

**THE AMERICAN RELIGIOUS RIGHT:
CONSERVATIVE CHRISTIANITY AND POLITICAL CONTROL**

by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is a study of the political attitudes, activities, and goals of contemporary conservative Christians in the United States, referred to hereafter as the **Religious Right**. While this group, due to its sheer numbers and denominational variants, can be seen as somewhat amorphous, their commonly-held belief in Biblical inerrancy as the moral paradigm for all social-political activities gives it cohesiveness, and it will be argued, a marked inflexibility in the solution-seeking realm of pluralistic politics.

By linking the strictures of conservative Christianity to the moral ethos of “traditional” America, the Religious Right has built a constituency based on fear, intolerance, and absolutism upon the foundations of a Divinely-inspired patriotism. It will be argued that this religious-ideological “closed loop” i.e., where all social activities must find their bases in a particular Christianity, is the antithesis of both the original intent of the American nation, and modern democratic processes.

As a pluralist democracy comprising many groups (and individuals) competing for the telling of their “story,” the United States, from its very beginnings, has sought to “deinstitutionalize,” by way of the First Amendment of **The Bill of Rights**, the authoritarian excesses of an “official” religion. The Religious Right has attempted to seriously impair this intent by positing the absolute Truth of the Bible as a prerequisite for all social-political processes. Consequently, this study will explore support for two interrelated hypotheses: First, that the absolute and unalterable Truth of the Bible is not entirely compatible with modern democratic politics, and second, that the Religious Right, who consider themselves to be the sole heirs to the American “moral” tradition, have actively sought to control political institutions and processes.

The arguments presented in this thesis will utilize, as tools of analysis, several “classic” treatments on the value of religious belief, contemporary social science theories, an examination of the institutions, prominent individuals, and public policies of the Religious Right, their moral-political opponents, and finally, the future prospects for the continued salience of conservative Christianity. As a whole, this thesis will contend that any attempt to find “truth” in politics that is analogous to Truth in religion is to debase, and ultimately, to seriously damage the value of both.

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to the Foster and Barrett families for the encouragement they gave to me; to my children, Chris, Nick, and Jenny for trying to play quietly in the house; and, most of all, to my wife, Gwen, who typed much of the material.

"He that is not with me is against me."

Matthew 12:30

"And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

John 8:32

"The government of the United States of America is not in any sense founded on the
Christian Religion."

George Washington

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this thesis is to identify the conservative Christian bloc popularly known as the Religious Right,¹ and to analyze its impact on the political and social affairs of contemporary America. This thesis is based upon two interrelated suppositions: First, that truth in politics is not analogous to or supportive of the Biblical truth of conservative Christianity; and second, that the Religious Right has actively sought control of the political and social institutions of American society by claiming to be the legitimate heirs to the American moral tradition.

Given the enormous complexity of American society, and its preeminent role in world affairs, the tone and influence of the Religious Right in political, economic, social, and moral matters cannot be observed without considerable apprehension. Indeed, the recent thrusts of this group into more secular fields — politics, government, the natural sciences, and popular culture, to name several — reveal not only a distrust of modern society, but also a profound misunderstanding of the nature (and natural limits) of democratic pluralism.

Reflecting the First Amendment of the **Bill of Rights**, religion in the United States is neither institutionalized as an “official” arm of the state, nor is it completely deinstitutionalized to the point that its effectiveness as an arbiter of public morality is lost. American religious faith, particularly conservative Protestantism, exists as a quasi-institutionalized belief system, not supported directly by the state, but implicitly recognized by it as a legitimate and considerable public power. Despite the lack of official institutionalization, the conservative Christianity espoused by the Religious Right has demonstrated, particularly during the Reagan Administration, a capability of maintaining a very public — and radical — political-social presence.

Although Christianity has played a major role in the development of Western political philosophy, the circumstances which have kept it at or near the surface of American public life is premised upon the pervasively religious nature of the society itself. Without state interference, religious faiths in the United States have assumed a form of *laissez-faire* competitiveness, where each vies for the telling of America’s

story, and, as the Religious Right has shown, for the claim to be the legitimate keeper of “traditional” American values. Ominously, such a claim has also bestowed upon the Religious Right a “God-given” mandate to treat politics as an earthly manifestation of the Biblical Truth. With this in mind, this thesis will seek to reflect the comments made above, and to examine why such a religious-political fusion has occurred.

Chapter 1 examines the views of major interpreters of the religious-political synthesis, namely, Alexis de Tocqueville, Karl Marx, Emile Durkheim, and Max Weber. While useful in themselves, the works to be examined here will be used as a theoretical starting-point for analyses in subsequent chapters. Examined in Chapter 1 are Tocqueville’s “first political institution” perspective of religion in early American political culture, Marx and the “inverted consciousness” of religious adherence, Durkheim’s thesis of the transcendent reality of religion and social collectivity, and Weber’s assessment of the influence of Protestantism on the economics of Western capitalist society. What all four perspectives point to (with Marx of course, taking the most disparaging view) is the notion that religious meaning systems — the metaphysical or supernatural — exerts its most profound influence in the temporal and mundane world of political processes.

Chapter 2 identifies the groups, organizations, and selected individuals which best exemplify the Religious Right’s foray into contemporary American politics. We shall also examine those theories which deal with the role of conservative Christianity in American society. Such theories will include the religious-political synthesis of symbol making, as well as other factors which have led to the Religious Right’s “political rebirth.”²

The policies and normative goals of the Religious Right are the subject of Chapter 3. In what has been described as the “blurring of the distinction between law and morality,”³ this chapter examines the notion that Biblical inerrancy and civic law are completely compatible and co-equal in a democratic society. By labelling all opponents “evil” rather than mistaken or different, the Religious Right has established a constituency premised upon narrow Scriptural interpretation and moral absolutism. Consequently, foes of the Religious Right are defined not only as politically mistaken, but as immoral, lawless, and even, “un-American.”

Chapter 4 entails a closer examination of the perceived “enemies” of the Religious Right. Since most radical movements tend to cut a wide swath in their search for opponents, the Religious Right, it would seem

(despite such nomenclatures as the Moral Majority), has targetted such large segments of American society as hostile territory, that practically all save “born-again” Christians are perceived as adversaries. Prominent among these, as could be expected, are liberals, members of the scientific community, and, as a final, catch-all designation, “secular humanists.” Included in this chapter is an analysis of the philosophy of humanism, and an examination of the creation-versus-evolution controversy. The battle, as it were, is not simply one of religious, political or moral differences. For the Religious Right, it is for the very survival of America itself.

The concept of a “Christian America”⁴ and its chances for longevity at the close of the “Reagan era” forms the basis of Chapter 5. Additionally, a brief assessment of the Religious Right’s successes and failures during the Reagan years will precede a look into the future with the new Republican administration of George Bush. Also included is a look at the fluctuating fortunes of the Religious Right, and the possibility of maintaining its continued effectiveness in the future. Since the underlying historical conditions which gave birth to the Religious Right still exist in American society, it may be premature to regard them as only a passing aberration.⁵ Finally, the thesis (briefly) examines the need to analyze the impact of religion on contemporary social-political controversies in the United States.

NOTES TO INTRODUCTION

¹This is not the sole expression used for this or its associate movements. Others are “radical right,” “new right,” “fundamentalist right,” “Christian right,” “far right,” and so on.

²This is the term used by Robert Wuthnow in “The Political Rebirth of American Evangelicals” in Robert C. Liebman and Robert Wuthnow, eds., **The New Christian Right: Mobilization and Legitimation** (New York: Aldine Publishing, 1983), pp. 174-175.

³This was taken from a taped lecture given by Dr. John Redekop at Simon Fraser University in 1986.

⁴The term “Christian America” is used in a somewhat pejorative way by John Redekop, **The American Far Right: A Case Study of Billy James Hargis and Christian Crusade** (Grand Rapids, Mi.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1968).

⁵Redekop, op. cit., note 3.

CHAPTER 1: RELIGION, POLITICS, AND THE SOCIAL SCIENCE LEGACY

The toleration of those who hold different opinions on matters of religion is so agreeable to the Gospel and to reason, that it seems monstrous for men to be blind in so clear a light.

—John Locke, *A Letter On Toleration*.¹

This chapter examines the ideas of four theorists whose collective works must be seen as seminal in any discussion of the religious-political link. In order of examination, these theorists are Alexis de Tocqueville, Karl Marx, Emile Durkheim, and Max Weber.

The relative brevity of the assessment of these four is due not only to the periods in which they wrote, but also to the fact that the “fundamentalist” religion discussed herein is a phenomenon of the twentieth century. Nevertheless, these thinkers attached great importance to religion and the influence it exerted on the social and economic development of the Western world.

i) Alexis de Tocqueville

In his remarkable study of the young American republic, Alexis de Tocqueville wrote,

Upon my arrival in the United States, the religious aspect of the country was the first thing that struck my attention; and the longer I stayed there, the more did I perceive the great political consequences resulting from this state of things, to which I was unaccustomed.²

In *Democracy in America* (1831), Tocqueville revealed the intimate, and unique, relationship between religion and political institutions in the United States. “Religion in America takes no direct part in the government of society,” he wrote, “but it must be regarded as the first of their political institutions.”³ In other words, the new republic, as Tocqueville saw, embodied the underlying values of the Judeo-Christian tradition: a democratic political culture guided essentially by the moral strictures of Biblical faith.

Leaving aside, for the moment, the notion of such a political institution, the uniqueness of the American religious-political synthesis was due as much to the “innumerable” sectarian divisions⁴ as to its

“New World...form of Christianity.”⁵ In what can be viewed as the forerunner to contemporary theses on the American “civil religion,”⁶ Tocqueville described American Christianity as a “democratic and republican religion.”⁷ Despite the absence of an “official” or national religious denomination, society’s contract between religion and politics “has never been dissolved.”⁸

Religion then, becomes a political institution not because a particular sect has the official recognition of the state, but because of the opposite reason, namely the constitutional neutrality, or silence, on religious matters.⁹ It was Tocqueville’s view that religion did not directly influence either law or public opinion. Indeed, it could be said that religion remained indifferent to public affairs. Despite such a position, however, religion exerted a direct influence over community and individual morals. “By regulating domestic life,” Tocqueville observed, “[religion] regulates the state.”¹⁰

Christian religion within the American experience, while pervasive, lacks the institutional and constitutional means to become an arm of the state. A possible analogy here would be that of a benevolent, titular monarch. Such an analogy was acknowledged in Tocqueville’s analysis:

In the United States the sovereign authority is religious, and consequently hypocrisy must be common; but there is no country in the whole world in which the Christian religion retains a greater influence over the souls of men than in America and there can be no greater proof of its utility, and of its conformity to human nature, than that its influence is most powerfully felt over the most enlightened and free nation on earth.¹¹

For Tocqueville, the world’s freest nation was also the most religious, but only, perhaps, in a special sense of the term. Because of the constitutional amendment guaranteeing state neutrality, religious adherence became a matter of voluntary compliance rather than a government directive. Consequently, the practicing of one’s faith was taken as positive expression of individual liberty.

One of Tocqueville’s major concerns was the maintenance of a democracy without a subsequently dangerous slip into despotism — defined here as unrestrained rule for private gain.¹² Since democracy (which in Tocqueville’s usage meant “equality”) could easily lead to selfish individualism, isolationism, and uncooperativeness, a “great counterforce”¹³ to these dangers was America’s religious strength.

Although religion was the first political institution, the maintenance of the American democracy was due, in part, to religion’s public power and its distinctness from political processes. As Tocqueville

observed:

It must never be forgotten that religion gave birth to Anglo-American society. In the United States religion is therefore commingled with all the habits of the nation and all the feelings of patriotism...In America religion has... laid down its own limits. Religious institutions have remained wholly distinct from political institutions, so that the former laws have been easily changed while former belief has remained unshaken. Christianity has therefore retained a strong hold on the public mind in America...[it is] a religion which is believed without question.¹⁴

While Tocqueville's assertion that religion is America's first political institution somewhat contradicts his later emphasis on religion as distinct from political institutions, we must realize that for Tocqueville, religion was the fundamental structure from which all subsequent American social-political values emanated.

What makes Tocqueville's work still worthy of serious consideration today was his insistence that America was driven by a fusion — despite the First Amendment — of political pragmatism and religious fervour. This fusion however, is difficult to define precisely. For example, apart from a half-dozen paragraphs on Catholic migration to the United States, Tocqueville discusses American piety using diffuse terms such as “Christianity,” “religion,” or “sect.” Clearly, the diversity of Christian commitment in America was much too broad to categorize in a sect-by-sect fashion. However, in a truly prophetic statement that carries far less intuitive appeal today, Tocqueville found conformity amidst religious heterogeneity. He wrote that “...religious zeal is perpetually stimulated in the United States by the duties of patriotism,”¹⁵ and, as will be shown later, this duty, so admired by Tocqueville, has become both a political and religious weapon frequently used by the Religious Right.

In an assessment of Tocqueville's work with regards to today's Religious Right, Phillip Hammond notes:

Certainly **Democracy in America** makes frequent reference to Americans' moral homogeneity in the midst of doctrinal diversity...[F]rom every quarter of American religious life came the message that the interests of every citizen are bound up in spiritual issues; the pursuit of self interest must be guided by transcendental considerations.¹⁶

For the contemporary Religious Right, it would appear that “doctrinal diversity” is both politically and spiritually heretical, and that “transcendental considerations” — private morality, in essence — have

become political “truths.”

ii) **Karl Marx**

In distinct contrast to Tocqueville, who saw religion as a buffer between despotism and the integrity of democratic institutions, Karl Marx (and Friedrich Engels) viewed religious faith as illusory and the producer of an “inverted consciousness.”¹⁷ Indeed, “criticism of religion,” wrote Marx, “is the premise of all criticism.”¹⁸

In Marx’s view,

*...man makes religion, religion does not make man. Religion, indeed, is the self-consciousness and self-esteem of the man who has not yet found himself or who has already lost himself.*¹⁹

What is important to recognize here is the lack of self-consciousness and self-esteem that, in Marx’s view, religion induces. In the existing world, it is the oppressed classes of society who turn to, or are trapped in religion in order to endure the cruelty of unjust social systems. Religion flourishes not only because of the social defects inherent in the state itself, but because the oppressed need something to believe in so as to make their economic deprivation bearable.

The oppressive state and the “other world” of religion exist in a kind of sinister symbiosis. Marx asserted that,

[t]he social principles of Christianity justified the slavery of Antiquity, glorified the serfdom of the Middle Ages and equally knows, when necessary, how to defend the oppression of the proletariat, although they make a pitiful face over it.

The social principles of Christianity preach the necessity of a ruling and an oppressed class, and all they have for the latter is the pious wish the former will be charitable.²⁰

Since the state (specifically, the capitalist state) is, either by outright acknowledgement or convention, linked to religious faith, freedom for the oppressed must include freedom from religion. “All emancipation,” stated Marx, “is the *leading back* of the human world and of human relationships and conditions, to *man himself*.”²¹

Analogous to the capitalists’ control of the means and forces of economic production, religion cannot

serve the interests of humanity, if humanity — particularly the oppressed — cannot assume complete control over the irrational intrusiveness of religious faith, and ultimately, preside over its destruction. A just social system, according to Marx, must be based not on the “nature of Christian society...[but on] the nature of human society.”²²

Significantly, the early evangelicals and (in the beginning of the twentieth century) fundamentalists tended to avoid politics as an earthly — or “this-worldly” — pursuit that had little or no bearing on eternal salvation. For Marx, the avoidance of the real world forms the ideological superstructure of religion: the acceptance of earthly suffering in return for everlasting life. This is the “inverted consciousness” of faith, where religious doctrine is the “‘theory’ (reflective awareness) of an alienated world.”²³

Paraphrasing Marx, Thomas Dean explains:

...there is an inverse dialectic at work between the human alienation which characterizes the underlying social order and its ideological (i.e. alienated) expression in the form of religion. This alienation of man from himself, his work, and his fellow men in this world is ideologically transformed and sanctioned by the development of Christianity into an other-worldly religion.²⁴

This inverse dialectical relationship, like other dichotomous socio-economic institutions, must inevitably crumble from the forces of social change. Just as dialectical materialism guided the direction of economic change, so too will religion give way to those same inexorable laws. In *The Manifesto*, Marx and Engels state:

When the ancient world was in its last throes, the ancient religions were overcome by Christianity. When Christian ideas succumbed in the eighteenth century to rational ideas, feudal society fought its death battle with the then revolutionary bourgeoisie. The idea of religious liberty and freedom of conscience, merely gave expression to the sway of free competition within the domain of knowledge.²⁵

Perhaps Marx’s unspoken contention was that religious faith can even impair the acquisition of knowledge itself.²⁶ Religion is not only an obstacle to man’s growing intellectual potential, but also serves as a mythical obfuscation “to sanction the status quo.”²⁷

Marx’s assertions are disputable from (at least) two perspectives. First, the stripping away of the transcendent “other world” of religious belief by no means assures that the value placed upon the “real world”

will increase; we all, at least occasionally, turn to an “other-worldly” faith of some kind, regardless of the “perfection” of existing conditions. Second, one must ask if Marxism itself is a form of (secular) religion, in that it promises salvation in the guise of a mature communist state. Other arguments, particularly those of the Religious Right, further maintain that Marxism — indeed, any “humanist” philosophy — is ill-equipped to deal with the ultimate questions of human existence, particularly, truth, morality, and death.

Such criticisms however, ignore Marx’s essential contention that the abstractness of religious thought “is but the reflex of the real world.”²⁸ When freed from centuries of theistic dogma, those ultimate questions of life will find their solutions within the real world of true human concern. Perhaps it can be further stated that what Marx sought “has always been the goal of religious hope itself, [namely a] new humanity.”²⁹

It is the opinion of many, however, that instead of liberating mankind from the abstract cult of religious transcendence, contemporary Marxism mistakenly elevates man himself to theistic prominence. The Marxian “self-deification of mankind,”³⁰ i.e. finding man at the centre of the universe, nevertheless, remains today as the most thorough intellectual antagonist to religious influence, and ironically, its most parallel.

iii) Emile Durkheim

In Emile Durkheim’s *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, observation of the impact of religion is not seen in terms of Marxian conflict, but in terms of its social origin as the “collective conscience”³¹ of a particular society. Religion, according to Durkheim, “is something eminently social,” and as such,

...religious representations are collective representations which express collective realities; the rites are a manner of acting which take rise in the midst of the assembled groups and which are destined to excite, maintain or recreate certain mental states in these groups.³²

Although *The Elementary Forms* deals largely with the totemic beliefs of the Australian Aboriginal people, Durkheim’s work is important in this context because of its extensive theory of religion as being “significantly interwoven with the conditions of human existence.”³³ In Durkheim’s view religion (all religions) divide the world into two large categories: the *sacred*, which are “the beliefs, myths, dogmas and

legends [which] express the nature of sacred things";³⁴ and the *profane*: the secular, or this-worldly.

For Durkheim, this dual division in the world was absolute and common to all religious systems. Indeed, these two categories are so distinct that they "cannot approach each other and keep their own nature at the same time."³⁵ Although Durkheim's bipartite universe has received a substantial amount of criticism³⁶ for its dichotomous and static character,³⁷ his analysis of religion as *the* social activity that fosters both collective thinking and individual conscience remains significant and provocative.

While society may be seen as a composite of individuals, religion symbolizes "the eminent form, and, as it were, the concentrated expression of the whole collective life. If religion has given birth to all that is essential in society, it is because the idea of society is the soul of religion."³⁸ As the indispensable expression of collectivity, Durkheim's view of religion would seem to be compatible with Tocqueville's assertion that religion is the primary political institution that guides the moral behaviour of the community. While each individual experiences a religious "feeling," the community discovers a collective consciousness of a greater reality,³⁹ namely, itself. In American political life, God stands above the nation as "a suprapolitical [sovereign],"⁴⁰ guiding both the individual's conscience and the national "will."

If it is the American experience to idealize its aims and institutions, and to idolize its prominent historical figures with near-sacred references, then the more temporal concerns of the profane have an enormous religious impact. As Durkheim explained:

There can be no society which does not feel the need of upholding and reaffirming at regular intervals the collective sentiments and collective ideas which make its unity and personality...[H]ence come ceremonies which do not differ from regular religious ceremonies, either in their object, the results which they produce, or the processes employed to obtain these results. What essential difference is there between [religious celebrations]...and a reunion of citizens commemorating the proclamation of a new moral or legal system or some great event in the national life?⁴¹

While Durkheim's approach to the study of religion via social phenomena was an effort to understand the complexities of religious belief systems, it can also be said that religion provided a fideistic basis for the systematic study of society.⁴²

Significantly, in a short article written some fourteen years before **The Elementary Forms**,

Durkheim observed that not only does religion explain society, it liberates and modernizes it as well. This liberation-through-faith approach was most noticeably observed in the moralistic emphasis on individualism found in Christianity. Such an emphasis, it would seem, was premised upon the final earthly actions of Christ. Durkheim states that

...in completing the definitive separation of the spiritual and the temporal, in abandoning the world to the disputes of men, Christ at the same time opened the way for science and freedom of thought. In this way one can explain the rapid progress made by scientific thought from the date that Christian societies were established. Let no one therefore denounce individualism as the enemy that must be opposed at all costs...It is thus an error to present individualist morality as antagonistic to Christian morality; quite the contrary, it is derived from it.⁴³

As will be discussed in subsequent chapters, the contemporary state's emphasis on individualism and scientific thought has been a major source of the Religious Right's often acerbic view of modern society. This emphasis, grounded in the constitutional concept of a religiously neutral state, is largely responsible for the apparent immoral "secularization" of American society.

Although Durkheim did not foresee a twentieth century division between scientific and religious thought in Christian societies, any attempt by science to explain (either by verification or falsification) the existence of religion is, in fact, an admission of religion's reality.⁴⁴ Since religion does exist, scientific explanations of such are considered redundant. "There is something eternal in religion," wrote Durkheim, and that "something" is religion's facility which allows us to feel "the vital necessities [of existence] without distinctly conceiving them."⁴⁵ This facility, which allows grand cosmological explanations without rational "proof" is "beyond that which science permits us to affirm."⁴⁶

As long as religion, albeit imperfectly and mysteriously, enables us to "feel" that which eludes scientific analysis, and challenges the moral ambiguities of a secularized society, its influence is much more than just a benevolent cosmology. For the Religious Right, it is something worth fighting for, and therefore becomes a considerable political weapon as well.

iv) Max Weber

Max Weber's analysis of the value of religion, particularly in **The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism**, sought to explain the economic development of the West through a direct linkage to specific Christian beliefs. Unlike Durkheim, Weber's concern here was not to prove or vindicate religious belief, but to analyze religion's interactive role in socio-economic development.

Weber's premise was as basic as it was complex: Did the Protestant Reformation — particularly Calvinism — change the attitudes toward work and the accumulation of capital? Did work itself become both a duty and a vocation under God? Weber's examination showed that within Calvinist theological beliefs, ceaseless and systematic labour was a show of proof, "by the appropriate conduct, that one had been elected by God for a further state of blessedness."⁴⁸

If primitive capitalisms were characterized, as R.H. Tawney states, by "the unlimited lust for gain [which was] anti-social and immoral,"⁴⁹ then modern capitalism (post-Reformation) must have been influenced by a pervasive and acceptable moral standard. The standard which liberated these economic values was found in the changing attitudes of sixteenth-century religious belief.

According to Weber, the religious justification for capitalism was nurtured in the idea of the "calling," which was in essence, approval from God to pursue the more earthly concerns of trade, commerce, and profit. As Ernst Troeltsch explained,

The Protestant ethic of the "calling," with its Calvinistic assimilation of the Capitalist system...made service in one "calling," [i.e.] the systematic exercise of one's energies, into a service both necessary in itself and appointed by God, in which profit is regarded as the sign of the Divine approval...It laid the foundation for a world of specialized labour....⁵⁰

Although there has been some form of capitalist economy since recorded history, the fundamental concept in Weber's thesis is, that based on the "calling," Christianity and capitalism became deeply interwoven. The notion that a market economy and Christian faith could not only coexist but were conjoined with Divine grace marked the beginning of a union whose moral foundation is still keenly felt today. That Christianity and capitalist materialism formed a strong link in the chain of Western development was obvious to Weber:

One of the fundamental elements in the spirit of modern capitalism, and not only that but of all modern culture: rational conduct on the basis of the calling, was born... from the spirit of Christian asceticism... For when asceticism was carried out of monastic cells into everyday life, and began to dominate the world by morality, it did its part in building the tremendous cosmos of the modern economic order.⁵¹

Consequently, material goods came to possess, in Weber's view, an increasing and inexorable power in human lives unmatched by any previous period in history. Over time, however, Protestant asceticism has come to be influenced by a less religious and less ethical pursuit of wealth, particularly, as Weber saw, in the United States — the field of capitalism's highest development. In America, Weber found that,

...the pursuit of wealth, stripped of its religious and ethical meaning, tends to become associated with purely mundane passions, which often give it the character of sport.⁵²

If modern capitalism can trace its roots to the influences of the Protestant ethic i.e., the religious rationalization of the socio-economic order, its subsequent evolution into a more "mundane" pursuit is significant for two reasons.

First, the psychological impact of the Protestant ethic, with its moral-ethical foundations, joined with other Western democratic institutions to eventually form a secularly-based order. Once institutionalized, capitalism reflected not so much a particular religious ethic as it did the moral philosophy of the Western democratic rationale of individuals pursuing their own economic salvation out of self-interest.

Second, and causally related to the above, religious beliefs themselves have been surpassed — at least in more temporal matters — by a more rationalized and systematized socio-political order that tends to demystify and impersonalize social conditions.

Indeed, in most Western societies, there is a tendency "to reject Christianity as an authoritative meaning system, in favor of drawing upon Christian fragments — select beliefs, practices, and organizational offerings — in a highly specialized, consumer-like fashion."⁵³ Such was the liberating effect of the "calling," that the spirit of Western capitalism itself, having altered (or outgrown) its Christian roots, can now be seen, ironically, as a spirit of secularization. Such a spirit has, not surprisingly, become a fundamental evil to the Religious Right.

Weber succinctly observed that “[w]hat the great religious epoch of the seventeenth century bequeathed to its utilitarian successor was...above all an amazingly good, we may even say pharasaically good, conscience in the acquisition of money.”⁵⁴ Paraphrasing Weber, perhaps it can be said that what the twentieth-century tenets of American conservatism bequeathed to its Religious Right offspring was a good conscience in conspicuous consumption via a veritable worshipping of the free market, justified (as the Calvinists had done) through Scriptural interpretation. Unlike the early capitalists of Weber’s *The Protestant Ethic* however, the spirit of Christian asceticism — a model of frugality and modesty — has given way to the curious notion that wealthy ostentatiousness has Divine approbation.

What were once considered transgressions against the will of God—wealth, militarism, intolerance, and nationalism—have now, in the “patriotic American” world of the Religious Right, become pillars of Christian righteousness. The “tremendous cosmos” of Weber’s modern economic order has once again found a spiritual, albeit dubious, ethic.

v) **Some Concluding Observations**

Although this brief treatment of these theoretical “classics” did not concern itself with the well known critiques of each perspective, suffice it to say that the recognition of religion’s value and influence in Western society (even in the work of the critics) can still be seen as vital. The work of these four thinkers gives to contemporary analyses an enduring social science legacy.

Such is the power of religious belief that it has been variously a first political institution, the producer of an inverted consciousness, a greater reality that defies scientific rationalization, and the progenitor of modern capitalism.

There is, however, a certain tension between these four assessments which underscores the difficulty in seeking a common ground between the religious and the political realms. Finding a common ground for religious beliefs amidst the complexities of contemporary American social life is ultimately reduced to a question of value. Should strongly-held religious convictions be accorded a prominent — or preeminent — place in modern Western culture, or should such beliefs be accorded a more neutral position as one of the

many competing values influencing society?

Qualitative differences (the source of the tension) aside, we should also recognize an important point of theoretical consonance: religion is a powerful determinant of political attitudes and action. This deduction is not intended to be axiomatic. Rather, it is to show that strident religious posturing increases the possibility of political conflict. Within the morally-absolute world of the Religious Right, such beliefs could have frightening consequences.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 1

¹John Locke, *Epistola de Tolerantia — A Letter on Toleration* Raymond Klibonsky, ed. J.W. Gough, trans. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), p. 65.

²Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy In America* Volume I. Henry Reeves, trans. (New York: Barnes & Co., 1856), p. 337.

³*ibid.*, p. 334.

⁴*ibid.*, p. 331. Furthermore, Tocqueville writes: “Each sect adores the Deity in its own peculiar manner; but all sects preach the same moral law in the name of God.” Interestingly, the unique and peaceful coexistence of various Christian sects (in America) was for Tocqueville, the epitome of democracy and civility. For the contemporary Religious Right, however, such a coexistence is often seen as threatening.

⁵*ibid.*, p. 328.

⁶See specifically, Robert N. Bellah, “Civil Religion in America” in *Daedalus* Vol. 96, 1967 (Winter), pp. 1-21. This short essay has produced a flurry of scholarship in the last two decades. See also, Roderick P. Hart, *The Political Pulpit* (West Lafayette, Ind.: Purdue University Press, 1977).

⁷Tocqueville, *op. cit.*, p. 328.

⁸*ibid.*

⁹The First Amendment to the American **Bill of Rights** has been taken to near-mythical heights by both the Religious Right and its opponents. While the more liberal interpreters of this amendment take it to mean freedom from direct religious influence in political and legal affairs, the Religious Right views it as **de facto** evidence of the Divine guidance bestowed upon the Founding Fathers. Consequently, there is no “wall” separating religion from the state, rather, the amendment is an affirmation of the distinctly Christian tone that forms the basis of American society. Additionally, Samuel Huntington raises an interesting point in stating that “[t]he United States is the only country in which a majority of the population has belonged to dissenting Protestant sects.” See Huntington, *American Politics: The Promise of Disharmony* (Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press, 1981), p. 15.

¹⁰Tocqueville, *op. cit.*, p. 332. Curiously, Tocqueville believed religion had more of an influence on women — “the protectors of morals” — than over men, who are often unable to be restrained “from the numberless temptations of fortune.”

¹¹*ibid.*

¹²See Phillip E. Hammond, “Another Great Awakening?” in Robert C. Liebman and Robert Wuthnow, eds. *The New Christian Right: Mobilization and Legitimation* (New York: Aldine Publishing, 1983), p. 209.

¹³*ibid.*

¹⁴Tocqueville, *op. cit.*, “The Second Part” (Volume II), pp. 4-5.

¹⁵*ibid.*, p. 335 (Volume I).

¹⁶Hammond, op. cit., pp. 212-213.

¹⁷Karl Marx, "Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right: Introduction" in **The Portable Karl Marx** Eugene Kamenka, ed. (New York: The Viking Press, 1983), p.115. N.B.: In Karl Marx and Friederich Engels, **On Religion** (New York: Schocken Books, 1964), p. 41, the term "reversed world consciousness" is substituted for "inverted consciousness."

