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Political Protestants and the conservative sect

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POLITICAL PROTESTANTS AND THE CONSERVATIVE SECT

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A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of Government
The College of William and Mary in Virginia

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts

by

Richard B. Kelley

1981

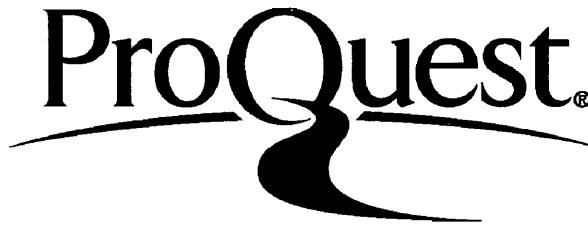
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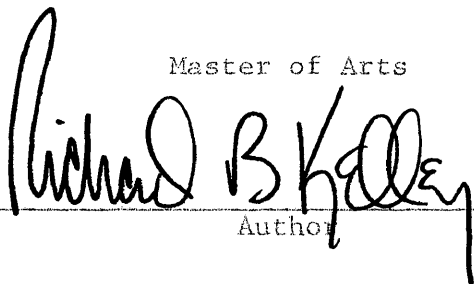
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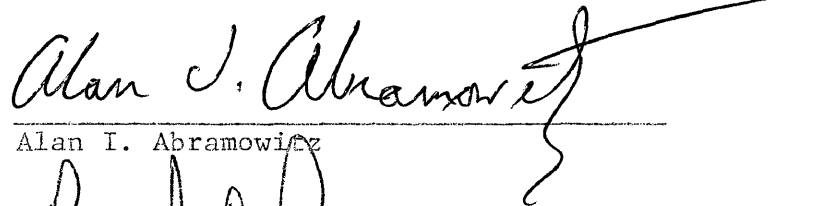
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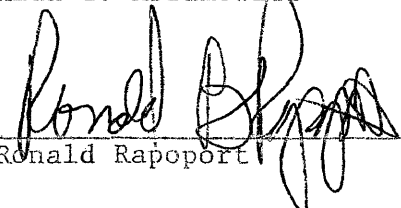


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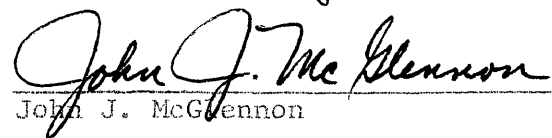
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ABSTRACT

Just as American politics is pluralistic, American religion is pluralistic, encompassing many sects, denominations, and faiths. Among the many religious groups, there is a group of politically and theologically conservative protestants that seeks to stop and reverse social or political trends through political means. The social or political trends the group perceives may be real or imagined.

Within this group of conservative protestants, there are many sub-groups with different leaders, agitating slightly different issues, but the sub-groups are united in their political viewpoint: they tend to look to the past, not the future, as their ideal. This viewpoint collides in the political arena with many other groups, especially colliding with groups that look to the future as an ideal.

History is important to forming an understanding of this group of conservative protestants. First, because this group has its view of history as an ideal, it is important to understand the group's conceptions and misconceptions of history. Second, history tends to show that opposition to conservative religious involvement in politics is deeply rooted; many immigrants to this country fled religious-political collusion and many, still, tend to react negatively to even mild forms of religious involvement in politics.

This study examines some concepts that serve as keys to codifying and understanding the political behavior of conservative protestants. Further, there is an historical examination of their behavior, and a case study of a State Senate race in Norfolk, Virginia, that illuminates some of the political limitations placed upon conservative protestants.

POLITICAL PROTESTANTS
AND
THE CONSERVATIVE SECT

CHAPTER I
THE QUONDAM COMPLEX

"The Quondam Complex describes a preponderance of symbolic investment in the past, related to some past group identity which has declined in symbolic importance. The Quondam Complex is politically actionable in these terms."¹ This concept, taken from Seymour Martin Lipset and Earl Raab (The Politics of Unreason: Right Wing Extremism in America, 1790-1970²), is central to this study. This study is about a group of American protestants who feel the course of American politics should lead back to the way it was--when men supposedly used the Bible to find their political answers. This group has the past as its guiding light and reveres the supposedly religious men who colonized America and wrote its constitution. This group is "conservative" in the pure sense of the word as it wants to conserve the past (its conception of the past) and recapture its perceived former importance as a group.

The Quondam Complex refers to those on the right wing of American politics, specifically those who feel their kind used to be in power but that history passed them by. J. Milton Yinger explained: "One might say that those on the far right see a glass that is half empty, and they fear that it soon will be entirely empty unless present trends can be stopped and reversed."³ Many right wing groups fit this description, including those who feel their economic status, ethnic purity, class status, style-of-life, etc., is ebbing. This study is

about a particular group of protestants who are variously called "fundamentalists", "evangelicals", "Bible Believers", and so forth, who feel moved to take political action to keep the glass from becoming more empty. Not all fundamentalists are moved to take political action; many confine themselves to saving souls and good works. Some theologically conservative churches, such as the Catholic and Quaker churches, have been involved in "liberal" political activities (e.g., against racial discrimination) because they feel the glass was half-full, not half-empty. The crucial distinction is that some conservative churches took political action to stop or reverse perceived trends. For the sake of focus, this study will concentrate on the political activities of conservative protestant churches.

Sociologists and political scientists use the term "alienation" when explaining protest movements. Yinger described alienation as a condition when

"...one experiences the loss of a relationship or value...the politically alienated feel estranged from the political structures and processes that were formerly accepted as valuable means to desired goals."⁴

Alienation thus becomes a motivation to become involved in politics. The Quondam Complex provides a basis for political involvement in this paradigm: A group feels estranged from the political system because of the disorder, doubt, and decay within the system, and the group decides (individually or collectively) the best way to correct the system is to return it to traditional standards. The group is then motivated to take conservative or preservative action.

There are many forms and styles of political involvement by conservative churches, from revival-rallies to using church buses to drive the flock to the polls. There are many leaders who come and go, many issues

that burn and die out. What remains constant is the tendency of conservative protestant churches to protest social changes; these churches move into the political arena not to initiate change, but to react against it. Because these groups were involved in protest activities (a natural occurrence within Protestant churches), they may properly be labeled as sects. Bryan Wilson noted the characteristics of a sect:

"Sects are movements of religious protest. Their members separate themselves from other men in respect to their religious beliefs, practices, and institutions...They respect the authority of orthodox religious leaders, also, of the secular government...Sectarians put their faith first: they order their lives in accordance with it."⁵

Each sect must retain its integrity, separating itself from outside corruption (while still respecting secular government.) Lasswell said "any sect which becomes tolerant and compromising has ceased to be a religion and becomes a denomination."⁶ A lack of tolerance and compromise in a political sphere tends to cause single-issue voting, and rigidity of doctrine leads to schism.

A label shall be invented for the groups that engage in political activities of a conservative nature as a protest against social change: The Conservative Sect. Conservative in that the past is the ideal, the light is at the beginning of the tunnel, to change a cliché. It is a sect because the group is involved in religious protest. In general terms, conservative sect members tend to be fundamentalists on Biblical issues, and they relate fundamentalist doctrine to political issues. The Conservative Sect is a group that draws its political outlook from the Quondam Complex because it places "a preponderance of symbolic investment in the past," and because it feels its identity "has declined in symbolic importance". The Conservative Sect is not a political

party, and only sometimes can it be called a movement. It is a style more than a movement, and there are several sub-sects within; it is, for the purposes of this study, an amorphous group of American protestants who feel both alienation from society and a need to regressively change society through political means. This sect has been an element of American politics since at least the early 19th century.

Any religious group that gets involved in politics takes certain risks. By concentrating on political change, instead of changing people, the conservative sect commits its spiritual strength to the vagaries of the ballot box. C. G. Campbell argued that the hierarchy of the Church of England lost its power "by striving to coerce the Christian conscience to obey its will, rather than by spiritual means."⁷ The Reverend Carl F. H. Henry argued "the Church's mission in the world is spiritual. Its influence on the political order, therefore, must be registered indirectly."⁸ Presumably, a religion that changes people will change the political structure indirectly; a religion that seeks to change politics directly opens itself up to questions and debate. A religion risks its reputation if it loses at the polls.

The conservative sect takes a specific risk in its quest to return American politics to the supposedly religious ways of the founding fathers. The past is an imperfect guide, as Andrew M. Greeley found, examining the records of the Puritans:

"Just as the conventional wisdom about religion assumed that there was a time when we were more religious...the conventional wisdom on marriage assumes that there was a time when chastity, fidelity, and monogamy were more popular...One wonders when that time was: in Puritan New England, whose ecclesiastical records recount seemingly endless trials for fornication and adultery?"⁹

It is one thing for a religious group to base its arguments on the

theological grounds, but quite another to base them on historical grounds; preachers at home with the Bible are not necessarily competent historians.

Returning to the guidelines set down by the nation's founders can provide a moral anchor, a past record of success to live up to. Returning to the religion of America's forefathers can mean a resurrection of the religious beliefs of exclusively male, exclusively white, exclusively English protestants. No Catholics, Jews, no Blacks, Poles, Germans, Czechs, Slavs, Irish, et al, may contribute. This paradigm excludes those forefathers who were non-believers or kept their beliefs to themselves. One must assume religious considerations brought the colonists and ignore the allure of profit, lack of stultifying caste, and unlimited opportunity for adventure. One must further ignore the strong influence of the British example (not scriptural example) in the formulation of America's political system. Returning to the religion of America's forefathers is a rallying cry with historical hyperbole, protestant arrogance, and a tincture of racism at its roots.

The Conservative Sect, operating as it does with a Quondam Complex, attempts to coerce or at least retrain society through political means to move backward. The sect enters politics to change politics, and therefore it is important to discover just how much impact it has and can have.

This study argues that the Conservative Sect had a significant impact only sporadically. Like any political action group, it had to be able to first attract voters and second it had to persuade them to vote a certain way. Its enthusiastic, fundamentalist preaching attracted many but the attraction was fleeting, primarily because the sect was led by charismatic leaders who came and went. Unlike a political party, the sect had no orderly succession of leaders and no orderly formulation

of policy and doctrine.

Further, its attempts at persuasion were fraught with errors of reasoning, narrow interpretations of issues, and intransigence. The topics for persuasion it selected presented additional problems because the sect took up moral issues that were difficult to legislate or topics that required the adherent to be against another group: anti-Catholic, anti-Semitic, anti-feminist, anti-homosexual, anti-anyone who was not a politically conservative fundamentalist.

Although there was nothing unconstitutional or unusual about religious organizations becoming involved in politics, many currents in American history ran counter to such involvement. Many immigrated to America to escape repressive state religions, and many came for purely secular pursuits. Given the religious pluralism of the country, many voters were theologically uncomfortable with the Conservative Sect, whether they were among the many who had lacked religious ties or among the many who were not fundamentalists. And, given the political pluralism of the country, the evangelistic leaders of the Conservative Sect (who saw everything in black-and-white, as good-versus-evil) tended to be politically naive. Because of these problems in persuasion, the Conservative Sect as easily attracted opponents as it did adherents.

In the following chapters, there will be an examination of religious involvement in politics, starting with the colonies and ending with current involvement, including a case study of a Norfolk, Virginia, State Senate race in 1979. Tracing historical trends was important for two reasons: first, history showed the Conservative Sect's claim that the founding fathers were guided by religion to be a myth and second, it puts current conservative sect involvement in the proper historical context, showing that current manifestations of the sect have deep roots.

Notes for Chapter I

1. Seymour Martin Lipset and Earl Raab, The Politics of Unreason. New York: Harper & Row, 1970. p. 462.

2. Ibid. Many ideas developed in this study came from this book.

3. J. Milton Yinger, Handbook of Political Psychology. (Jeanne N. Knotson, ed.) San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1973. p. 200.

4. Ibid., p. 178.

5. Bryan Wilson, Religious Sects: A Sociological Study. London: World University Library, 1970. p. 7.

6. Harold D. Lasswell, The Analysis of Political Behaviour. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 1948. p. 190.

7. G. G. Campbell, Race, Religion, History. Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1973, p. 221.

8. Carl F. H. Henry, Aspects of Christian Social Ethics. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Co., 1964. p. 105.

9. Andrew M. Greeley, Unsecular Man: The Persistence of Religion. New York: Schocken Books, 1974, p.17.

CHAPTER II

THE CONSERVATIVE SECT, TO 1900

The colonists who had a religion were mostly Protestants--protestants in that their religion was formed as a protest to Catholicism. Protestants carried in their fiber the schismatic spirit of protest, that is, until their sect set up an established denomination, then a new generation of protesters broke away:

"Protestantism contained a perverse and rather frightening logic which believers tended to back away from whenever they saw it, but there was no real escaping it. The process of questioning Truth is easier to start than stop, and in a questioning atmosphere no truths are safe."¹

In the 1630s, the Puritans came to America because they felt sure God's wrath would strike England as surely as it struck "Sodom and Gomorrah," and because they felt they were the "successors of Israel."² British politics had turned against them when Charles I installed William Laud as Archbishop of Canterbury: "Laud's doctrines, and his determination to root out dissent, would soon leave the Puritans with no alternatives, save conformity, silence, emigration, or revolt."³ The Puritans protested by emigrating and concerned themselves with "making their society in America embody the Truth they already knew."⁴ The Massachusetts colony did not become the embodiment of the Puritan Truth because the protesting spirit of the Puritans caused the breakup of the colony into other colonies "less than five years after the first settlers arrived, and the process continued until by the 1640s a whole

cluster of small New England colonies had come into existence."⁵

In 1639, Roger Williams formed the first Baptist Church in America⁶ at Providence and challenged the apparent close interrelationship between church and state in Massachusetts. Williams saw a clear distinction between the two: "...a law or constitution may be civill or religious... either civill (meerly concerning bodies or goods) or religious concerning soule and worship."⁷ The Puritans did not, in any event, go to the Bible for civil law and worried little whether their laws were scriptural, rather, "that they should be sufficiently English and that any changes in English laws should have ample warrant in local needs."⁸

The Puritans did invoke the name of God in the official pronouncements and their writings often mentioned churches.⁹ This led modern-day fundamentalists to conclude that God was a driving force in colonial America:

"Statesmen, leaders, and outstanding citizens have indicated their faith in God through their public and private statements. The nation laid its foundation and developed its political and social structure by its continued adherence to these spiritual and religious ideals."¹⁰

Conservative Sect writers were quick to use history to prove America's political system was making the glass half-empty; they argued it was nearly full when the Puritans were in power (and the natural conclusion is that Americans should return to Puritan ways.) They have said the Puritans' religious structure was the basis for the American political system. Daniel J. Boorstin saw it another way:

"Dazzled by the light they found in Scripture, we have failed to see the steady illumination found in old English example... The lawmakers of the colony, to the extent their knowledge allowed, and with only minor exceptions, actually followed English example."¹¹

The Puritan view that the world was evil and corrupt (the half-empty glass) made a mark on American Protestantism. Puritans left

another, darker mark, because of their view they were on God's business meant "they had a tendency to justify their own conduct even when it was atrocious."¹²

Virginia, meantime, "was not founded by religious refugees."¹³ Virginia was set up for economic pursuits, and "the religious doctrine of the leading Virginians, including George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Patrick Henry, and James Madison, was non-descript."¹⁴ Modern conservative sect writers would refer to the "founding fathers" and their Christian motivations, but one is at a loss to see where the "founding fathers" were driven by Christian faith. Other colonies besides Massachusetts and Virginia had similar, non-religious reasons for existence.¹⁵ When one refers to the strong religious beliefs of the "founding fathers", which fathers is one referring to, and to which belief? The Conservative Sect views ignores those who came because America offered a better chance for secular pursuits like tilling the soil:

"There were also a great many people who belonged to no church at all. The secular current in America was always strong...the shaping influence of religion in American life was itself shaped by the presence of these folk."¹⁶

Purely secular concerns--an expensive British foreign policy and the "commercial selfishness of the narrow oligarchy who dominated... British affairs"¹⁷--were very important to the colonies. When it came time to draw up a list of grievances, a Declaration of Independence, not one complaint dealt with religious affairs.¹⁸ Even the famous introduction, "We hold these truths to be self-evident," was edited to make it more secular: "In deriving the essential social truths from their 'self-evidence'--rather than from their being 'sacred and undeniable' as the original draft read--the Declaration was building on

distinctly American Ground."¹⁹ The Declaration does mention God and the Creator, but clearly He is mentioned in the sense that He made all men equal, and the "self-evident" truths came not from Him, but from men.

When the Constitutional Convention met at Philadelphia, its members were concerned with their half-full glass. Having thrown off the British yoke, the constitutionalists had the unique opportunity to fill the glass, as H. G. Wells said,

"It was a Western European civilization that had broken free from the last traces of Empire and Christendom...The absence of any binding religious tie is especially noteworthy--the new community had, in fact, gone right down to the bare and stripped fundamentals of human association."²⁰

Clinton Rossiter explained that the old church-state relationship was destroyed, and "the New World pattern of multiplicity, democracy, private judgment, mutual respect, and widespread indifference was well on its way to maturity."²¹ Edmund S. Morgan said whatever hold the church had on the state was lessening, as "eighteenth century Americans could talk of the formation of government without even referring to Israel as their model and sometimes without even mentioning God as an initial participant in the covenant."²²

The constitutionalists were secular men, and they showed political toleration for opposing beliefs. Ben Franklin, for one, did not go to church, but he said, "I was never without some religious principles"--- the principles he said he found in all religions.²³ Franklin, in a letter to his parents, said viture, not orthodoxy, was most important: "And the Scripture assures men, that at the last Day, we shall not be examin'd what we thought, but what we did."²⁴ Thomas Jefferson was another who talked about toleration by government:

"The legitimate powers of government extend to such arts only as are injurious to others. But it does me no injury for my neighbor to say there are twenty gods or no God. It neither picks my pocket nor breaks my leg."²⁵

At the Convention, there was little talk of religion or of God. No one at the Convention would "have dared to proclaim that his opinion had the support of the God of Abraham and Paul. The Convention in 1787 was highly rationalist and even secular in spirit."²⁶

The final document said nothing of God. "We the People of the United States" ordained and established this document. There are two mentions of religion and both mandate a wide space between religion and state. Madison said in Federalist 57, "no qualification of wealth, of birth, of religious faith...is permitted to fetter the judgement or disappoint the inclination of the people." In Federalist 52, he said "the door of [elective offices] of the federal government is open to merit of every description...without regard to...any particular profession of religious faith." Madison's explanations of Article Six indicated that direct religious involvement in government was prohibited. The First Amendment barred the government from getting directly involved in religion: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting free exercise thereof." Clinton Rossiter explained the secular government created by the Constitution was the natural product of the need for toleration:

"Live-and-let-live, worship-and-let-worship was the essence of religion in this land of vast differences and a hundred religions, of which the most important was the vaguely Christian rationalism that governed the tolerant minds of men like Jefferson, Franklin, Hamilton, and Washington."²⁷

Madison said a "multiplicity of sects" (Federalist 52) would help secure religious rights and Jefferson noted "the several sects perform the office of censor morum over each other," and the uniformity sought since the introduction of Christianity had seen "millions...burned, tortured,

fined, imprisoned" and yet "we have not advanced one inch toward uniformity."²⁸ Having many "sects" in the country was thus deemed good by the founding fathers, or more accurately, efforts to create one sect was deemed bad for political life. Madison said in his famous Federalist 10 one of the "latent causes of faction" was a zeal for "different opinions concerning religion", but factions should be controlled, not stamped out.

A decade after the Convention, the first identifiable instances of conservative sect reaction to social change occurred. A prominent Congregationalist minister, Jedidiah Morse, delivered many sermons against the "Order of the Illuminati", a secret masonic society formed in Bavaria. The Illuminati were, according to Morse, conspiring to overthrow the United States and organized religion. New England clergymen and even Yale President Timothy Dwight took up the torch, and "illuminism" became a favorite straw-man of the conservative clergy and the Federalists.²⁹ The Federalists were looking for a convenient conspiracy to help rally their crumbling party, and other vague, anti-religious, anti-American, and especially pro-French conspiracies were created. Alleged foreign threats were the reason for the Alien and Sedition Acts of 1789.³⁰ The Acts were not enforced long--just long enough to interfere with the 1800 elections; two of the three acts were designed to limit the participation of immigrants who had not only strange manners, customs, and religions, but also a tendency to vote for Jeffersonians.³¹

Throughout the 1800s, the Conservative Sect was moved to action against immigrants. Throughout the century, the Sect was hard at work, trying to keep the newly minted Americans from drinking from the glass

of American protestant politics. The immigrants would come and bring in their baggage any number of icons, symbols, and methods of religion, and conservative protestants sounded the alarm:

"By 1816 a 'united front' of American evangelicals...was launched to bring merchants, bankers, and clergy together in a national effort to make sentimental Protestantism the cultural law of the land before 'superstitious' Catholics and frontier 'barbarians' had corrupted a vulnerable people."³²

To these protestants, the new America was about to die in its infancy unless the nation retrenched.

But the immigrants were not the sole source of change in the New World for the natives cared little for the way things used to be done. H. L. Mencken said, "the generation born in the New World was uncouth and iconoclastic; the only world it knew was a rough world, and the virtue that environment engendered were not those of niceness, but those of enterprise and resourcefulness."³³ Getting along meant not an adherence to hidebound beliefs; it meant getting out and doing and inventing new ways of doing things. Being educated was more important than being devout as "education was his religion, and to it he paid the tribute of both his money and his affection."³⁴ The battle between the secular and the religious over the proper role of state-run education began early-on in American history and continues today. The Conservative Sect saw education as a powerful secularizing force more powerful than the church. Yinger described alienation as "the experienced loss of a relationship and a sense of participation and control, with reference to prevailing social structures."³⁵ The immigrants, the "uncouth" new generations, secular education, and other developing factors were part of the storm surge that further alienated the Conservative Sect from whatever participation and control of government it once had.