¹⁸Marx, **The Portable Karl Marx** ibid.

¹⁹ibid.

²⁰Karl Marx, "The Communism Of The Paper *Rheinischer Beobachter*" in **On Religion** op. cit., p. 83.

²¹Marx, **The Portable Karl Marx** op. cit., p. 114.

²²Marx, **Karl Marx: Essential Writings** Frederick L. Bender, ed. (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), p. 23. Given that much is made of the particular time-period of his writing, this is the work of the "young Marx."

²³Thomas Dean, **Post-Theistic Thinking: The Marxist-Christian Dialogue in Radical Perspective** (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1975), pp. 59-60.

²⁴ibid., p. 60.

²⁵Marx and Engels, "The Manifesto of the Communist Party" in **The Essential Left: Five Classic Texts on the Principles of Socialism** David McLellen, ed., new ed. (London: Unwin Paperbacks, 1986), p. 35.

²⁶This debate can be most clearly seen in the creation versus evolution controversy, and does seem, ostensibly, to bear out Marx's assertions.

²⁷Dean, op. cit., p. 5.

²⁸Marx, "Capital, Book I" in Marx and Engels, **On Religion** op. cit., p. 135.

²⁹Dean, op. cit., p. 235.

³⁰Leszak Kolakowski, **Main Currents of Marxism: Its Origins, Growth and Dissolution. Volume 3: The Breakdown** P.S. Falla, trans. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), p. 530.

³¹Reginald W. Bibby, "Religion" in Robert Hagedorn, ed. **Sociology** 3d. ed. (Toronto: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1986), p. 383.

³²Emile Durkheim, **The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life** J.W. Swain, trans. (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1915), p. 10.

³³A.A Goldenweiser, "Review: 'Emile Durkheim — Les formes elementaires de la vie religieuse. Le systeme totemique en Australie. 1912'" in **American Anthropologist**, 17, pp. 719-35. Reprinted in W.S.F. Pickering, ed., **Durkheim On Religion: A selection of readings with bibliographies** W.S.F. Pickering and Jacqueline Redding, trans. (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1975), p. 210.

³⁴Durkheim, op. cit., p. 37.

³⁵ibid., p. 40.

³⁶For instance, W.E.H. Stanner writes: "My criticism of [Durkheim's] schema as much arose...from the difficulty of finding a conceptual home for facts which, excluded in the first category [the sacred], should have fallen within the second [the profane], but would not do so." See M. Freedman, ed., **Social Organization: Essays Presented To Raymond Firth** (London: Cass, 1967), pp. 217-240. Reprinted in W.S.F. Pickering, *op. cit.*, p. 291.

³⁷Pickering, *ibid.*, pp. 290-291.

³⁸Durkheim, *op. cit.*, p. 419. Additionally, Phillip E. Hammond raises the point that, for Durkheim, "religion" and "sacred" were distinct categories i.e., events may be sacred without being religious. Hammond uses the analogy of love and marriage — we do not usually equate one with the other — to reinforce the contention that there is a separation between the personal and the institutional. My argument would be that the institutional is an extension of the personal, and that collective personal beliefs evolve into social institutions. While accepting that love does not necessarily lead to marriage, I also believe that marriage cannot be held as so distinct from love (although other factors such as duty, obligation, and family considerations do play important roles). While Durkheim may have separated religion from the sacred, it is unclear where the institution of the Church would fit in this schema. To reiterate Durkheim's suggestion, religion divides the world into the sacred and the profane, and "by showing that the idea of religion is inseparable from that of the Church, it makes it clear that religion should be an eminently collective thing" (*ibid.*, p. 45). Religion then, as practiced by the Church, becomes an extension (or an "ideal" expression) of the sacred. See Phillip E. Hammond, ed., "Introduction" in **The Sacred in a Secular Age: Toward Revision in the Scientific Study of Religion** (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), pp. 4-5.

³⁹Bibby, *op. cit.*, p. 383.

⁴⁰Robert N. Bellah and Phillip E. Hammond, **Varieties of Civil Religion** (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1980), p. 11.

⁴¹Durkheim, *op. cit.*, p. 427.

⁴²W.S.F. Pickering, *op. cit.*, "Introduction", p. 4.

⁴³Emile Durkheim, "Individualism and the intellectuals" reprinted in Pickering, *op. cit.*, p. 68.

⁴⁴See especially the conclusion of **The Elementary Forms**.

⁴⁵*ibid.*, pp. 430-431.

⁴⁶*ibid.*

⁴⁷Of Calvinism (and John Calvin), J.T. McNeill writes: "Holiness is not sought in detachment but in the society of believers and in the active pursuit of the daily calling which is accepted as a station appointed by God." See Alan Richardson ed., **A Dictionary of Christian Theology** (London: SCM Press, Ltd., 1969), p. 266.

⁴⁸A.F. Wells, **Social Institutions** (London: Heinemann Educational Books, 1970), p. 266.

⁴⁹R.H. Tawney, "Forward" in Max Weber, **The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism** Talcott Parsons, trans. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958), p. 1(e).

⁵⁰Ernst Troeltsch, "The Economic Ethic of Capitalism" in Robert W. Green, ed., **Protestantism and Capitalism: The Weber Thesis and its Critics** (Boston: D.C. Heath and Co., 1959), p. 24.

⁵¹Max Weber, *op. cit.*, pp. 180-181.

⁵²*ibid.*, p. 182.

⁵³Bibby, *op. cit.*, p. 412.

⁵⁴Weber, *op. cit.*, p. 176.

CHAPTER 2: Identifying the Religious Right.

The idea that religion and politics don't mix was invented by the Devil to keep Christians from running their own country.

— Jerry Falwell¹

In presenting brief analyses of four “classic” assessments of the value of religious belief, the focus of Chapter 1 was on religion as a whole, and not a particular religious-political linkage. Despite differences in treatment, the direction of each assessment clearly pointed to Christianity as the preeminent moral foundation of Western social-political thought. Although one may question the influence of religion in the maintenance of contemporary society, the heritage of the Western moral ethos, as even Marx observed, is unmistakably religious.

The cosmology of religious belief provides both an understanding (or interpretation) of historical events, and a justification for present actions. In the realm of politics, contemporary conservative Christianity functions not as an institute of the state, but as a private (populist) agent of social and moral conviction, where a multitude of religious denominations “compete” for the telling of America’s past, present, and its hopes for the future.

Since Tocqueville, observers of the United States have commented upon the apparent shallowness, and the absence of a well-defined philosophical base in the nation’s political life. Lacking a deeply-entrenched historical perspective, and, by association, an official institutional base, such shallowness (or “populism”) have given contemporary religious views a considerable influence in political, social, and cultural issues. While this influence is not uniquely American, its tone and direction must be regarded as such; and nowhere in American life has this broad swath of “Christian” values been utilized so effectively than by the Religious Right. Their heritage, techniques, and political rebirth are the subjects of this chapter.

i) **The American religious heritage**

In the United States, the persistence and intrusion of what are thought to be “traditional” values continue to be utilized as definitive statements of things “American.” Few countries, if any, consistently refer to an unaltered, two hundred year-old constitution² as both an institutional and inspirational guidepost with the same zeal and reverence as the United States. Similarly, few countries elevate their “Founding Fathers” to such near-Divine prominence. If there is an inspirational side to the story of America, it is that of a wholly-new nation, founded upon the concepts of religious, political, and economic freedom, and peopled by those seeking an enlightened individualism.

Although the state itself was deemed to be expressly secular, the goal of the First Amendment in the **Bill of Rights** was to guarantee religious plurality and freedom, and to avoid the constraints of an official or national church.³ The intention of such a goal was to free the “religion market,”⁴ and to assure that religious adherence was a matter of individual choice, not a national directive.

One’s commitment to religion is based on voluntarism rather than state coercion. In an observation that echoes both the sentiments of Tocqueville and the interactive approach of Weber, S.M. Lipset writes:

In seeking to explain the special character of American religion many foreign visitors singled out the effect of the separation of church and state, which resulted in American churches being voluntary organizations in which congregational self-government was the predominant form of church government...[T]he special quality of American religion has been linked to three elements in the American past: first, New England Puritanism infused certain ascetic values into the very concept of Protestantism — the Puritans’ “Protestant ethic” lay close to the heart of most denominations...[S]econd, ideological emphases and institutional changes which flowed from the American Revolution led to forms of church organization analogous to popularly based institutions; and third...all sections of the United States were formed out of an unsettled frontier without any traditional class structure or significant aid or control from a central government....⁵

Despite its initial Puritan asceticism and orthodoxy, religion in America, as a popularly based institution, assumed an informal, rather than a formal influence. This is not to suggest that Christianity lost its moral hold over early American society. Rather, the Protestant concept of voluntarism, free from institutional (or state) control assured that religion would become a broadly accepted “American” value, and therefore compatible with the expansion of other liberties.⁶ Salvation becomes a personal, not an institutionally

sanctioned pursuit:

The waves of religious revivals in the early nineteenth century — known as the Second Great Awakening⁷ — were predicated upon the (largely) evangelical Protestant tenets of individualism and a personal commitment to Christ. This emphasis upon man's freedom and responsibility, in effect, the disestablishment of religion, meant that religious requirements, and the community at large, were mutually reinforcing, and not necessarily distinct from one another. Religion itself, as a voluntary organization, not only guided the morals of the community from within (as Tocqueville saw), but became an aspect of the democratic process.

This democratic twist to religiosity emanated, constitutionally at least, from the **Bill of Rights**. Within the larger context of American society however, voluntarism meant not only individual choice, but a “competitiveness and commercialization of religious organizations.”⁸ Religion, under these circumstances, functions not only as an expression of individual-communal faith, but assumes a secularized, nationalized force as well.

If America was founded on the notion of religious liberty, the absence of an institutionalized religion meant that faith contributed to the American democratic ideal. Thus, religion's contribution to society is legitimate at the popular level⁹, and does not, as in most Western countries, stand as an aloof, elitist, and often impersonal, “official” institution. To this end, Protestant Evangelicalism was the most amenable in “accommodating its public theology to the [American] civil religion.”¹⁰

As the American nation developed, so too did a nascent form of “established theology” and a “parallel moral consensus,”¹¹ exalting the virtues of liberty, individualism, and self-control. According to Hammond, these parallel elements were a reflection of rural life and small town ideals,¹² where a sense of self-reliance and community commitment were both religious and civic virtues. While the “moral consensus” of American life may (still) be seen as secular, its very nature is an intrinsic part of American Christianity, and remains suffused with religious references: “Christian America,” the “city on the hill,” “God's chosen nation,” or even, the “Moral Majority.” Subsequently, as the “Kingdom of God on Earth,”¹³ the image of America as a haven for Christian refugees has become so enmeshed with the secular notions of liberty and individualism, that even Durkheim's carefully considered distinct worlds of the sacred and profane begin

to blur.

Revivalism in America — the earlier Great Awakenings and the emergence of Fundamentalism — shaped, “to a remarkable degree, American religious experience, and hence American culture.”¹⁴ While there were waves of revivalism in Europe as well, particularly England, America lacked the pre-existence of tradition as well as the social and political institutions to counter these occasional groundswellings of religious fervour. As George Marsden notes, “Revivalism had little competition when it came to determining the distinctive characteristics of American religious life.”¹⁵ Without credible opposition or tradition, the evangelical emphases on premillennialism¹⁶ and Biblical inerrancy became recognized (if not wholly accepted) strands of the American cultural framework by the late nineteenth century.

Significantly, the dawning of the twentieth century, particularly post-World War I, marked the increased antipathy of conservative Protestantism towards rapid industrialization and urbanization. In an ironic twist, evangelicalism — the erstwhile spiritual transmitter of those “radical” American concepts of individualism, self-reliance, and liberty — was to become the religious-political bastion against the forces of modernity. Separated by religious conviction from the vicissitudes of a restless urban America, Fundamentalists (so-called after 1910) responded negatively to the political and social issues of the time “with next to no theoretical preparation to guide them.”¹⁷ Awaiting the Fundamentalists (and today, the Religious Right) was the battle for America itself: Bolshevism, evolution, the Great Depression, World War II, public education, social programmes, a liberalized culture, and finally, the spectre of “secular humanism.” Modernity, it seemed, had turned its back on America’s religious heritage, and by association, the very essence of the nation itself.

ii) **Conservatism and symbolism: the genesis of the Religious Right.**

After the much-publicized debacle of the Scopes “Monkey” Trial at Dayton, Tennessee in the summer of 1925, conservative Protestantism, and Fundamentalism in particular, suffered a severe setback that is still felt today. The trial of biology teacher John Scopes pitted the intellectual against the uneducated, and the urban against the rural. As Marsden arguably observes, few could ever again take Fundamentalism

seriously; it bears the label still used by some theorists: the "obscurantist" faith.¹⁸

As early as 1927, Maynard Shipley declared, "For the first time in our history, organized knowledge has come into open conflict with organized ignorance." And furthermore, "If the 'self-styled fundamentalists' gain their objective of a political takeover, much of the best that has been gained in American culture will be suppressed or banned, and we shall be headed backward toward the pall of the Dark Age."¹⁹

Fundamentalism failed to gain large numbers of supporters between 1925 and 1950 — a period marking America's rise as the pre-eminent world power. But its abhorrence of modernism, and by association, liberalism, continued to be the major political rallying point for various religious conservatives. "Turning inward" against the increasingly accommodative and liberal mainstream religions, Fundamentalism, with a few notable exceptions,²⁰ cultivated a conservative-religious path with virtually no political or cultural channels of popular expression. Despite Senator Joe McCarthy's hysterical interregnum, fundamentalist religious-political beliefs enjoyed few national audiences. As Hammond points out, in such a sealed environment, religion itself becomes the only outlet of expression²¹ and cohesion.

Until the early 1960s, many social scientists tended to view religion as largely irrelevant in modern society, arguing that if religion had any impact at all, it was to be found only in private life, that is, in personal lifestyles and family affairs.²² Many theorists viewed the accommodating, "consumerized" mainstream churches as compliant members of a liberal society, thus relegating all religious beliefs to a somewhat complacent role in the national political life. While this may indeed have been the status of the ecumenical churches, conservative Protestants were still imbued with the deeply held, theologically-expressed moral convictions of the nineteenth century.²³ Consequently, the traditional religious roots of American conservatism were, from a social science perspective, given relatively scant attention.

What this lack of attention meant was that American conservatism itself, particularly after World War II, was often analyzed *sans* its deeply religious foundations. However, even without direct references to religion, American conservatism has a distinct spiritual "core belief" that Jerome Himmelstein describes as

...an often unsteady synthesis of three intellectual tendencies: a libertarianism "apprehensive about the threat of the state to private enterprise and individualism"; a traditionalism (or new conservatism) "appalled by the erosion of values and the emergence of a secular, rootless, mass society"; and a militant anticommunism rooted in the "profound conviction that the West was engaged in a titanic

struggle with an implacable adversary — Communism — which sought nothing less than the conquest of the world.”²⁴

What tends to make American conservatism unique is the somewhat “paradoxical combination” of libertarianism — which stresses secularism, materialism, and self-interest — with a traditionalism that seeks to limit all three. In Himmelstein’s opinion, “American conservatism has flourished [as the New Right]...because its combination of traditionalism and libertarianism overcomes the problems of each standing alone...contemporary American conservatism affirms both God and capitalism, both social stability and economic ferment.”²⁵

The origins of, and the potential for the Religious Right to become a political force can be traced to the 1950s. McCarthyist extremism and the anti-communist crusades of evangelical leaders have left lasting impressions.²⁶ Nascent political expressions of the Religious Right, however, were not noticeable until the emergence of a youth “counterculture” in the mid-1960s. As James Hunter points out, before the mid-1960s, the values of conservative Protestantism and the prevailing values of the country as a whole, i.e. “premarital chastity, marital fidelity, the undesirability of divorce, and the sanctity of life all remained strongly institutionalized in the mainstream of American culture.”²⁷

For conservative Christians, the social tumult of the 1960s and 70s marked a decisive turn from prevailing national values. Indeed, of that era, one could ask, what were national values? Set against a restless, assertive youth counterculture, and an increasingly liberal political mood, conservative Christians often saw themselves as the sole guardians of America’s traditional moral heritage. Although the youth counterculture of the 1960s provided them their most visible target, the “decisive turn of events,” whereby the Religious Right channeled their moral-religious perspectives into a political rebirth, came in the following decade. Of that time, Robert Liebman writes:

Against the background of pro-abortion legislation, movements for gay and women’s rights, and the national trauma of Watergate, the sharp line between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Caesar began to blur...Some [religious conservatives] connected moral decline with the widely perceived failure of public education. Others argued that the call for gay and women’s rights threatened the eventual demise of the family. Still others argued that a lack of moral leadership was responsible for America’s diminished international prestige.²⁸

Whatever the reasons for a moral decline (including the emotional strain of the Vietnam War), the response of the Religious Right was more of an emotional appeal than a calculated political mobilization. By decrying the nation's loss of traditional moral values, the Religious Right's concern was with nothing less than the survival of America itself.

Narrow as it may be, this vision of a morally-rigid America does not represent a significant departure from longstanding conservative Christian beliefs. Given the large number of conservative Protestants in America, and the absence of a cohesive "national" church or religion, the move towards the attainment of some political power and influence amidst the moral flux of the 1970s was not wholly unexpected.

What was surprising to many social scientists was the political rise of conservative Christianity as a social movement which did not previously experience a broad shift in values and attitudes.²⁹ Liebman suggests that,

...it was not the changing values of evangelicals which urged them into politics. The biblical precepts which evangelicals evoked were longstanding. Rather, these values took on a new meaning as evangelicals experienced a sense of political entitlement that came from the symbolic link between their own identity and that of the larger society. Their own sense of political entitlement led them to express familiar values through new forms of action. That evangelicals would emerge as a political force could not have been ascertained by theories which held that evangelical ideology was a world unto itself.³⁰

The purpose of the Religious Right's political mobilization was not to integrate contemporary values into their own longstanding beliefs. Rather, the task was to endure as unchanging moral traditionalists, with the hope that American society would turn away from its destructive moral relativism and "return" to its former moral rigidity. It is not, therefore, the Religious Right who are isolated from the American mainstream, it is modern American society, that is, the largely urban, "secularized" middle class³¹. Having lost or ignored its traditional purpose, this middle class now finds itself in isolation.

Given American conservatism's distinct "core belief" in the struggle between the forces of good and evil i.e., freedom and oppression, a religious-political linkage seems logical, if not necessary. All conservatives, whether expressly religious or not, have responded with alarm to the increasing "liberalization" of American society, specifically, to notions of collectivism, state interventionism, the welfare society, and the "'slave morality' of altruism."³²

To reiterate Himmelstein's premise, the American conservative combines traditionalism with libertarianism, and, in keeping with Weber's theory of the Protestant ethic, "affirms both God and capitalism." Just as self-reliance and free enterprise transcend the coercive tendencies of the state, so too does conservative Christianity resist the collective moral view of the ecumenical churches. In Peggy Shriver's view, this resistance to a "communal dimension" of faith, means that "[t]he emphasis of the fundamentalist groups tends to translate into an individualism that says that good individuals, not government, make a good society."³³ Political and religious conservatives share not only the view that state institutions should be as benign as possible, but also that the public good — the traditional morality — is best preserved by an individual belief in strong Christian values.

The absence of a national religious denomination in the United States further reinforces the conservative notion of anti-statism and a commitment to voluntarism which echoes the traditional "egalitarian and democratic social ethos."³⁴ Ironically, this traditional commitment to individualism has engendered both the growth of conservative Christian sects, and the "secularization" of traditional American values. Despite the current efforts of the Religious Right, this dichotomy is, and has been, unavoidable. As Bryan Wilson points out,

The very diversity of religious commitment [in America] imposed the assumption of secularity, since only in this way were different religious persuasions accorded equality... [Religion] could become effectively involved [in the national identity] only as religious differences themselves eroded, so that all faiths might serve the same end...Religious commitment and Church allegiance *have become* elements in the American value system, accepted parts of "the American way of life"...Religion has placed its common values at the service of the political and social institutions of the nation, and has become one of the various approved values of American culture.³⁵

More to the point, in Lipset's view, is the notion that religion itself has become a form of "Americanism."³⁶

The aim of religious conservatives to politically mobilize cannot be entirely attributed to the urge to preserve Americanisms and/or American culture. Such values are much too broad, and are not limited to conservatism. Indeed, most socio-political groups in the United States profess to be quintessentially "American" regardless of political leanings or religious affiliations. Still, it has been more the practice of the Religious Right to link their particular points of view to legitimate American values than any other contemporary political group.

The Religious Right's struggle for definitive Americanisms appeal not so much to rationality as to the emotional, intuitive response. Values and traditions, which were historically, and in the Religious Right's view, Divinely established, are still deeply ingrained. Similarly, American political attitudes and institutions were formed not by pragmatism and enlightenment (at least in the more secular sense), but rather, by men ordained by God to establish the "new Israel." Consequently, values and traditions, even from a contemporary point of view, take on a sacred and symbolic meaning.³⁷ There is an explicit connection between the spiritual expressions of religious belief, and the symbolic components of American culture.

Calling this connection "seizing access to symbol production," Donald Heinz states:

If the New Christian Right is engaged in a contest over the meaning of America's story, and if public symbols are the key through which overarching systems of meaning are discovered and constructed, then gaining access to symbol production (generation, selection, definitions, dissemination, and control) is indispensable. Since 1980, the New Christian Right sees itself as having stormed its Bastille and freed its story from forces which had the power to imprison it and hide it from public consciousness. Television, schools and family are the major areas of conflict over symbols. Important symbols themselves, they are also the means of access to symbol production for which the New Christian Right is contending.³⁸

Civic and religious symbols are common in every country. Within them, a nation can identify normative aims and aspirations which transcend the ordinary, and define inspirational national purposes. For the Religious Right, the melding of religious and public (or secular) symbols unleashes a potent power to "create an alternative world."³⁹

In Durkheimian analysis, such symbols allude to the sacredness of society itself.⁴⁰ Furthermore, symbols

...bear the power to bring a symbolic world, a universe of meaning, into existence. They become ordering forces in everyday life. Life is created and lived out as an extension of the symbol, in which one discovers life-giving and enlightening power. Symbols may help to recover a lost past or summon a new future.⁴¹

Symbols, and therefore, the "symbolic world" are used by the Religious Right not only to define existing America, but also its Divinely-inspired ideals. If America is to have symbolic or metaphorical meanings, then clearly Christianity must be their foundation. Set against a restless, and spiritually ambiguous society,

the Religious Right's task of returning America to its traditional roots requires much more than an appeal to Christian morality and ethics; a defined political agenda is needed as well. While the "symbolic world" and its transcendent ideals do matter, a political linkage — one that ensures legitimation — is essential. The most enduring of America's cosmological symbols: the intimate relationship of "God and country," must be moulded into a political force. The key exponents of this religious-political-moral alignment, and what they represent in the context of contemporary American society, are the subjects of the following section.

iii) **Political Rebirth: the formation and mobilization of the Religious Right.**

Finding a precise point in time whereby the Religious Right became an identifiable political force is obviously difficult. Identifying the constituency via its values and/or "ideology" is somewhat more precise, but as will be shown, is not free from analytical conflict, or subtle differences in emphases.

Chronologically, those factors seen as highly instrumental in the formation of the Religious Right have been the more controversial civil rights/education decisions rendered by the United States Supreme Court.

Key decisions with regards to civil rights in public education include **Brown v. Board of Education, Topeka, Kansas**, in 1954, which "desegregated" public schools;⁴² the 1962 **Engel v. Vitale** decision prohibiting religious observances — "school prayer" — in public schools;⁴³ and beginning in 1968, a further series of Court decisions on desegregation and "busing."⁴⁴

In the social policy area of legal and civil rights, the 1972 proposal of an **Equal Rights Amendment (ERA)** to the Constitution was seen by conservative Christians as "anti-family" and encouraging homosexual marriages. In the Religious Right's view, this proposal was contrary to Scriptural teachings on the proper roles for women and men.⁴⁵ The deadline for approval of the ERA was June 30, 1982, and, due in large measure to the lobbying pressure of the Religious Right, the proposal failed to win the necessary approval of thirty-eight states.

In all of the decisions of the Supreme Court, none had been as instrumental in mobilizing a once moribund Religious Right as the landmark ruling in **Roe v. Wade** in 1973, where the Court held that under

specified conditions, the right to privacy in obtaining an abortion was guaranteed under the Constitution.⁴⁶

Subsequent events which sharpened the Religious Right's political focus — and which tended to divide the nation along “moral” lines — include the 1974 resignation of President Richard Nixon in the wake of the Watergate scandal, and the 1975 American military withdrawal from Vietnam. While the lengthy imprisonment (444 days) of fifty-two Americans by Iranian revolutionaries in Tehran in 1980-81 tended to unite the country, the festering feelings of American anger and impotence were loudly relayed by the Religious Right.

These events in themselves do not entirely account for the political rise of the religious conservatism. They give, however, an important perspective on the Religious Right's assertion that America's deteriorating moral character has led to its diminished prestige. What must be stressed here is that the Religious Right's battle for the preservation of “traditional” America is more than the sense of moral outrage over controversial legal and political decisions, or a tarnished international image. The struggle, which these events tend to exemplify, is for the transcendent “soul” of a Divinely-ordained, rigidly Christian America, where the symbols of state and religion are interwoven into a sacred societal fabric.

The preservation and guardianship of such a fabric is claimed, with some success, by the Religious Right. Like all nascent political movements, the Religious Right does have its internal differences of opinion on a number of social and political issues. With regards to its “public” persona as the moral guardian American tradition however, there is unanimity in embodying the following perspectives:

- 1) Membership in, but not limited to,⁴⁷ a fundamentalist and/ or evangelical Protestant denomination.
- 2) A strong affinity with economic libertarianism,⁴⁸ where one can maximize his/her own utility, and exercise freedom of choice with a minimum of state interference.
- 3) A need to return to “social traditionalism”⁴⁹ (which, when contrasted with economic libertarianism, reinforces Himmelstein's premise of a “paradoxical combination”). The apparent abandoning of American traditional values — family, community, and religion — is due primarily to the spreading of secular i.e.,

“liberal” humanist philosophies. The aforementioned points of contention such as busing, abortion, and the ERA have been joined by other equally dangerous moral issues: the teaching of evolution, general sexual permissiveness, and the move towards nuclear disarmament. The fact that a large portion of society disagrees with the Religious Right’s position on these issues is indicative of the spiritual-moral-political crisis in America.

- 4) A militant anti-communism⁵⁰ advocating massive increases in defence spending, and an aggressive foreign policy which must halt the spread of “officially atheistic” socialism/communism.
- 5) As discussed throughout this chapter, a profound “anti-modern”⁵¹ bias, including, to a lesser degree, an anti-urban bias as well. While modernism *prima facie*, connotes industrialism, and technological advance, it is also the source of “big” government, “big” labour, and the secularized, immoral community of intellectuals, artists, the professoriat, and numerous humanist organizations.⁵²

This anti-urban bias — the “secular city,” as Harvey Cox described it⁵³ — and its place in the Religious Right’s cosmology is more ambiguous. Because large urban areas are morally suspect, they have become key areas for the Religious Right’s proselytizing activities. But, urban areas are also the seats of political power and electoral strength — meaning a potentially vast number of supporters — and as such, major metropolitan areas like Washington, D.C. and Dallas-Fort Worth,⁵⁴ have become lobbying and administrative headquarters of the Religious Right.

The above perspectives are broadly indicative of the Religious Right’s major concerns and characteristics. More specific “moral” issues — the mass media, gun control, working mothers, school curricula, and so on — can be subsumed under the broader categories provided. Although it may be mistaken to assume that all members of the Religious Right are unanimous in their private support for these concerns,⁵⁵ or that all so-called liberals are in total disagreement with them, these five major perspectives are consistent with the Religious Right’s public policy pronouncements.

As Will and Rhys point out, conservative Christianity during the 1970s had changed from political

quietism to public ideological zeal. Given the impact of social, political, and legal changes since the 1950s, this resurgent zeal “helped to foster the expansion of a conservative religious world-view to a world-view which includes *religiously informed positions* on issues not commonly thought of as moral or religious...” [Emphases original].⁵⁶

This shift from a private to a public world-view has important ramifications. First, religious zealotry acquires a legitimacy which transcends the previously-held assumption that religion was a private matter. Such a shift is not meant to imply that the traditional religious world-view has never influenced society and/or politics; rather, it points to conservative religion’s reactions to contemporary changes in moral values, and the feelings among conservative Christians that to “go public” with their concerns is the first step to restoring traditional values.

Second, religiously-informed positions, by their nature, circumvent democratic processes of accommodation and aggregation of competing points of view i.e., what were once thought of as political issues devoid of explicit religious-moral content now become a struggle for Truth — a battle between good and evil. This point will be addressed in detail in Chapter 3; for the time being, suffice it to say that any effort to find truth in politics that is analogous to Truth in religion is a potentially dangerous undertaking.

The legitimacy of religiously-inspired beliefs are not so much new, in the strictest sense of the word, as they are resurgent. Tocqueville saw religion (though not officially an arm of the state) as an institutionally cohesive moral force, while Durkheim frequently referred to the transcendent religious consciousness of group/community behaviour. The influence of religion on the moral community — the public, as it were — has deep historical roots. The Religious Right did not “discover” these values, but rather, was instrumental in bringing about their contemporary legitimacy.

This new legitimacy is itself a paradoxical complex. Given their strong affinity for individualism, and their thinly-veiled mistrust of institutional “bigness,” be it government, business, or labour, it is those same institutions the Religious Right must influence if their “moral” Christian perspective is to have any real impact on American society. The increasing fragmentation of a secularized, post-industrial society provides an opportunity for a more ideologically cohesive group to command political and economic attention. By wrapping itself in the symbolic referents of religion and patriotism, the Religious Right may acquire a

respectability and a legitimacy that is surprisingly influential, and, potentially, commanding of institutional attention.

America's alleged drift on a sea of moral ambiguity and, consequently, social, political, and economic decay is due primarily to the modern era's "deinstitutionalization" of religious-moral values.⁵⁷ Since modernity, in the Religious Right's terminology, is synonymous with "humanism" — atheism, evolution, amorality, and socialism⁵⁸ — traditional religiously-based moral foundations have lost their cultural prominence. The notion that morality is to be found and maintained only through strict religious adherence is of course, contentious. But given the Religious Right's view that America is God's chosen nation, the secularizing tendencies of modernity cannot be seen as anything but the antithesis of traditional moral standards.

The "vision" of the Religious Right is not only that of an America guided by an abiding spiritual faith, but of a nation that is "in covenant with God"⁵⁹ i.e., a conscious partnership that is real and unshakable. As prominent Fundamentalist John Price unequivocally states,

[t]he history of God's relationship with America is truly remarkable. Our Lord has intimately involved himself in our nation's history and thus has been instrumental in the establishment and growth of a free and vibrant country...[Furthermore] God is just as involved in our nation's future as he has been in our past.⁶⁰

Modernity severs that tie between God and country, allowing political, legal, and economic institutions to create their own moral agenda. By denying God's "relationship" with America, modern society has brought the nation perilously close to its own destruction. The need and the opportunity for the Religious Right to participate in political processes thus becomes clearly defined: a sense of righteous indignation, and a duty to restore American values.

Lipset and Raab have found that conservative Christian groups have been the most amenable to using the powers of government institutions to achieve religiously-determined goals. Such a religious-political affinity may be the result of a "status displacement" of conservative Protestant sects⁶² in the face of an increasingly liberal society. This sense of decline in social-cultural status is highly instrumental in the motivation to influence government policy. To reverse or halt what are perceived to be adverse ("immoral")

trends in government is a “preservatist thrust” that is “the heart of right-wing extremist politics.”⁶³

This analysis, however — the preservation of singularly religious goals — is incomplete. Conservative Christian groups are indeed amenable to political involvement, but what is most important here are the causes of such involvement and the ends it serves. Since the Religious Right has a well-defined moral and social agenda to “save” America, the normative goal must be control of those governing institutions,⁶⁴ and not merely the preservation of conservative religious viewpoints.

Despite the much-admired First Amendment of **The Bill of Rights** which guarantees religious freedom by placing a “wall” between religion and the state, the Religious Right has made one’s faith a political issue. The “alliance between partisan politics and partisan religion” has produced a “politicized God”⁶⁵ that denies both religious pluralism and state neutrality. Frightening as the idea of a “politicized God” is, it has met with approval from many conservative sectors in American society.⁶⁶ The concept of a partisan (i.e., Republican) God carries the promise of a clearly-defined structure and order to a society that has been dangerously weakened by the prevailing moral relativism of liberal secularism (and, some maintain, by the ecumenical churches as well). Religious-political fundamentalism offers an amalgam of defined aims and solutions which liberalism supposedly cannot: faith, patriotism, a clear sense of right and wrong, and a monopoly on Truth.

Clearly, the Religious Right’s agenda fits neatly into what Roof and McKinney call the “back-to-basics mood” in America.⁶⁷ Furthermore, with regards to cultural and religious liberalism,

[e]vangelical and fundamentalist faiths flourished as the cultural and religious center seemed to collapse. Rigid and demanding beliefs, traditional values, certainty, absolutist moral teachings — all seemed to fill the needs of the times. By drawing cognitive and behavioral boundaries and adhering generally to a non-accomodating stance toward modernity, they offered a clear alternative to secular and diffusely religious points of view.⁶⁸

This “back-to-basics mood,” previously expressed in a more secular, more scholarly, and less populist form of conservatism⁶⁹ has found its spiritual component, and therefore its unique synthesis, in the Religious Right. Although President Reagan’s electoral victories in 1980 and particularly 1984 were due partly to the influence of the Religious Right,⁷⁰ the greater success of the latter was in reshaping the face of conservatism by manipulating the tenets of conservative Christianity as a model for politics. Again, this “paradoxical

combination” — libertarianism and traditionalism has given the Religious Right the opportunity to “put” Christian beliefs at the forefront of the American political-social fabric. While a once secure liberal mainstream now wanders in political, economic, and moral ambiguity, the traditionally amorphous American conservative movement has found its long-sought cohesiveness.

Whether this cohesiveness can be maintained in the coming decade (a premise that is rife with argument) will be dealt with in the concluding chapter. Presently, with the “public face” of American religious conservatism seemingly pervasive, if not wholly accepted, a closer look at certain policies and goals of the Religious Right are the subjects of the next chapter.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 2

¹Jerry Falwell, July 4, 1976, in "Jerry Falwell: An Unauthorized Profile," reprinted in David Bollier, *Liberty & Justice For Some: Defending a Free Society from the Radical Right's Holy War on Democracy* (New York: Frederick Ungar, 1982), p. 54.

²The *original* Constitution and Bill of Rights remains unaltered; amendments, of course, have since been added. However, this is not to say that interpretations of both do not differ. The battle over the First Amendment and what it means in terms of church-state relations is indicative of such conflict.

³This absence of an "official" church has led many observers to the conclusion that the nebulous "American Way" itself is the national religion. See, specifically, Robert N. Bellah, "Civil Religion in America," in *Daedalus*, Vol. 96, 1967 (Winter) pp. 1-21. Additional works include: Will Herberg, *Protestant-Catholic-Jew* (New York: Anchor Books, 1960); S.M. Lipset, *The First New Nation: The United States in Historical and Comparative Perspective* (New York: Basic Books, 1963); Bryan Wilson, *Religion in Secular Society: A Sociological Comment* (Baltimore: Pelican Books, 1969); and Roderick P. Hart, *The Political Pulpit* (West Lafayette, Ind.: Purdue University Press, 1977).

⁴Peggy L. Shriver, "Religion's Very Public Presence" in *Annals, American Academy of Political and Social Sciences* (AAPSS), 480, July, 1985, p. 143.

⁵S. M. Lipset, *The First New Nation: The United States in Historical and Comparative Perspective* (New York: Basic Books, 1963), pp. 180-181.

⁶Phillip E. Hammond, "The Curious Path of Conservative Protestantism" in *Annals, AAPSS*, 480, July, 1985, p. 54.

⁷The First being in the 1740's, prior to the Revolution, and the Third in the 1870's, as the early forerunner to Fundamentalism. See Frank J. Lechner, "Fundamentalism and Sociocultural Revitalization in America: A Sociological Interpretation" in *Sociological Analysis*, Vol. 46, No. 3, Fall 1985, pp. 243-260.

⁸Hammond, op. cit., p. 54. Indeed, from Tocqueville onwards, many foreign observers have sought an explanation for the superficiality of American religious adherence. A lack of tradition, an "unsettled" frontier, and a variety of Protestant sects have all contributed. See, also, George Gallup, "Religion in America" in *Annals, AAPSS*, 480, July, 1985, pp. 167-174; and Martin E. Marty, *A Nation of Behavers*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976), Ch. 8.

⁹Lechner, op. cit., p. 249.

¹⁰ibid.

¹¹Hammond, op. cit., pp. 54-55.

¹²ibid., p. 55.

¹³Lechner, op. cit., p. 248.

¹⁴George M. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture: The Shaping of Twentieth-Century Evangelicalism 1870-1925* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), p. 223. It would be misleading to conclude that Protestant Fundamentalism is solely responsible for shaping American culture.

There are, after all, 50 million Roman Catholics, and 6 million Jews in the U.S as well.

¹⁵ibid.

¹⁶Still very much in evidence today, Fundamentalists draw their premillennialist beliefs from the Book of Revelation, where (among other things), seven angels bearing seven trumpets unleash God's fury and wrath at the "unbelievers" e.g., "...and there followed hail and fire mingled with blood, and they were cast upon the earth: and the third part of trees was burnt up, and all green grass was burnt up" (Rev., 8:7). In Hammond's (op. cit., p. 56) description, the premillennial view assumes "that things will get worse before Christ comes again to reign for a thousand years, and no human agency can influence the outcome; the most that persons can do is repent, get saved, and await the rapture." It has often been said that President Reagan espouses premillennialism, i.e., Christ will come in his lifetime.

¹⁷Marsden, op. cit., p. 208.

¹⁸ibid., p. 188.

¹⁹Maynard Shipley, *The War on Modern Science: A Short History of Fundamentalist Attacks on Evolution and Modernism* (New York, 1927), pp. 3-4. Reprinted in Marsden, *ibid.*, p.189.

²⁰The few exceptions would include Carl McIntire, Billy James Hargis, and in a more moderate tone, Billy Graham.

²¹Hammond, op. cit., p. 57.

²²Benton Johnson, "Religion and Politics in America: The Last Twenty Years" in Phillip E. Hammond, ed., *The Sacred in a Secular Age: Toward Revision in the Scientific Study of Religion* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), p.301.

²³Hammond, "The Curious Path..." op. cit., p. 57.

²⁴Jerome L. Himmelstein, "The New Right" in *The New Christian Right: Mobilization and Legitimation* Robert C. Liebman and Robert Wuthnow, eds. (New York: Aldine Publishing, 1983), p. 19.

²⁵ibid., p. 23. Although the intent here is to tie the "core beliefs" of American conservatism to the Religious Right, it would be misleading to place all American conservatives into the same ideological group. While the "New Right" (which includes the Religious Right) are indeed Republican Party supporters, the two are often openly antagonistic to each other. The New Right sees the mainstream GOP as the effete, intellectual, Eastern stronghold of the Buckleys, the Rockefellers, and the relatively recent coterie of "neoconservatives." Additionally, President Reagan's signing of a nuclear arms treaty with the Soviet Union in December, 1987, thus abandoning his New Right "evil Empire" view of the Soviets, has further exacerbated the intra-party tension. For a more complete analysis of the beginnings of this split, see Alan Crawford, *Thunder on the Right: The New Right and the Politics of Resentment* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), Ch. 6.

²⁶Robert C. Liebman, "The Making of the New Christian Right" in Liebman and Wuthnow, op. cit., p. 229.

²⁷James Davison Hunter, *American Evangelicalism: Conservative Religion and the Quandary of Modernity* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1983), p. 103. Hunter's book is an outstanding treatment on the whole issue of conservative religion in modern society.

²⁸Liebman, op. cit., p. 227.

²⁹ibid., p. 237.

³⁰ibid.

³¹As John Redekop maintains, it is not that the Religious Right has become accomodative and/or tolerant; its success is due to the notion that the rest of society has "caught up" with them. (Taped lecture at S.F.U., 1986).

³²Willmoore Kendall, *The Conservative Affirmation* (Chicago: Henry Regnery Co., 1963), p. 4. As well, Kendall insists that Christian pacifism is a specious liberal interpretation of Scripture.

³³Shriver, op. cit., p. 148.

³⁴S.M. Lipset, *Revolution and Counterrevolution: Change and Persistence in Social Structures* (New York: Basic Books, 1968), p. 54.

³⁵Bryan Wilson, *Religion in Secular Society: A Sociological Comment* (London: C.A. Watts, 1966), pp. 97-98.

³⁶Lipset, op. cit., p. 85.

³⁷See, for instance, Bellah, op. cit., for selected presidential pronouncements.

³⁸Donald Heinz, "The Struggle To Define America" in Liebman and Wuthnow, op. cit., p. 137.

³⁹ibid., p. 143.

⁴⁰See especially, Chapter 1, Book I, of Durkheim's *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*.

⁴¹Heinz, op. cit., p. 143.

⁴²This decision also called into question the tax-exempt status of Christian private schools, most notably for the latent racism inherent in their so-called "Christian" admission criteria.

⁴³See Bollier, op. cit., pp. 249 & 261.

⁴⁴These are: *Green v. County School Board 1968*; *Swan v. Charlotte-Mecklenberg Board of Education 1971*; *Keyes v. School District No. 1, Denver, Colorado*; and *Columbus Board of Education v. Perrick 1979*. See, Bollier, *ibid.*, p. 261.

⁴⁵The decision in favour of Jane Roe's right to an abortion was 7-2. This decision, however, did not mean that abortion became an absolute right in all circumstances. The Court wrote that "recognizing a right of privacy also acknowledges that some state regulation in areas protected by that right is appropriate. A state may properly assert important interests in safeguarding health, in maintaining medical standards, and in protectin g potential life" (*Roe v. Wade, 410 U.S., 113 [1973]*). The ensuing controversy was in deciding, via the Fourteenth Amendment, where life, or "personhood," begins. This lead to the "trimester system" in determining restrictions to a woman's right to an abortion. During the first trimester, no restrictions were imposed on this right; during the second, a state could implement some guidelines and regulations; and, at the end of the sixth month, the state could prohibit abortions if the health of the mother was not in jeopardy. As Robert Zwier states, "The Court did not require states to prohibit abortions in the last trimester, but it allowed them to do so". See Zwier, *Born-Again Politics: The New Christian Right in America* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1982), p. 24.

⁴⁶Zwier, *ibid.*, pp. 26-27. The ERA reads as follows:

- 1) Equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex.
 - 2) The Congress shall have the power to enforce, by appropriate legislation, the provisions of this article.
 - 3) This amendment shall take effect two years after the date of ratification.
- (Source: **The World Almanac and Book of Facts 1981**, p. 475).

⁴⁷Although very much a minority, the Religious Right includes Roman Catholics and Jews as well.

⁴⁸Himmelstein, *op. cit.*, p. 15. See also, James Buchanan and Gordon Tullock, **The Calculus of Consent: Logical Foundations of Constitutional Democracy** (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1962); and Michael Novak, **The Spirit of Democratic Capitalism** (New York: AEI/Simon & Schuster, 1982).

⁴⁹Himmelstein, *ibid.*

⁵⁰Zwier, *op. cit.*, p. 17. Also, John Redekop traces the beginnings of the American anti-communist crusade to a speech by Winston Churchill in the U.S. in 1946 (Taped lecture, S.F.U., 1986).

⁵¹Gillian Peele, **Revival and Reaction: The Right in Contemporary America** (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), p. 85.

⁵²Hunter, *op. cit.*, p. 111.

⁵³See, both by Cox, **The Secular City: Urbanization and Secularization in Theological Perspective** (New York: Macmillan, 1965); and **Religion in the Secular City: Toward a Postmodern Theology** (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1984).

⁵⁴Dallas, Texas is the home of W.A. Criswell's First Baptist Church of Dallas, the largest and most influential branch of the Southern Baptist Convention.

⁵⁵For statistical background to the difficulties of identifying members of the Religious Right, see Jeffry Will and Rhys Williams, "Research Note: Political Ideology and Political Action in the New Christian Right" in **Sociological Analysis**, 1986, 47, 2: 160-168.

⁵⁶*ibid.*, pp. 160-161.

⁵⁷Hunter, *op. cit.*, p. 110.

⁵⁸*ibid.* Here, Hunter is quoting the Reverend Tim LaHaye, a prominent California Evangelical, and a board member of Moral Majority, Inc.

⁵⁹*ibid.*, p. 113.

⁶⁰John Price, **America at the Crossroads** (Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House, 1976), p. 184. Reprinted in Hunter, *ibid.*

⁶¹S.M. Lipset and Earl Raab, **The Politics of Unreason: Right Wing Extremism in America, 1790-1977** (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), p. 118.

⁶²*ibid.* Also, see note 27.

⁶³Lipset and Raab, p. 118.

⁶⁴This will be explained in detail in Chapter 3.

⁶⁵James E. Wood, Jr., "Editorial: Religion and Politics — 1984" in *Journal of Church and State*, Vol. 26, Autumn, 1984, No. 3, pp. 410-411.

⁶⁶A November, 1984 New York Times-CBS poll found that 81 per cent of white "born-again" Protestants voted for Ronald Reagan in the 1984 election. See also, Wade Clark Roof and William McKinney, "Denominational America and the New Religious Pluralism" in *Annals, AAPSS*. 480, July, 1985, p. 31.

⁶⁷Roof and McKinney, *ibid.*, p. 30.

⁶⁸*ibid.*

⁶⁹In this branch of conservatism — often called neoconservatism — the works of F.A. Hayek, Milton Friedman, James Buchanan, Irving Kristol, and others are considered indispensable.

⁷⁰See note 66, above.

CHAPTER 3: POLICIES AND GOALS: BRINGING TRUTH TO POLITICS

Not voting is a sin against God...Perverts, radicals, leftists, Communists, liberals, and humanists have taken over the country because Christians didn't want to dirty their hands in politics.

— Reverend James Robison,
The Washington Post
 August 24, 1980.¹

Can a case be made for linking Biblical truths to the world of politics? How extensive should this link be? While pluralist democracy, on its face, implies moderation in policy implementation, and a consideration of competing points of view, does it also imply moral ambiguity or relativism? As Chapter 2 explained, public ideological zeal among conservative Christians tended to focus on a social or family-oriented cluster of issues: school prayer, abortion, feminism, and so on. Less emotionally-charged² issues such as unemployment, trade deficits, inflation, and the economy as a whole are not ignored either — they do imply a “humbling” of America. The overall thrust of the Religious Right’s anger (and hence, its mobilization) is to restore the traditional moral order in all areas of social life. Nothing is exempt from Christian morality.

To the Religious Right, Peggy Shriver explains, America’s malaise is a symptom of a “new morality.”³ Synonymous with liberal and/or secular wickedness, this new morality must be challenged by a political agenda founded in godliness and traditional values. As Jerry Falwell states:

When people begin to cooperate with what God is doing, you have an unbeatable combination...I am convinced that the real crisis in America is a moral crisis which supersedes our economic, our military, our energy crises. I am convinced that what Solomon said in the Proverbs...is the key to our survival. He said, and I paraphrase, living by God’s principles promotes a nation to greatness [Proverbs 14:34]. Violating God’s principles brings a nation to shame. The last 20 to 30 years we have suffered shame and of late, international embarrassment because we have been violating God’s principles.⁴

By claiming the mandate to speak for America’s Christian ethic, “God’s principles,” for the Religious Right, must include the political realm. As was mentioned in the preceding chapters, this concept is by no means new; religious postulates have always, in one form or another, guided American society. What is new, at

least within the context of American political thought, is the idea that religious absolutism and democratic politics are compatible in a pluralist society. A nation guided by the hand of God cannot maintain a “passive obedience”⁵ to the powers of democratic government, but must actively pursue the preservation of spiritual and moral righteousness.

The premise here is both facile and far-reaching. As Robert Zwier explains, the Religious Right’s foundation is simple: “Biblical morality [is] the cornerstone of a good society.”⁶ On the other hand, such a belief raises frightening implications. In a speech delivered to the National Affairs Briefing of The (Religious) Roundtable in Dallas, August 1980, the Reverend James Robison stated: “Let me tell you something else about the character of God. If necessary, God would raise up a tyrant, a man who might not have the best ethics, to protect the freedom interests of the ethical and the godly.”⁷ (In attendance here was Republican Party presidential candidate Ronald Reagan). Professing to know God may be admirable; professing to know God’s political viewpoint is another matter. And yet, the questions still remain: Are there absolute truths within the political realm? Are these truths to be found in conservative Christianity?

That a Christian Truth exists — at least for Christians — is beyond speculation. That the same Truth exists in politics via a particular interpretation of Scripture must be held up to close, if not sceptical, scrutiny.

To imply that such Truth exists must mean that there are no new “truths” to discover, and that all knowledge (save knowledge of God) has been already revealed.⁸ Politics is neither as simple nor as Manichean as the Religious Right implies, yet, amidst the tumult of contemporary America, their message has not gone unheeded. On that basis, this chapter will explore the Religious Right’s assumption that Christian absolutism and American politics are inherently compatible, and that the long-held distinction between private morality and public policy is nothing more than a “humanist” tautology.

i) **The vanguard of Truth: the Religious Right’s elite.**

Although the Religious Right has no shortage of well-known spokespersons, it would be mistaken to assume that all conservative Christians hold similar social-political attitudes, and that the Religious Right’s public personalities speak for 50 million conservative Protestants.⁹ Indeed, many in this broad community

are critical of such groups as the Moral Majority for attempting to build a cohesive political bloc, and are similarly critical of the news media's abiding fascination with such organizations.¹⁰

Despite this infrequently-heard diversity of opinion, it is the public personalities of the Religious Right who are the subjects of much academic and popular attention. What follows is a synopsis of the major organizations and personalities of the Religious Right, in a (roughly) descending order of importance and/or popularity.

Moral Majority Inc.: Moral Majority was founded in January 1979 by the Reverend Jerry Falwell, Howard Phillips of **Conservative Caucus** (who coined the term "moral majority"), and Paul Weyrich of the **Committee for the Survival of a Free Congress**. The best known of the Religious Right's organizations — as is Jerry Falwell himself — Moral Majority is, arguably, a political lobbying group, not a religious organization.¹¹ The "father" of a **Christian Bill of Rights** (see Appendices), Falwell is also pastor of the Thomas Road Baptist Church in Lynchburg, Virginia, and host of the "Old-Time Gospel Hour" television broadcast. Since 1981, Falwell's ministry has been receiving approximately 70 million dollars (U.S.) per year¹² in contributions — the highest earnings of any electronic ministry. In early 1988, Falwell had stepped down as head of **Moral Majority** (which underwent a change of name to the "Liberty Federation") after a protracted period of time in the national spotlight as the interim caretaker of the **PTL** (Praise The Lord) Club.

The Heritage Foundation: Founded in 1974 by Paul Weyrich and funded (initially) by brewing magnate — and active **John Birch Society** member — Joseph Coors, the **Heritage Foundation** is the preeminent intellectual "think tank" of the entire New Right movement. The Foundation's services range from a "distinguished scholars' program," to advising top-ranking Administration officials, as well as the "pro-family" and educational "watchdog" committees.¹³ It has been widely rumoured that the Foundation itself was the mastermind behind the entire Religious Right movement.¹⁴ Additionally, journalist Perry Young states that "[m]any of the Reagan administration's decisions and policies are based directly on position papers and reports from the **Heritage Foundation**, located in the Joseph and Holly Coors Building, a few blocks north-west of the Capitol."¹⁵ The December 1987 signing of a nuclear arms treaty between President

Reagan and General Secretary Gorbachev has, however, caused something of a rift between the Administration and the Foundation.

Christian Voice: Perhaps the most contentious of all Religious Right organizations, **Christian Voice**, under director Gary Jarmin's tutelage, is best known for its controversial "Moral Report Cards," rating senators and representatives on dubious "moral issues" on a 0 to 100 scale. These issues include support for Taiwan (or "Free China"), banning homosexuals from teaching in schools, reinstating school prayer, and prosecution of alleged pornographers.¹⁶ Not surprisingly, all liberal and many conservative legislators have consistently failed to make **Christian Voice's** passing grade of 70 per cent. These people have either failed to vote accordingly on these issues, or they have refused to see such issues as "moral" in the first place. These failures have included Representative Robert Edgar (D-Pa.), who is a Methodist minister, Evangelical leader and Senator Mark Hatfield (R-Ore.), five of six Jewish legislators, all of Congress' Black members, and fourteen of twenty female members of Congress.¹⁷ Highly-rated members of Congress include Senator Jesse Helms (R-N.C.), founder of **The National Congressional Club**, and prominent organizer of the powerful **National Conservative Political Action Committee (NCPAC)**, and Senator Paul Laxalt (R-Nevada), one of the drafters of the **Family Protection Act** (see Appendices).

The National Congressional Club: While the NCPAC is better known for its aggressive lobbying on behalf of various New Right causes, the NCC, founded by Senator Helms in 1973, is the "wealthiest independent political action committee in the country."¹⁸ **The Club** uses direct mailing to target potential contributors, and, because of Senator Helms' national influence, has a contributor's list of over 350,000 members. Such is **The Club's** ability to raise funds for conservative candidates and causes, that it has been likened to a "small political party" in both wealth and influence.¹⁹

The Richard A. Viguerie Company (RAVCO): RAVCO is the sprawling computerized direct-mail operation started by Viguerie in 1965. RAVCO (or **The Viguerie Company**, as it is now called) has become such a valuable enterprise for the entire New Right network that its influence is incalculable. Renting lists

of both confirmed and potential donors to various right-wing causes and organizations, **RAVCO** sends approximately 75 million appeals per year. Although Viguerie maintains that political groups comprise less than 15 per cent of his full client list,²⁰ that small percentage is indeed impressive. Viguerie's clients include: Moral Majority, Inc., Christian Voice, NCPAC, The Conservative Caucus, American Conservative Union, Committee for the Survival of a Free Congress, and Young Americans for Freedom.²¹ Whether politically-active or not, Viguerie states that “[o]ur clients are concerned with issues such as gun-control, pro-life, prayer in school, abuses by national union officials, wasteful government spending, high taxes, immorality on TV and in the movies, an educational system that can't educate, national defense, and many other issues.”²² In addition, Viguerie's company also publishes **Conservative Digest**, and **The New Right Report**, which, needless to say, are widely circulated throughout the New Right network.

The Roundtable: Formerly known as **The Religious Roundtable**, this organization, founded in September 1979 by former Colgate-Palmolive executive Ed McAteer, coordinates four annual meetings of major Christian (i.e., conservative) leaders. Other activities of **The Roundtable**— closely connected with **Moral Majority** and **RAVCO** — include workshops and seminars for the laity on political mobilization and lobbying. According to McAteer, America's most pressing need is for “leadership— in the home, churches, [and] government.”²³ Taking direction from the Biblical phrase, “Is there not a cause?” (1 Samuel 17:29), McAteer, according to Perry Young, “believes in an Old Testament God of absolutes, a God seeking vengeance on a whole country full of sin.”²⁴ **The Roundtable's** most popular (or infamous) moment of public attention came at its August 1980 National Affairs Briefing in Dallas. Addressing the elite of America's conservative Protestants, Southern Baptist Convention President Bailey Smith declared that “God Almighty does not hear the prayer of a Jew.”²⁵ Prominent members of **The Roundtable** include Jerry Falwell, Jesse Helms, Richard Viguerie, Paul Weyrich, and “creation-science” propagandist Tim LaHaye.

These six organizations lend considerable social and political justification to the Religious Right's assertion that since “virtually all of the problems facing the nation are moral,”²⁶ their own involvement in its politics becomes imperative. By focussing on what are perceived to be moral crises in American life, the

organizational apparatus of the Religious Right has transformed religious quietism and privacy into a groundswell of political action reflecting America's "back-to-basics" mood. Claiming ownership of, and kinship ties to, the traditionalist heritage of the United States, the Religious Right and its organizations have elevated private morality to matters of urgent national concern.

On its face, this elevation, or traditional resurgence, is neither unexpected nor wholly unwarranted: even organizations opposed to the Religious Right have their own moral agenda or value premises. What is of concern here is the breadth of subject areas which the Religious Right considers to be morally and religiously pertinent, and the vehement way in which their goals are pursued. Within their rigidly delineated world, it is not only politics and private morality which are inseparable, it is also conservative Christianity and America's entire social-cultural framework.

ii) **Politics and Christ: the "unbeatable combination."**

"In our attempt to rally a diversity of morally conservative Americans together in Moral Majority," says Jerry Falwell, "we were convinced that millions of people were fed up with the fruits of liberalism, both in politics and religion...[liberalism in politics and religion] must be viewed as cousins of the same family because both rest upon the same foundational presupposition of the inherent goodness of mankind."²⁷

Assuming that Falwell's view of political and religious liberalism has some merit, it is difficult to imagine a democratic pluralism that does not posit at least some faith in the goodness of man. To a limited extent, the Religious Right does acknowledge that goodness is a human attribute: the preservation and growth of religion does depend upon earthly "good works." Such humanistic rationality, however, is overshadowed by their predominant belief that human beings are by nature sinful, immoral, and susceptible to evil temptations; to be "born again" (John 3:3) is, in part, the recognition of one's inherent sinfulness, and is part of the theological core of conservative Christian belief.

Although religious beliefs transcend mere political machinations, they form and sustain communities "through common language usage and patterns of behavior which give definition to social orders."²⁸ Similarly, in Robert N. Bellah's analysis, religion functions as a "cultural gyroscope" that defines reality and

provides “stable points of reference for human action.”²⁹ This stability provides an anchor that secures not only belief in a Divine and ordered universe but provides a set of national, or civic values as well. The latter, inasmuch as they include secular activities, are, nevertheless, a part of what can be considered religious: a collective national view, or a public consciousness which aspires to a reality greater than itself.

If liberalism mistakenly separates the political from the religious, as Falwell contends, by over-emphasizing human goodness, the system of religious meaning that defines American culture is lost. As a fundamental source of “this-worldly” authority (and certain social values), politics itself, in the Religious Right’s view, is an extension of the Judeo-Christian ethic. To differentiate between activities and/or institutions (e.g. the political, the social, the economic, the aesthetic³⁰) as having a religious or non-religious content, is to engage in fallacious liberal speculation. Public policy positions of the Religious Right, so they claim, are devoid of any such rationalist dualism, and are suffused with “moral” and absolute Biblical references.

To illustrate: a strong military is justified by the First Epistle of Peter (1 Pet. 2:13-17);³² the right to influence the “secular” fields of politics, law, business, and so on, is found in Proverbs 14:34;³³ preservation of “traditional” family and gender roles can be found in Genesis 2:18-25.³⁴ If the Bible is indeed the foundation of a good society, then the procedural or structural aim of politics — how a society organizes and pursues its goals³⁵ — are an expression of religious truths. By concluding that “political passivity by the church yields social control to the ungodly,”³⁶ the Religious Right has made politics a subject of partisan theological concerns.

Many issues embraced by the Religious Right are broad enough that moral-ethical implications *are* of significant value: abortion, euthanasia, education, pornography, and the whole broad spectrum of “family issues.” One need not be a religious conservative to detect the moral complexity inherent here; even so-called “moral relativists” (liberals, secular humanists) view these issues with a deep and abiding concern. Where the Religious Right makes its radical departure in terms of such moral concern is its essentially Manichean world view — good and evil premised upon religiously informed positions³⁷ — and its distortion of the essence of politics as an accommodative “national meaning system.”³⁸ Politics, for the Religious Right, is not an arena to reconcile a plurality of conflicting interests, but an extension (albeit an earthly one)

of cosmological “ultimate concerns”³⁹ which politics *per se* cannot fully address. To view politics as essentially irreligious civic processes is to deny the deep moral commitment religion has made to American life.

iii) Christian morality and political policies

To reiterate John Redekop’s description, the thrust of the Religious Right’s incursion into the political realm has been the “blurring of the distinction between law and morality.”⁴⁰ For the Religious Right, politics becomes both an extension of the eschatological, and a restorer of fundamental traditional principles.

This additional religious-moral extension can be damaging to the political process. By fusing the cosmological referents of religious meaning to the national meaning system of politics, decision-making could conceivably be based solely on a “correct” interpretation of Scripture. While the larger social concerns mentioned above have moral (if not religious⁴¹) implications, other concerns, seemingly devoid of religious content, fall under the tutelage of the Divine.

In the seemingly irreligious world of economic processes (which will be dealt with in more detail later), for instance, Jerry Falwell assures the faithful that modern free enterprise is consistent with the desires of Christ:

Jesus Christ made it clear that the work ethic was part of His plan for man. Ownership of property is biblical. Competition in business is biblical. Ambitious and successful business management is clearly outlined as part of God’s plan for his people.⁴²

With regards to government-sponsored plans to assist those who are less than successful in business management — the poor, the unemployed, and the displaced — Falwell apparently assumes that the Biblical tenets of compassion and mercy do not apply. Such people, according to Falwell, are a

...lazy, trifling bunch lined up in unemployment offices who would not work in a pishop eating the holes out of donuts.. My edict for them is, Let them starve.⁴³

Weber's analysis of a "pharasaically" good conscience in the acquisition of personal wealth has taken here a particularly uncharitable turn.