Feelings of alienation from the political mainstream gorged with immigrants spawned many conservative sub-sects. The Know-Nothings began organizing in the 1840s, gaining their peculiar name because they "knew nothing" when asked about their activities. "It soon became evident, however, that their purposes were to defend Protestantism against Catholicism, to make immigration laws more restrictive."³⁶ By the 1850s aliens constituted more than half the population of New York City and they outnumbered native-born Americans in such cities as Chicago, Milwaukee, and St. Louis, to name a few.³⁷ Religious and political concerns were also felt by the Whigs, who had drawn on "the Protestant evangelical animus against Masonry and Catholicism, seen as insidious threats to Protestant republicanism."³⁸ Catholic immigrants were a natural target because their Bible was not the King James Version, and their allegiance was allegedly to Rome. "Frightened nativists viewed every Catholic immigrant as an agent of the pope sent to seize the government and destroy Protestantism."³⁹

The Quondam Complex is politically actionable when a group that identifies itself with the past feels that events have eroded the significance of the group and the Know-Nothings and the Whigs, whose importance was waning, began taking on strong characteristics of conservative sectarianism:

"The exposure of subversion was a means of promoting unity but it also served to clarify national values and provide the ego with...righteousness. Nativists identified themselves repeatedly with a strange, incoherent tradition in which images of Pilgrims, Minute Men, Founding Fathers, and true Christians appeared in a confusing montage."⁴⁰

Larger concerns than immigrants and Catholicism were drawing the country's attention by the mid-1850s. The Conservative Sect (anti-Catholic, anti-immigrant, anti-foreign subversions, etc.) tried and failed to elect a

President (Millard Fillmore) under the banner of the American party in 1856, drawing about twenty-five percent of the total vote.⁴¹

The election of 1860 brought Lincoln into power and touched off the Civil War. In this study of religion and politics, Lincoln deserves special note. One of the few presidents who never belonged to a church for any length of time, Lincoln often quoted Scripture and often mentioned God. Both sides before and during the Civil War used religion to justify their cause, but Lincoln's religious justifications were tempered by "his own undogmatic, unsectarian, and compassionate religious sensibility."⁴² Conservative protestants, horrified by the Mormon movement, put pressure on Lincoln to act, especially because of the Mormons' peculiar notions about marriage. Lincoln, needing all the support he could get, compromised on the issue. Lincoln explained why he compromised when he told Brigham Young's emissary a story about life on the Illinois prairie:

"Occasionally we would come to a log which had fallen down. It was too hard to split, too wet to burn, and too heavy to move, so we ploughed around it. That's what I intend to do with the Mormons. You go back and tell Brigham Young that if he will let me alone, I will let him alone."⁴³

Lincoln was trying to steer the same course of religious rationalism and worship-and-let-worship thought that marked the men of the Convention. Lincoln died before the Civil War's wounds healed and the super-heated evangelists drew strength from post-war tensions. The Conservative Sect was not in a conciliatory mood and evangelical protestants "helped charge the conspiracy theories and bigotries, all of which shaped the monistic impulse in America for the next three-quarters of a century."⁴⁴

The Civil War invigorated American industry, and this "brought with it what contemporaries thought of as an 'immigrant invasion', a massive forty-year migration of Europeans, chiefly peasants, whose religions,

traditions, languages, and sheer numbers made easy assimilation impossible."⁴⁵ Catholics and small numbers of Mormans⁴⁶ in this "invasion" created paranoia which led the "majority to contradict its own commitment to religious freedom and due process of law."⁴⁷ The post-war period saw a strengthening of public education, exacerbating the Conservative Sect's alienation. One modern fundamentalist writer was disturbed that

"...state education spread independent thinking, which took the place of the omniscient church in community circles. People became increasingly at home in this world and chose to work out their own intellectual salvation. Youth learned to question everything, including the most sacred realities of life."⁴⁸

Religion itself was changing too, and like most everything else, it had to meet one criterion: Does It Work? Henry Steele Commager wrote of the nineteenth century man that "his religion, too, notwithstanding in Calvinistic antecedents, was practical. He was religious rather than devout, and with him the term 'pious' came to be one of disparagement."⁴⁹

Discussions of alienation, protest, and a yearning for the past, give important understanding of what the Conservative Sect was and why it existed. The hard question is how much political success did it have? The answer, as America moved into the twentieth century, was that it had success only when the issues it found important were also important to people outside the sect, which was not very often: the Alien and Sedition Acts, laws banning some Mormon practices, etc. On the far-reaching issues of forming a constitution, regulating immigration, teaching in the public schools, the sect was on the losing end. A political philosopher would attribute the sect's lack of success to its organic rearward thinking, while the rest of the country was looking

forward. The political scientist might say the sect was solely a reactive organism that could not exist except in the presence of a proactive stimulus.

In any event, America was changing while the conservative sect was trapped by stagnant fundamentalist thought. The Bible was its travel guide, but where did the Bible lead? Deciding what the Bible said and meant was a difficult task for the fundamentalists and this study shall now examine how this task was undertaken and its political implications.

If the Bible was brief and pithy, dictated by a single author, and if it was about a non-abstract subject, it would be an easy task to be a fundamentalist. However, the Bible has many books (some books not accepted by all) transcribed by many authors, and it contains allegory, parable, and poetry. If one believes the Bible is the only important thing, one might withdraw thoroughly from the unregenerate world. In this instance, politics is affected by the loss of this group. On the other side of the coin the religious person might try to extend the goodness of the church to the land. In this instance, politics is affected by the addition of this group. What course for the Fundamentalist: save souls and ignore politics; save souls and hope that politics will improve indirectly; or improve politics by direct church intervention? The answers to these questions are complex and entangled with qualifications and variance on each issue. The devil, too, can quote Scripture: in a political forum, politicians are free to give their actions a scriptural facade and, hence, a certain dignity and syllogistic invulnerability ("I am right, you are wrong, so there is no debate.")

In some instances, religion and politics can be discrete, but men of religion are free to enter politics, and politicians are free to

quote Scripture. There is a temptation on both sides to do so. Lincoln's old antagonist, evangelist Peter Cartwright, once joked at an Illinois convention: "I have waged an incessant warfare against the world, the flesh, and the devil, and all other enemies of the Democratic Party."⁵⁰

Warfare against the world, the flesh, and the devil was a common occurrence before the Constitutional Convention. During the "Great Awakening" (mid-1700s), fundamentalist agitation swept the nation. The most notable preacher of the period, Jonathon Edwards, had a favorite topic, "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God," with vivid imagery of what damnation was like: "Man, in his natural state of sinfulness, was hung like a loathsome spider in God's fingers."⁵¹ Henry Steele Commager found this fundamentalist thinking still a powerful force in the twentieth century:

"That a people so optimistic and self-confident should accept a theology which insisted on the depravity of man, that a people so distrustful of all authority should yield so readily to the authority of the Scripture is interpreted by men like themselves, that a people so inclined to independence should take their religious ideas at second hand, that people so scientific minded should resolutely ignore the impact of science in the realm of religion--all of this is difficult to explain, except on fundamentalist grounds."⁵²

The fundamentalists had no pope, no Martin Luther, no John Wesley, no Joseph Smith, to show them the way. As a theological and political force, the fundamentalists depended upon a rather anarchical system of local, autonomous preachers.

Current fundamentalist writers trace modern fundamentalism to the Bible Conference Movement, which began in the late 1870s and lasted approximately until the 1920s: "The Bible Conference Movement represented fifty years of conservatives' efforts to maintain their Christian witness in a cultural situation slipping from their grasp."⁵³ The 1895 Niagara

conference was the watershed, when the "five essential doctrines" of fundamentalism were adopted: (1) The Virgin Birth of Jesus, (2) Christ's death on the cross as payment for man's sins, (3) Christ's bodily return to earth to establish the earthly Kingdom of God, (4) The absolute inerrancy of the Bible, (5) The physical resurrection of Christ.⁵⁴ In 1909 the twelve-volume The Fundamentals: A Testimony to the Truth was published and "the effect was to stir up a militant antagonism toward liberalism which would reach its height in the decade which followed the First World War."⁵⁵

With fundamentalism's intellectual vitality restored, the Conservative Sect was revitalized, too. Fundamentalist writer Stewart G. Cole summed up the purpose of the new spirit:

"Fundamentalism was the organized determination of conservative churchmen to continue the imperialistic culture of historic Protestantism within an inhospitable civilization dominated by secular interests and a progressive Christian idealism."⁵⁶

Far from requiring total sect withdrawal from society, the movement required of its members a certain degree of participation--to change society back to the way it was. Stated another way, the fundamentalists read their Bibles and decided to become active in politics. Yinger would find this decision consonant with alienated group behavior as

"...it is sometimes assumed, perhaps too quickly, that estrangement from political structures, personnel, and policies...leads to apathy, political withdrawal, and a low level of political participation...Yet it is also observed that the politically estranged may be swept up in enthusiasm for a political movement."⁵⁷

The fundamentalists had made their changes in theological doctrine, codifying certain biblical positions, and renewing their political activism. What did not change was the lack of hierarchical structure and the reaction-based nature of their political protest.

While the fundamentalists were meeting, immigrants came in greater

numbers than ever before, causing increased concern for conservatives.⁵⁸ Fundamentalism began to draw its greatest numbers from poorly and uneducated strata and began to play more on protestant fears of Catholics and Jews, forming alliances with the Ku Klux Klan,⁵⁹ and the Populist movement.

The Populists, who sprang up during the economic troubles of the late 1800s, fueled their rhetoric with charges of conspiracies and dreams of the past as they "...looked backward to the lost agrarian Eden."⁶⁰ The Populists shared many notions as well as people with the Conservative Sect, taking on characteristics of the Sect to attract certain voters. The foremost leader of the Populists, William Jennings Bryan, gave the party an "unprecedented evangelical character", and his running mate in 1896, Thomas E. Watson of Georgia, was a "virulent anti-Catholic."⁶¹ Bryan "defected" to the Democratic party (later taking the Conservative Sect's side in the infamous Scopes "Monkey Trial"), and Watson took over. Watson often charged that Catholic convents were the scene of infanticide and unusual sexual practices and that the Knights of Columbus were arming themselves. He also charged that Jews ruled America's economy and engaged in ritual murder of Christians.⁶² After Watson took command of the party, it faded from the scene.

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CHAPTER III

THE CONSERVATIVE SECT, 1900 to 1975

The immigrants kept coming. By 1907 virtually all came from Southern and Eastern Europe and "were predominately Catholic or Jewish".¹ The high-water mark was in the period between 1900 and 1920, dropping dramatically after that.² Lipset and Raab note that American politics had always been affected by the fluidity of the underlying social structure and "various formerly entrenched groups have felt disinherited. These situations in America have been the typical wellsprings of right-wing movements."³ The Conservative Sect had been feeling "disinherited" for nearly 100 years because of the immigrant influx, but in the early 1900s the influx reached its peak and so too did the sect's anti-immigrant rhetoric. At the turn of this century, "old landmarks were losing their familiar contours in fact; in rhetoric, therefore, they had to be affirmed all the more strenuously."⁴ One of the new faces of the Conservative Sect, William A. "Billy" Sunday, took note of the Russian Jews and Italian Catholics, and memorably described them as "garlic-smelling, bomb-throwing, unassimilated immigrants."⁵ The Conservative Sect was not in favor of welcoming these immigrants and helping them assimilate because the sect was, after all, a reactionary group and reactionary groups, as Yinger said, "seek to increase the sense of alienation of their members."⁶

The Conservative Sect's tendency to paint the darkest possible picture of social change led to its tendency to make wild statements and

charges. These tendencies became apparent as American Christianity changed in the twentieth century with some denominations becoming more liberal, some more conservative, and some remaining indecisive.⁷ The national unity during WWI extended to most churches, but interdenominational warfare broke out after the war: "Only barely did the enthusiasm of 1919 drown out the rumbling of schism that mounted to open battle in the fundamentalist wars of 1922 to 1927."⁸ These wars widened the split between the fundamentalists of the Conservative Sect and the liberal, mainline, and established churches. Besides striking out at the teaching of evolution in public schools, the Conservative Sect cut its anti-communist teeth by attacking the liberalized thinking in most other denominations. At first, the Presbyterian church was hardest hit by the "liberals-must-be-communists" attacks of the 1920s.⁹ By 1929, "ultrafundamentalists" had established their own Presbyterian seminary, at Westminster.¹⁰ The star pupil at the new seminary was Carl McIntire, and "he more than any other individual would establish the ideology, the tone, and the momentum of the far right."¹¹ McIntire's hunt for communists in churches extended to the McCarthy era when he helped congressional investigators "locate 'suspects' within the clergy."¹² McIntire charged that the Revised Standard Version of the Bible "was the product of a 'Red' plot and that the World Council of Churches was a front for 'the conspiracy,'"¹² McIntire guided the early careers of Major Edgar C. Bundy, Billy James Hargis, and Dr. Frederick Schwarz.¹³