The overarching thrust of the Religious Right's "moral" reasoning (at least in economic and government matters) is that individuals should not delegate their responsibilities to the state. To abrogate one's duty to him/herself and family is to be disobedient to God's law.⁴⁴ But there is something of an irony here: for all their avowed distrust of government intrusion into family life, education, and economic matters, the Religious Right has consistently voiced a desire to have their values legislated by the state. While many of the Religious Right's forays into the political realm are reactionary in nature i.e., mobilizing against a perceived moral-ethical danger, their growing aggressiveness (not necessarily their success) has culminated into a comprehensive program of political, social, and economic issues. This, again, is the paradox of a "politicized religious world view,"⁴⁵ which (ostensibly) favours an absolute church-state separation and a personal commitment to Christ, but "finds its most daring and public expression in the form of conventional political activism."⁴⁶

The stark vision of the premillennialist world view held by most on the Religious Right suitably lends itself both to the spreading of the gospel (the *evangel*), and aggressive political activity couched in Scriptural prophecy. Such a combination enables the Religious Right to address a surprisingly broad range of social issues. As several scholars have recently pointed out:

Pessimistic interpretations of premillennialism have led some fundamentalist groups to an isolationist and decidedly apolitical position on the relationship between the church and the secular world. Other fundamentalist groups, however, who also subscribe to the premillennialist doctrine, have embraced political activity as a means to support a religious mission of world evangelization. Politically active fundamentalists have opposed many enemies, including evolutionism, socialism, and communism, and, most frequently today, secular humanism.⁴⁷

In a rather confident polemic, Jerry Falwell echoes the above assessment:

It is now time for moral Americans to band together into a collective voice and make the difference in America by exerting an effort to make their feelings known. The godless minority of treacherous individuals who have been permitted to formulate national policy must now realize they do not represent the majority. They must be made to see that moral Americans are a powerful group who will no longer permit them to destroy our country with their godless, liberal philosophies.⁴⁸

A careful reading of Falwell's "catch-all" statement reveals several curious, though consistent anomalies. First, there is a profound belief that liberals are conspiring to destroy America. Second, given that these "godless, liberal philosophies" endanger America's existence, much of the population must have been coerced into believing them; yet, it seems that such philosophies are the work of a "godless minority of treacherous individuals." And third, there is a rather paranoiac conviction that "moral" (i.e., fundamentalist Christian) Americans have been somehow excluded from democratic processes by a godless, secular elite. In fact, this public concern for political-social issues has been premised upon an entrance time of their own choosing. Although the liberal-secular tone of American politics may have indeed "forced" the Religious Right into action, the notion that they have been prevented from entering the political world by a cabal of liberal secular humanists (who, apparently, "control" most of Congress and the bureaucracy) is surely spurious. Such an assertion appears to be based more on the desire for self-identification via a search for an amorphous enemy than any other contingency. Perhaps the "moral majority" is nothing of the kind, and modern liberalism, both in theory and practice, is more pervasive and acceptable than the Religious Right admits.

This need to enter the political fray, and to wage a battle against the dark forces of contemporary liberalism is what Richard Hofstadter has called "the paranoid style in American politics." Within such a style, even history itself, in Hofstadter's view of the American "far right," becomes an implacable adversary:

The central image [of the paranoid style] is that of a vast and sinister conspiracy, a gigantic and yet subtle machinery of influence set in motion to undermine and destroy a way of life...The distinguishing thing about the paranoid style is not that its exponents see conspiracies or plots here and there in history, but they regard a "vast" or "gigantic" conspiracy as *the motive force* in historical events. History is a conspiracy, set in motion by demonic forces of almost transcendent power, and what is felt to be needed to defeat it is not the usual methods of political give-and-take, but an all-out crusade. The paranoid spokesman sees the fate of this conspiracy in apocalyptic terms—he traffics in the birth and death of whole worlds, whole political orders, whole systems of human values.⁴⁹

Is Hofstadter's thesis still worthy of consideration? In a letter to his religious contributors, the Reverend James Robison writes of such a sinister conspiracy:

America is now totally vulnerable to an attack from the atheists in the Kremlin...Christian friend, *OUR NEGLIGENCE AND FAILURE TO STAND FOR GODLINESS IN THE POLITICAL ARENA IS A SIN* — it is a sin and nothing else...Because of our national sin, here's the grim prospect we will face within three years — unless we act now with one united Christian voice:... Churches closed by force in violation of the first Amendment ...A NEW political dictatorship in America in which Christians will be persecuted — perhaps imprisoned or killed for their faith...[W]ithout prayer warriors and spiritual leadership, our efforts will be sidetracked by Satan....⁵⁰

Common in most of the Religious Right's polemical literature, Robison's fantastic assertions are given without justification, without evidence, and without obvious reason. Why America is "totally vulnerable" to a Soviet attack is anybody's guess, and perhaps that is the point. With the literal truth of the Bible as the ultimate arbiter and source of all wisdom, rational justification is largely unnecessary. Careful, or objective, analysis of contentious issues would appear to be a specious liberal fallacy that obscures the Truth. Utilizing selected Biblical interpretations which can be moulded to suit any purpose, such questionable statements retain their aura of moral legitimacy.

In the Religious Right's world of inflammatory utterances, perhaps none have gone as far as North Carolina Senator Jesse Helms, who once stated that federal tax dollars "are being used to pay for grade school courses that teach our children that *cannibalism*, *wife swapping*, and the *murder* of infants and the elderly are acceptable behavior."⁵¹ Again, no apparent justification for this bewildering statement was given; it was, in the Religious Right's view, simply true. Since liberal secular humanism had "removed" Christ from the political agenda, any assertion made by a Bible-believing Christian conservative (like Helms) must be accurate.

Any attempt to synthesize Biblical truths to the political process will not only erode the concepts of free political debate and conflict resolution, but will surely result in the eradication of democratic pluralism altogether. By frequently insisting that the United States is a republic and not really a pluralist democracy,⁵² the Religious Right has played a coy game with its more authoritarian intentions. While the emotionally-charged cries of "freedom" and "liberty" are used *ad infinitum* by the Religious Right, their unyielding belief that all political processes are subsumed under the auspices of a vengeful Christian God underscores a not very subtle distaste for pluralism. Jerry Falwell writes:

Today we find that America is more of a democracy than a republic. Sometimes there is mob rule. In some instances, a vocal minority prevails. Our Founding Fathers would not accept the tyranny of a democracy because they recognized that the only sovereign over men and nations was Almighty God...

And furthermore,

If a man is not a student of the Word of God and does not know what the Bible says, I question his ability to be an effective leader...Only by godly leadership can America be put back on a divine course....⁵³

Historians have often argued whether the Founding Fathers had envisioned a Hamiltonian republic — “frightened of democracy,” according to Louis Hartz⁵⁴ — or one founded upon the tenets of Jacksonian democratic thought. While “mob rule” was certainly a prominent concern of the Founding Fathers, a more pressing need (at that time) was accomodating the “interests of heterogeneous communities, thereby insuring the ‘participation’ of sectional and other interests in rational decision-making.”⁵⁵ The normative purpose was to create a “national pluralism — flexible enough to accomodate republican virtue *and* material progress *and* imperial power.”⁵⁶

Falwell’s warning of a “vocal minority” is plausible only if two additional factors are considered. First, that somehow the democratic process has been so disfigured that the “will of the people” (his “moral majority”) has gone unheeded i.e., the expected moral leadership has been tainted by a liberal minority. Second, a true republic, with all its attendant (traditional) aristocratic and autocratic tendencies, is something that most Americans would be reluctant to accept. Falwell’s (and Robison’s) paradigm, with its sovereign Christian God, more resembles an absolute monarchy/theocracy than a republic.⁵⁷ If this is indeed what America wishes, then Falwell’s harsh “unbeatable combination” appears to be the antithesis of the benign “Creator” in the **Declaration of Independence**.⁵⁸

(As to Falwell’s subsequent assertion that only the “godly” are suitable for public office, such a notion contravenes Article VI(3) of **The Constitution**.⁵⁹)

Though not founded upon the strictures of a particular Christianity, the American republic also embodied the quasi-religious ideology of a “righteous” people destined to triumph over “savage nations” in a “grandiose conception of world redemption.”⁶⁰ The Religious Right’s view of world redemption

justifies and supports (what many see as) America's aggressive foreign and military policies. Indeed, such policies may be needed to bring about a global reconciliation with Christ.

External or internal, the threats posed to America require something more demonstrative than the more benevolent expressions of Christian faith. In these premillennialist "end times," notions of Christian compassion and tolerance are seen as tepid and ambiguous measures. Instead, the prominent metaphor is holy war, with America as the last bastion of Christian faith. A "Dear Brother in Christ" letter from **Christian Voice** relays this urgency:

...we [conservative Christians] share in common that only Truth that sets men free indeed, and finally binds them together. And that must be our focus if we are to face the final days victoriously...America, as a nation and a people, has stood in her brief history as the mightiest (and perhaps the last) great home of the Faith. She is known to the peoples of the world as a 'Christian nation.' It follows naturally that she and her people are the special target of Satan as he seeks to devour the planet and everyone on it....⁶¹

If domestic secular humanists and foreign communists do not destroy America, apparently Satan will. With regards to the home front, Jerry Falwell expresses similar sentiments:

God has led me to wage a Holy War against the moral sins which threaten America. And I'm asking you to help me bring an end to abortion, pornography, homosexuality, socialism, and the breakup of family life. We must put our country back on course. And you know there's not much time left.⁶²

There is an obvious contradiction here: If Armageddon is near, why be concerned with the mundane realm of socio-political policy? The answer, as it were, is a combination of Biblical truths and a concomitant religious American patriotism. Since "righteousness exalteth a nation" (Proverbs 14:34), and since it is the duty of religious fundamentalists to spread the word of God, it is critically important to turn a nation to God before the destructive "end times." As the last stronghold of Christian faith, it is America "that God will begin the metastatic renewal of the habitable earth, a renewal to be marked by the commencing of a radically new cosmic order."⁶³

If God is to begin this renewal in America, then America (and the Holy Land, Israel) must be cleansed not only morally, but socially and politically as well. To bring this cleansing process to the political arena

may well be the Religious Right's most difficult, yet its most potent, public exercise.

iv) **The politics of urgency: "secondary" issues and moral concerns**

Well-known moral issues such as abortion, gay rights, feminism, divorce, and school prayer are certainly the dominant items on the Religious Right's moral-political agenda, and their controversial presence in the public forum is neither new nor unexpected. For a particular religious bloc to draw certain distinctions between what is or is not morally acceptable is not uncommon. What makes the Religious Right, unique is its synthesis of the moral with the more "secondary" religious concerns of the political process: military and foreign policies, social assistance programmes, school textbooks, and so on. (Even such non-religious issues as gun control and treaty-making are of "moral" interest.) By including within its religiously-based parameters almost every issue that comprises the world of modern American politics, the Religious Right has either (depending on one's view) elevated Scripture to become the only moral-ethical-religious guide we will ever need, or reduced it to a handful of exaggerated truths employed only in the pursuit of self-interest and authoritarian ends. While the former is their professed goal, the latter appears the more likely outcome.

The Religious Right's position on the major moral issues is well known, and does not require further analysis here. While many — if not most⁶⁴ — Americans often disagree with the Religious Right's stance on various major issues, it is generally accepted that concerted debate on them is justified and worthy of interest. The inclusion of secondary issues in the Religious Right's agenda, however, should be viewed with special concern. (The term "secondary" means that such issues, while important politically, have limited value as religious concerns.)

The aggressiveness and scope of the Religious Right's incursion into politics can be more clearly understood when selected secondary political issues are examined for their apparent religious significance. By formulating policy positions in such areas, the Religious Right sends a clear signal that it is not content to be a single-issue group whose concern is limited to the preserving or enhancing of religious freedoms. In its claim to know God's "agenda," *all* issues are subsumed under a religious scrutiny. What follows is a brief

synopsis of several “secondary” issues.

a) **Military policy**

In the Religious Right’s way of thinking, aggressiveness is synonymous with Christian righteousness. If America is a “godly” nation duty-bound to evangelize the world according to Scriptural tenets (and other New Right policies as well), then differences of opinion or resistance to them are not merely misguided, but evil. Military and foreign policies themselves become sword-bearers of Biblical truth.

The traditional moral absolutism of conservative Christianity reflects the fundamentalist “passion for military matters”⁶⁵ and, concomitantly, the narrow interpretation of pertinent Scriptural passages. All but ignoring the Biblical exhortations to beat swords into plowshares (Isaiah 2:4) or loving the enemy (Matthew 5:44), the Religious Right consistently refers to the more aggressive tenets of **Deuteronomy**. Here, Moses is harsh and unyielding in separating a holy people from the heathens:

And when the Lord thy God shall deliver them [the heathens] before thee; thou shalt smite them, and utterly destroy them; thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor show mercy unto them [Deut. 7:2].⁶⁶

Today’s “heathens” fall into two large categories: secular humanists, and communists. The former will be addressed in the next chapter; with regards to the latter, particularly the Soviet Union, communist expansionism is the major factor in the manifestation of Biblical prophecies of an apocalyptic end to the world. David Bollier explains:

According to [the Religious Right], the world will soon experience seven years of great suffering and tribulation and will witness the rise of the Anti-Christ. In a fiery Battle of Armageddon, which will pit the satanic Soviet Union against Israel, the Christian legions will defeat the forces of darkness. Following this apocalypse, Christ will reign over the earth for 1,000 years until the Final Judgement.⁶⁷

By applying such a prophecy to the arena of world politics, the Religious Right seems resigned to accepting global warfare, perhaps nuclear warfare, as the only path to salvation. The politicization and militarization

of this premillennialist view impedes the acts of compromise and negotiation to urgent social-political problems. Not only are different paths to salvation, be they of a religious or secular nature, evil, the bearers of such messages must be either converted or vanquished as well. Mere avoidance or criticism of different meaning systems is not enough: only their humiliation and/or destruction will suffice.

Commenting on the American propensity to “redemptive violence” as a means of addressing global conflict, Robert Jewett writes:

Americans reacted with amazement against realists in other countries who lacked enthusiasm for redemptive violence. That the world should be destroyed for the sake of our principles seemed self-evident to us, while others decided it might be better to be “red than dead.” Such an attitude seemed highly immoral to Americans. The mystique had rendered us incapable of comprehending even our allies. With the same ideological blindness, we plunged into the arms race without the slightest hesitation and produced an arsenal of ludicrous proportions...[This] reveals the religious conviction of a people as vividly as do the long forgotten pyramids in the jungles of Central America, testimony to the power of primitive obsessions.⁶⁸

This “mystique of violent salvation,” as Jewett calls it, is firmly rooted in the “Deuteronomic principle” of the Old Testament: “misfortune for the chosen people is due to divine wrath provoked by traitors; if they are wiped out, wrath will be assuaged and victory will then be inevitable.”⁶⁹ While “traitors” implies a conspiracy from within, it does not require a great leap of logic — or faith — to realize that the term can be applied to all who hold different religious viewpoints. Under the Religious Right’s vengeful and exacting God, those who differ in religious, political, and moral matters are indeed traitors and enemies who must either be “brought inside” (to use Jerry Falwell’s term), or cast out.

A strong military has been a cornerstone of American domestic and foreign policy for most of the twentieth century. In what would seem to be an issue that is at least controversial (and in some quarters, anathema) to most Christians, the Religious Right exhibits something of a fetish for military superiority. Certainly, the Bible itself is replete with epic accounts of battles, and fighting for a Christian cause is a constant throughout recorded history. The Religious Right’s justifications, however, seem dangerously facile:

America is in serious trouble today. It has lost its economic and military prominence among the nations of the world. Exercising leadership from this weakened position is an exercise in futility. Our leaders are finally realizing what many have tried to state for years: that the Soviets are liars

and cheaters, and that they are determined to conquer our free country and to infiltrate the American people with godless communism. The security of our country is at stake. We must return to a strong program of national defense.⁷⁰

On the other hand, should America fail in its preordained role as a global moral arbiter, and allow its military forces to weaken, it really does not matter. As Jerry Falwell explains elsewhere:

If God is on our side, no matter how militarily superior the Soviet Union is, they could never touch us. God would miraculously protect America.⁷¹

In the cosmology of the Religious Right, such statements are treated, it would seem, as axiomatic. Since America is God's chosen nation, it has both a duty to be militarily superior, and a right to expect God's special protection. Military superiority is "our primary goal," according to Richard Viguerie, because, "[to] put it bluntly, we are locked in world-wide combat with Communism. In fact...we have been fighting the Third World War since before the Second World War ended."⁷² The "mystique of violent salvation," to repeat Robert Jewett's insightful phrase, is well-suited to this contemporary "holy war."

What is more disturbing is that such absolute views are used repeatedly to shape the Religious Right's perception of the Soviet Union. In a trenchant critique of the "radical right" perspective, Edward Ericson raises an interesting point:

New Right "think tanks" that develop schemes for pursuing the Third World War on terms they imagine can be aggressively managed, yet always controlled short of an all-out military conflict, attribute to the Soviets a remarkable gift for composure and self-control. As we heat up the diplomatic and propaganda fronts against them, all the while pursuing the arms buildup reminiscent of World War II, the Soviets are expected to come to their senses and accept the inevitability of our triumph, or else be run into the ground through sheer exhaustion.⁷³

While New Right think tanks such as **The Heritage Foundation** do cultivate an aura of intellectual respectability, their predominant disposition to see the world in Manichean terms mirrors the Religious Right's scriptural interpretation of Deuteronomy, and its spectre of "redemptive violence."⁷⁴ Such naivete, however, is not the sole domain of the Right: both sides of the political spectrum tend to assume that eventually their political adversaries will miraculously "see the light" and initiate a complete ideological reversal.

What is alarming with these simplified assumptions is that a rigid Christian morality supercedes and inhibits the understanding of social, cultural, and political factors which characterize other countries. World events and tensions are seen as “a real-life morality drama that pits a ‘Christian America’ against ‘godless communism’.”⁷⁵ “Jesus was not a sissy,” says Jerry Falwell, and furthermore,

The bearing of the sword by government is correct and proper. Nowhere in the Bible is there a rebuke for the bearing of armaments...[T]he role of government is to minister justice and to protect the rights of its citizens by being a terror to evildoers within and without the nation.⁷⁷

It may not be too facetious to suggest that God’s blessings for America are directly proportionate to the size of its military. While ridding America of its supposed evils is a primary task of the Religious Right, there is an underlying assumption that other nations are in need of a conservative Christian witnessing. Spiritual and military force are thus conjoined in the pursuit of righteousness.

Biblical justifications for warfare in the modern age reinforce the Religious Right’s view that an implacable, sinister adversary — be it Satan, socialism, or secular humanism — is waiting for an opportunity to pounce on a morally-depleted America. Such a militaristic interpretation of Scripture is by no means unique, and the Religious Right’s view of an angry, impatient, and helpless America puts the country’s simmering tensions, at least for some, into an explainable perspective.

Finding itself in the unenviable position of a “declining hegemon,” America may be learning “that hegemons in decline are feared but despised,”⁷⁹ as did Britain earlier in this century. This is not to say that an America in decline is eager to lash out indiscriminantly. But it does suggest a certain impatience and xenophobia brought upon by a wounded pride. Although it may be assumed that the United States earnestly seeks to avoid military hostilities, a belief in a Divine approbation of such ignores the horrors and futility of war.

b) **Economic policy and the role of government**

While the laissez-faire flavour of Religious Right economic views have been mentioned earlier in this chapter, it should be pointed out that their economic theories, if in fact they do exist, are in an embryonic

stage. The economic perspectives of the Religious Right appear to have only a scant connection to the ideal of Christian altruism, and a more pronounced linkage to the “me first” theories of a crude rational choice approach. Although many theologians voice concern on economic subjects, and a few economists assess religious positions,⁸⁰ the thrust of Religious Right economics seem inextricably bound in the assumption that all unfettered market activity is good (meaning moral), and all regulatory or participatory economic actions by the state are not. Such a view indeed, is actively promoted by many distinguished — albeit secular — scholars: F.A. Hayek, Milton Friedman, and James Buchanan to name only a few.⁸¹ (Despite their secular approaches, these economists would also see the “good” of the free market as being “moral” i.e., the freedom to maximize one’s utility by pursuing personal economic goals is morally correct.) The point to be made here, however, is that despite such august intellectual company, the Religious Right’s economic perspectives, like everything else on its agenda, are moulded to fit a particular interpretation of Scripture.

Max Weber notwithstanding, the *homo economicus* of the Religious Right would appear to be morally and materially opposed to the concept of Christian asceticism. Since the penultimate goal of the Religious Right is to preserve the disciplined individualism of “traditional” America (the ultimate aim is spreading the Word of God), an unrestricted economic market is a formidable weapon against the coercive, centralizing, and therefore evil tendencies of the state.

Many considered conservative opinions (especially Hayek’s) would contend that the market itself does not have a specific moral purpose, and does not serve an end unto itself. Marxists, on the other hand, while acknowledging that capitalism does indeed create wealth and rapid technological change, would see the market as serving a very real *immoral* end: the preservation of a privileged bourgeoisie dependent upon the continued subjugation of labour.

Whether one views market processes as having destructive inherent contradictions, or that left alone, capitalism provides substantial societal benefits, are two views of an argument that, in the main, has not been lost on the Religious Right. But, in their relatively sophomoric attempts to connect state intervention to an anti-Christian conspiracy, any chance for rigorous, dispassionate analysis is remote. Arguments which make the question of morality the ultimate premise are rarely taken to a higher level of abstraction. If capitalism (and, it follows, monetarism and supply-side economics as well) is Biblically-approved, any

argument to the contrary is an immoral attempt to place a “man-made” (i.e., humanist) system of values over and above the revealed Word of God.

This is not to suggest that a Christian perspective has not played a fundamental role in the development of Western capitalism; the vast montage of thought from Adam Smith to Max Weber and beyond is replete with moral-Christian references. Rather, it is the notion that only capitalism is morally and Biblically approved within the American ethos that is of interest here.

According to Michael Novak, the concept of “democratic capitalism,” with its inherent moral foundation, has all but been ignored by Western social scientists. Novak explains that democratic capitalism is a tripartite concept of liberty synthesizing (Western) economic, political, and spiritual values. Any country that has successfully managed to integrate all three has, in effect, institutionalized liberty.⁸² Embedded in the Western heritage of Judeo-Christian teaching are “attitudes of good and wise stewardship” and “sustained economic development [which] rests decisively upon moral-cultural values of certain sorts.”⁸³ Novak concludes that “economic systems are dependent on moral-cultural systems. Where certain attitudes, habits, beliefs, aspirations and exertions are lacking, economic development is unlikely to occur.”⁸⁴ While Novak is certainly not a fundamentalist Protestant (he is a Roman Catholic), there is an air of American superiority in his analysis which fits well into the Religious Right’s moral-political schema.

The contention that capitalism-is-Christianity and vice-versa is strongly maintained by the Religious Right as both an example of the timeless wisdom of the Bible, and the moral superiority of America’s economic prowess. Although the corporate world of multi-national business is viewed with nominal suspicion, it is the government’s tendency to centralized economic decision-making that is “godless and fallible.” More to the point, some “Christian economists” (of the Religious Right) regard the free market as a “natural, divine plan,” and government as “God’s rival.”⁸⁵

It is sinfulness that exacerbates economic problems, and, as Jerry Falwell maintains,

When we as a country acknowledge God as our creator and Jesus Christ as the Savior of mankind, we will be able to turn this nation around economically as well as in every other way.⁸⁶

In this context, sinfulness means a failure to provide economic “good stewardship” by misplacing trust in government growth and intervention. Since governments seek to coerce and centralize, individual freedom in the marketplace is usurped by an ever-expanding Leviathan. As the state increases its role in the economy, so too, in the eyes of the Religious Right, will other freedoms — possibly religious worship — be similarly compromised.

Balanced budgets, trade deficits, taxation, and the like, are of course, a major concern of secular conservatives as well: monetarism, supply-side theories — “Reaganomics” — have featured prominently in the New Right perspective. In the Religious Right, where theories of economic positivism are markedly less rigorous and scholarly, the emphasis is on the moral certitude of a free market and a vastly emasculated government.

The crux of the problem is to return government to a program of “fiscal integrity.” Robert Zwier illustrates:

“Deficit spending — where government spends more than it takes in — is immoral; it violates every Biblical principle of good stewardship and living within one’s means.” [Zwier is here quoting an unnamed source.] Specifically, the [Religious Right] says that the tax cut of the Reagan plan “will eventually mean thousands of your hard-earned dollars staying in your family budget where our provident Father intended them to be.”⁸⁷

A major focus of the so-called “Reagan plan” was to lift the tax burden from personal and corporate income and to reduce the federal deficit. Implicit in this plan, as the President (and the entire New Right) observed, is that “New Deal” i.e., liberal politics is really socialism in embryonic form. The more government expands, the more the tax burden grows, until finally, individual freedom is all but eradicated. The New Deal liberal “believes in a stronger and stronger central government, in the philosophy that control is better than freedom,” offers the President, with an added observation that “liberals lean increasingly toward bureaucracy, operation by computer minds and forced fiat, the submergence of man in statistics.”⁸⁸

Reagan’s view of liberalism is, to a point, accurate. But it is ironic to note that despite his much publicized cuts in social services spending — enthusiastically supported by the Religious Right — the federal deficit increased three-fold during his first term, due to increases in military spending to counter the alleged Soviet threat.⁸⁹ An enormous federal deficit caused, in part, by military spending is one area where

the Biblical principle of good stewardship need not apply. In fact, it could even be said that a military buildup is good stewardship in government. Since Armageddon, in the Religious Right's cosmology, will begin with Soviet aggression against Israel,⁹⁰ such a buildup is both desirable and moral.

Why government-sponsored programs to help the poor — welfare and food stamps, to name two — are immoral, while increased military expenditure is not, is justified by the belief in God's special relationship with America. Built on the Biblical convictions of individual initiative and strong moral fibre, America, as the last bastion of liberty (so the argument goes), is duty-bound to halt the threat of communist expansion. Militarization, the "bearing of the sword" by government, is, in the face of such godlessness, correct and necessary.

Government assistance for the less fortunate, and government interference in the lives of the more fortunate, is an abrogation of the traditional American ethic of individualism and voluntarism. Since both ethical premises are Biblically-inspired, such assistance—to the point where recipients become dependent upon the state—is immoral. While Weber's **Protestant Ethic** provides a thorough analysis of the influence of Calvinist thought in this regard, it appears that the "guilty" conscience of asceticism is absent in the Religious Right's beliefs. Some commentators have suggested that they feel little, if any sympathy for the world's poor not only because of their belief in minimal government assistance, but also as a result of a *select* interpretation of Scripture. The stern absolutes of the Proverbs and the Epistles are favoured over the more compassionate words of Jesus found in the Gospels.⁹¹ That there are hundreds of references in the Bible where the righteous assist the poor, and little in the tenets of New Right economics has been virtually ignored by the Religious Right. There are, as is well-known, many exhortations by popular "televangelists" to give aid to the needy. The aid given here, however, is both received and administered by these religious organizations, and little, if any real assistance filters down to those in need. "Rendering unto Caesar" in order to fashion a more equitable society is often regarded as a leftist ploy designed to erode America's freedoms. Indeed, "God helps those who help themselves."

The size and scope of government is held directly responsible for this malaise of evil. In a document produced by a group called "One Nation Under God," this contention is addressed in McCarthyist terms:

The government has become bloated at the expense of the citizens. The servant has become our master. Freedom and initiative have become throttled by bureaucracy run wild...The truth of God is taken from our schools by action of government, while unbridled sexuality [sic], humanism, and satanism are taught at public expense.⁹

This host of evils, initially brought upon by government attempts to regulate the free market, have set in motion other forces destined to weaken America's strength and freedom. It is something of a paradox within Religious Right thought, for while the right to maximize one's utility — to exercise freedom of choice and thought — in the economic world is taken as a "given," similar liberations of the mind and spirit elsewhere are restricted. While a free market is, in their view, Biblical, freedom of thought and discretion, in education, for instance, is fraught with sinister dangers. The following sub-section will deal with the controversial area of educational concerns, and their meaning to the Religious Right.

c) **Education and textbooks**

The subject of education has always been, for obvious reasons, a key concern of parents, communities, and politicians. All told, educational issues are a primary, and not a secondary political issue. Within the Religious Right, however, it would seem that formal education is conditioned upon, and subordinate to, the inculcation of conservative Christian moral standards. The emphasis here is primarily on values, and how these must form the core of any educational curriculum. Few would deny that "values," inasmuch as they express widely-held standards and norms, are an essential component to formal education. In the public school system, the qualification of values and norms is usually limited to common, non-denominational rules of proper conduct: honesty, integrity, tolerance, and so on.

The Religious Right, on the other hand, views this broad (some would say ambiguous) teaching of values as yet another evil perpetrated upon an unsuspecting public by modernity i.e., by liberal secular humanists. With the exception of the **Roe v. Wade** court decision, nothing in American public life has been contested so belligerently as public education and its transmission of moral standards. The focus of this sub-section will be to examine the Religious Right's moral argument on the dangers of modern public education practices, and the consequences which could arise if their view becomes accepted as a standard in public

schooling.

A contentious aspect of the Religious Right's education platform is the opposition to any semblance of religious neutrality in the classroom. Having lost the battle for the institutionalization of prayer in the classroom in *Engel v. Vitale* over twenty-five years ago, conservative Christians have remained the most vocal, and emotional, opponents of a pluralistic, public education. The major aim of the Religious Right's attack on public education is the eradication of that familiar Christian nemesis, secular humanism. While secular humanism is allegedly undermining all facets of a decent society (more on this in Chapter 4), it is the classroom where the Religious Right's battle for "traditional" American morality begins. Indeed, in their view, education means not only what to think, but **how** to think as well.⁹³

The most insidious problem with public education and its humanist-inspired values is that it instills "godlessness" in malleable young minds. By delegating authority to the state (an initial mistake in itself) for the education of children, an important avenue for the inculcation of Christian values is lost. Traditional Christian values have not only been eschewed in the public schools, they have been supplanted by the dangerous values of humanist thinking. While this argument is rather weak, since religious values are more strongly reinforced in the home, the contention that "atheistic" humanism has filled this moral void propels the Religious Right's determination.

Education, as their reasoning contends, is an indoctrination process, therefore, humanist educators, with their subtly evil ways, "are inspired by totalitarian philosophies and harbor subversive intentions."⁹⁴ Since the Religious Right sees itself as the only torchbearer of morality, it should be self-evident that public schools, with their emphasis on a pluralistic education, cannot teach proper moral values. True, the public system does attempt to teach students the values of honesty, integrity, tolerance, and (dubiously) democracy, but explicit Christian references to such are missing. Two questions arise with regard to this view: Why bother to change the policies of public schools? And concurrently, don't private Christian schools teach the proper religious values?