Other fundamentalists took up the cudgels in the 1920s to ban the teaching of evolution in the schools and their foray into politics "led to the drive for anti-evolution statutes in nearly all Southern states and secured them in five."¹⁴ John T. Scopes, a teacher in Tennessee, was convicted of teaching evolution, but his trial--pitting the agnostic

Clarence Darrow against fundamentalist elder-statesman William Jennings Bryan--attracted so much negative publicity to the fundamentalists that they eventually backed off. One of the best-known of these publicists, H. L. Mencken, wrote "the Book of Revelation has all the authority in these theological uplands of military orders in time of war. The people turn to it for light upon all their problems, spiritual and secular."¹⁵

The Ku Klux Klan, "another rural Protestant enthusiasm of the twenties",¹⁶ thrived in the post-war era, gaining power enough to scare the Democratic party into not condemning it by name at the 1924 Convention.¹⁷ The Klan was a part of the

"...resurgence of that nativist spirit which identified Americanism with Anglo-Saxon Protestantism and found Roman Catholics, Jews, and sundry aliens from...Europe to be a menace to that way of life inaugurated by the founding fathers of the nation."¹⁸

Catholicism as a political issue came into sharper focus in 1928 when Al Smith was chosen to lead the Democratic party. "The Catholic issue as a political question was inseparable from an American Protestantism that...identified itself with the state as a sectarian possession."¹⁹ Smith was also a "wet" and a big-city Democrat from New York, totally an anathema to the Conservative Sect. Herbert Hoover "denounced the use of religious intolerance by his supporters", but the forces of "bigotry, particularly in the South, introduced the issue of religion in the campaign."²⁰ The reaction against Smith by the Conservative Sect heightened religious tensions rooted in the anti-Catholic campaigns of the early 1800s and "the underground campaign impugned the Americanism of Catholics and thus gave a blow to their assimilation."²¹ When John F. Kennedy ran thirty-two years later, the Conservative Sect had lost its anti-Catholic allies but remained firmly against Catholics in high office. In 1960, Bob Jones, Carl McIntire, Harvey Springer, Norman

Vincent Peale, and other evangelicals would join in anti-Catholic propaganda²² as did virtually all other major fundamentalist groups.²³

One trend becoming more established in the twentieth century was the tendency for the Conservative Sect to find its greatest strength in the South and rural areas, where clergy "attempted to suppress liberal thinking and to stabilize traditional Christianity."²⁴ John Shelton Reed wrote that "probably the most striking feature of the religion of the South is that the region is, and has been since antebellum times, monolithically Protestant."²⁵ Walter De Vries found in 1974 that "Southerners were more than three times as likely as nonsoutherners to be Baptists, and nonsoutherners almost three times as likely to be Catholics."²⁶ The South was developing as the main battle ground for civil rights, and the Conservative Sect, which organically attempted to conserve its status, was prepared to react.

The Quondam Complex would operate powerfully in this fight, with the Conservative Sect viewing the agitators for civil rights as emptiers of the glass; contrariwise, preachers for civil rights would view the glass as only half-full. The civil rights movement operated as a pure opposite to the Quondam Complex; the civil rights movement saw the past as the way things should not be. Andrew Young quoted a black preacher who put this difference succinctly: "'we ain't what we oughta be; we ain't what we're gonna be; but thank God we ain't what we was.'"²⁷ Carl McIntire defended the status quo racial relationship, saying in 1945 that "Jesus Christ repudiated the popular doctrine that is on the lips of thousands of preachers today--the universal Fatherhood of God."²⁷ The biographers of Billy Graham explained that "evangelical Protestantism in the 1940s and 50s was overwhelmingly white and conservative on the question of race."²⁹ The Conservative Sect, outnumbered at the polls by

non-fundamentalists, looked longingly again to the good old days when there was, in their view, no racial tension as "the insecurities of that tension would tend to foster social nostalgias for an older America that had not been forced to confront a radically pluralistic world."³⁰

The fight over civil rights touched off controversy in many denominations over whether churches should become actively involved in politics at all.³¹ The Reverend Carl F. H. Henry, who edited Christianity Today and who was one of the major thinkers of the conservative theology school, wrote in 1964 that no church should become directly involved on either side "except perhaps in the most extreme emergencies" and should never speak to government "as one corporate body speaking to another, in political terms."³² American Jews, while philosophically and financially supportive of civil rights,³³ remained wary of religious involvement in politics, "finding their own freedom in the development of wide separation between church and state and in the growth of religious tolerance."³⁴ In the 1960s, Jews, Catholics, Jehovah's Witnesses, and agnostics, found a Supreme Court more willing to pry religion away from state activities and many groups were active in bringing suits.³⁵

The Conservative Sect, appalled that Protestantism (so useful as an anti-communist, anti-Catholic tool) was being used as a tool against racial bigotry, found themselves in a contradiction:

"Fundamentalist opponents of the social gospel often complained about politicising religion, but they were deeply engaged in the same process. They set flinty faces against ecumenism, liberal theology, liberal politics, socialism, foreign aid, the United Nations, and the civil rights movement. In the Protestant underworld, ultra right-wing leaders politically exploited religious literalism and parochialism."³⁶

The Reverend Billy Graham, a comparative liberal in the Conservative Sect

because of his ecuministic bent and his moderate civil rights views, found himself in a difficult position as the presidential court prophet. His relationship with President Kennedy cost him some friends and his relationship with President Johnson was strained because Graham's "basic theological constituency favor Senator Goldwater."³⁷ Graham's relationships with presidents from Eisenhower to Nixon was a mixed blessing on both sides, partly because Graham became a target for black clergymen: "White House sermons by conservative preachers who have a vested interest in affluence and who preach a status quo gospel will not suffice."³⁸ Graham stopped going to the White House after he staked his fundamentalist, pious reputation on Nixon's moral character. Graham said, "I can testify that he is a man of high moral principles."³⁹ and that came back to haunt him.⁴⁰

For American blacks, religion played an important part in their political involvement because "the best known spokesmen for the Negro in this period--Martin Luther King, Jr., James Farmer, James Baldwin, Malcolm X--were sons of clergymen; King and Malcolm X were themselves ministers."⁴¹ Looking just at the rhetorical styles of the preachers on both sides of the civil rights question, both sides were one in the same. Carl McIntire, Bob Jones, and Martin Luther King, Jr., were all superb preachers, tending to take the Bible literally, emphasizing the inevitability of God's Judgment. However, McIntire and Jones saw God's Judgment in favor of the way things used to be; King saw God's Judgment in favor of the way things should be. That King was more successful with his message led many in the Conservative Sect to assume that King was successful through subversive means, but the charges, that King was a tool of the Kremlin, attended communist schools (King got his Doctorate at Boston University), and so on, are too preposterous to be

detailed here. Nonetheless, accusations of subversion, conspiracies, etc., on the part of civil rights activists were not surprising manifestations of conservative sect protest.

The tendency of the Conservative Sect to beget mythical anti-American conspiracies and then attack them was an established tradition going back at least to Jedidiah Morse. The Sect's first alleged conspirators were the non-protestant immigrants, and later the Sect would charge that most any group that took a differing view, say, the National Council of Churches, had to be conspiring against cultural protestantism. Paranoia became a politically actionable force, reaching maturity in the 1950s. Conspiracy theories fit neatly into the concept of the Quondam Complex: Conservative Sect members, looking for reasons why they are alienated from society, assume that others must have conspired to get ahead. During the Cold War there were new opportunities for the sect to ferret out conspiracies.

There were no great numbers of immigrants to fear, but there was widespread fear of communism, and many fundamentalist preachers would pay particular attention to communism's anti-religious aspects. The sect had been developing its anti-communist rhetoric since the end of the First World War, when Billy Sunday, W. B. Riley, George McCready Price, and others discovered global conspiracies "made up of Kaiserism, evolutionism, Bolshevism, high criticism, and liberal theology,"⁴² That such conspiracies existed seems now beyond credulity, but Carl McIntire dropped Kaiserism and evolutionism from the mix and re-identified "Bolshevism" with liberal theology in the 1950s. McIntire, who found the Revised Standard Version "the work of Satan and his agents",⁴³ helped Senator McCarthy and the House UnAmerican Activities Committee locate "red" clergy. His attacks evoked a backlash from mainline churches⁴⁴

and from such politicians as Eisenhower⁴⁶ that left his organization foundering. Nonetheless, the Conservative Sect looked fondly on the period which, according to Cushing Strout, experienced a "quasi-religious revival. In political terms the new cult of religion was conservative, nationalistic, and self-congratulatory."⁴⁶ Theology had become an important ingredient in the general anti-communist feelings and the American foreign policy of containment, and in this the Conservative Sect found allies in its fight to suppress "liberal" theology. However, as so often happened to the Sect, it rhetorically over-stepped its bounds and was discredited. The general theology "that communism was wicked, like the devil, relentless"⁴⁷ had given the Conservative Sect an opening that it exploited until it went too far.

Communists and black preachers were not the sole objects of the Conservative Sect's wrath. Education had long been a battlefield for clergymen of all descriptions as well as purely secular groups. Should school children be led in prayers in the public schools? And if so, which prayer, and under what circumstances? During the late 1950s and the early 1960s, several court suits were wending their way through state and federal courts.

In 1963, the Supreme Court issued its most definitive ruling on school prayer, ruling on one case from Pennsylvania and one case from Maryland jointly. Justice Clark, delivering the majority opinion, noted that religion was an important part of American life, but

"...what our Constitution indispensably protects is the freedom of each of us, be he Jew or Agnostic, Christian or Atheist, Buddhist or Freethinker, to believe or disbelieve, to worship or not to worship, to pray or keep silent, according to his conscience, uncoerced and unrestrained by government."⁴⁸

The decision did not ban prayer in schools, as a student could still

constitutionally bow his head and pray; the difference was the student would have to do it without guidance from the school. The firestorm of protest continues to day as a primary contention of conservative sect protest.⁴⁹ The battle between the sect and those who wanted to keep the schools secularly neutral was, and is, nothing new,⁵⁰ and because of this, the activities of the sect draw great interest from the National Educational Association and other teacher's groups.⁵¹

What is instructive about the activities of the Conservative Sect and its many sub-sects in the twentieth century is that little had changed in either the thinking or the style of the sect. It still believed the glass was half-empty; it was being emptied by outsiders or subversives, and America was moving dangerously away from the ideals and the practices of the mythical founding fathers--whom they claimed as members of the sect. The people who made up the Conservative Sect continued to decry the disorder and doubt they observed, and they continued to feel alienated. They, likewise, would also find their greatest strength in the South.

The nature of their targets would not change, although the faces and names would. The immigrants attacked by Jedidiah Morse, the Know-Nothings, the Populists, and Billy Sunday, no longer came from foreign countries, but there was still great fear within the sect about foreign threats. As the 1970s began, the Conservative Sect would launch political attacks on immigrants from within American society--women immigrating from the kitchen, blacks from second class status, and homosexuals immigrating from their hiding places into the mainstream. The attacks on secular education would continue, as would the attacks on churches holding different views on what the Bible really said.

Ironically, though the sect would fear the powerful impact of tech-

nology--broadcasting--to its benefit.

Most important, the Conservative Sect demonstrated it had limited ability to effect regressive political change, unless allies were found to fight specific "threats" such as communism. The Conservative Sect remained only an element of American conservatism.

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CHAPTER IV

THE CONSERVATIVE SECT AND THE 1980 CAMPAIGNS

When the followers of the Wesley brothers came to America from England, large crowds and many converts were drawn to the enthusiastic message these Methodists brought. Eventually the ministry became highly trained and scholarly, stopped riding the circuit, and became part of the establishment. Then, as Lipset said, "sects arose to satisfy the need for religious enthusiasm."¹ Preachers with style, a loud voice, and a simple message drew people into the tent but the question, in this political study, was whether the people in the tent could be moved to take political action. Technology eventually carried the preacher's voice around the world; theoretically, satellites made all the world the preacher's tent, but could the people be persuaded? The Conservative Sect developed its share of "electronic evangelists" who could conceivably reach everyone with a radio or television, and who would try to persuade people that America should follow the example of the mythical "founding fathers".

There were new faces in the sect. Among them were Jerry Falwell, whose ministry included a thriving Baptist Church in Lynchburg, Virginia, Liberty Baptist College, and a political organization with the imposing title of the "Moral Majority"²; a group that called itself "Christian Voice", based in California, and creator of the controversial congressional "report card"; "Religious Roundtable", founded by television evangelist James Robison and former advertising executive Edward McAteer³; and other

lesser known groups. "The movement draws its strategists from secular conservative lobbies and from such single-interest forces as the right-to-life and stop-ERA movements."⁴ Two of the most visible of these strategists were Paul M. Weyrich, from the "Committee for the Survival of a Free Congress", and Howard Phillips, a former Nixon aide who started the "Conservative Caucus". It was Weyrich who said, "we are talking about Christianizing America."⁵

Jerry Falwell's Thomas Road Baptist Church was completed in 1970 and remains his base of operations. It is the home of his "Old Time Gospel Hour" television show, which is his main source of income.⁶ His statement of religious doctrine was fundamentalist, similar to the doctrine of the 1895 Niagara Conference.⁷ The political arm of his ministry, Moral Majority, formed in June 1979 with a stated purpose to "bring this country back to God."⁸ A Moral Majority brochure explained what Falwell set out to do: "He has accepted the burden of awakening this republic to her national sin, calling this nation to a real moral referendum, and turning America around toward the path of morality."⁹ True to fundamentalist tradition, Falwell attacked the non-fundamentalist churches as the source of America's alleged spiritual sickness, saying, "What's the real problem in America...it's not the Republican party or the Democratic party. I'm neither, I'm a Baptist. It's the churches."¹⁰ And Falwell brushed aside theological criticism (especially from the old fundamentalist whipping-boy, the National Council of Churches): "The problem is that we don't agree with those buzzards--and that we outnumber them."¹¹ Whether Moral Majority or the buzzards were of greater number was debatable to political scientists, but Falwell was adamant. Moral Majority set out to create "a moral climate in which it is easier for politicians to vote right than wrong."¹² and attempted to convince large

numbers of voters they were immoral and must repent. This was a difficult task, because it ran counter to another great American tradition, of "live-and-let-live, worship-and-let-worship."¹³

Christian Voice gained considerable publicity by attempting to quantify morality, distributing a "moral report card" on congressmen that purportedly measured morality as a function of votes on fifteen issues with "significant moral implications."¹⁴ Some of the issues were difficult to imagine as being "moral" issues, such as the creation of a Department of Education ("Moral": Yes vote, "Immoral": No vote.) The author of the ratings, Gary Jarmin, argued the Department was supported by the National Education Association, "which espoused a radical, secular-humanist philosophy."¹⁵ Even congressmen with unimpeachable conservative credentials, such as Representative Robert K. Dornan and Senator Jesse Helms, protested the ratings system. Dornan protested because he thought it was moving toward "creeping anti-Semitism",¹⁶ and Helms asked: "Hubert Humphrey and I didn't agree ninety percent of the time--did that mean he was more immoral?"¹⁷ The ratings drew considerable protest from mainline theologians because "the report cards have deeply disturbed some Christian politicians who themselves turned to Scripture for guidance in finding solutions to our country's problems, yet have come to more liberal conclusions."¹⁸ The ratings were high for some of the congressmen indicted for taking bribes and for Representative Robert Bauman, who pleaded guilty to a homosexual solicitation charge, and were low for the House's clergymen, like Baptist minister William Gray and Father Robert Drinan.¹⁹

Labelling political groups not belonging to the Conservative Sect immoral or unGodly was nothing new, of course. The immigrants Billy Sunday described as "garlic-smelling bomb-throwers" were now fully assimi-

lated Americans. So, there were new groups to affix labels to, such as "liberals" and "secular-humanists". Labelling was an important part of the Sect's behavior. John W. Burton said that

"...social myth and prejudice...help to explain observed differences in culture and traditions not otherwise understood. They provide a framework into which unknowns can be fitted...Barbarians and infidels were those who had different values, cultural habits, and religious beliefs."²⁰

Burton was speaking about international relationships, but his point is well taken in context. The Conservative Sect saw its country under attack by outsiders who, while they were citizens, were unAmerican because they did not fit into the Conservative Sect's definition of what an American was. In the sect's formulation, an American was one who suffered from the Quondam Complex, that is, one who felt the Godly foundation of America had been attacked.

It would be a mistake to link the Conservative Sect with all modern politicians who described themselves as "born again" or "evangelical." For example, congressmen John B. Anderson and Mark O. Hatfield, and President Jimmy Carter were self-described "born-again" Christians, but were not members of the sect. In fact, these men were targets of the sect--particularly Carter. Falwell said Carter's support of the Equal Rights Amendment and his reluctance to support an anti-abortion constitutional amendment "is a deep disappointment to God-fearing, God-loving individuals."²¹ Carter and Anderson were the object of similar comments during the presidential campaign.²² Hatfield had little but contempt for the Conservative Sect, saying, "the Gospel is not a code, a set of rules, but the incarnate of God in Christ. The Gospel is a person. When you say 'these are the issues that the moral majority... '--that to me is apostasy."²³ Hatfield did not see himself as a part of any group that "wrap their Bibles in the American Flag, believe that conservative

politics is the necessary by-product of orthodox Christianity, who equate patriotism with the belief in national self-righteousness." 24

Also, it would be a mistake to lump together the Conservative Sect with religious movements such as the "Jesus People" and some other charismatic groups.²⁵ There are other television evangelists, such as Ernest W. Angley and Oral Roberts²⁶ and other movement leaders such as Sun Myung Moon,²⁷ who, in crude terms, are politically agnostic.

A central theme of this study is that the Conservative Sect has always been a part of American politics, and, as it is driven by reaction to change, it will be a part of American politics as long as society keeps changing. The Sect looked out the window in the late 1970s and saw social tides running against it: sex roles and sexuality norms were perverted; secular education marched to the beat of "humanists"; youth not reading the Bible; communism on the move abroad while "liberals" preached understanding of communism instead of confrontation. The sect always used the past as its ideal and this ideal was God-given. Falwell said,

"...the Puritans and Pilgrims left an evangelical imprint on the hearts and minds of the early Americans so that when they wrote the Declaration of Independence, the Bill of Rights, the Constitution, and the various state charters and constitutions, you can find the philosophies of the Puritans and Pilgrims in line are in line of these very important documents. We are a nation under God."²⁸

Falwell and other conservative protestants found themselves in the headlines during the campaigns of 1980, but the roots of their style of behavior were old and well established. Lipset found

"...the crusade to keep America Protestant by imposing ascetic norms on the total population...is actually as old as the United States itself...in almost every generation, 'old American' groups which saw themselves as 'displaced', have sought to reverse these processes through the activities or moralistic movements or political action groups. Conflict between the advocates of ascetic and nativist doctrines, usually associated with the

Federalist-Whig-Republican party, and their more culturally cosmopolitan opponents in the non-Southern Democratic party, has characterized much of American history."²⁹

Richard Hofstadter found a common style that characterized these groups, and described it as paranoid:

"The clinical paranoid sees the hostile and conspiratorial world...directed specifically against him; whereas the spokesman of the paranoid style finds it directed against a nation, a culture, a way of life whose fate does not affect him alone but millions of others...His sense that his political passions are unselfish and patriotic, in fact, goes far to intensify his feeling of righteousness and his moral indignation."³⁰

Patriotism and righteousness were the common themes of the rhetoric of the Conservative Sect throughout its existence, and it put a special emphasis on its self-styled morality: "Preservatist or restorative movements--that is, backlash movements--require an aggressively moralistic stance and will find it somewhere."³¹ Consonant with its Quondam Complex, "people or groups who are objects rather than beneficiaries of change tend to seek a general 'fundamentalism' of order."³²

The use of moralism worked to the detriment of the Conservative Sect first because there is not American Sanhedrin and, hence, no firm set of moral rules, and second, the making of avuncular moral judgments about one's brother caused anger and resentment and led to conflict.

Burton wrote about this sort of conflict, saying

"...even now there has been discovered no clear demarcation between mores that are ethical, and those that are cultural, religious, legal, or merely a matter of etiquette. This failure to distinguish ethics from culturally based normative rules leads to the making of moral judgments by some sections of the community on the behaviors of others...Social tensions and conflicts must result."³³

It is beyond the range of this study to say what is moral and what is not, but what can be said is that moralism and politics are an explosive mixture. The lure of political gain can tempt the moralists, and moralism

can create conflict in a political forum. Insofar as the Conservative Sect is concerned, moralism is an important part of its appeal and this had political implications whether its moral appeal is sound or not..

Another central theme in this study is the Conservative Sect has always justified its political behavior by identifying with "founding fathers"; just as it sought fundamentalism in its religion, it sought fundamentalism in its politics. Pat Robertson, founder of the Christian Broadcasting Network, wrote (in a pamphlet distributed at a "Washington For Jesus" rally) in reference to the first English landing at Cape Henry, "on that day, a very brave people came ashore...and claimed this land for Jesus. It is our intention to reclaim it for Jesus in our generation."³⁴ According to Roberson, "government was to be the servant of God's people."³⁵ Falwell's Moral Majority was based on the same premise, that "America, which began on such great promise, [was] founded upon the principles of the Bible."³⁶ Again, the policy of the Conservative Sect (Falwell and Robertson might be considered sub-sects unto themselves) was not to create something new but to recreate nostalgic protestantism. There were many villains to blame for America's supposed turn away from its "great promise," and these villains were generally "liberals" or, in other words, anyone who did not agree that America was founded for Jesus or upon biblical principles.