To answer them in reverse order, yes, Christian schools (depending on denomination) do teach the approved values. They are, however, relatively expensive, not within easy commuting reach of many, and morally-compatible teachers can be hard to find. It must also be remembered, to reiterate an earlier premise,

that the goal of the Religious Right is to influence and/or control public institutions in order to turn the nation favourably back to Christ. Control of the public classroom, therefore, is essential: the battle must logically begin, and may even end here.

Secondly, as an alleged policy of public schools, what are “humanist” educational values? According to the Religious Right, they are any method which allows a child to solve a moral-ethical problems utilizing John Dewey’s classic principle of “values clarification.” Edward Ericson describes values clarification as

...a technique or method of moral education on John Dewey’s principle that effective learning involves thinking about one’s experience; it seeks to use the young person’s power of observation and reasoning to examine attitudes about behavioral questions. For example, is it right to lie or steal? Is it ever right, under any circumstances, to mislead or deceive, even to save an innocent human life? Would it ever be right, under any circumstances whatsoever, to steal a loaf of bread? Is it usually right to tell falsehoods or to take what does not belong to you? If not, why not? How do we decide that one act is right and another wrong?⁹⁵

Conspicuously absent from the methods of values clarification is an absolute definition of right and wrong applicable to every conceivable situation. In conservative Christianity, there are no such slippery ambiguities; the Bible makes clear and unequivocal distinctions between right and wrong, good and evil. Any wavering or questioning as to what is the morally-correct course of action is indicative of a lack of moral conviction.

As a humanist philosophy, values clarification (and its fellow traveller, “situation ethics”) teaches children to examine their answers and their reasons for giving them. This modern version of the Socratic method of teaching is however, enormously deceptive. Mel and Norma Gabler, the Religious Right’s self-appointed textbook censors, point out that such methods are tantamount to brainwashing:

As long as the schools continue to teach ABNORMAL ATTITUDES and ALIEN THOUGHTS, we caution parents NOT to urge their children to pursue high grades and class discussion, because the harder students work, the greater their chances of brainwashing.⁹⁶

“Abnormal attitudes” and “alien thoughts” as defined by the Religious Right can be (literally) anything not found in the Bible, or at least considered questionable within the purview of conservative Christianity. As

the Religious Right increased in both numbers and political tenacity (whether they still are gaining strength, holding steady, or declining in support will be discussed in the concluding chapter), so too did their battles with public school boards and libraries.

A particular issue here was the use of certain questionable texts which (allegedly) violated Christian beliefs and furthered the cause of secular humanism. Conway and Siegelman explain:

Led by a handful of national activists and organizations, local parents' groups and "concerned citizens" councils have arisen to promote censorship of textbooks and other materials they consider to be "anti-Christian, anti-parent, anti-government, immoral and obscene." Books tarred with this designation include classics such as *Of Mice and Men*, *A Farewell to Arms*, *The Grapes of Wrath*, and *The American Heritage Dictionary* — alleged to contain 70 entries in 155,000 rated "obscene or otherwise inappropriate for high school students."⁹⁷

Recently, the United States Supreme Court threw out an appeal by seven Hawkins County, Tennessee families that "godless" books violated their childrens' religious freedom. These books included *The Wizard of Oz*, *Cinderella*, and the fairy tales of Hans Christian Andersen.⁹⁸ Conversely, in what could turn out to be more damaging, the Gablers and their associates have been successful in pressuring biology textbook publishers to severely limiting the explanations of theories of evolution, even to the point of omitting such theories altogether.⁹⁹

What these "Christian" censors are engaged in is a word-by-word screening of texts that attack Christian-American values and promote "communism, socialism and internationalism."¹⁰⁰ In their zeal to expurgate objectionable material, the censors of the Religious Right have taken semiotics to previously unimagined heights. David Bollier provides these examples:¹⁰¹

Textbook Passage: "It was so false, so pointless, how could they sing of the land of the free, when there was still racial discrimination?"

Objection: "Majority of people are free, only people in jail are not free."

Textbook Passage: But it was always China that we were taught was home. In those days we were all immigrants. Whether we were born in America or not, we were all immigrants."

Objection: "This does not foster patriotism toward America and is a rather derogatory statement about our country."

Textbook Passage: Reference to UNICEF, United Nations Children’s Emergency Fund.

Objection: “UNICEF is a known communist front.”

Precisely where Christian morality is being compromised is not, as the above censorship efforts show, always clear. Sex education, values clarification, and the teaching of evolution are, predictably, the major targets of the censorship committees. The overall tone of such an attack seems to indicate a concern with something less tangible than specific subjects, namely, that any critical study of America (critical in the sense that it is probably “liberal”) is an attack upon Christ.

In an effort to combat the transmission of secular humanist values in public schools, several Christian publishers have furnished textbooks and curriculum guides to private (i.e., fundamentalist) schools. One of the most prominent of these “Christian educators” is **Accelerated Christian Education (A.C.E.)** of Lewisville, Texas. The A.C.E. programme, used in hundreds of American Christian schools — and 160 Canadian schools¹⁰² — provides an acceptable “Christian environment” from kindergarten to high school graduation.

The A.C.E. programme uses few textbooks. Instead, a dozen or so “Pace” booklets — along with the Bible — are the only source materials. Incredibly, before the fourth grade, no textbooks or secondary sources are used in teaching at all, except the Bible.¹⁰³ The A.C.E. rejection of textbooks is justified thus:

Education is not oriented around one textbook. Education is life and the Bible is life. It is the philosophy of God’s word. Children at our school learn to see life from God’s point of view. Adding secondary textbooks to the Bible is like adding poison to good food.¹⁰⁴

One may indeed wonder how these Christian students will fare in their future adult world.

The most disturbing aspects of a fundamentalist Christian education are its lack of scope, and its intolerance of independent, critical analyses. While the Religious Right would lay the exact charge against secular educators, their conviction is based primarily on the fear that religion’s influence would diminish as a child’s ability for intellectual criticism grows. Furthermore, any intellectual independence based upon the specious tenets of a secular education only adds to the fear that public education’s hidden goal is the erosion of traditional morality, and by association, a diminution of America’s preeminence among righteous

nations. That such preeminence can somehow be maintained by denying children (and adults) the full range of intellectual discourse and questioning is misleading and dangerous. By shielding children from “subversive” teaching methods or “unpatriotic” anti-Christian ideas, little will be reaped save ignorance and misunderstanding. As **Proverbs 1:7** states, “the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge.” Such fear, which *a priori* proposes that learning must be limited to Biblical admonition, may mean the demise of the pursuit of knowledge.

v) **The real political agenda**

If military policy, economic matters, and education are added to the plethora of other political concerns of the Religious Right, what is the “real” agenda? Despite the Moral Majority’s insistence that they believe in church-state separation, and that they are not a religious organization attempting to control government,¹⁰⁵ such statements must be contrasted with their vigorous efforts to affect change within the political realm. As stated at the beginning of this chapter, much of the Religious Right’s anger and indignation is focussed upon the spiritually-impooverished “new morality” of this more complex, secularized age. Since “God’s principles,” as explained in Scripture, cover every conceivable facet of earthly life, the world of politics, which helps bring meaning and authority to national beliefs, can scarcely be exempted.

If all social-political issues can be made to “fit” a certain standard of Christian morality, then the Religious Right’s professed respect for “dualism” (i.e., church and matters of state to remain separate) should be regarded suspiciously. By subsuming the concerns of the military, state social expenditures, school textbooks and curricula — and other “secular” fields such as law, business, the natural and social sciences — under a pre-determined set of Biblical directives, can the real agenda be anything but political and social control?

This question is frequently sidestepped by the Religious Right with the facile reply that the forces of secular humanism, as an (atheistic) human-centred religion, have become so pervasive within the basic institutions of American life, that all sense of traditional morality and discipline has been displaced. This very public “if they can do it, so can we” approach obscures the fact that, despite its somewhat confusing moral

ambiguities, the secular “world” rarely adheres to the equally damaging premise that different modes of thought are inherently evil.

Mobilized by the existence of the distinct forces of good and evil in the world, the political expressions and policies of the Religious Right are a reflection of those same forces as they exist within the world of religious faith. Evil, in whatever facet of life, is best fought with an unshakeable belief in Biblical wisdom. The substitution of understanding and tolerance with (apparently) Biblically-condoned absolutes of belligerence and nationalism gives life to the Religious Right’s Manichean political policies.

This propagation of politics as a Christian duty is, in many ways, ethnocentric. Theocentricity is a prominent factor here as well, but ethnocentricity in the world of conservative Christianity carries with it the possibility of even more damaging political distortions. With regards to ethnocentricity and the policies of the **Moral Majority**, Robert L. Soileau elaborates:

The central presupposition of the Moral Majority forces radical distinctions. One primary concern is whether a person or a group can be judged fundamentally “sound.” The possibility of coexisting in open dialogue over theological, political, economic and social differences is remote. Partisanship wins in the end and competing outgroups become enemies. Few words are more prejudice-packed than the word “enemy.” In this context, “enemy” is a synonym for individuals, ideas, and behaviour patterns deemed irreconcilable. Labeling prevents communication and encourages adversary images. Data that could refute the distorted images of the outgroup are simply not admissible. Two strong emotions control these ingroup motives. They are fear and the will to power. The fear of being wrong either limits or precludes communication, and the will to dominate those who hold contrary views is an emotional security drive. Absoluteness is important to the ethnocentric mentality.¹⁰⁶

An “us versus them” mentality is indigenous not only to those with strong religious convictions. In many instances, the give and take of the democratic process itself is premised upon an assumption that majority rule entails a process of convincing “outgroups” to alter their thinking. The Religious Right, however, is set apart from the partisan machinations of the democratic process precisely because their motivation is fueled not by a *process* of accomodation, but by a non-negotiable, all-encompassing Christian morality. To make matters more inflexible, theirs is not merely a choice between “different” moralities; for the Religious Right, their perspective is quite simply, and exclusively, “moral.”

This exclusive moral domain — the personal relationship with God — is further enhanced by fundamentalist claims of two-way communication with the Divine. “God has instructed me” or “He has told me”

are common qualifiers for many (if not all) Religious Right policies.¹⁰⁷ That God speaks only to conservative American Christians is further proof of His special relationship with a “godly people.”

When and why do politics become religious Truth? For politically-active conservative Christians, the former becomes the latter when the emotional response to religious belief becomes indistinguishable from national (i.e., civic) goals and symbols. If God does maintain a special relationship with America, as the Religious Right contends,¹⁰⁸ then any move to alter or sever that relationship, as democratic pluralism does, is inviting catastrophe. Politics, as an expression of meaning in national life, is in essence, an expression of the revealed truth of God. Religion, as the authoritative origin of this revealed Truth, must fulfill two criteria: first, it must satisfy the more transcendent concerns of human existence and purpose: the affirmation of the existence of God and the prospect of eternal salvation being the most obvious. Second, it must act as the ultimate arbiter of political expression e.g., “In God We Trust.” To separate the two, or to lose sight of religion’s power as a political institution, as Tocqueville would have it, is to deny that politics and religion are both morally-conditioned processes and arbiters of values. This is why, among other things, the Religious Right’s public desire for continued church-state separation is rather suspect. While they vigorously maintain that the state has no role in the affairs of a church (save an endorsement), the converse is not so enthusiastically held. Their active role in both primary and secondary political issues, where they seek to influence the state but not vice-versa, would seem to verify this.

The moral stance taken by the Religious Right in its search for political truth and control is obviously narrow and selective. The very concept of “morality” in a Biblical sense must surely include not only the absolutes of the Proverbs, the Epistles, and Revelation, but also the compassionate Gospel attributes of love, mercy, and humility. Without these, the concept of morality itself is “morally deficient.”¹⁰⁹

The contention here is that the Religious Right actively seeks control of the political process—a monopoly on morality and a desire to become politically active could not mean anything else. It is therefore, important to show that the political and religious realms cannot fit together so seamlessly. As Herbert Richardson states,

What is this thing by which we articulate the unity of a political society? It is politics itself (elections, debates, judicial acts) and *political philosophy*. Precisely because the political process cannot be hypostatized as a single general will, but must be conceived as a contingent system of relations that

is created as various agents choose to interact and compromise with one another, the symbolic level on which it must be described is not that of religious myth, but that of practical philosophy.

And furthermore,

Politics can only exist when it is understood that politics is not religion...Politics does not solve the ultimate questions of life, will not bring salvation, cannot make men happy. Its goal is more modest, but no less essential. Politics allows persons and groups that have different aspirations to live together in relative peace and cooperate in limited ways for the sake of specific finite benefits. Whenever politics seeks to be more than this, it must inevitably become far less.¹¹⁰

In pursuit of their Divinely-approved mandate to set religious standards for political processes, the Religious Right may well ensure that politics becomes “far less” than a relatively peaceful means of accomodation. By using religious morality as a yardstick of political worth, the Religious Right has revealed the democratic process at its worst, where “evil” replaces “different,” and where absolute certainty negates the search for satisfactory compromise. In their search for a metaphysical, and supposedly democratic answer to the immoral bent of contemporary American politics, one would do well to heed the words of New Right network leader Richard Viguerie: “Remember, we are trying to take power from those who govern this country and the world. And they are not going to give it up without a very, very tough, hard fight.”¹¹¹

Those who (supposedly) govern America, and who have engaged the Religious Right on political, scientific, philosophical, and ultimately, moral grounds are the subjects of the following chapter.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 3

¹Quote taken from David Bollier, **Liberty & Justice for Some: Defending a Free Society from the Radical Right's Holy War on Democracy** (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1982), p. 70.

²Gillian Peele, **Revival and Reaction: The Right in Contemporary America** (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), p. 91. This is not to say that such issues were (or are) ignored. Rather, the point here is that largely economic issues have often been the domain of more secular conservative groups.

³Peggy L. Shriver, **The Bible Vote: Religion and the New Right** (New York: The Pilgrim Press, 1981), p. 6.

⁴Jeffrey Hadden, "Born-Again Politics: The Dallas Briefing," in **Presbyterian Outlook**, October 20, 1980, volume 162 no. 38, p. 6. See also, Shriver, *ibid.*, p. 9. Proverbs 14:34 states: "Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people."

⁵Robert Zwier, **Born-Again Politics: The New Christian Right in America** (Downer's Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1982), p. 39.

⁶*ibid.*, p. 40.

⁷Taken from Perry Deane Young, **God's Bullies: Native Reflections on Preachers and Politics** (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1982), p. 16. Young's book is a journalistic account of the more prominent personalities of the Religious Right, and the seemingly endless scandals which follow them.

⁸This will be addressed further in a later chapter. Particularly prominent here is the creation-versus-evolution controversy.

⁹This number is a "mid-way" point between Gallup's estimate of 30 million "evangelicals," and the 80 million total conservative Protestants (church-goers and non-attendants) claimed, but not substantiated by the Religious Right.

Moreover, **The Gallup Organization** and the **Princeton Religious Research Center (PRRC)**, have found a wealth of statistical data:

— 8 out of 10 Americans claim to be Christians.

— 62 per cent of all Americans believe that Jesus will return to Earth someday.

— Nearly half of the American adult population believe in creationism.

— 37 per cent believe in Biblical inerrancy.

— Two-thirds of all Americans think their chances of going to heaven are "good."

— And in a more light-hearted but telling assessment, **Gallup** also found that 24 per cent of teenagers believe in "Bigfoot," and 23 per cent of adults believe in astrology — many of whom are regular church-goers. (This assessment is rather timely, considering the recent revelation that both the President and Mrs. Reagan regularly consult with astrologers, much to the chagrin of the Religious Right.) See George Gallup Jr., "Religion in America" in **Annals, American Academy of Political and Social Sciences (AAPSS)** 480, July 1985, p. 168.

¹⁰Shriver, *op. cit.*, p. 35.

¹¹The tone and direction of **Moral Majority Inc. (MM)**, or the "motivating fire," as Peggy Shriver calls it, is best illustrated by the following MM statements:

For too long now we have witnessed the concerted attack waged by ultra-liberals and so-called 'feminists' against the family structure in America...

For too long now we have watched pornography, homosexuality, and godless humanism corrupt America's families, its schools and its communities.

And when a country becomes sick morally, it becomes sick in every other way. Socialism, which is a first cousin to communism, is taking over the Republic. Today, everything is geared to the state...to give-away programs and welfarism... to the point where our country is nearly bankrupt...

Now is the time for moral Americans to stand up for what is right and decent in our country — and change what is vile and wrong. — from "Capital Report," August, 1979.

Furthermore, from the MM brochure, "Decade of Destiny" (1980), comes the procedural strategies of the organization:

1. Mobilizing the grass-roots of moral Americans into a clear, loud, and effective voice, which will be heard in the halls of Congress, in the White House, and in the state legislatures across this land.
2. Informing the moral majority of Americans about what is going on behind their backs in Washington. The monthly Moral Majority report will help accomplish this goal.
3. *Lobbying intensively in Congress to defeat left-wing social welfare bills that would further erode our previous [sic] freedoms.*
4. Pushing for positive legislation which will insure a strong, enduring and free America.
5. Helping the moral majority of Americans in local communities to fight pornography, homosexuality, obscene textbooks, and other burning issues facing each and every one of us.
6. *Recruiting and training moral American men and women to run for political office.* [Emphases original.]

Taken from Shriver, op. cit., pp. 22-23.

¹²James Breig, "TV Religion: The Price is Right" in *U.S. Catholic*, August, 1981, p. 13. For a more general analysis of the "televangelist" industry, see Bollier, op. cit., Part 1, "The Electronic Church."

¹³James Bollier, *ibid.*, p. 26.

¹⁴Jerome L. Himmelstein, "The New Right" in Robert C. Liebman and Robert Wuthnow, eds., *The New Christian Right: Mobilization and Legitimation* (New York: Aldine Pub., Co., 1983), p. 26.

¹⁵Young, op. cit., p. 27.

¹⁶See Shriver, op. cit., p. 17.

¹⁷Bollier, op. cit., pp. 16-17. These are *Christian Voice* ratings for 1982.

¹⁸*ibid.*, p. 31.

¹⁹*ibid.* According to Bollier, *The Club* raised \$7.6 million in the 1980 campaign, and from January 1981 to March 1982, raised an "awesome" \$6.7 million.

²⁰Richard A. Viguerie, *The New Right: We're Ready to Lead* (Falls Church, Va.: The Viguerie Company, 1981), p. 38. Although this book is curiously written and studded with questionable assertions, it is, nevertheless, a valuable "insider's" guide to the whole New Right network.

²¹For a more detailed account of RAVCO's relationship with the New Right, see Perry Deane Young, op. cit., pp. 83-95.

²²Viguerie, op. cit., p. 38.

²³Young, op. cit., p. 22.

²⁴ibid.

²⁵See note 7. See also, Shriver, op.cit., pp. 29-30.

²⁶Burton Yale Pines, **Back To Basics: The Traditionalist Movement That Is Sweeping Grass-Roots America** (New York: William Morrow and Co., 1982), p. 278. Here, Pines is quoting Conservative Caucus National Director Howard Phillips.

²⁷Jerry Falwell, ed., **The Fundamentalist Phenomenon: The Resurgence of Conservative Christianity** (Garden City, N.J.: Doubleday & Co., 1981), pp. 186-187.

²⁸John F. Wilson, **Public Religion in American Culture** (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1979), p. 94.

²⁹Robert N. Bellah, **Religion and Progress in Modern Asia** (New York: Free Press, 1965), pp. 171-173. Taken from John F. Wilson, "The Status of 'Civil Religion' in America" in Elwyn A. Smith, ed., **The Religion of the Republic** (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971), pp. 10-11. See also, Alexis de Tocqueville, **Democracy In America**, and Emile Durkheim, **The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life**.

³⁰Wilson, ibid., p. 11.

³¹See the **Christian Bill of Rights** in Appendices.

³²1Pet. 2:13-17 reads as follows:

13 Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king as supreme;

14 Or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well.

15 For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men;

16 As free, and not using *your* liberty for a cloak of maliciousness, but as the servants of God.

17 Honor all *men*. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king.

³³See note 4.

³⁴Genesis 2:18-25 is the creation of Eve from Adam, and the instruction that a man "shall cleave unto his wife." See also, **The Family Protection Act** in Appendices.

³⁵Herbert W. Richardson, "What Makes A Society Political?" in **Religion and Political Society**, Herbert W. Richardson, et al., (New York: Harper & Row, 1974), p. 100.

³⁶A. James Reichley, "Religion and the Future of American Politics" in **Political Science Quarterly** Volume 101, Number 1, p. 25, 1986.

³⁷See Chapter 2, p. 49.

³⁸Description only taken from John F. Wilson, **Public Religion in American Culture** op. cit., p. 95.

³⁹George Armstrong Kelly, **Politics and Religious Consciousness in America** (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Books, 1984), p. 24.

⁴⁰See **Introduction**, note 8.

⁴¹A common reply to moral relativists from the Religious Right is that without religion, humans do not have morals.

⁴²Jerry Falwell, **Listen, America!** (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Co., 1980), p. 13. see also, David Bollier, op. cit., pp. 295-304.

⁴³Jerry Falwell, **America Can Be Saved** (Murfreesboro, Tn.: Sword of the Lord Publishers, 1979), p. 35. See also Bollier, *ibid*.

⁴⁴See for instance, 1Timothy 5:8, which states:

But if any not provide for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.

⁴⁵Jeffry Will and Rhys Williams, "Research Note: Political Ideology and Political Action in the New Christian Right" in **Sociological Analysis**, 1986, 47, 2: p. 162. see also, Chapter 2, p. 49.

⁴⁶James Davison Hunter, **American Evangelicalism: Conservative Religion and the Quandary of Modernity** (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1983), p. 114.

⁴⁷Tom D. Daniels, Richard J. Jensen, and Allan Lichtenstein, "Resolving the Paradox in Politicized Christian Fundamentalism" in **The Western Journal of Speech Communication**, 49 (Fall 1985), pp. 248-249.

⁴⁸Jerry Falwell, "Introduction" in Viguerie, op. cit., no page number. Furthermore, in this book, Viguerie, in what surely is an inadvertant attempt to accentuate the curious, blames the "ultra-liberal" **National Council of Churches** for a number of travesties. The NCC has, according to the author,

Advocated the admission of Red China to the United Nations as early as 1958.

Came out against prayer in public schools in 1963.

Spoke out against the war in Vietnam in 1965.

Pushed for a guaranteed annual income.

Pressed for more foreign aid year after year.

(p. 132)

⁴⁹Richard Hofstadter, **The Paranoid Style in American Politics and Other Essays** (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1966), p. 29.

⁵⁰Robison's letter taken from Flo Conway and Jim Siegelman, **Holy Terror: The Fundamentalist War on America's Freedoms in Religion, Politics, and Our Private Lives** (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Co., 1982), p. 246. This book is an excellent — and highly disturbing — journey through the "agitprop" of the Religious Right.

⁵¹Helms' famous (or infamous) letter has been reproduced in Young, op. cit., p. 305.

⁵²See for example, Shriver, op. cit., pp. 72-79. What the Religious Right means here is that dissenting opinions in a true (i.e., Christian) republic would have no real place in the political process. Political leadership would be maintained by an authoritarian elite of Bible-believing Christians. For instance, see

James Robison's statement at the beginning of this chapter.

⁵³Falwell, **Listen, America!** Quoted from Conway and Siegelman, op. cit., p. 72.

⁵⁴Louis Hartz, **The Liberal Tradition in America: An Interpretation of American Political Thought Since the Revolution** (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1955), p. 89.

⁵⁵Benjamin R. Barber, "The Compromised Republic: Public Purposelessness in America" in Robert H. Horwitz, ed., **The Moral Foundations of the American Republic** (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1977), p. 25.

⁵⁶ibid., p. 24.

⁵⁷One of Thomas Jefferson's fears was that the office of President could turn from a republican to a monarchical institution.

⁵⁸The first two paragraphs of the **Declaration of Independence** appears to describe a benevolent God that is studiously non-denominational, e.g., a "Nature's God" and a "Creator" who endowed mankind "with certain unalienable rights."

⁵⁹Article VI(3) of **The Constitution** states: "...no religious test shall ever be required as a qualification to any office or public trust under the United States."

⁶⁰Robert Jewett, **The Captain America Complex: The Dilemma of Zealous Nationalism** (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1973), p. 184. The concept of "Manifest Destiny" i.e., America's conquest of the entire continent, can be included here.

⁶¹Reprinted in Shriver, op. cit., pp. 14-15.

⁶²Letter from Jerry Falwell, August 15, 1980. Reprinted in Shriver, ibid., p. 16. Furthermore, Falwell has reproduced these statements on a parchment-like **Declaration of War**, signed by Falwell, and stamped with the "official" Seal of the "Old-Time Gospel Hour." See Perry D. Young, op. cit., p. 308.

⁶³Maureen Henry, **The Intoxication of Power: An Analysis of Civil Religion in Relation to Ideology** (Boston: D. Reidel Publishing, 1979), p. 47. Although Henry is describing the period between the First Great Awakening and the signing of the Constitution, it fits well into contemporary premillennialist rhetoric. In addition, evangelist-writer Hal Lindsey sees the European Economic Community as the incarnation of the 10-nation one world government of the Antichrist.

⁶⁴James Davison Hunter's analysis found only 30 per cent nationwide support for the platform of the Moral Majority. See Hunter, op. cit. (n. 46), p. 118. See additionally, Joseph B. Tamney and Stephen D. Johnson, "The Moral Majority in Middletown" in **Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion**, 1983, 22(2): 145-157; and James Davison Hunter, "Religion and Political Civility: the Coming Generation of American Evangelicals" in **Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion**, 1984, 23(4): 364-380. For a somewhat different analysis that suggests a substantial number of Americans favour repression of both left- and right-wing groups, see James L. Gibson, "Pluralistic Intolerance In America: A Reconsideration" in **American Politics Quarterly**, Vol. 14, No. 4, October 1986 267-293.

⁶⁵Bollier, op. cit., p. 284.

⁶⁶See also Exodus 23:32 and Corinthians 6:14.

⁶⁷Bollier, op. cit., p. 285. See also, in a work that more resembles science fiction than earnest speculation, Hal Lindsey, **There's A New World Coming: An In-Depth Analysis of the Book of Revelation** (Eugene, Or.: Harvest House, 1984).

⁶⁸Jewett, *op. cit.*, pp. 193-194.

⁶⁹*ibid.*, p. 21. See also, Deut. 7:2.

⁷⁰Jerry Falwell, *The Fundamentalist Phenomenon*, *op. cit.*, p. 213.

⁷¹Jerry Falwell, *Listen America!*, *op. cit.*, p. 106. Also, prominent ERA opponent and Eagle Forum founder Phyllis Schlafly apparently has said that “nuclear weapons are a gift from a wise God.”

⁷²Viguerie, *op. cit.*, pp. 109 and 114.

⁷³Edward L. Ericson, *American Freedom and the Radical Right* (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing, 1982), pp. 74-75.

⁷⁴See pp. 56-57 and notes 62 and 64.

⁷⁵Bollier, *op. cit.*, p. 283.

⁷⁶Lisa Myers, “Falwell Strives for Role as Political Kingmaker,” *The Washington Star*, July 3, 1980. See also Bollier, *ibid.* p. 285. The right-wing *Washington Star*, incidentally, was rumoured to have been owned by the Reverend Sun Myung Moon of the Unification Church.

⁷⁷Jerry Falwell, *Listen America!*, *op. cit.*, p. 98. See also Bollier, *op. cit.*, p. 285.

Additionally, Robert McAfee Brown, in analyzing *Listen America!* takes issue with Falwell’s fetish for militarism. He writes:

Thus, Falwell makes the choice clear: It’s either God — or weapons. And then he chooses ... weapons! Weapons on almost every page, God on page 106. Who(m) does he really trust? The only consistent thesis seems to be, ‘Yes, we can trust God to save us miraculously, if we turn back to Him, but just to be on the safe side, let’s arm ourselves to the teeth!’ Whatever that is, it isn’t trust in God.

See Robert McAfee Brown, “Listen, Jerry Falwell!” in *Christianity and Crisis*, December 22, 1980, vol. 40, no. 21, p. 364. Reprinted in Shriver, *op. cit.*, p. 62.

⁷⁸In *Holy Terror*, *op. cit.*, pp. 331-337, Conway and Siegelman write of the disturbing inroads fundamentalist Christianity has made in the American military. Interviewing a “Captain X” who held priority positions in strategic and tactical warning systems, the authors tell of his utter frustration in maintaining efficiency and a chain of command amongst “born again” servicemen in sensitive posts:

“A case came up involving a major who was a fundamentalist Christian,” [Captain X] began. “He had been through the Navigators’ training program and was very active in the base Christian community. In the course of a routine conversation, I asked him, ‘Suppose you found yourself in a situation where you were confronted with a potential global nuclear confrontation, and you were under extraordinary pressure and critical time requirements. How would you respond?’ And he smiled at me and said, ‘Well, if that ever came to pass, I would simply put my faith in the hands of the Lord ... I feel that basically I’m here because God wants me to be here. And whatever moves I make, that’s basically all in God’s design. It’s all in God’s will, and whatever happens is what Jesus has put in the Holy Spirit for me to enact.’” (p. 333)

⁷⁹David McKay, *Politics and Power in the U.S.A.* (Hammondsworth, England: Penguin Books, 1987), p. 15.

⁸⁰See, for instance, Reinhold Niebuhr, **Faith and Politics: A Commentary on Religious, Social and Political Thought in a Technological Age** ed. Ronald H. Stone (New York: George Braziller, 1968), pp. 139-164; and Michael Novak, **The Spirit of Democratic Capitalism** (New York: AEI/Simon & Schuster, 1982).

⁸¹See, James Buchanan, **Liberty, Market and State: Political Economy in the 1980s** (Brighton, U.K.: Wheatsheaf Books, 1986); Milton Friedman, **Capitalism and Freedom** (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1962); and F.A. Hayek, **The Constitution of Liberty** (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1960).

⁸²Michael Novak, "The Judeo-Christian Values That Characterize Economic Freedoms" in **The Future of Private Enterprise: Challenges and Responses Volume 1, 1984**, eds. Craig E. Arnoff and John L. Wood (Atlanta: Georgia State Univ., 1984), p. 8.

⁸³ibid., p. 15. See Proverbs 22:7: "The rich ruleth over the poor, and the borrower is the servant to the lender." Proverbs 22:29: "Seest thou a man diligent in his business? He shall stand before kings."; and Thessalonians 3:10: "... that if any would not work, neither should he eat."

⁸⁴ibid.

⁸⁵All three quotations from Bollier, op. cit., p. 296.

⁸⁶Jerry Falwell, **Listen America!** op. cit., p. 81.

⁸⁷Zwier, op. cit., p. 50.

⁸⁸Ronald Reagan, with Richard G. Hubler, **Where's the Rest of Me?** (New York: Korz, 1981), p. 298. Also reprinted in Wilbur Edel, **Defenders of the Faith: Religion and Politics from the Pilgrim Fathers to Ronald Reagan** (New York: Praegar Pub., 1987), p. 147.