As Hofstadter noted above, spokesmen of the paranoid style saw their nation under attack. James Robison, of the Religious Roundtable, said, "we are either going to have a Hitler-style takeover, a dictatorship, Soviet communist domination or we're going to get right with God in this country."³⁷ The executive director of Christian Voice, Richard T. Zone, said, "evangelicals are waking up to the fact that we're losing our country."³⁸ Paul Weyrich said that "Middle Americans did not begin

to wake up in large numbers until this past year...The impression given in our mass media is that homosexuality, communal marriages, abortion, and women in the military combat are perfectly normal and even desirable."³⁹ Not just the Conservative Sect was under attack, the nation was under attack: "If we look at the sin of sodomy and the destruction of the city of Sodom, we're at the brink of destruction."⁴⁰ Homosexuals were favorite "invaders" in the sect's literature. Bob Jones, Sr., said that because of homosexual activities in San Francisco, "I wouldn't want to live in that town; one day it's going to fall into the sea--God warned then with Mt. Saint Helens (the volcano that erupted in Washington State.)"⁴¹

There were other "invaders" from within, particularly "liberal" judges (who legalized abortion, women's rights, took prayer out of the schools, etc.), the schools (which taught "humanism"), the media, and "liberal" politicians, and mainline churches received special scorn. Robertson said, "the courts, in league with the leftist-oriented American Civil Liberties Union, a handful of athiests, unitarians, and liberal Protestant and Jewish groups, have successfully 'deChristianized' our public life."⁴² As for secular public schools and colleges, the President of Liberty Baptist College, A. Pierre Guillermin, said they were "controlled by a rationalistic approach which had no standards of right and wrong."⁴³ Most members of the Conservative Sect had given up trying to prove there were conspiracies underfoot and yet according to the chief spokesman for Moral Majority,

"...for the past forty years, there has been a similar 'mindset' of people involved in government and the media: these people believe that you can throw money at problems, they go to the same kinds of schools, read the same kinds of books, they share a similar world view."⁴⁴

A recurrent theme in conservative sect literature was the need for

correction of the "moral drift" of America could not be entrusted to "liberal" politicians and theologians, but was the responsibility of "Bible believers...[who] have sat out the political process."⁴⁵ Christian Voice co-founder Robert Grant was empirically correct in that "if Christians united, we can do anything. We can pass any law or amendment."⁴⁶ If all Christians, from Methodists to Catholics to Baptists, worked together on the same legislation, their numbers would make them politically invincible. Who would lead this crusade? A Moral Majority pamphlet trumpeted its founder, Jerry Falwell, under the headline "A New Kind of Leadership:...recognizing the impending crisis, one man--a man of proven leadership and true vision--has stepped forward."⁴⁷ Nevertheless, one wondered whether the Conservative Sect itself, let alone all the other denominations and sects in America, would recognize Falwell as the leader, or any other person for that matter. There had never been a viable religion-based party in America, hence, the Conservative Sect's age-old problem reappeared: it was politically stunted for it had no mechanisms to make its disparate sub-sects work in concert, no selection of leaders, no codification of doctrine. It could not act, only react.

The issues agitated by the Conservative Sect during the 1980 campaigns were primarily issues that were reheated and somewhat redefined from the past: sex and sexuality issues, such as abortion, homosexuality, women's roles, etc.; foreign threats, and the concurrent need for military superiority; institutional support for religion, such as prayer in the schools and the teaching of evolution.⁴⁸ Billy Graham,⁴⁹ Carl McIntire and his followers like Billy James Hargis,⁵⁰ had focused on the same things thirty years before.

These issues demonstrated the Conservative Sect's organic preoccupation with the mythical past, when only monogamous couples had sex, when

America was afraid of no foreign foe, when prayer was a morning ritual in public schools. Falwell nostalgically recalled

"...when I was growing up...the family was clearly a husband-wife relationship...A homosexual in my childhood was looked on as a moral perversion...Here in America, our moral values are changing. And now, when someone takes a moral stand...he is looked upon as a bigot."⁵¹

Being a sect, which meant separation from society, the Conservative Sect found itself in a familiar dilemma: how could it stay separate and still get involved in politics? The Sect solved this dilemma by proclaiming its devotion to non-partisanship and then got involved in partisan politics anyway.

The partisanship of the sect was exemplified in one issue of the Moral Majority Report which had this headline: "Carter Camp Takes Aim at 'Electronic Evangelists'", and in another headline which said, "Gay Leaders Visit White House: Aide Maddox More Comfortable with Homosexuals than Fundamentalists."⁵² That issue had many articles about homosexuality (eight of seventeen articles dealt with it) and the articles advanced the notion that homosexuality was on the increase and Democrats were politically linked to homosexual groups.⁵³ Falwell told his "Old Time Gospel Hour" audience "we're not involving ourselves in partisan politics."⁵⁴ but his aide Robert Billings (who served on the Reagan campaign and administration staffs) said, "the truth is, where the rubber hits the road, Moral Majority is pro-Reagan, ex-officio."⁵⁵ It was difficult to directly link the Conservative Sect with political conservatives in general, given the confusion over the popular use of the term "conservative,"⁵⁶ but it was accurate to say, reviewing the literature of the sect, it was still closely aligned with the "Federalist-Whig-Republican" party. The sect was ecstatic over the results of the 1980 elections.⁵⁷ Jarmin, of Christian Voice, wrote that "it points to the beginning of a

new era"; Falwell wrote "we were surprised to win such an overwhelming victory in almost every state."⁵⁸ Weyrich said, "the sleeping giant of America's 'Moral Majority' has awakened at last."⁵⁹

One last note on the issues of the Conservative Sect concerns the impressionistic observation of the writer that the sect seems to be preoccupied with sex as a national issue. Anti-traditional-masculine figures, such as homosexuals and feminists, were the objects of a great bulk of the sect's literature. There was much about "begating" in the Bible, and many stories about male-female relationships, and perhaps this is the source of the Sect's preoccupation. What would seem a more likely explanation, however, was that sexual issues attracted media attention and their visibility attracted the sect because of its hypersensitivity to change. Another explanation might be that homosexuals had a limited ability to fight back in political forums and were a handy target. Psychological research would be the best way to discover why the sect used sex as an issue, but it was important in a political study to note what issues the sect planned to prosecute in political forums, and sex was certainly one of them. As a political strategy, the use of sex as an issue would help and hamper the sect's political strength. It would help because most other traditional politicians were concerned with the mundane issues like taxes, and the sect had sex as an issue to itself. It would hurt because sex is a narrow platform to build a national base, and many prefer not to talk about the subject in open forums. Rhetorically, sex was an attention-getter, good for drawing headlines. Christian Voice, for example, got its start in California as a political action group that campaigned for a state referendum to ban homosexual teachers from schools.⁶⁰ Falwell, at his many "I Love America" rallies, was eminently quotable for such lines as

"God made Adam and Eve, not Adam and Steve,"⁶¹ and pornography was "on main street...dumped like a cesspool into our living rooms through TV."⁶²

Many of the sermons of Falwell, Robison, et al, contained a passage that began with "when I was growing up..." and then much was made of the changes they perceived in America regarding sex and the relative roles of men and women. Assuming they were correct, and assuming further something should be done politically to change things back to the way they supposedly were, what sort of action would one take? Popular support for a tax rollback is politically actionable; taxes can be rolled back. However, how can one legislate a rollback in sexual practices and sex roles? If abortion was made unconstitutional, would that stop abortion? Could one liquidate pornography? These are questions whose answers would have to take into account the ability of politicians to control social change. The irony for the Conservative Sect was that on one hand the sect demanded that government get out of private lives, but on the other hand, it demanded that government get involved in the most private aspects of people's lives.

Political Reaction to the Conservative Sect

The names and faces had changed through the years, but a central concept--the Quondam Complex--proved a remarkably stable and constant method of identifying and understanding the Conservative Sect. Just as followers were attracted to the sect's emphasis on the conservation of mythical fundamental political and religious ideals, there was a considerable number of people who opposed the sect. Significant responses came from theologians and political figures.

The theological responses were politically important because they served to erode the public's perception of the Sect. The response of

theologians who were not conservative was uniformly negative and was based on two points: the Conservative Sect was too judgmental and the sect had peculiar, if not dangerous and inaccurate ideas about what the Bible taught. Christian Century editorialized that "the demand for purity on single issues, or more precisely, clusters of emotion-laden issues, is a dangerous trend", because "Christian faith should not be used by either the left or the right to demand purity in situations where purity is an impossibility."⁶³ Other writers were concerned about the issue of "purity" and how the Sect had baptised its view as "pure."⁶⁴ Senator Hatfield said, "what I react against is the equating of a political issue with one's morality or one's relationship with God."⁶⁵ The President of the National Council of Churches, William Howard, argued "we can't use polarization as a tactic for raising funds to combat people taking positions different from us. It would lead to an ugly religious war."⁶⁶

Other theologians were concerned about the sect's biblical interpretations. Martin Marty read Matthew 25 and argued that on Judgment Day, Christ will ask whether one fed the hungry, clothed the naked, etc., and not about one's stand on the Equal Rights Amendment or prayer in schools.⁶⁷ Another wrote "we need to maintain a spirit of humility. We must admit that we do not always clearly fathom the complexities of these policy issues."⁶⁸ The President of the Union Theological Seminary, Donald Shriver, was worried that the Conservative Sect would drive people away from religion: "Evangelicals will subject the gospel of Jesus to unnecessary rejection by others if they identify it with any political program."⁶⁹

The arguments of the more "liberal" theologians had a large potential political impact. First, the outnumbered fundamentalist churches

substantially in membership,⁷⁰ and second, denominations such as the Methodists and the Roman Catholics have large, well-established lobbying organizations in Washington.⁷¹ The opposition of these churches helped (and will help) reinforce separatist beliefs within the Conservative Sect and gave the sect another opponent to attack but also limited the sect's ability to attract members and form coalitions with mainline churches. Whether the fundamentalist foundation of the Sect will ever be subjected to theological criticism is unlikely, because as sociologist John Scanzoni put it,

"genuine dialogue, leaving open the possibility of mutual change, is by definition unknown to the fundamentalists. It is that incipient sect mentality that has tended to plague evangelicalism, and which has often kept it from building bridges with mainstream Christianity."⁷²

The response of the conservative churches had its negative aspects, too. First there was the nagging problem of sectarian behavior; if one is a separatist, how can one get involved with other churches to fight political wars? Bob Jones, Sr., in an interview with the writer, said he commended Moral Majority and other sub-sects for their morality and patriotism, but he could not joint them "because that's ecumenism, and that's forbidden in the Scripture." According to Jones, God is not "glorified" when you building the ecumenical movement, "which is the AntiChrist."⁷³ Jones' reluctance to join with other churches stemmed from an old controversy involving the ecumenical "Christian Unity" movement among Protestants that began in earnest at the turn of this century. The anti-ecumenists thus served to reinforce the Conservative Sect's split into many sub-sects which may hold similar views but which cannot work together.

Other conservative church responses involved the contention that preachers should be engaged in preaching, not politicking. Bailey Smith,

President of the Southern Baptist Convention, said, "we have to be careful, in identifying all conservative political views as synonymous with Christianity...The way some of these men talk, I think they're more excited about missiles than about the Messiah."⁷⁵ Television evangelists Pat Robertson and Jim Bakker, both delved into conservative political topics on their television shows; but both put distance between themselves and other members of the Conservative Sect on the issue of politicizing religion. Robertson, in his letter of resignation from the Religious Roundtable, wrote he would "avoid anything which would cause confusion in accomplishment of [our mission of reaching people for the Lord Jesus Christ.]"⁷⁶ Robertson wrote that Christians have a constitutional right to political activism, but "we must constantly guard ourselves, lest we lose our role as arbiters of eternal truths and take in exchange the role of political advocates."⁷⁷ Bakker scorned the sect's advocacy of conservative politicians: "I don't think God is a Republican or a Democrat who is pretty clearly active for one candidate."⁷⁸ Bakker's position was that religion organizations should give political counsel when asked and should pray for elected leaders.⁷⁹ The Executive Director of the National Religious Broadcasters, Ben Armstrong, said NRB guidelines prohibited involvement in politics: "A few broadcasters who claim to be the heads of churches but devote their air time to political commentary...are not and cannot be affiliated with NRB."⁸⁰ Armstrong said, "there was only one cause to champion and that was to bring people into a closer relationship with God."⁸¹ The impact of conservative church criticism was difficult to assess in hard political terms, but this criticism did indicate conservative churches were not a monolithic unit ready to do political battle.