⁸⁹Edel, ibid., p. 148.

⁹⁰See also, Ezekial 39, where the Soviet Union is today's Meshech and Tubal: Israel's enemies from the "north parts."

⁹¹In a 1987 Central Independent television documentary, "Thy Will Be Done," one Dallas theologian tells of his dismissal from W.A. Criswell's theological seminary because of a paper he submitted suggesting that the Bible makes it abundantly clear that the rich have an obligation to the poor. The program also revealed that Criswell's church, **First Baptist of Dallas**, gave, despite its millions of dollars in tax-exempt revenue, less than one-third of one per cent of its earnings to help the poor.

⁹²Reprinted in Shriver, op. cit., p. 25.

⁹³Bollier, op. cit., p. 124.

⁹⁴Ericson, op. cit., p. 58.

⁹⁵ibid., p. 60.

⁹⁶Mel and Norma Gabler, **Handbook No. 1**, (Longview, Tx.: Educational Research Analysts, 1981). Reprinted in Bollier, op. cit., p. 126.

⁹⁷Conway and Siegelman, op. cit., p. 118.

⁹⁸"Fundamentalists lose 'godless' books appeal." **The Vancouver Sun**, Feb. 22, 1988.

⁹⁹The creation-evolution debate will be explained in Chapter 4.

¹⁰⁰Conway and Siegelman, op. cit., p. 118.

¹⁰¹Bollier, op. cit., p. 125.

¹⁰²Judith Haiven, **Faith, Hope, No Charity: An Inside Look at the Born-Again Movement in Canada and the United States** (Vancouver: New Star Books, 1984), p. 177.

¹⁰³ibid., p. 180.

¹⁰⁴ibid. Here, author Haiven is quoting the A.C.E. introductory film. See also, Conway and Siegelman, op. cit., p. 117.

¹⁰⁵Jerry Falwell, **The Fundamentalist Phenomenon** op. cit., pp. 189 & 191.

¹⁰⁶Robert L. Soileau, "The Ethnocentric Nature of the Moral Majority" **Perspectives in Religious Studies** Spring 1985, Vol. 12, No. 1, p. 3.

¹⁰⁷Jerry Falwell's **Declaration of War** ends with his signature and this qualification: "With a firm mandate from God I fully commit The Old-Time Gospel Hour ministry in support of this Declaration of War."

¹⁰⁸Falwell, for instance, believes the reason for this is because "America has the largest percentage of born-again believers of any nation on earth." See Judith Haiven, op. cit., p. 56.

¹⁰⁹Shriver, op. cit., p. 59.

¹¹⁰Herbert W. Richardson, op. cit., p. 59.

¹¹¹Viguerie, op. cit., p. 136.

CHAPTER 4: Humanism and Science: The Battle for Truth

Christians, like slaves and soldiers, ask no questions.
— Jerry Falwell¹

The contention in the previous chapter that political control is the aim (or hidden agenda) of the Religious Right was supported by examining, and interpreting, several aspects of American political life. Certainly, an examination of military, economic, and educational policies illustrate the direction of conservative Christian aspirations, but only to a limited extent. In order to bring fully Truth to the political realm, all strands of social life must be incorporated into a complete meaning system bounded by religious faith. The much-desired shift to political conservatism can be considered complete only when the spiritual belief in Biblical inerrancy is sustained. Anything less is a denial of the revealed Truth of God.

To seek the answers for all things in the pages of the Bible is to raise the possibility of a closed ideological system where questioning, interpretation, and private beliefs are suspect. Even the human urge to nuance, subtlety, and metaphor in matters of faith are given little consideration. If, as the Religious Right contends, the Bible stands as the ultimate authority over human behaviour and aspirations, then those who seek answers elsewhere, whether by a different religious faith, or by more man-made premises, are indeed dangerous. To entertain seriously the notion that spiritual, political, and scientific thought need not be dependent upon the revealed Truth of Scripture is to remove Christianity from the public and intellectual affairs of men and women, confining it, impotently, to the sphere of private belief.

If religion is confined to the private domain, the loss in political legitimacy and power is obvious. Private belief does not exude a propensity for political and social control, does not publicly define implacable adversaries, and does not facilitate the premise that “different” is synonymous with “evil”² (at least on the political stage). The normative aims of democratic pluralism are maintained, or are at least tolerated in the best interests of society.

On the other hand, to view all public statements of a religious nature as suspicious is to deny the role

spiritual faith has played in democratic societies. Indeed, religion is and must continue to be a component of the public “face” of society. To deny avenues of public expression to religiously-informed positions is itself a denial of pluralism.

To some, this may appear to be typical liberal vascillation, an ambiguous tautology that satisfies no one. Yet, any move towards either side — complete (or mandatory) public acceptance of a particular religious view, or to keep religion confined to private utterances — is surely unsatisfactory. Both views are potentially dangerous, not only in themselves, but because an opponent of either view could easily be labelled with the dangerous term of “enemy.”

In their desire to make a particular form of Christianity the cornerstone of society, the Religious Right is quick to remind anyone that religion cannot only be a ritualized manifestation of private belief. God’s word must be spread, and in a society where decadent secular humanism is pervasive, the Word must be spread with an aggravated sense of alarm. The spectre of the “end-times” — the premillennialist view — offers no other recourse. James M. Dunn explains:

From the believer’s perspective there is no other choice. Not to take a stand in the political context is to support the [secular] status quo. To accept things as they are is to indicate either that one is satisfied with present policies, that the situation is hopeless, or that his religion has nothing relevant to say.

To fail to alarm another morally assures that one will remain morally asleep himself. There is no neutral ground in a vital, changing democratic society. To ‘stay out of politics’ or to assume a smugly superior pose as an independent above it all is itself an alignment with the forces of evil, a cheap cop-out.

Withdrawal from the world is a time-tested denial of religious realism, an evasion of ethical responsibility. Biblical truth must be fleshed out, incarnate. That means translating whatever one perceives to be revealed truth into contemporary terms, seeking proximate solutions with policies and candidates.³

Silence, to put it another way, implies approval of the moral relativism so common in the liberal perspective. If religious perspectives have nothing to add, or are shut out of the vicissitudes of contemporary society, then its power as a meaning system is lost. (Much of the Religious Right’s criticism of the ecumenical churches is also premised upon this rationale.) In the world of conservative Christianity, “public ideological zeal” (to repeat Will and Rhys’ phrase⁴) is itself an extension of Biblical Truth.

The obvious danger here is that political processes, which at least should be minimally accommoda-

tive, become partisan extensions of Biblical hermeneutics. The normative goal of defusing political and social conflict becomes secondary to the religious goal of aggressively spreading the Truth. As the **Christian Voice** “Moral Report Cards” have shown, what is politically desirable is indistinguishable from what is religiously demanded. (The creation versus evolution controversy, dealt with later in this chapter, is indicative of this view).

The desire to achieve what is “right,” i.e., what is morally correct, is preferred over the give-and-take of the democratic process. Discussing the theological orientations of the Religious Right, Hill and Owen address this important political and ethical premise:

The shape of [the Religious Right’s] thinking is an ‘ethic of the *right*’ rather than an ‘ethic of the *good*.’ This is a *prescriptive* manner of interpreting suitable behavior; what is written (*script*) comes first (*pre*), before anything else. This approach does not accredit questions such as: What is good for me, you, us? What do I want, need, think is best? Rather, it asks: What is the great law? What is True? Then an ethic of the *right* proceeds to deal with the crucial question, what is required of me and us? Whereas *good* is concerned with aspiration, hopes, goals, *right* speaks only of duty, obligation, obedience to authority. Nor is there any sense of ambiguity or dialectic ...in the [Religious Right’s] position. The notion that what is *good* may have some bearing on what is *right*, a standard mainline position, never occurs to such a mentality [Emphases original].⁵

Taking James Dunn’s and the Hill and Owen premises together, a picture emerges of a bloc certain in what is politically “right” reinforced and supported by what is Biblically “true.” Pragmatic i.e., democratic solutions to political-social problems are seen as largely unnecessary for two major reasons. First, the concept of compromise is anti-Biblical, and a sign of a diminution of faith; and second, pragmatic solutions tend to eschew ultimate Truth, obscuring what is “right” with the half- measure of democratic compromise.

When public policies become extensions of religious doctrine, the “ethic of the right” can be reinforced not only through selected passages of the Bible, but also through a vindictive identification process of different (i.e., “evil”) political, intellectual, or religious groups. Showing what it is not by pointing out gaping flaws in different groups’ orientations (and how those flaws are in fact “evil”), the Religious Right has found enemies at every turn. Operating on the assumption that those who do not believe in a strict Biblical inerrancy are by nature evil, the Religious Right has cut a dangerously wide path in its search for identifiable enemies. Since the very definition of what is “true” is premised upon an opposite — the untrue or evil — the existence of a large number of adversaries, real or imagined, is not surprising.

That foreign enemies are plentiful and ever-ready to topple America's freedoms practically goes without saying. It is the enemies *within*, however, which pose the greatest threat, and present the biggest challenge to the Religious Right. Evildoers from foreign shores are undoubtedly enemies; but Americans themselves who differ with the Religious Right are also traitors and conspirators.

Many Americans are regarded as such not only for their religious differences, but because of their political differences as well. While "mainstream" or ecumenical-liberal churches, and all non-Christian faiths⁶, are indeed suspect in matters of religious doctrine, the differences in political opinion are often more revealing. The common left-right, or conservative-liberal ideological clashes are, to be sure, telling. However, as all groups along the political spectrum lay claim to the same ethic of American patriotism, and to the "correct" interpretation of the Constitution, the Religious Right's explicit linkage of God and country renders all other competing claims to America's story suspicious and incomplete.

During the Reagan presidency, this fundamentalist linkage was "officially" recognized on numerous occasions. As the President himself once remarked,

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.⁷

Reagan's contention that religion and politics are related is, in the Western context, accurate, but only in a limited sense. Whether the connection can be made whereby contemporary political processes are always premised upon a certain religious morality should be viewed with scepticism. Also questionable is whether the notion that recognition of one's imperfection i.e., inherent sinfulness, is a prerequisite for democratic tolerance. Human imperfection is self-evident, but in the Religious Right's view (and presumably President Reagan's), such human failings can be ameliorated only through a personal conversion to Christ. The words of Jesus in **John 3:7** are absolute: "Ye must be born again." Consequently, human imperfection becomes a matter of degree: those who are "born again" are less imperfect than those who are not.

Since this personal conversion to Christ is based entirely on an individual's desire to accept the Truth, those who are not so easily convinced can hardly be trusted, and especially so in matters of political and social

policy-making. If politics is the process whereby public morality is to be premised upon Scripture, those who desire a separation of Christian morality and politics denigrate both.

As Robert Jewett explains, within the purview of the Deuteronomic Principle⁸ of a complete and righteous victory of a holy people over the “heathens,” “one resorts to mythic solutions to adversity.” As for the pre-eminent “mythic solution,” Jewett writes:

The first of these is the *betrayal theory*. If defeat has come to a righteous nation, it must be due to evil conspirators. Someone must have betrayed the cause, thus thwarting the natural rhythm in which goodness brings victory and sin brings defeat. All one has to do is find the traitors, eliminate the obstruction, and victory will once more be assured.⁹

Does defeat or sin come through contemporary liberalism’s betrayal of traditional Christian-American values? In defining what it is *not* through a vindictive identification process of “sinful” liberal enemies, it may be said, with some degree of accuracy, that the Religious Right is engaged in the dangerous game of promulgating virulent nationalism while actively disliking a large proportion of its fellow citizens. Those groups who hold a special danger and enmity for the plans of the Religious Right, secular humanists and evolutionists, are the subjects of the balance of this chapter.

i) **Secular Humanism: the evil religion.**

As stated throughout this thesis, secular humanism is the “catch-all” designation used by the Religious Right to describe anything that is vaguely liberal or separate from the tenets of religious morality. The term “secular humanism” itself is of very recent parentage, first mentioned by the U.S. Supreme Court in *Torcaso v. Watkins* in 1961.¹⁰ Defined briefly, secular humanism is a “naturalistic philosophy” which holds “that it is possible to lead a good life and contribute significantly to human welfare and social justice without a belief in theistic religion or benefit of clergy.”¹¹

It is not difficult to ascertain the enormous problems this definition presents to conservative Christians. At its heart, secular humanism is predicated upon the existence of an inherent (and universal) human morality; virtues such as compassion, justice, tolerance, and even love exist without recourse to

religious tenets and without belief in a supernatural deity. With some justification, the Religious Right contends that secular humanism is synonymous with moral relativism and this leads dangerously to moral breakdown and to societal decay.

Most eminent, self-proclaimed humanists come from the ranks of the intellegentia. They are a very tempting target indeed for the Religious Right. Officially, however, the American Humanist Association totals only 3,500 members, and are, therefore, much too small for any sustained attention and/or blame for moral laxity. Instead, the Religious Right has designated liberalism and liberals as the major proponents of humanist philosophy. By arbitrarily placing such a large and diverse group of people under the humanist rubric, the Religious Right has conferred upon humanism — and liberalism — something it never intended to be: a sectarian and evil creed grounded in dangerous “leftist” ideas.¹²

Although correct in their view that committed humanists see religion as a destructive myth, the Religious Right exaggerates the humanist perspective with wildly fantastic assertions. Convinced that secular humanists are openly hostile towards religion and traditional modes of moral behaviour, the Religious Right has conjured up an evil philosophy of almost unspeakable influence. Prominent fundamentalist Reverend Tim LaHaye puts humanism into this dark perspective:

The truth is, the major social ills of our day, such as the mass murder of 10 million unborn children since 1973, a \$5 billion annual porno business, rampant drug traffic, teenage promiscuity and unwanted pregnancies, venereal disease...the tragic breakdown of the family, and a catastrophic rise in crime, can all be laid directly at the door of secular humanism theories that reject God and His moral absolutes.¹³

If this is what humanism has wrought, then by any criteria, it is truly destructive. This is the point conservative Christians are trying to make. In reality, humanism does nothing of the kind. It does place human beings at the centre of their universe — so does Christianity and other monotheistic faiths, to a degree — but it does so solely on the rationale that only human beings can solve, and are responsible for, human failings.

Nevertheless, secular humanism represents for the Religious Right that “rootless, epistemological void”¹⁴ that is synonymous with contemporary liberalism: tolerance and a willingness to compromise, rather than issue strict moral absolutes. Although organizations such as the American Humanist Association

(AHA) do issue certain clear-cut moral strictures incorporating the Judeo-Christian ethic of the Ten Commandments, the Religious Right's attack upon humanism remains undiminished.

On moral-ethical grounds alone, the Religious Right has limitless objections to humanism. But in its attempt to raise the level of hyperbole against a moral enemy which can claim the intellectual high ground, the Religious Right has elevated (paradoxically) secular humanism from a moral-ethical philosophy to a religion. Since "religion" is faith premised upon absolute notions of Divine Truth, to ascribe such a position to secular humanism is curious logic indeed.

The Religious Right's underlying assumption here is that humanism not only challenges religious belief on moral-intellectual grounds, it actually replaces the authority of Christian Truth. By "masquerading" as the essence of pluralistic democracy, secular humanism, through such institutions as the Supreme Court, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), and the Department of Education, has accomplished the unthinkable: it has become "the most dangerous religion in the world."¹⁵

That this most dangerous "religion" is firmly entrenched in all government institutions, including the judiciary, is the Religious Right's greatest fear. In their failure (publicly, at least) to understand that democratic institutions and processes must be largely secular in nature, the Religious Right has reached the simplistic conclusion that secular humanism, the naturalistic philosophy pertaining to worldly things, functions as religious dogma. To contend that the heterogeneous strands of a pluralistic society should function in concert towards the mystical absolute Truth may be many things, but it is not democracy.

To repeat earlier propositions, traditional American values such as faith and a commitment to voluntarism are part of that political community which Tocqueville prized as a democratic institution, and which Durkheim sought to identify as a reality greater than itself. These values do not reflect a specific Christian religion. Rather, the entire value/meaning system itself is reflective of a commitment to pluralism which has been sanctioned and nourished by traditional religious values, and reinforced by the American Constitution. It is the democratic nature of the American tradition which negates (or should do so) the influence of any one faith. American political processes and institutions are (and have been), despite the Religious Right's contentions, avowedly secular.

This does not mean, as the Religious Right is quick to suggest, that "we are being controlled by a small

but very influential cadre of committed humanists who are determined to turn traditionally moral-minded America into an amoral, humanistic country.”¹⁶ As they have so often shown, the Religious Right misconstrues the concept of pluralistic democracy, clinging firmly to the belief that those institutions which are secular are somehow amoral and anti-Christian. For all their patriotic banalities supporting the cherished notion of personal and religious freedom, the Religious Right has lost sight of the fact that secularized, democratic institutions have helped to engender, not inhibit, those freedoms. By allowing for a plurality of competing viewpoints and philosophies, the democratic process ensures that personal religious beliefs remain inviolate.

There can be little doubt that the moral foundations of a democratic community are (or were) premised upon religious beliefs, and that religious faith helped to counter the potential excesses of democracy.¹⁷ However, it is also true that the absence of official recognition of any one faith by the state strengthened, rather than diminished, personal beliefs. Ironically, it is conservative Christianity itself that proves this conclusively: its growth, strength, and influence flourished because the liberal state remained impartial and, by extension, secular. In the absence of state recognition, all faiths could compete within the moral community.

This conception, writes Edward L. Ericson, is “[t]he virtue of the liberal humanistic tradition [which] lies in this very recognition of universal human experience.” Furthermore,

The liberal moral philosophy does not see itself as a closed ideology or insular morality standing in opposition to other traditions. Ethical universalism is the very essence of the liberal spirit. To be consistent in this belief, compassion and caring must extend to all our fellow beings; the moral feelings cannot be reserved for members of any one church, party, nation or race.¹⁸

If the Religious Right is indeed the heir to the American moral tradition in the modern age, then it obviously owes more to the tenets of liberal thought than it is willing to acknowledge.

As James Davison Hunter explains, conservative Christianity has played an influential role in American society because of the separation of church and state — “the *isolation of religion* from politics.” This isolation, i.e., the absence of state recognition of a particular faith, has further meant that, “[i]n spite of any ideological diversity and attendant hostilities, the civil society remains intact as long as all parties

agree to abide by the procedural norms of tolerance of opposing views, respect for civil liberties, and non-violent legally proscribed political action and dissent.”¹⁹ This assessment is analogous to Tocqueville’s contention that although religion is not an actual government institution, it is the pre-eminent *political* institution.²⁰ And, in further analogy that the Religious Right would no doubt consider heretical, *and* proof of the wickedness of secular humanism, this is similar to Marx’s idea of a “civil society” whereby social consciousness is split safely in to the public and private realms, allowing the state to exist in a natural way, free from the “private whim” of religion.²¹ Taking a somewhat different position, some commentators have suggested that liberalism and fundamentalism share a common ideology and social location: a concern with individual rights vis-a-vis the state, and a solid North American middle class outlook.²²

Applying a more specific label to the arch-enemy, James Davison Hunter has determined that the Religious Right’s political- moral campaign is being waged against a “structural fixture of all highly modern societies...’The New Class’.”²³ Generally well-educated and professionally trained, the New Class espouses the humanistic philosophy of the liberal tradition. This is not to say that most members of the New Class are not religious; Hunter states that many are indeed so. Politically, however, there is much more uniformity and a “world view” which suggests close ties to secular humanism. Hunter writes:

In the West, particularly in America, the social and political character of the New Class is predominantly, though not uniformly, left-liberal. This takes many forms: moderate hostility to monopoly capitalism, government interventionism in the private sector of the economy and the consequent expansion of public sector services, the collectivization of private property, and a liberal-reformist orientation to social and political issues in general.²⁴

Since a “liberal-reformist orientation” is synonymous with humanist evil, the Religious Right has attempted to make explicit connections between political beliefs and morality. As their political analyses tends towards the polemical, the Religious Right has eschewed more moderate forms of discourse, replacing it with what works well on a visceral level: semantic traps. The vast litany of “pro” and “anti” prefixes in the Religious Right’s lexicon can be highly effective not only because of its reductionism, but also for putting opponents on the defensive. If you are pro-choice on abortion, you are anti-family; if you are pro-nuclear disarmament, you are anti-defense; if you are anti-censorship, you are pro-pornography; and finally, if you are pro-liberal, you are anti-moral, and un-American.

These absolutistic uses of language, especially when used against opponents, usually means that subsequent discourse and debate is spent on demonstrating how “moral” and by extension, how “American” each side is.²⁵

Overall, the most important aspect of this battle to consider is whether secular humanists do control the social and political agenda in America. In short form, the answer is an unequivocal “no.” While it is true that the political institutions themselves are secular in nature, this must be seen as essential to a modern democracy, and not reflective of the personal beliefs of the people within them. The more controversial decisions of the Supreme Court (eg., **Roe v. Wade**) cannot be seen as the deliberate designs of “evil” men who place little value on the sanctity of life, but as legal decisions intended to preserve individual freedom from over-arching systems of control, be they government or certain moral-religious strictures. Similarly, certain directions taken by the public education system do not, as the Religious Right contends, reflect “godlessness” in educational principles. Removing school prayer from public schools is not tantamount to saying that God does not exist or has no value in children’s lives. What it is saying is that public institutions must remain neutral with regards to religious matters, and that religion in general is a voluntary and private, not a mandatory and public, commitment.

In any case, recalling **Gallup** data which found that eight of ten Americans profess to be Christian, and that over 90 per cent of the total population has a religious preference,²⁶ the chances of atheism making strong inroads into American social-political life are slim.

The Religious Right’s view of secular humanism dictates that certain political principles and attitudes are a barometer of religious commitment. There is, for example, a high correlation between the “liberal” political view and the lack of strong religious conviction. The more liberal (and the more accepting of secular democratic institutions) a person is, the more that person falls into the self-centred evil of atheistic humanism.

Although the more moderate voices of the Religious Right would deny it,²⁷ their facile linkage of liberalism with the evils of secularism demonstrates a marked distaste for the American democratic tradition. Measuring the “correct” political attitudes by the tenets of a particular Christianity is, by all accounts, what the Founding Fathers wished to avoid, and both the **Declaration of Independence** and **The Bill of Rights**

reinforce their wishes in unequivocal terms.²⁸

The more polemical views within the Religious Right make no attempt to conceal their hostility toward those they consider to be morally, and hence politically, suspect. While this may be considered “fair game” within the scope of democratic politics, their accompanying hyperbole should be regarded with scepticism. For example, Tim LaHaye states that “the humanists will accomplish their goal of a complete world takeover by the year 2000 ...[therefore] we must remove all humanists from public office and replace them with pro-moral political leaders.”²⁹

Apart from the insidious use of a semantic trap i.e., “pro-moral,” one must question who LaHaye’s “we” represents. Bible-believing Christians? New Right activists? Republicans? One suspects that in the effort to make their voices heard and to have their policies enacted, the Religious Right would have few reservations about subverting the democratic process.

What political-religious qualifications would satisfy the Religious Right’s insistence that those who hold office or shape public policy are morally sound? Undoubtedly, such qualifications would have to include beliefs in Biblical inerrancy and a limited role for government. (Limited in the sense that any government decision that conflicts with the conservative Christian view would not be enacted.) Or, to reiterate Hill and Owen’s approach, a morally sound government would adhere to an “ethic of the right” rather than an “ethic of the good.”³⁰

America’s most fundamental crisis, according to the Religious Right, is a crisis of morality. From modern education to the ongoing decisions of the Supreme Court, so-called “pro-moral” Americans have witnessed a disturbing political shift that has substituted the wisdom of the word of God for modern pluralist decision-making. Contemporary political society (or at least a small cadre of humanists), has eschewed the moral principle of absolute Truth in favour of a dubious democratic pluralism, and the sinister utopian overtones of internationalism.³¹ Any philosophy or religion which places ultimate responsibility for the human condition on intellectual capacity alone is a specious attempt to elevate man beyond his/her ability for making moral judgements.

An important element in the Religious Right’s attack on humanism is the belief that morality itself is a God-given concept. Without religious faith, human beings are bereft of any substantive moral direction.

We are incapable of formulating moral-ethical precepts such as those revealed to Moses in the **Ten Commandments** without Divine guidance. To leave us “on our own” to determine what are acceptable moral standards is so relativistic as to be immoral in itself.

However, the belief that God is constantly guiding an individual’s — and a nation’s — moral values must be balanced with a commitment to human responsibility for such values. With its emphasis on the “born-again” process, conservative Christianity (as their economic philosophies have shown), often seems to imply an abrogation of human responsibility³² and humanitarian considerations. In the Religious Right’s view, it would appear that the intensely personal experience of being “born-again” must also coincide with an unwavering hostility to “liberal” humanist values.

The crux of the humanist-Christian debate is, of course, the moral claim to political power. While humanists themselves do not have greater aspirations to political office than any other group, they do insist that political institutions and processes reflect pluralism and remain secular. Politics, in the humanist view, is not about Truth; it is a reflection of the need for compromise.³³ The concept of morality in society is indeed an integral part of political considerations, but morality must be based on human rationale and human needs, and not the strict tenets of a particular religion.

The Religious Right’s response to this position is contradictory. Publicly, their support for individualism and political freedom is unwavering. But in reality, such support begins and ends on the strength of one’s religious convictions i.e., it is determined by its compatibility with conservative Christianity. Anything beyond this — finding morality and political meaning outside this parameter — is “detrimental to the best interests of the human race.”³⁴

It is in the “best interests” of the human race, of course, to hold political views which do not conflict with a particular Biblical interpretation, and in the Manichean world of the Religious Right, there can be no other recourse. As Robert Zwier affirms, “[e]very government decision, no matter how trivial, is [for the Religious Right]...a moral decision because it distributes benefits to some and levies costs on others.”³⁵

The deeply-rooted conviction that political decisions are based on moral considerations is neither new nor unwarranted. What is of concern here is just how distorted this conviction becomes under the Religious Right’s moral reach. If every decision is to be a moral decision based on a particular faith, then Western

democracy's much vaunted tradition of political compromise is in jeopardy. For the Religious Right, politics has two major criteria to fulfill: it must institutionalize a certain Christian morality, and as a profane (earthly) extension of sacred Truth, it must identify both enemy and ally. This is the fallacy of the Religious Right's claim to political legitimacy: that politics can solve, in concert with religion, the "ultimate questions of life."³⁶

If politics can be a temporal enforcer of religious ethics, it can also be an effective transmitter of fear.

Charles Krauthammer explains that in their battles with secular humanists,

[t]he religious right...has chosen paranoia. It is a clever tactic. What otherwise would have been a shadowy struggle against a 500-year-old historical trend — secularization — is transformed into a crusade against a militant ideology controlled by vanguard of party activists — the humanists. A generation ago the pernicious sappers of our vital national juices were called "godless Communists." Now they are "secular humanists."³⁷

Is it an exaggeration to suggest that the Religious Right is really McCarthyism in contemporary form? Given that they lash out so vociferously and paranoiacally against their political-moral "enemies," perhaps the term, while facile, is accurate. Those who hold subversive, immoral philosophies can hardly be labelled anything as inoffensive as "political opponents."

To further suggest that a siege mentality permeates the Religious Right may also have merit. In the modern world of secular institutions and processes, the keepers of the true remnants of traditional American morality cannot ignore the religious "calling" of righteous indignation. To ignore the opportunity to fight back would be an admission of religion's failure to sustain its earthly importance. Religious belief is rendered meaningless with the absence of public expression and, it would seem, political viewpoints as well.

Max Weber wrote that "[t]he more a religion of salvation has been systematized and internalized in the direction of an ethic based on an inner religious state, the greater becomes its tension with an opposition to the world."³⁸ In their attempt to link political-social life to the tenets of conservative Christianity, the Religious Right has not only encountered, but may have created more enemies than reasonably thought possible. Their other prominent adversary (and humanist ally), the scientific community, will now be examined with regards to the evolution versus creation debate.

ii) **Evolution versus creation: science and pseudo-science.**

If natural science seems an unlikely subject for political discourse, it is because only rarely, in modern Western democracies, at least, is science regarded as something of an adversary by a particular political group. In the special and personal relationship with God which the Religious Right claims is uniquely theirs, a religious-scientific conflict may not be surprising, but given their quest for political power, it is cause for serious concern. As the Scopes “Monkey” trial of 1925 had demonstrated, a fundamentalist backlash against accepted scientific teachings is dangerous to both science and democratic politics.³⁹ The major concern here is not who holds the “acceptable” view of cosmological creation, but the dangerous political consequences inherent in attempting to make science conform to religious dogma.

The central question here rests on both origins and purpose: Is there a Divine design and reason for life? The first two chapters of Genesis certainly affirm this. Indeed, it is ultimately fitting that the first sentence of the Old Testament answers all questions of origin in profound and elegant simplicity: “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.” For the Bible-believing Christian, the theories of physics and biology are pointedly soulless and bleak.

Even the most facile questions of existence are addressed, as physicist Paul Davies says,

...from utterly different starting points. Science is based on careful observation and experiment enabling theories to be constructed which connect different experiences. Regularities in the workings of nature are sought which hopefully reveal the fundamental laws that govern the behaviour of matter and forces. Central to this approach is the willingness of the scientist to abandon a theory if evidence is produced against it...

In contrast, religion is founded on revelation and received wisdom. Religious dogma that claims to contain an unalterable Truth can hardly be modified to fit changing ideas. The true believer must stand by his faith whatever the apparent evidence against it. This ‘Truth’ is said to be communicated directly to the believer, rather than through the filtering and refining process of collective investigation. The trouble about revealed ‘Truth’ is that it is liable to be wrong, and even if it is right, other people require a good reason to share the recipients’ belief.⁴⁰

For the Bible-believing Christian, the revealed Truth serves a twin purpose. First, it transcends the secular theories of science, leaving the whole question of creation for the mysterious machinations of an omnipotent God. Second, it endows man with a sense of Divine purpose — a vitalism where life was created not by random self-organization and evolution of organic compounds,⁴¹ but through the deliberate designs of the

Creator. To deny both i.e., Truth and vitalism, is to deny the most crucial, and most mysterious, purpose of God.

Is such a dichotomy crucial to politics and political processes? If politics is Truth, as the Religious Right believes, then the “creationist” view of human origins is undeniably crucial to their entire political thrust. Political processes and attitudes are a reflection of the Divine design and purpose in human origins and human life. As the “organizing principle of reality itself,”⁴² God must loom large in the Religious Right’s public policies.

The Religious Right’s battle with scientific theories of evolution reached its most critical public presence in the state of Arkansas in March 1981, when then-Governor Frank White signed into law **Act 590: the Balanced Treatment for Creation-Science and Evolution Science Act**. Titles are telling, and **Act 590** clearly outlines the Religious Right’s clever (at least in a political sense) defense against the teaching of theories of evolution in public schools.

By describing evolution as just another “theory” perpetuated by the secular humanist scientific establishment, the Religious Right had attempted to obtain a “balanced treatment” in the teaching of creation. Hence, the **Genesis** account of creation became “Creation-science,” and evolution, “Evolution-science.” What is of particular importance here is the metamorphosis of the essence of Judeo-Christian belief into something thinly disguised as non-religious.

The intent was to conceal any religious motives by appealing to the moral sense of equal time for competing points of view. Lest anyone suspect that the real motive was purely the propagation of a certain religious viewpoint, **Genesis** was semantically altered in order to share the field with modern science. Fitting the absolute and unprovable Biblical creation of the cosmos into the questioning world of the natural sciences was a telling example of the Religious Right’s political acumen. But, as Gene Lyons wrote, “[t]he text of the law [Act 590] betrayed its intent at every turn.”⁴³

Section 4 of **Act 590** reveals its overall religious content:

- (a) ‘Creation-science’ means the scientific evidences for creation and inferences from those scientific evidences. Creation-science includes the scientific evidences and related inferences that indicate: (1) Sudden creation of the universe, energy, and life from nothing; (2) The insufficiency of mutation and natural selection in bringing about development of all living kinds from a single organism; (3) Changes only within fixed limits of originally created kinds of plants and animals;

(4) Separate ancestry for man and apes; (5) Explanation of the earth's geology catastrophism, including the occurrence of a worldwide flood; and (6) A relatively recent inception of the earth and living kinds.⁴⁴

What is, to repeat, more contentious here is not the altering of the heart of **Genesis** into dispassionate or “academic” language, but the ends for which such an alteration was to serve. To accept supernatural creationism as part of the “two-model approach” for the teaching of human origins in public school science classes is to debase both science and religion. Since **Genesis** can neither be proved or disproved (falsified), it exists, in the eyes of the Religious Right, as the unalterable Truth.

Any account of creation that begins and ends within six (literal) days of Divine machinations may be wondrous and mysterious, but it is not science. All available knowledge is complete, closed, and impervious to scientific refutation. One might go so far as to say that knowledge itself is rendered moribund in the face of such absolutes; further questioning, probing, and theorizing becomes unnecessary.

Duane Gish, a biochemist and associate director of the fundamentalist Institute for Creation Research (ICR) of San Diego, unintentionally illustrated the **Genesis-as-science** fallacy:

We do not know how God created, what processes He used, *for God used processes which are not now operating anywhere in the natural universe*. This is why we refer to divine creation as special creation. We cannot discover by scientific investigations anything about the creative processes used by God [Emphases original].⁴⁵

What Gish had done — inadvertently — was to set religion and science in their proper perspectives: the former as an unquestioning acceptance of the supernatural, and the latter as a rigorous process of investigation of natural phenomena.

Where then, do we “put” God vis-a-vis scientific explanations of the universe? If God's creativity is impossible to verify scientifically, then is God outside time? Did He create time i.e., the singularity that created the universe?⁴⁶ Or, is there a dual role to God: creating the universe and holding it “in being”?⁴⁷ These and other questions about origins are, unfortunately, usually regarded by the Religious Right as the esoteric meanderings of humanist physicists and biologists. “Acceptable” science is that which is firmly grounded in the revealed truth of **Genesis**, and ideally, that which postulates the notion of an Earth that is only thousands, not billions, of years old.⁴⁸ Acceptable politics, therefore, is the social- cultural reinforce-

ment of such Truth.

To the question of why religious beliefs should be shifted to school science classes, the research laboratory, and the radio telescope, the Religious Right's reply is a rather slippery one: since the "Big Bang," human evolution, and the concept of self-organization are theories that cannot be (or have not been) proven beyond doubt, they too must be based on a foundation of faith. That faith, not surprisingly, is secular humanism.

What the Religious Right has constructed here is a kind of closed loop where all "ungodly" scientific theories share a common dependence upon secular humanism:⁴⁹ all theories which offer natural laws of cosmic origin and evolution, regardless of evidence, are premised upon humanism's dismissal of God.

One *can* be an evolutionist and a Christian, and many scientists do hold this dual perspective. The view here maintains that *Genesis* is largely allegorical, and that the evolutionary theory of a 5-billion-year-old Earth is in keeping with the concept of God's "special creation."⁵⁰ To many in the Religious Right, however, such a view is in direct conflict with Biblical inerrancy. If the Bible is Truth, these so-called Christian evolutionists are doing little more than soft-peddalling humanist dogma. As prominent creationist Henry Morris explains,

One can be a Christian and an evolutionist just as one can be a Christian thief, or a Christian adulterer, or a Christian liar. It is absolutely impossible for those who profess to believe the Bible and to follow Christ to embrace evolutionism.⁵¹

With little or no room for interpretation and debate, even other Christians can be deemed "evil." The only "scientific" theories of evolution acceptable to the Religious Right are those based on the decidedly unscientific premises of Scripture; science indeed, cannot escape Truth.

Antithetical to the certainty of strong religious convictions, the processes of scientific investigation are propelled by a sense of doubt and rigorous self-examination. Science, to borrow Robert Wuthnow's description, is "a constructed reality" where the scientist's work is dependent upon "reality-maintaining activities."⁵²

Religion, while "real" in the Durkheimian sense that it exists,⁵³ also engages in forms of reality maintenance (eg. spreading the word of God as Truth), but with one crucial difference: the unalterable and

lasting truth of the Bible is the paradigm for all subsequent maintenance activities. Christian faith may have many forms of expression, but its canons of Truth are not subject to evolution or change. In Marx's own terminology, this is the epitome of the "inverted consciousness"⁵⁴ of religious belief, where humans are alienated from themselves by the other-worldly realm of religion.

Reflecting a sense of ennui and regret, Charles Darwin himself wrote:

I had gradually come...to see that the Old Testament from its manifestly false history of the world, with the Tower of Babel, the rainbow as a sign, etc., etc., and from its attributing to God the feelings of a revengeful tyrant, was no more to be trusted....I gradually came to disbelieve in Christianity as a divine revelation...Thus disbelief crept over me at a very slow rate, but was at last complete.⁵⁵

Just as Darwin did not intentionally set out to "destroy" God, it would be misleading to assume, as does the Religious Right, that today's scientists are the progenitors of an epidemic of humanism or (worse) atheism. While myths and legends may fall in the face of scientific explanation, it is too harsh an assessment to maintain that a scientist's purpose is to deliberately debunk religious faith.

This is not to say that science does not cast doubt upon the fundamental tenets of religious belief: it assuredly does. Natural explanations for previously unexplained i.e., supernatural phenomena are indicative of their opposing epistemologies. Science is built and maintained by observation, and at times, doubt. Religion is built and maintained by Divine authority and revelation. Both offer a "self-consistent model of reality,"⁵⁶ but only religion is entirely subjective and deeply personal.

The Religious Right's proposition that religious interpretations of origin belong in the world of science — enforced by legislation and/or court decision — may be the most telling evidence of their propensity to "fit" religion into every avenue of social, political, and scientific decision-making. By using the political-legal weight of the state to enforce such an interpretation, the Religious Right has again attempted to use political means to reinforce a religious truth. To refute the findings of accepted scientific research through Biblical hermeneutics has potentially dire implications for democratic politics, as well as science. Both could conceivably be reduced to rigid theological mechanisms whose only purpose is to support a conservative Christian state.

Equally important to consider in this controversy is the right of free speech. The Religious Right has

contended that Christian views of creation are at least as worthy as secular scientific theories and to deny access to religious interpretations of such is an abrogation of the right to speak freely. Denying access to religious views and interpretations is an abrogation of such a right, but the whole concept of free speech must be put into a reasonable context. Few would want to ban the creationist from public discourse; perhaps fewer still would accept it as science. As Canadian philosopher of science Michael Ruse has stated, "I don't want to ban Creation-science. Anyone who wants to can believe it and say it out loud...But not in the schools. Creation-science is religion and has no place in biology classrooms."⁵⁷

Ruse's comment illustrates one of the Religious Right's greatest failings: an inability to distinguish between what is religiously imperative and what is democratically possible. Freedom of worship is, and should be, considered an inalienable right unhindered by the state. In the same vein, scientific theories should be free from the supernatural premises of religion. When one indignantly imposes on the other, particularly via political processes, both lose their sense of value. It is not simply their view of evolution that the Religious Right desires for the country's science students, it is Christianity in general, and its conservative variants in particular. In order to carry the Religious Right's concept of freedom of speech to its logical contingency it would be interesting to engage in the possibility of an inverse proposition: scientists expounding on the logic of Big Bang theories, and theories of evolution, selection, and disorder in front of church congregations. (The cosmologies of totemic beliefs shared by many of the world's Aboriginal peoples should also be considered.)

Science, despite the Religious Right's contentions, is not theology, nor does it pretend to be. It does share with religion the search for the origins of the universe, of the creation and evolution of Earth, and in some instances, science searches for the complexities of the human "soul" by mimicking evolution and the emergence of complex forms.⁵⁸

This may seem, especially to conservative Christians, a deliberate intrusion of science into the unknowable world of Divine wisdom; in effect the purposive destruction of faith by bleak rationality. Science not only disputes the Genesis account of creation, but seeks to replace it with a specious cosmology of its own.

The crux of the dilemma is faith, and as Henry Morris says, the deterioration of moral values. "If I

lose faith with Genesis,” Morris states, “I’m afraid I’ll lose faith in the rest of the Bible.” And further, “No Adam, no fall; no fall, no atonement; no atonement, no Saviour. Accepting Evolution, how can we believe in a fall?”⁵⁹

The entire debate over creation versus evolution, or creation-science versus evolution-science, puts the Religious Right in a curious, even contradictory, position. By promulgating their own “scientific” theories — many of them borrowed from true science⁶⁰ — they are condoning scientific methods (of a sort) in the search for origins. But by basing such “science” solely on the premise that it does not conflict with Scripture, and that every theory must find its way back to an omnipotent Creator, the Religious Right is saying, in effect, that any science that fails to do this is sinful. We are left not with science, but with the Religious Right’s penultimate goal: everything must be subsumed under a particular moral-religious standard, and reinforced, if necessary, by political means.

According to one theologian, the Religious Right’s fear of “evolution-science” is not indicative of an anti-scientific bias, because “science, rightly understood, supports and confirms religious belief.”⁶¹ Science itself does not attempt to dispel God, only particular sciences do. The whole idea of “creation-science” is indicative of the Religious Right’s yearning to have the Bible accepted in the very frontiers of human knowledge and discovery.

The Religious Right may wish to legitimate its view of creation by adopting the scientific method as a way to reinforce and vindicate religious belief, but it does so erroneously. The Biblical account of creation is a religious tenet, not scientific theory. Unlike science, religion *requires* one to believe, and while disputes over interpretation do arise, the essential premise i.e., God created the heaven and the Earth, is beyond question and investigation. As compelling and majestic as *Genesis* is, it is not science.

The danger of the Religious Right’s “creation-science” lies in its political ramifications. Turning to the state in the hopes of having their “scientific” views legitimated, Religious Right poses a far greater threat to the political process than it does to science. Science, even evolution-science, is not about social control or the ethics of “right thinking.” Though not eminently compatible with one another, politics and religion, respectively, certainly are.

Can, or should we “mark off” religion, science, and politics from each other? Or, should all be

subsumed and practiced under the auspices of a single moral cosmology? By disguising the language of religious faith as a scientific theory enforceable in a court of law, the Religious Right has again demonstrated their disposition towards the latter.

On the other hand, a complete separation of the three is meaningless, if not impossible. They can be compatible and even complimentary, but only in the limited sense that each must be aware of its own boundedness, and of the danger inherent in extending its authority (not its viewpoints) into other areas.

This limitation is particularly difficult for a strong religious faith. As a transmitter of ultimate reality, and the “wonder of it all,”⁶² religion would seem to transcend abstract intellectual boundaries. But in order to preserve the integrity and structure of all three it is imperative to remember that religion is subjective morality, science is precision, and politics is the social activity of legitimate and limited secular authority. Each influences without (ideally) weakening the other’s sphere of control. Convinced that conservative Christianity is the moral arbiter of all social-intellectual activity, the Religious Right has raised serious questions about the nature and intent of their religious convictions.

On January 5, 1982, Judge William R. Overton of the United States District Court (Arkansas, Western Division), entered an injunction “permanently prohibiting enforcement of Act 590.”⁶³ Overton stated that “creation science is not science, [and] the conclusion is inescapable that the *only* real effect of Act 590 is the advancement of religion.”⁶⁴ The judge entered the injunction not because creationism is a religious belief, but because “creation science” is itself religion. Despite the Religious Right’s appeal for “balanced treatment” and the importance of maintaining a Bible-based faith in the act of creation (these battles have been taken to fifteen other states as well, but the Arkansas decision has significantly hampered the creationists’ cause⁶⁵), Judge Overton expressed the danger in making a political policy from a religious truth. It is fitting to end this section with his own words:

Whether the proponents of Act 590 constitute the majority or the minority is quite irrelevant under a constitutional system of government. No group, no matter how large or small, may use the organs of government, of which the public schools are the most conspicuous and influential, to foist its religious beliefs on others.⁶⁶

iii) Final Observations.

Is there, or should there be, one religious-political meaning system in American life? Or, as Phillip E. Hammond stated the question, "Once a society permits multiple meaning systems, does it cease to *be* a society?"⁶⁷ In keeping with the Religious Right's contention that America has a Divinely-inspired purpose, it is logical for them to view the competing (and amoral) perspectives of democratic pluralism as destructive and evil, and to see secular humanists and evolution scientists (among others) as sinister co-conspirators. Cohesion, completeness, and uniformity in the telling of a country's moral story should indeed point to a single transcendent purpose, but such a purpose never was, and never can be America's story. Such uniformity of purpose is analogous to mistakenly seeing politics itself as an ultimate Truth.

The Religious Right's yearning to restore an America that never was underscores their misunderstanding and/or misuse of the (admittedly) slippery concepts of freedom and democracy. These concepts have their limits of course, and it is the view of the Religious Right that modern society has dangerously exceeded them: traditional morality and self-control has all but disappeared. To abandon religious faith for the morally undisciplined world of modern pluralism is to lose the transcendent reality (to reiterate Durkheim's phrase) that defines a society's higher purpose.

Transcendent considerations aside, freedom and democracy, in the Religious Right's lexicon, have deceptive meanings. Freedom, if correctly understood in the Western perspective, has both negative and positive connotations. Negative freedom is essentially the absence of coercion or of undue restrictions placed on individuals by government authority. It is, in other words, "freedom from" coercion, arbitrariness, and suppression.⁶⁸ Positive freedom (sometimes called "real freedom" by liberal interpreters⁶⁹) holds that certain enlightened interventions by government — social programmes, for instance — are essential to achieve a balance between the necessities of individual growth and society as a whole. In their quest for political power, the Religious Right (although not the only group to do so) vacillates between both concepts of freedom, applying one or the other when convenient to do so, or conducive to political gain: disallowing prayer in public schools is unnecessary government intervention, while the legislative attempt to enforce the teaching of "creation science" is not.

The Religious Right's use of the term "democracy" is similarly fraught with contradiction and expediency. If American democracy means, to use Abraham Lincoln's famous passage from the Gettysburg Address, "government for the people by the people," it would imply at least a partial degree of pluralism, and a desire to ameliorate conflict. This is something that the Religious Right is often hesitant to accept, as "the people," at least in modern times, have a misguided commitment to a secularized pluralism. As the Reverend Jerry Falwell has stated, America today is at "the tyranny of a democracy"⁷⁰ because citizens have failed to recognize the sovereignty of God.

During election campaigns, however, the Religious Right seems far more accepting of the "tyrannical" democratic process, especially when it can mobilize voting support. When a chosen "moral" candidate wins a plurality of votes, "the people [or God] have spoken" quickly replaces the pejorative of democratic "mob rule."⁷¹

To be fair, one can at least say that the Religious Right adheres to the rules of the game, albeit with a dubious claim to the moral high road in political policy-making. All of which brings us back to two initial questions: Are religion and politics compatible? Is politics about Truth?

Tocqueville once wrote that "unbelief is an accident, and faith is the only permanent state of mankind."⁷² Has the modern process of secularization been an accident? Has American society lost or ignored its true "permanent state"? Any answer depends on what one is looking for. With growing divorce rates, increased crime, and a less than traditional sexual code, the obvious reply would be yes, American society has ignored its religious-moral base. But, with so many Americans claiming to be "born-again" Christians,⁷³ not to mention the stunning electoral success of the "new" traditionalist GOP in 1984,⁷⁴ it would appear that conservative Christian morality is in a robust state. The most reasonable answer to this dichotomy is anathema to the Religious Right. Religion has lost much of its public moral suasion because politics is not Truth, and a democratic, plural society cannot confine itself to a particular religious perspective. Indeed, the very meaning of democratic politics itself — the will of the majority balanced by respect for minority views and needs — would be lost under the auspices of such rigid control. "Might makes right" is a dangerous value to bring into the democratic arena. An "ethic of the right" based on a single religious Truth can be equally damaging.

This is not meant to imply that politics and/or society should turn away from all Judeo-Christian values, nor does it suggest that the considerable number of conservative Christians have no political worth or influence. What it does suggest is that neither should be considered impervious to other points of view, and that the moral certainty which accompanies strong religious faith cannot find a perfect “fit” in a pluralistic society.

One possibility to consider in this seemingly intractable dilemma is neither wholly political nor religious. It is what George Armstrong Kelly has called the influence of the “intervening area [of an] ‘other-regarding’ morality.”⁷⁵ As systems of control, “politics and religion meet in the field of public morality,”⁷⁶ and both command suitable forms of conviction: faith and piety for religion, loyalty and allegiance for politics.⁷⁷ This does not mean that truth in the profane realm of politics is analogous to the sacred Truth of religious faith, but it does suggest a commonly-shared basis of moral decision-making. It reflects, as A.H. Somjee has suggested, the need for a universalistic “public minimum,” whereby “political society *qua* political society...[can] evaluate and judge the conduct of individuals, groups, officials, institutions, and corporations in public life.”⁷⁸

This concept of a “public minimum” (including also, a “moral minimum”) in political life allows for the consideration of “the rule of law, basic freedoms, electorally mandated authority”⁷⁹ — universalistic prerequisites to the democratic process — to be maintained in the face of potentially undemocratic tendencies. While Somjee’s concept finds its most potent application in developing countries, a public-moral minimum, though long-accepted in Western societies, could satisfy both the need to maintain the secularity of political institutions, and allow for the considerable validity of religiously-influenced moral criteria.

Political decisions, as pragmatic necessities of the profane, cannot, however, be likened to religious decisions in the strictest sense. Both share a common moral premise i.e., the Judeo-Christian heritage, but politics is the secularization of that heritage.

Faith and piety are prerequisites for religious belief. They are mental abstractions which reinforce the certainty of a revealed Truth and/or final destinations. Politics, in some ways abstract in itself (e.g., ideologies and philosophies), is neither eschatological, nor premised on notions of *absolute* good.⁸⁰ Politics, to repeat Herbert Richardson’s phrase, “allows persons and groups that have different aspirations to live

together in relative peace and cooperate in limited ways for the sake of specific *finite* benefits” [Emphasis added].⁸¹ In the “less than ideal”⁸² world of government and politics, there can be no revealed Truth, and no final destiny of salvation. The profane world asks for cooperation and (ideally) a sense of fairness to ameliorate the vicissitudes of this life. While certain political decisions may indeed be premised upon moral “givens,” in the absence of Truth they cannot be religious. To argue otherwise is to subject democratic politics to the dangers of Messianism.⁸³

Most, if not all countries have political “messiahs” (of a sort), and certainly the United States is no exception. (With regards to conservative Christians, Ronald Reagan comes quickly to mind.) What the Religious Right desires for America is, of course, *the* (or their) Messiah — the divine Christian Trinity of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit — to lead the country out of sin, and to establish a political order based on infallible Scripture.

As this thesis has shown, few events or intellectual premises of political life escape the Religious Right’s interest or condemnation: secular humanism, science, and democratic pluralism all carry connotations of immorality, and ultimately, of “godlessness.” Even more disturbing, in terms of politics and power, is how easily these facets of the profane are deemed to be “un-American” as well as sinful.

This connection — godliness-is-American — is the crucial element in the Religious Right’s political rebirth. Ironically, this connection seems to point to a condition the Religious Right (publicly, at least) finds anathema: more state control in the lives of citizens. Religious Truth requires constant reinforcement and maintenance, and if society is shifting away from such Truth (e.g., as evolution science has shown), the desired religious order can only be maintained by a re-alignment of the political order. The state must be made to reinforce Truth in order to save human beings from themselves, and to (re)turn society to a path of righteousness.

If political order and a particular religious order are mutually reinforcing, does this mean that the Religious Right seeks to be the power behind both? As the liaison between the one, true God and society, as well as the sole exponents of American traditionalism and patriotism, the response can only be yes. Torchbearers of the Truth are not amenable to the give-and-take of interpretation, debate, and accomodation. Politics, as the most influential earthly means to power and purpose, are seen as a means to such Truth.

Two of the most prominent members of the Religious Right leave little room for ambiguity. “A politician,” says Jerry Falwell, “as a minister of God, is a revenger to execute wrath upon those who do evil.”⁸⁴ Former Republican presidential candidate and founder of “The 700 Club,” Marion (Pat) Robertson, puts the Religious Right’s political perspective in less emotional, but equally dangerous terms. “The Constitution of the United States,” he said, “...is a marvelous document for self- government by Christian people.”⁸⁵

If nothing else, these statements leave little room for speculation upon the conservative Christian’s rightful place in American politics. Is a “Christian America” a potential reality? The concluding chapter which follows addresses this crucial question.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 4.

¹Quote taken from Judith Haiven, **Faith, Hope, No Charity: An Inside Look at the Born Again Movement In Canada and the United States** (Vancouver: New Star Books, 1984), p. 55.

²I am here alluding to a previous definition of private belief which is not *publicly* political, and is more ecumenical in outlook. See Chapter 2, pp. 22 and 25.

³James M. Dunn, "Religion And Politics: A Proper Mix" in **Perspectives in Religious Studies** Vol. 13, No. 2, Summer 86, p. 152.

See also Samuel 2:9: "...and the wicked shall be silent in darkness...".

⁴See Chapter 2, p. 33, and End note 56.

⁵Samuel S. Hill & Dennis E. Owen, **The New Religious Political Right In America** (Nashville: Abingdon, 1982), p. 39.

⁶Although the Religious Right is an unequivocal supporter of a strong Israel, it remains somewhat tentative in its acceptance of Judaism. Those Jews — 144,000 to be exact — who return to the Holy Land and gather together the scattered tribes before Armageddon commences are guaranteed eternal salvation (see Revelation 7).

Also, author Judith Haiven, in her interviews with leading fundamentalists, relates that the single common response to her Jewish faith by these men was a patronizing, "you are one of God's Chosen people, did you know that?" *op. cit.*, p. 38.

⁷Office of the Federal Register, **Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents**, 2 September, 1984, vol. 20, p. 1161. See also Wilbur Edel, **Defenders of the Faith: Religion and Politics from the Pilgrim Fathers to Ronald Reagan** (New York: Praegar, 1987), p. 155.

⁸See Chapter 3, p. 57.

⁹Robert Jewett, **The Captain America Complex: The Dilemma of Zealous Nationalism** (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1973), p. 225, both quotations. See also Richard Hofstadter, **The Paranoid Style in American Politics and Other Essays** (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1966).

¹⁰**Torcaso v. Watkins**, 367 U.S. 488,495 (1961). Eminent humanist Corliss Lamont describes the court's decision:

In 1961 the U.S. Supreme Court took official cognizance of religious Humanism in the case of Roy R. Torcaso, a Humanist who was refused his commission as a Notary Public under a Maryland law requiring all public officers in the state to profess belief in God. In delivering the unanimous opinion of the Court that this statute was unconstitutional under the First Amendment, Justice Hugo L. Black observed: "Among religions in this country which do not teach what would generally be considered a belief in the existence of God are Buddhism, Taoism, Ethical Culture, Secular Humanism and others."

See Corliss Lamont, **The Philosophy of Humanism** 6th ed., rev. (New York: Frederick Ingar Pub., Co., 1982), p. 24.

¹¹Paul Kurtz, *In Defense of Secular Humanism* (Buffalo: Prometheus Books, 1983), p. vii.

¹²In actuality, the closing paragraph of *Humanist Manifesto II* (1973) states that “Destructive ideological differences among communism, capitalism, socialism, conservatism, liberalism, and radicalism should be overcome.” Even with this disclaimer however, this is precisely the type of “one-world-ism” that the Religious Right abhors.

See Kurtz, *ibid.*, pp. 39-47 for the full *Manifesto II* text.

¹³San Diego Union, August 30, 1981. Reprinted in David Bollier, *Liberty & Justice For Some: Defending a Free Society from the Radical Right's Holy War on Democracy* (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1982), p. 102.

¹⁴George Johnson, *Architects of Fear: Conspiracy Theories and Paranoia in American Politics* (Los Angeles: Jeremy P. Tarcher, Inc., 1983), p. 170.

¹⁵Lamont, *op. cit.*, p. xi. Lamont is here quoting an unnamed source from the *Moral Majority*.

¹⁶Tim LaHaye, “What Every Christian Should Know About Humanism” n.d. Reprinted in Bollier, *op. cit.*, p. 98.

¹⁷Excesses of, for instance, the French Revolution which, according to Ralph H. Gabriel, fell into disrepute among many Americans at that time. It was the Puritan ethic of “work, sobriety, self-restraint and the renouncing of frivolity” which held the early American communities in check. See Ralph H. Gabriel, *American Values: Continuity and Change* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1974), pp. 128-129.

¹⁸Edward L. Ericson, *American Freedom and the Radical Right* (New York: Frederick Ungar Pub. Co., 1982), p. 108, both quotations.

¹⁹James Davison Hunter, “Religion and Political Civility: The Coming Generation of American Evangelicals” in *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 1984, 23(4): p. 365.

²⁰See p. 5 of this thesis, and note 3 of Chapter 1.

²¹Karl Marx, “On the Jewish Question” in James Davison Hunter, *op. cit.*

²²See, for instance, Tyron Inbody, “The Common Ground of Liberals and Fundamentalists” in *Perspectives In Religious Studies*, Fall 1986, Vol. 13 No. 3: 197-206.

²³James Davison Hunter, *American Evangelicalism: Conservative Religion and the Quandary of Modernity* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1983), p. 107.

²⁴*ibid.*, pp. 108-109.

²⁵The most telling examples of this were the television commercials sponsored by *People for the American Way*, an organization founded by television producer Norman Lear to counter the Moral Majority's attack on “indecent” prime-time television programming. Despite their heavy emphasis on the benefits of pluralism, the advertisements, according to Judith Haiven, “...stooped to the level of the Moral Majority. Running through the television pieces was a powerful appeal to that lowest common denominator of American life — national chauvinism.” See Haiven, *op. cit.*, p. 52.

²⁶See George Gallup, “Religion In America” in *Annals, American Academy of Political and Social Sciences* (AAPSS) 480, July 1985, p. 168, and Constant H. Jacquet, Jr., ed. *Yearbook of American and Canadian Churches* 1986 (and 1987 editions). (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1986), p. 282.

²⁷See for instance, Jerry Falwell's comments entitled "What Moral Majority Is Not" in Jerry Falwell, ed. **The Fundamentalist Phenomenon: The Resurgence of Conservative Christianity** (New York: Doubleday & Co., 1981), pp. 191-192.

²⁸See Chapter 3, endnotes 58 and 59.

²⁹LaHaye's comments reprinted in Flo Conway and Jim Siegelman, **Holy Terror: The Fundamentalist War on America's Freedoms in Religion, Politics and Our Private Lives** (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday and Co., 1982), pp. 129-130.

³⁰See endnote 5.

³¹See Appendix III: excerpts from **Humanist Manifesto II**.

³²Conservative Christianity's adherence to the concept of being "born-again" (John 3:3) appears to be, ironically, just such an abrogation. By confessing to one's inherent sinfulness, the underlying premise seems to be that "all will be forgiven." Responsibility for earthly actions, therefore, are relinquished to the will of God. The most blatant examples of this are the Jim Bakker and Jimmy Swaggart sex and money scandals, where the two men simply acknowledged their sins and, since they were already "born again", were apparently forgiven.

³³It would be misleading to state that only committed humanists hold this view. Many Christians do so as well.

³⁴So says Cal Thomas, the former vice-president for communications for Moral Majority, Inc. **The New York Times**, May 20, 1981. Reprinted in Bollier, op. cit., p. 104.

³⁵Robert Zwier, **Born Again Politics: The New Christian Right in America** (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1982), p. 127.

³⁶See Chapter 3, endnote 111.

³⁷Charles Krauthammer, in **The New Republic**, June 25, 1981. Reprinted in Bollier, op. cit. p. 104.

³⁸Max Weber, **The Sociology of Religion** Ephraim Fischhoff, trans. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1963), p. 207.

³⁹It is also dangerous, as many non-conservative Christians would attest, to religion itself.

⁴⁰Paul Davies, **God and the New Physics** (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1983), p. 6.

⁴¹*ibid.*, p. 68. On the issue of spontaneous organization, or "dissipative structures" in chemical compounds, see Ilya Prigogine and Isabelle Stengers, **Order Out Of Chaos: Man's New Dialogue With Nature** (Toronto: Bantam Books, 1984).

For an examination of political life as a complex of self-organizing structures, see Laurent Dobuzinskis, **The Self-Organizing Polity: An Epistemological Analysis of Political Life** (Boulder, Co.: Westview Press, 1987).

⁴²Charles P. Henderson, Jr., **God and Science: The Death and Rebirth of Theism** (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1986), p. 16.

⁴³Gene Lyons, "Repealing The Enlightenment" in **Harper's Magazine**, April 1982. Reprinted in Ashley Montagu, ed., **Science And Creationism** (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), p. 354.

⁴⁴Act 590 of 1981, "Balanced Treatment for Creation- Science and Evolution-Science Act". Ark. Stat. Ann. 80-1663, et seq. (1981 Suppl.).

⁴⁵Duane T. Gish, *Evolution? — The Fossils Say No!* (San Diego: Creation-Life Publishers, 1972). Reprinted in Michael Ruse, "A Philosopher's Day In Court" in Montagu, op. cit., p. 331.

⁴⁶Paul Davies, op. cit., pp. 44-45.

⁴⁷ibid., p. 45.

⁴⁸This concept of an impossibly young Earth — between 6,000 and 10,000 years old — is derived from counting the generations from Adam and Eve through to the Exodus of the Israelites from Egypt. Therefore, from God's creation of man on the sixth (literal) day to the Exodus (circa 1450 B.C.) is a time-span of approximately 4,000-8,000 years. This is assuming, incidentally, that the ages of such pivotal figures as Methuselah, Noah, and Abraham are also true: their ages were 969, 950, and 175 years respectively.

⁴⁹See Davies, op. cit., pp. 47-48, whereby the existence of God can be explained in this way.