When the polls closed it was plain the candidates supported by the

Conservative Sect had won, or, more accurately, the candidates attacked by the sect had lost. How big a role did the sect play? Poll data, discussed in the next chapter, indicated the election would have probably turned out the same without the sect's involvement; indeed, the data indicated the possibility that many of the sect's favorites would have won larger victories if they were not involved with the sect. The reaction of President-Elect Reagan, when asked about how much he would listen to Moral Majority and similar groups that supported his candidacy, was definitively lukewarm: "I am going to seek advice where I think I can get advise on a particular problem, ask their help, and, uh, I don't any other way to say it, uh, than that."⁸² A month before the election, Reagan had gone to Falwell's church in Lynchburg and avoided religion and morality while making his standard attacks on Carter, saying things like, "government can aid family life by reducing unemployment..."⁸³ Reagan's limp embrace of the Conservative Sect was understandable in light of a poll taken by Republicans in Virginia, in which very few voters said they would vote for "evangelical candidates," and almost one-third of those polled responded unfavorably to Jerry Falwell---the highest of any public figure mentioned.⁸⁴

The limitations facing the Conservative Sect's quest for political power were built into its Quondam Complex: operating on a narrow base of issues that were biblically related or related to the sect's perception of the faith of the "founding father", the sect had a difficult time becoming involved in tradition political arguments that swung large numbers of voters--such as economic growth, taxes, city services, etc. Moral Majority's Director of State Organizing, Charles Cade, said that the organization's own polls indicated this problem:

"Abortion, pornography, those are hard for average Christians to relate to. They don't read Playboy, their daughters aren't

pregnant, they don't know any queers. But when people's life savings are deteriorating at fifteen to twenty percent a year, that's evil."85

Whether the various sub-sects such as Moral Majority, Religious Roundtable, Christian Voice, and so on, could broaden their issues-base remained to be seen. Cal Thomas, of Moral Majority, implied in a post-election commentary that Moral Majority was merely one voice in the political wilderness: "I believe God has chosen certain persons to speak out on nuclear power and racism while He has called others to speak out about abortion and pornography."86 Whether Moral Majority, for one, would seek to broaden its base remained in doubt. In December 1980, Falwell sent a letter to Moral Majority members seeking "the largest sacrificial gift" because

"...for the last several months the press reported the statements and activities of many who are doing everything in their power to chop down the Moral Majority and discredit me. These persons have been vicious and calculating in their orchestrated attacks...but we've stood our ground and continued to fight relentlessly for the moral principles you and I want restored to our great nation."87

If this letter was any indication, Moral Majority changed little as a result of its experience. The elemental issues, present the Conservative Sect's rhetoric throughout history--paranoia, righteousness, the need to "restore"--remained.

NOTES FOR CHAPTER IV

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56. Steven R. Weisman, "What Is A Conservative?", New York Times Magazine, 31 August 1980. pp. 12-34.
57. See the front sections of the Washington Post and the New York Times, 6 November 1980.
58. George Cornell, Religion Writer, the Associated Press, 6 November 1980.
59. Paul Weyrich, Review of the News, 5 November 1980. p. 62.
60. Time, 14 April 1980. p. 94.
61. Detroit Free Press, 22 April 1980. p. A-1.
62. "Old Time Gospel Hour", 25 October 1980. cf., Billy Graham's statement that obscene writings pour "like dripping from a broken sewer. Sex is front page copy everywhere." World Aflame, op. cit., p. 18. Pornography is generally referred to in conservative religious literature in scatological terms.
63. Christian Century, 9 April 1980. p. 396.

64. Zweir and Smith, op. cit., p. 940; Robert E. McKeown, "'Christian Voice': The Gospel of Right-Wing Politics", Christian Century, 15 August 1979. p. 781; Ted Moser, op. cit., p. 446; William F. Fore, "Forms of Self-Deception and Hypocrisy", Christian Century, 22 October 1980. p. 1004.

65. Mark Hatfield, quoted in the Washington Post, 24 August 1980. p. F-3; Moser, op. cit., p. 444.

66. Christian Science Monitor, 17 November 1980. p. 23.

67. Martin Marty, "Christian Voice's Rating Game", Christian Century, 18 June 1980. p. 687.

68. Zweir and Smith, op. cit., p. 940.

69. Donald W. Shriver, "The Temptation of Self-Righteousness", Christian Century, 22 October 1980. p. 1002.

70. Leo Rosten, Religions of America. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1979. pp. 329-334; 451-457.

71. Keller, op. cit., p. 2633; see also the book, by James L. Adams, The Growing Church Lobby in Washington. Grand Rapids: William E. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1970.

72. John Scanzoni, "Resurgent Fundamentalism: Marching Backward into the '80s?", Christian Century, 10 September 1980. p. 848, 849.

73. Bob Jones interview with author at Tabernacle Baptist Church, Virginia Beach, Virginia, 30 October 1980.

74. Clifton E. Olmstead, History of Religion in the United States. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1960. pp. 527-527; 536-540; Strout, op. cit., p. 315.

75. Keller, op. cit., p. 2634.

76. Quoted in Norfolk Ledger Star, 30 September 1980. p. B-1.

77. Perspective, Fall, 1980.

78. Quoted in Associated Press, 2 September 1980.

79. Bakker spokeswoman Emily Walker telephone interview with author, 5 September 1980.

80. Ben Armstrong, The Electric Church. New York: Thomas Nelson Pub., Inc., 1979. p. 45.

81. Ibid., p. 45.

82. Ronald Reagan, broadcast news conference, recorded and transcribed by author, 10 November 1980.

83. Quoted in Washington Post, 4 October 1980, Metro section, p. 1.
84. Virginian-Pilot, 25 October 1980. p. A-1.
85. Keller, op. cit., p. 2630.
86. Moral Majority Report, 17 November 1980. p. 5
87. Letter to Moral Majority members, dated 1 December 1980.

CHAPTER V

A CASE STUDY OF A NORFOLK STATE SENATE ELECTION

Thus far in this study there was little empirical data on the political capabilities of the Conservative Sect. In this chapter survey data will be examined as part of a case study of the 1979 State Senate races in Norfolk, Virginia. The data generally supported this study's thesis that the Conservative Sect has only limited political impact and tends to attract opponents as easily as adherents. This case study was only one examination of one race in one city and as such it would be difficult to make generalizations about American politics as a whole. Where available, national polling data will be used to facilitate generalizations on specific issues; otherwise, the case study stands by itself.

The Norfolk State Senate race was a good test of the Conservative Sect's political abilities--at least on a local level--for three reasons:

First, Norfolk state senate races were historically conducted in stable, nonvolatile circumstances, generally unaffected by national issues. Democrats almost invariably were elected regardless of which party controlled Congress or the Presidency. The circumstances were thus controlled and rather constant, untainted by outside political influence.

Second, this race offered a contest involving a conservative Republican challenger who espoused conservative religious views and another Republican challenger who was a conservative Baptist minister, both of whom contended the incumbents were too "liberal" and supported "immoral" legislation,

such as the Equal Rights Amendment, Medicaid-paid abortions, etc.¹ A third Republican challenger was a non-Christian who challenged the incumbents on more traditional political grounds. The former two challengers were thus good standard-bearers for the Conservative Sect's political viewpoint and the latter challenger acted as a rough control in the polling data analyses.

Third, this race was in the "Bible Belt" of American society,² and one would expect that if the sect's politics was to succeed, it would succeed in Virginia, the home base of Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson. The conservative religious candidates did very poorly, finishing fifth and sixth in a six-way race, and the opportunity was presented to examine some reasons why they failed. In this case study, some of the reasons why struck deep into the viability of conservative religious involvement in politics, foremost among them, voters reacted unfavorably to any political involvement at all by religious organizations. Further, the two conservative religious challengers spent considerable time campaigning in churches and because they did this and lost, the idea that churches were efficient vehicles of political persuasion was discredited.

Republicans made impressive gains in Virginia following the breakup of the Byrd Machine in the late 1960s-early 1970s, and the GOP dominated statewide contests and congressional races by the mid-1970s.³ However, in 1979, the State Senate and the House of Delegates were still Democratic strongholds. In Norfolk, three Democratic incumbents--Stanley C. Walker, Joseph T. Fitzpatrick, and Peter K. Babalas--ran against a full slate of Republican challengers--Meyera E. Oberndorf, R. Wayne Nunnally, and G. William Ralph--and the top three vote-getters would be elected to the Senate from Norfolk, "It's a milestone for the Republican party," said Norfolk GOP Chairman Albert Teich, "possibly the first time since Recon-

struction the Republicans have contested every Senate seat."⁴ Behind Teich's optimism, however, there was the primary problem of running against three entrenched incumbents.

Two of the challengers, Nunnally and Ralph, attempted to use their conservative religious beliefs as political issues. Both were self-described "born again" Christians, and both attempted to bring to light issues of "morality" in the campaign.⁵ Curiously, their fellow Republican challenger, Oberndorf, was a Jew, and she came closest to unseating an incumbent while running her campaign independently of Nunnally and Ralph.

Oberndorf's refusal to run with her fellow Republicans was understandable in light of a few incidents that marred the campaign. Nunnally was accused of anti-Semitism after he poked fun at Jewish traditions and he made regrettable comments about Fitzpatrick (calling him a "prostitute") and Babalas (cruelly jesting about Babalas' bone disease.)⁶ Ralph campaigned solely on what he called "moral" issues such as abortion. A Baptist minister, he ran his campaign with the help of some area churches, and even had Jerry Falwell come to Norfolk to help raise money.⁷ Ralph's rhetoric indicated he saw his country under attack and he said it was time to turn society around, to restore it to the way it was:

"I am concerned about family things...There is a moral majority in this country and we want to bring morality back to Richmond. I don't really have time to talk about my [electric] bill when they are killing a million babies a year. Our Democratic opponents say what we are talking about is garbage---and they support abortion and the Equal Rights Amendment."⁸

That Oberndorf had decided to go it alone was driven home by an advertised endorsement from Norfolk's popular Republican congressman, G. William Whitehurst, which praised Oberndorf's stand on taxes, etc., and totally ignored Nunnally and Ralph, and any "moral" issue.⁹ Oberndorf notably stopped any association with her "running-mates" after a stormy

meeting with a Jewish women's organization, at which she faced lacerating questions about her "running-mates" conservative religious views. She left the meeting in tears.¹⁰ The Norfolk Virginian-Pilot, in its Sunday editions before the election, noted "Mrs. Oberndorf's attempt to crack the Democratic 'team' has centered primarily on Babalas, while Nunnally and the third Republican challenger, the Rev. G. William Ralph, have banded together."¹¹

With the Republicans in near-fratricide, the Democrats concentrated on the tedious, little-noticed things that win local elections, such as putting together precinct task forces to knock doors, man telephone banks, and hand out literature. Most of the public attacks were aimed at Oberndorf and usually dealt with charges that she was an opportunist, a turncoat Democrat, and--being a Virginia Beach Councilwoman--had the interests of Virginia Beach, not Norfolk, at heart.¹² (The senate districts in question comprised all of Norfolk and a very small slice of the City of Virginia Beach, where Oberndorf resided.) When asked specifically about their religious beliefs, each of the Democratic incumbents told the writer they were deeply religious, were involved in church affairs and believed in God, but religion had not place in politics or government.