⁵⁰See Derek Burke, ed., *Creation and Evolution* (Leicester, U.K.: Inter-Varsity Press, 1985).

⁵¹H.M. Morris, *King of Creation* (San Diego: Christian Literature Press, 1980). Reprinted in R.J. Berry, "Response to V. Wright" in Derek Burke, op. cit., p. 131.

⁵²Robert Wuthnow, "Science and the Sacred" in Phillip E. Hammond, ed., *The Sacred in a Secular Age: Toward Revision in the Scientific Study of Religion* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), pp. 194-195.

⁵³See Chapter 1, endnote 44.

⁵⁴ibid., endnote 19.

⁵⁵Charles Darwin, *The Autobiography of Charles Darwin* Nora Barlow, ed. (London: Collins, 1958), pp. 85-87. Additionally, Charles Henderson Jr. op. cit., pp. 42-62 for an interesting assessment of Darwin's work and his crisis of faith.

⁵⁶Willard Young, *Fallacies of Creationism* (Calgary: Detselig Enterprises, 1985), p. 115.

⁵⁷Michael Ruse, "A Philosopher's Day In Court" in Ashley Montagu, op. cit., p. 333-334.

⁵⁸See "Computers look for the soul" in *The Vancouver Sun*, Oct. 3, 1987, p. B3. This article examines scientific research in evolution by use of computer generated (i.e., artificial) "self-replicating automata."

⁵⁹Taken from Ray Ringer, *Six Days or Forever?* (Oxford: The University Press, 1958), p. 111 & p. 63, respectively. Reprinted in Robert Root-Bernstein, "On Defining A Scientific Theory" in Montagu, op. cit., p. 81.

⁶⁰As Willard Young says, "...the Creationists acquire virtually all scientific facts and data which they use to support their own position from the very sciences whose validity they reject, such as biology, geology, astronomy, and physics. Apparently the Creationists believe these sciences are valid enough when they are used to support Creationism, but are erroneous when they support evolution." See Young, op. cit., p. 137.

⁶¹Harvey Cox, *Religion in the Secular City: Toward a Postmodern Theology* (New York: Touchstone Books, 1984), p. 54.

⁶²Young, *op. cit.*, p. 116.

⁶³**McLean v. Arkansas** (E.D. Ark. 1981). Reprinted in its entirety in Montagu, *op. cit.*, pp. 365-397.

⁶⁴*ibid.*, p. 388.

⁶⁵Although Louisiana and Mississippi passed virtually the same legislation, Gene Lyons says that, “[u]ltimately, the creationists cannot prevail in the courts. Now that the scientific community and the educated public are aroused by the Little Rock spectacle...”. See Montagu, *ibid.*, pp. 362-363.

⁶⁶*ibid.*, p. 392.

⁶⁷Phillip E. Hammond, “Pluralism and Law in the Formation of American Civil Religion” in Robert N. Bellah and Phillip E. Hammond, **Varieties of Civil Religion** (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1980), p. 144.

⁶⁸See, for instance, F.A. Hayek, **The Constitution of Liberty** (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1960).

⁶⁹Robert F. Nixon, “A Definition of Liberalism” in **Politics: Canada**, Paul W. Fox and Graham White, eds. (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1987), p. 382.

⁷⁰See Chapter 3, endnote 53.

⁷¹There is an added contradiction here. If democracy means the tyranny of “mob rule”, why is there only a “small cadre of committed humanists” running governmental institutions? See Chapter 3, endnote 16.

⁷²Alexis de Tocqueville, **Democracy In America, Volume 1** (New York: A.S. Barnes & Co., 1856), p. 338.

⁷³See Chapter 3, endnote 9.

⁷⁴The GOP’s changes under presidential candidate George Bush will be assessed in Chapter 5.

⁷⁵George Armstrong Kelly, **Politics and Religious Consciousness in America** (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Books, 1984), p. 249.

⁷⁶*ibid.*, p. 264.

⁷⁷*ibid.*, p. 265.

⁷⁸A.H. Somjee, **Parallels And Actuals Of Political Development** (London: The Macmillan Press, 1985), p. 124.

⁷⁹*ibid.*

⁸⁰I do not mean “good” in the sense that Hill and Owen used the term to differentiate between the Religious Right’s “ethic of the right” and the politically desirable “ethic of the good.” “Absolute good” here means the perfect state of good as exemplified by the life of Jesus. See Chapter 4, endnote 5.

⁸¹See Chapter 3, endnote 111.

⁸²Peter Hinchliff, **Holiness And Politics** (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1982), p. 187.

⁸³On this notion, see Hill and Owen, *op. cit.*, pp. 152-153.

⁸⁴Jerry Falwell, **Listen, America!** (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Company, 1980), p. 98. See also, Conway and Siegelman, *op. cit.*, p. 73.

⁸⁵Pat Robertson, "700 Club" broadcast, December 20, 1981. Reprinted in Bollier, *op. cit.*, p. 258.

Chapter 5: The Religious Right and Political Control

But surely it is not legitimate to assume that in the order of the Universe, whatever is desirable is true. Optimism, even when a God is already believed in, is a thorny doctrine to maintain....

— J.S. Mill¹

This thesis began with four profound thinkers who, despite their theoretical and philosophical differences, recognized the importance of religious faith in the mundane world of the social-political. With regards to the Religious Right, perhaps the most important of the four is Tocqueville. It is his analysis which best captured the power and, more importantly, the paradox of strong religious beliefs in the fragile world of democratic politics. His “first institution” thesis, where religion takes no *direct* part in government, but is nevertheless the preeminent political institution,² heralded an important theoretical premise:

Every religion is to be found in juxtaposition to a political opinion, which is connected with it by affinity. If the human mind be left to follow its own bent, it will regulate the temporal and spiritual institutions of society upon one uniform principle; and man will endeavour...to harmonize the state in which he lives upon earth, with the state he believes to await him in heaven.³

Tocqueville’s understanding of this religious-political “affinity” was to view religion as a restraint against the possible excesses of democratic politics. Religion provided society “inner controls of morality” which helped to maintain secular, democratic institutions and processes.⁴ Religion regulates democratic processes by personal moral convictions, but it should not, in Tocqueville’s view, come to possess them.

This boundedness, or limit, to religion’s influence upon politics is admittedly a slippery abstraction. On one hand, religion’s well-defined moral strictures are seen as useful to politics. On the other hand, however, religion’s usefulness in the morally-diverse world of politics must have limits. Where, we must ask, can the lines be drawn?

Strong religious convictions are not given to half-measures or a “pick and choose” model of usage.

It would be difficult to convince a conservative Christian that while his/her moral standards are admirable in the home and church, they are only *partially* useful to the broader world of politics. Indeed, much of the thrust to the Religious Right's political rebirth is predicated upon the view that there can be no distinction or picking and choosing of certain religious-moral standards to suit prevailing political whims. If religious discipline, as Tocqueville observed, nourished the concepts of freedom and democracy, then religion should remain applicable to every political-social contingency, not merely as an opaque, emaciated "guide."

The America of Tocqueville's time (and of Marx, Durkheim, and Weber's as well) is, obviously, vastly different than the America of today. But, while political theories, institutions, and processes change, the essence — the "core belief" — of religious faith does not.

Politics, by its very nature, means finding stability in the midst of inevitable change. It seeks not Truth, but consensus. The moral nature of certain political decisions may indeed be premised on religious morality — even to the point of overlapping. Seeking Truth however, is well beyond the competence of politics, and perhaps even individuals.⁵

Religion is built upon received wisdom and revelation. Where politics is tentative and consensus-seeking, religious certainty "is the certainty of *faith*,"⁶ and an expression of the final destination, be it heaven or hell, that awaits everyone. Their incompatibility lies in their divergent epistemologies: religious doctrine and practices lead to the ultimate cosmological Truth; politics (merely) offers possible solutions to possible instabilities.

The obstacle here, despite epistemological differences, is not a matter of total incompatibility: religion has bequeathed to politics certain moral strictures. Rather, it is a matter of what can be realistically achieved in a pluralistic society. Theologian Peter Hinchliff explains:

But no Christian, whatever his view of fallen men — *because* of his view of fallen man—can ever allow the pursuit of a political programme (revolutionary, monetarist or collectivist) to become an absolute good. For human society *will not* become perfect. Those committed to the most idealistic programme will either be crushed by an intolerable burden of guilt for the corporate sinfulness of society—in which they share but cannot eradicate—or they will project their guilt, in the form of hatred, upon those whom they identify as the enemies of justice, freedom or brotherhood. That is always the danger in political theology, of whatever kind.⁷

Religion seeks an absolute good (or an “ethic of the right” to repeat Hill and Owen); it seeks, via the Bible, an exclusive human ideal, not just among individuals, but communities and even “righteous nations” as well. It is a task politics cannot hope to emulate in the profane world.

The Religious Right’s attempts to “fit” (or force) Christian faith to democratic politics reveals deep misunderstandings of both. But even more contentious is how the explicit symbols of that faith — the Bible, Christ and eternal salvation — are used to alter the social activities of society. Equally contentious is the concept of distorting the abstract symbols and temporal policies of civic society so that they may reflect a particular religious cosmology: patriotism is “godly”, the Constitution is Divinely-inspired, and military might is Christian are dangerous and misleading distortions of national symbolism and civic policy. “Creedal passions,” as Samuel Huntington⁸ calls this religious-political connection, is a dominant tradition in American society. It is, as Tocqueville, and many others since have noted, a major element in the “American way of life.” As the most visible expression of this connection, the successes, failures and the future of the Religious Right in America are the subjects of this concluding chapter.

i) **Ronald Reagan and the Religious Right**

Clearly, the Reagan years were the most successful in bringing the Religious Right’s policies for public attention. During those eight years, the President himself has been publicly aligned to the conservative Christian (and New Right) platform of less government, lower taxes, support for prayer in schools, anti-abortion, hawkish military policies, and sustained attacks against “modern-day secularism”⁹ and communism. Of course, this high-profile approval of such policies was reciprocated by Reagan’s near-monopoly of conservative Christian electoral support: fully 80 per cent of White “born-again” Christian voters supported the President in 1984, up 17 per cent from 1980.¹⁰

Despite the President’s own success in 1984 (with the vigorous support of the Religious Right), the Republican Party in Congress did not reflect the Reagan “sweep.” The GOP had gained only thirteen seats in the House of Representatives, and had actually lost two seats in the Senate.¹¹

In the most important arenas of influence in national policy-making and political life — the Congress

and the courts — support for much of the Religious Right's programme has been less than impressive. The Congress has still refused to support a Constitutional amendment allowing voluntary school prayer, the Supreme Court has not (yet) changed its position on **Roe v. Wade**, and the United States District Court (Arkansas) ruling banning the teaching of "creation-science" in public schools has not been appealed.¹² Although it would be misleading to underestimate the influence of the President for the propagation of conservative Christian views i.e., espousing the high moral ideals of "traditional" America, the salience of the Religious Right's policies have not been matched with high public or political acceptance. (If anything, Congress has only given symbolic recognition to things religious, for instance, allowing the President to declare 1983 as the national "Year of the Bible."¹³)

Despite (or in spite of) these legislative defeats, the President himself has often alluded to the moral laxity of his opponents. Criticizing Democratic Party economic policies during his Administration, Reagan stated:

If our opponents were as vigorous in supporting our voluntary prayer amendment as they were in raising taxes, maybe we could get the Lord back in our schoolrooms and get the drugs and violence out.¹⁴

By aligning himself — if only symbolically — with the Religious Right, the President may have given to conservative Christianity a nominal "moral," if not legislative, political victory. In the telling of America's transcendental story — a "Christian America" — Ronald Reagan has been the most important exponent of the Religious Right's cosmology.

ii) **Into the unknown: the Religious Right and President Bush**

While registering an impressive victory over the Democratic Party challenger Michael Dukakis in the presidential election of November, 1988,¹⁵ President-elect George Bush is something of a moral ambiguity in the eyes of the Religious Right. Although a loyal Reagan Vice-President, the perception of Bush is that of an "old-guard" moderate conservative who espouses the views of the wealthy, northeastern elite. Indeed, many in the Religious Right regard Bush as an outright "liberal" and a "dupe of international financiers."¹⁶

Traditionally, American presidential campaigns have been short on platform specifics and long on patriotic rhetoric, and the Bush campaign (and Dukakis' as well) was no exception. Although committed to the Reagan legacy of lower taxes, an enlarged military, bringing back prayer in schools, and vowing to carry on the fight against current abortion laws, much of Bush's campaign has been of the vague "flag-waving" variety, emphasizing a "softer, kinder America" and the emotional importance of reciting the **Pledge of Allegiance**.

Seen as an "establishment" Republican and a "counterfeit conservative,"¹⁷ Bush moved to offset such protestations from the Republican Right (including the Religious Right) by choosing Indiana's Senator J. Danforth Quayle as his vice-president. Proudly touted as a new generation of right-wing Republican, Quayle (who has been called "vacuous," among other things) is seen as an important link in maintaining the GOP's intimate relationship with the luminaries of the "ungoverning" New Right, most notably Howard Phillips, Richard Viguerie, and Paul Weyrich.¹⁸

For the Religious Right itself, the candidacy of Pat Robertson proved to be a rather tumultuous affair. Easily the most controversial (if not the most self-centredly "religious") of all Republican candidates, Robertson's surprising showing in the preliminary Iowa Caucuses in early 1988 did not extend to the March "Super Tuesday" caucuses. Robertson, of course, a well known "televangelist" and founder of the **Christian Broadcast Network (CBN)** had found himself in the unenviable position of having to explain to the nation such suggestions as why "only [Christians] are qualified to have the reign," and why he was ordained by God to seek political office.¹⁹

On the subject of American foreign policy, it would have been interesting to have heard Robertson's explanation for such past comments as Jordan being "a little pipsqueak country [without] money...people...land...[or] oil,"²⁰ and why his vice president at CBN once described the Japanese as "very shallow, very materialistic" and that Buddhism and Shintoism are devoid of knowledge of God.²¹ In the end, the most serious blow to the short-lived Robertson campaign was when fellow Religious Right leader Jerry Falwell endorsed George Bush.

As David Pilgrim explained, Pat Robertson failed to realize a "fundamental principle of American national politics: candidates must be [relatively] centrist in ideology, or appear so."²² While many

Americans may indeed be so, too much emphasis on being “born again” does not garner much electoral support.

During the presidential election campaign, it appeared that the New Right and Religious Right, though far from completely satisfied with him, took a “leap of faith” and supported George Bush. Whether such prominent Religious Right legislative proposals as Jerry Falwell’s **Christian Bill of Rights**, and Senator Paul Laxalt’s **Family Protection Act** (see **Appendices**) will receive even tacit approval from a Bush administration remains to be seen.

iii) **Final Observations: The American Religious Right and Political Control**

Although this thesis was pointedly critical of the Religious Right, it was done with the conviction that what is admirable and desirable in both religion and democratic pluralism can only be preserved by maintaining careful distinctions, a sense of boundary, between the two meaning systems. This is not to imply that one cannot, or should not, influence the other. On the contrary, the realms of Durkheim’s *sacred* and *profane* must overlap and at times, find congruence in individual and national expression.

The fallacy of the Religious Right is that conservative Christianity can be supra-political and, temporarily, politically relevant for all people. The specious belief that America is “God’s chosen nation” — arrived at from a dubious interpretation of Scripture, and (by most accounts) a misreading of American history — carries with it serious socio-political implications. As several authors discussed here have related, those who have a monopoly on Truth are not easily given to accommodation and compromise. The dangers to a heterogenous society inherent in this centric perspective are many and obvious, and given America’s pre-eminent position in world affairs, the dangers of such a view, should it ever reach positions of real power, are incalculable.

The thematic constants of this thesis were that “truth” in politics (if it indeed exists) is not analogous to or supportive of the Biblical Truth of conservative Christianity, and that the Religious Right, as self-described heirs of American traditionalism, has actively sought control of the country’s political and social institutions. The underlying premise here was that an unquestioning adherence to Biblical inerrancy coupled

with the quasi-religious nature of the American ethos leaves little room for the ambiguity necessary for social pluralism and democratic tolerance. By actively engaging in the political process, whether through a political action committee, through its own chosen political candidates, through books and pamphlets, or from a pulpit itself, the Religious Right shows a profound desire to “remake” America in its own image. This is not to say that all public statements of a religious-political intent are suspect or without value. However, given the new-found aggressiveness of conservative Christianity, particularly of the Fundamentalists and/or Southern Baptist sects, such “public ideological zeal” is predicated upon carrying out what is perceived to be “God’s will.” Given the fundamentalist belief in a personal, often reciprocal, relationship between a person and Christ, the supernatural and mythic referents of faith become very real indeed. While this may engender “fellowship” — cohesion and uniformity — within the deeply personal sphere of private faith, an adherence to a transcendent and absolute authority in the give-and-take world of political solution-seeking is to mistakenly seek Truth where truth cannot be found, much less universally defined. To ignore or refuse to see the absolute necessity of finding compromise and agreed-upon solutions to the *earthly* problems of human society is to obscure the real (and moral) essence of democratic politics.

Finally, what of the Religious Right and its future? Presently, at the “Reagan era’s” end, indicators point to a decline in the Religious Right’s (perhaps the entire New Right’s) political influence. Does this signal a return to the political-social quietism of conservative Christians similar to the post- *Scopes’* trial era? Ostensibly, the answer is no. The Religious Right has become far too prominent (and wealthy) in the past fifteen years to ever assume a position of political insignificance or ridicule, at least in the foreseeable future. Canadian political scientist John Redekop stated that it would be a mistake to assume that the Religious Right is just a “passing aberration.” As long as the social-political conditions which engendered its growth still exist, their presence, in whatever degree of influence, will be long-term.²³

It may also be useful to look at the fluctuating fortunes of the Religious Right in terms of a threshold²⁴ i.e., a limit to their influence. In terms of overall influence, is the Religious Right, despite a perceived decline, more influential and more prominent than before their mid-1970s “political rebirth”? Is this threshold now much higher than in previous years? It would seem that in the crucial areas of members, policies, and organizations that the Religious Right, even in decline, will retain a much higher and more influential profile

than in the past. If their efforts have shown only one politically desirable attribute, it is their tenacity.

That religion may continue to influence politics and, at times, teach the higher human virtues of altruism, compassion, and humanity, does not mean that politics could change from being "less than ideal," but it does give political society high ideals for which to strive. In the absence of ever finding Truth in politics, religion can bequeath to us much-needed principles.

To conclude this critical study of America's Religious Right, perhaps it would be fitting to end with the words of the great American religious philosopher, Reinhold Niebuhr:

It may be well for the statesman to know that statesmanship easily degenerates into opportunism and that opportunism cannot be sharply distinguished from dishonesty...The moral achievement of statesmen must be judged in terms which take account of the limitations of human society which the statesman must, and the prophet need not, consider.²⁵

NOTES TO CHAPTER 5

¹John Stuart Mill, *Three Essays on Religion* (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1874), p. 165.

²See Chapter 1, endnote 3.

³Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy In America*, Volume I, Henry Reeves, trans. (New York: Barnes & Co., 1856), p. 328.

⁴George Armstrong Kelly, *Politics and Religious Consciousness in America* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Books, 1984), pp. 47-48.

⁵George Armstrong Kelly, *op. cit.*, pp. 253-255.

⁶Willard Young, *Fallacies of Creationism* (Calgary: Detselig Enterprises, 1985), p. 116.

⁷Peter Hinchliff, *Holiness and Politics* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1982), p. 200.

⁸Samuel P. Huntington, *American Politics: The Promise of Disharmony* (Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press, 1981), pp. 154-166.

⁹Wilbur Edel, *Defenders of the Faith: Religion and Politics from the Pilgrim Fathers to Ronald Reagan* (New York: Praegar, 1987), p. 153.

¹⁰Gerald E. Pomper, "The Presidential Election" in Marlene Michels Pomper, ed., *The Election of 1984: Reports and Interpretations* (Chatham, N.J.: Chatham House, Inc., 1985), pp. 68-69.

Additional data shows that Reagan captured 73 per cent of the total White Protestant vote, 55 per cent of the Catholic vote, and 32 per cent of the Jewish vote. In percentages of the total 1984 voting public, these represent 51, 26, and 3 per cent respectively. The "White 'born-again'" category represents 15 per cent of total voters. See Pomper, *ibid.*

¹¹Edel, *op. cit.*, p. 139.

¹²See *ibid.*, also Ross K. Baker, "The Second Reagan Term" in Pomper, *op. cit.*, p. 147. Baker states that of all the Reagan "followers," the Religious Right has fared the worst in terms of legislative achievement. See also Chapter 8, in Ashley Montagu, ed. *Science and Creationism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984).

As well, there has been considerable intra-party conflict within the GOP in more secular areas of legislation, particularly in the area of tax reform, where Reagan suffered an embarrassing defeat in December, 1985, when 168 of 182 House Republicans voted to arrest the progress of the President's bill. See Nicol C. Rae, "The Modern Republican Party: Resurgence or Decline?" in *Journal of American Studies* 22 (1988), pp. 239-240.

¹³Edel, *op. cit.*, p. 130.

¹⁴Quote taken from Gerald M. Platt and Rhys H. Williams, "Religion, Ideology and Electoral Politics" in *Transaction/ SOCIETY*, Volume Twenty-Five, Number 5, July-August, 1988, p. 142.

¹⁵George Bush won 40 states in the presidential election, and 426 Electoral College votes, compared with the Democratic challenger Michael Dukakis' showing of 10 states, the District of Columbia, and 112 Electoral College votes. Bush won 54 per cent of the popular vote, Dukakis, 46 per cent. What is important

to keep in mind here is that, despite Bush's convincing victory, the United States Congress remains, as it had during Ronald Reagan's second term, firmly under the control of the Democrats.

¹⁶"Praying For The Presidency" in *The Vancouver Sun*, March 5, 1988, p. B1.

¹⁷Ross K. Baker, op. cit., p. 150.

¹⁸"The retooling of the right," in *U.S. News & World Report*, August 22, 1988, pp. 22-23. See also, Chapter 3, "The Vanguard of the Religious Right."

¹⁹David Pilgrim, "Pat Robertson and the Oval Office" in *Journal of American Studies* 22 (1988), 3, pp. 259 & 261.

²⁰David Bollier, *Liberty and Justice For Some: Defending a Free Society from the Radical Right's Holy War on Democracy* (New York: Frederick Ungar Pub., 1982), p. 290.

²¹Flo Conway and Jim Siegelman, *Holy Terror: The Fundamentalist War on America's Freedoms in Religion, Politics and Our Private Lives* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Co., 1982), p. 65.

²²Pilgrim, op. cit., p. 262.

²³From a taped lecture at Simon Fraser University, 1986, by Dr. John Redekop.

²⁴Thanks to Dr. L. Dobuzinskis for this concept.

²⁵Reinhold Niebuhr, "Leaves from the Notebook of a Tamed Cynic", pp. xii-xiv. Reprinted in Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. "Reinhold Niebuhr's Role in American Political Thought and Life" in Charles W. Kegley, ed., *Reinhold Niebuhr: His Religious, Social, and Political Thought* (New York: The Pilgrim Press, 1984), p. 196.

APPENDICES

Appendix I: The Christian Bill of Rights

- Amendment I We believe that, from the time of conception within the womb, every human has a scriptural right to life upon this earth. (Ex.20:13;Psa. 139:13-16)
- Amendment II We believe that every person has the right to pursue any and all scriptural goals that he or she feels are God-directed during that life upon this earth. (Prov. 3:5-6)
- Amendment III We believe that, apart from justified capital punishment, no medical or judicial process should be introduced that would allow the termination of life before its natural or accidental completion. (Psa. 31:15)
- Amendment IV We believe that no traitorous verbal or written attack upon this beloved nation advocating overthrow by force be permitted by any citizen or alien living within this country. (Rom. 13:1-7)
- Amendment V We believe that all students enrolled in public schools should have the right to voluntary prayer and Bible reading. (Josh. 24:15)
- Amendment VI We believe in the right and responsibility to establish and administer private Christian schools without harassment from local, state or federal government. (Deut. 11:18-21)
- Amendment VII We believe in the right to influence secular professions, including the fields of politics, business, law and medicine, in establishing and maintaining moral principles of Scripture. (Prov. 14:34)
- Amendment VIII We believe in the right to expect our national leaders to keep this country morally and militarily strong so that religious freedom and Gospel preaching might continue unhindered. (I Pet. 2:13-17)
- Amendment IX We believe in the right to receive moral support from all local, state, and federal agencies concerning the traditional family unit, a concept that enjoys both scriptural and historical precedence. (Gen. 2:18-25)
- Amendment X We believe in the right of legally-approved religious organizations to maintain their tax-exempt status, this right being based upon the historical and scriptural concept of church and state separation. (Matt. 22:17-21)

Reprinted in Peggy L. Shriver, *The Bible Vote: Religion and the New Right* (New York: The Pilgrim Press, 1981), pp. 18-19.

Appendix II: The Family Protection Act

Title I. Education

1. Federal education money is denied states that don't allow prayer in public buildings.
2. Federal money is denied states that don't require parental consent for student enrollment in public school courses about religion.
3. Federal money is denied schools that try to exclude parents from visiting public school classrooms or functions.
4. Federal money is denied schools that require public school teachers to belong to a union.
5. Federal money is denied states that don't permit parental and community review of textbooks prior to their use in public schools.
6. Federal money is denied values clarification or behavior modification courses.
7. Federal money may not buy textbooks or other educational materials that belittle the traditional role of women in society.
8. States are insured the right to determine teacher qualifications, free from the influence of federal regulations.
9. States are insured the exclusive authority to regulate attendance at public schools.
10. Local schools are given back the authority over sex-intermingling in sports and other school activities.
11. Private schools are exempted from National Labor Relations Board jurisdiction.
12. A Family Savings for Education Plan is established: Parents may deposit up to \$2,500, tax-exempt, per year, to save for their children's education.
13. Most titles of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act are repealed and replaced with block grants of money to states to use for education as they deem necessary.
14. If schools require a parenthood course, parents may arrange for their children to be taught the course by a minister or church on a release-time basis.
15. Parent-run schools are granted tax exemption if they fulfill certain requirements, and are granted accreditation for all purposes of federal education law.
16. Federal courts are denied jurisdiction over the issue of voluntary prayer in public buildings and the issue of state requirements for teacher selection and promotion.

Title II. Welfare

17. A tax credit of \$250 is allowed a household which includes a dependent person age 65 or over (Multigenerational Household Incentive).

18. A tax exemption of \$1,000 is allowed a household which includes a dependent person age 65 or over.

19. College students may not receive food stamps.

20. A corporation may deduct from taxes its contributions to a joint employee-employer day care facility.

21. The pre-1973 Defense Department requirement that servicemen separated from their families send their dependents an allowance is reinstated.

Title III. First Amendment Guarantees

22. Rights of Religious Institutions. Federal agencies may not regulate religious activities such as church schools, religious homes and other ministries.

23. Rights of Families. Parental rights over the religious and moral upbringing of their children are reinforced.

Title IV. Taxation

24. Contributions by an employed person to a savings account for his nonworking spouse are tax deductible, up to \$1,500 per year.

25. The current "marriage tax," which penalizes married couples with two incomes, is eliminated.

26. Expenses incurred in connection with charitable, civil, political or religious volunteer work are given the child care credit.

27. Married couples filing jointly are granted an additional \$1,000 tax exemption for the year in which a child is either born or adopted. The exemption increases to \$3,000 if the child is adopted and either handicapped, over the age of 3, or biracial.

28. Contributions to an IRA-type retirement account for the taxpayer's parents are deductible, up to \$1,500 per year for each parent.

Title V. Domestic Relations

29. Child Abuse. Federal attempts to change state statutes on child abuse are forbidden. Spankings are specifically stated as not constituting abuse. Federal funds for operation of a child abuse program without specific authorization from the state legislature are prohibited.

30. Spouse Abuse. State statutes regarding family relationships are protected from federal interference. Private associations to care for domestic violence victims are encouraged.

31. State statutes regarding juvenile delinquency are protected from federal interference. Tax-exempt status is granted to private associations working on the problem, providing no federal funds are received.

32. Parents must be informed when an unmarried minor receives contraceptive appliances or abortion-related services from a federally supported organization.

33. Legal Services Corporation money may not be used in litigation seeking to compel abortions, assistance or compliance with abortion or funding for abortions.

34. Legal Services money may not be used for school desegregation litigation.

35. Legal Services funds may not be used for divorce litigation.

36. Legal Services funds may not be used for homosexual rights litigation.

37. Federal money is denied any organization that presents homosexuality as an acceptable alternative lifestyle.

38. Discrimination against declared homosexuals may not be considered an "unlawful employment practice."

Taken from Peggy L. Shriver, *The Bible Vote: Religion and the New Right* (New York: The Pilgrim Press, 1981), pp. 150-153.

Appendix III: Excerpts from Humanist Manifesto II

Religion

First: In the best sense, religion may inspire dedication to the highest ethical ideals. The cultivation of moral devotion and creative imagination is an expression of genuine "spiritual" experience and aspiration.

We believe, however, that traditional dogmatic or authoritarian religions that place revelation, God, ritual, or creed above human needs and experience do a disservice to the human species...

We appreciate the need to preserve the best ethical teachings in the religious traditions of humankind, many of which we share in common. But we reject those features of traditional religious morality that deny humans a full appreciation of their own potentialities and responsibilities. Traditional religions often offer solace to humans, but, as often, they inhibit humans from helping themselves or experiencing their full potentialities. Such institutions, creeds, and rituals often impede the will to serve others...

Ethics

Third: We affirm that moral values derive their source from human experience. Ethics is *autonomous* and *situational*, needing no theological or ideological sanction. Ethics stems from human need and interest... We strive for the good life, here and now. The goal is to pursue life's enrichment despite debasing forces of vulgarization, commercialization, bureaucratization, and dehumanization.

The Individual

Fifth: *The preciousness and dignity of the individual person* is a central humanist value... We reject all religious, ideological, or moral codes that denigrate the individual, suppress freedom, dull intellect, dehumanize personality.

Democratic Society

Seventh: To enhance freedom and dignity the individual must experience a full range of *civil liberties* in all societies. This includes freedom of speech and the press, political democracy, the legal right of opposition to governmental policies, fair judicial process, religious liberty, freedom of association, and artistic, scientific, and cultural freedom.

Ninth: *The separation of church and state and the separation of ideology and state are imperatives.* The state should encourage maximum freedom for different moral, political, religious, and social values in society

Humanity as a Whole

In closing: The world cannot wait for a reconciliation of competing political or economic systems to solve its problems... Destructive ideological differences among communism, capitalism, socialism, conservatism, liberalism, and radicalism should be overcome. Let us call for an end to terror and hatred. We will survive and prosper only in a world of shared humane values.

Humanist Manifesto II (1973) reprinted in Paul Kurtz, **In Defense of Secular Humanism** (Buffalo, N.Y.: Prometheus Books, 1983), pp. 39-47.

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