By no stretch of the imagination was religion a hotly debated issue in the election, and the most popular religious question that did surface concerned Oberndorf's uneasy relationship with her "born again" fellow Republicans. Ken Geroe, chief strategist for the Democratic campaign, said Ralph's manager called on the eve of the election and boasted that church buses would bring thousands of Ralph and Nunnally voters to the polls, swamping the Democrats.¹³ Few, if any, of those buses made it, or if they did the parishioners left the buses and voted for someone

other than Nunnally or Ralph. The Democrats ran as a team, stressed their time-honored political virtues like experience and service, and left the Republicans to their own self-destructive devices. Nunnally and Ralph did receive the endorsement of Norfolk City Councilman G. Conoly Phillips,¹⁴ and this deserves note. Phillips was a self-described "born again" Christian candidate when he ran for the Democratic nomination for United States Senate in 1978. Phillips created a stir by his politically unorthodox campaign; and he was particularly vague about issues such as taxation and foreign affairs, saying, "God has not revealed to me all He would want me to do." Phillips ran because he "was called upon to represent Jesus Christ in the United States Senate."¹⁵ Phillips enlivened the primary and attracted attention by holding "prayer-group caucuses" but he did poorly.¹⁶

This study has focused on the Conservative Sect's organic limitation to specific "moral" issues and the resultant limited political impact of the Sect. This hypothesis was put to a test in the following examination of poll data from the week following the November 6th 1979 Norfolk State Senate elections. In general terms, the data showed Norfolk voters knew little about the conservative religious beliefs of Nunnally and Ralph. In any event, there were indications the Norfolk voters would not have responded positively to conservative religious issues.

A telephone survey was conducted among registered voters who said they voted in the Senate election. No respondents who said they did not vote in the election were included. The survey was conducted the week following the election, with thirty-three questions asked about whome the respondents voted for, sources of information about the candidates, and the respondents' political and religious views.¹⁷ The names of

potential respondents were drawn from a complete list of registered voters broken down by precinct.¹⁸ Approximately 500 potential respondents were contacted and from this group, 277 agreed to answer the complete survey. Table One shows how the actual vote compared with the votes respondents said they cast.

As one can see, the survey vote results were similar to the actual vote, though a bit more Democratic; this may be due to sampling error or due to the respondents' reluctance to identify with the losers, and certainly some voters forgot whom they voted for. In any case, it was clear the Democratic Team won the day (Democrats also swept the House of Delegates races), with Oberndorf providing a good scare. The "born again Christian" candidates finished, to put it in the words of Democratic strategist Geroe, "in the nickel seats."¹⁹ In the actual vote, Oberndorf did well in the nine Virginia Beach precincts but was soundly beaten in the ten "black precincts" in Norfolk. Nunnally and Ralph ran fifth and sixth, respectively, in all precincts and, notably, Ralph ran sixth in the Ingleside precinct, the home of his Baptist church.

In the survey, thirteen percent of the respondents said they considered themselves to be Republicans, and it would seem Nunnally and Ralph received essentially the vote of Republican identifiers. At the outset, it would be tempting to say Nunnally and Ralph got only the votes of Republicans and explain the election's outcome on the basis of partisanship among voters; Norfolk was a Democratic stronghold and therefore Republican candidates could expect to lose. Oberndorf received about one-half of her votes in the survey from respondents who said they considered themselves Independents while Nunnally and Ralph received almost none from Independents and this could explain why she came much close to beating an incumbent.

Table One. Actual Vote and Survey Vote.

CANDIDATE	Actual ^a Vote	% ^b	% ^c	Survey Vote (N=277)	% ^d
Walker	23,821	21	30	199	72
Fitzpatrick	21,153	19	22	155	60
Babalas	20,896	19	22	153	60
Oberndorf	20,023	18	17	122	44
Nunnally	13,614	12	7	46	17
Ralph	12,738	11	5	37	13
TOTALS	112,245	100	100	712 ^e	

a. Actual vote from Norfolk Virginian-Pilot, 7 November 1979, D1-2.

b. Percentage of total votes cast by all voters.

c. Percentage of total votes respondents said they cast.

d. Percentage of survey respondents (N=277).

e. Total votes cast by all respondents; each respondent could vote for three candidates or fewer of the six candidates on the ballot.

Party identification is generally an important factor to be considered in almost any election at any level and Table Two shows how the candidates fared on a partisan basis. While all the candidates other than Nunnally and Ralph received an even distribution of Independent and Democratic votes---even picking up a number of Republican votes---Nunnally and Ralph received about nine out of ten of their votes from Republicans. Again, in Norfolk's state house elections Republicans do not win because there too few Republicans. Perhaps Nunnally and Ralph receive only the vote of partisan Republicans because very few voters knew anything about them. Respondents were asked, "what have you heard about Nunnally or Ralph," and if they had no answer, they were probed with follow-up questions such as, "have you heard anything about his party, or what he stands for?" The result was that seventy-two percent could identify neither the party nor the issues relating to Nunnally and eighty-three percent had similar blank responses to Ralph.

Table Three shows the distribution of Nunnally and Ralph votes by the respondents' religious identification and, again, there was a demonstration of the apparent narrow appeal of the pair. The other candidates virtually swept non-Protestant voters while Nunnally and Ralph depended heavily on Protestants. This may have been related to the strong correlation of the respondents' religious identification with a party identification, i.e., about ninety percent of those who said they were Catholics or Jews also said they were Democrats. Further, Nunnally's and Ralph's total vote from Protestants was less than the Protestant vote for each of the incumbents: forty-one respondents who said they were Protestant voted for Nunnally or Ralph while over eighty respondents who said they were Protestant voted for one of the incumbents. The incumbents' strong showing among Protestants may have been partly due to the incumbents' near sweep of black respondents: forty-six of the forty-seven black

Table Two. Respondents' Party Identification by Vote.

Party Identification ^a	Nun/Ral (N=48)	All Others ^b (N=321)
Democrat	3	40
Republican	86	20
Independent	10	40

- a. From the question, "In politics, do you generally consider yourself to be a Democrat, a Republican, or an Independent?"
- b. Total of all votes cast for candidates other than Nunnally or Ralph. Total is more than number of respondents (277) because each respondent could cast more than one vote.

respondents said they voted for one of the incumbents and ninety-two percent of the black respondents said they were Protestant.

As discussed before in this study, some blacks may be conservative theologically but that does not mean they are necessarily political conservatives; William Ralph and Martin Luther King, Jr., were both Southern Baptist preachers but were polar opposites politically. Ralph explained to the writer before the election why he had not campaigned in black churches in Norfolk, "because they're all Democrats anyway." This had important ramifications for the Conservative Sect: while it may attract a number of Protestants, the sect tended to cleave the Protestant community along racial lines, and it received very few non-Protestant votes. After the 1980 presidential election, in one "exit" poll of more than 1,500 respondents, fifty-three percent of blacks questioned said they were "born again" and thirty-four percent of whites said they were "born again."²⁰ Among the white "born again" respondents, Reagan beat Carter by about ten percent, the same margin of victory Reagan received in the total vote, but among black "born again" respondents, Carter beat Reagan, eighty-six percent to six percent. This national poll tended to support Ralph's contention that blacks "are all Democrats anyway" regardless of their religious orientation.

Table Four shows the distribution of Nunnally/Ralph votes by the respondents' religiosity. The striking similarity between Nunnally/Ralph votes and the votes for all other candidates indicates it would be difficult to say religiosity was a factor in the election. Nunnally and Ralph received a higher percentage of their votes from those who said they attended church at least once a month, and all other candidates received a higher percentage from those who said they rarely or never went to church. Other attempts were made to find significant differences in the

Table Three. Religious Identification by Vote.

Religious Identification ^a	Nun/Ral (N=48)	All Others (N=321)
Protestant	86	59
Catholic	2	10
Jewish	0	7
Other, None	12	23

- a. From the question, "Would you describe your religious orientation as Protestant, Catholic, Jewish, or something else?"

votes cast for individual candidates, but the votes cast for Walker, Fitzpatrick, Babalas, and Oberndorf, were all within five percentage points of the distribution of their votes combined. Obviously, it was possible to say the Norfolk State Senate election was probably not decided by the religious devotion or habits of the respondents' and this would tend to belie Nunnally's and Ralph's claim, expressed to the writer before the election, that they would pick up the votes of "all of the religious people in Norfolk."

All of the data presented so far strongly support the idea that the Norfolk election was a partisan affair. Correlations of denominations--Baptist, Methodist, etc.--by Nunnally/Ralph vote demonstrated there was no significant difference between their votes and the votes cast for the other candidates. Respondents were asked, "What is your reaction to Nunnally or Ralph, favorable, unfavorable, etc.?"--and, again, the only strongly favorable group among ten different groups (denominations, vote frequency, age, etc.) was the group of Republicans in the survey; the only strongly unfavorable group was the group of Democrats in the survey.

Putting the best possible light on Nunnally's and Ralph's loss, one could say they did poorly not because they had an unpopular message, rather, they did not reach enough people, especially the Independents and Democrats. It was clear from the survey that the respondents knew little about the pair. When respondents were asked if they heard or read anything about the religious beliefs of the candidates, fifty-five percent said they had. Of this group, forty-seven percent couldn't remember which candidate, twenty-one percent said they had heard something about Oberndorf's religion, seven percent mentioned Babalas or Fitzpatrick, and six percent mentioned either Nunnally or Ralph. The respondents were not

Table Four. Religiosity by Vote.

Religiosity	Nun/Ral (N=48)	All Others (N=321)
Would you describe yourself as...		
Very Religious	25	29
Fairly Religious	48	48
Not Very Religious	11	10
Not At All	17	11
How often do you attend church:		
Once a Week	31	33
At Least Once a Month	47	37
Few Times Year	16	12
Rarely, Never	6	18

required to be accurate (e.g., Oberndorf was a Jew, Fitzpatrick was a Catholic) and the percentages would have been smaller if respondents were required to be accurate. Nonetheless, seventy-one percent of all the respondents (N=277) either did not know or could not remember the religious beliefs of any of the candidates. All of this may say something about the Nunnally/Ralph effort to campaign in churches: perhaps they did not speak in enough churches; perhaps the parishioners did not vote, perhaps the parishioners did not pay attention to them.

Nunnally's and Ralph's lack of success in their church-based campaign was duplicated in Virginia by Jerry Falwell's Moral Majority during the 1980 presidential campaign. Although Falwell said Moral Majority had registered many thousands of voters through church-based campaigns in Virginia, Joan Mahan, State Secretary of Board of Elections, said the increase in registrations in Virginia was due to population increases, and the State Chairman of the Virginia Republican Party, Alfred Cramer, said, "I cannot find any evidence that Moral Majority and the evangelicals really did anything like registering people."²¹ Falwell's boast that Moral Majority had registered three million voters nationwide had "little factual basis":

"though [Falwell] said the number is based on estimates from state affiliates, Moral Majority directors in two of the active states--California and Alabama--said they merely send out voter materials to pastors and make no effort to keep a count of new registerants."²²

Falwell also claimed his "Old Time Gospel Hour" reached twenty-five million viewers each week, but the Nielson rating for his show put the number of viewers at 1.2 million.²³ Religious broadcasting in general reaches a narrow audience and "tends to reach those who have already been reached in the sense of already having formed association with religious institutions."²⁴ Using any church, whether it be a local church or an "electronic

church," as a political vehicle probably will not help a candidate much: either the candidate spends too much time reaching too few people or the candidate is likely to persuade people who are already persuaded in his favor; in both cases, the candidate is engaged in unproductive pursuits. One question posed in this study is whether conservative preachers can persuade people to act in a political manner, and the apparent answer here is the preacher does not reach many people and those he does persuade would have voted in favor of the preacher's position anyway.

Table Five shows the correlation of the respondents' views about three types of religious involvement in politics by their vote. In each case, the respondents who said they voted for Nunnally or Ralph were more likely to favor religious involvement. The Nunnally/Ralph voters were also somewhat less likely to be neutral, and the voters for all other candidates were much more likely to be unfavorable toward religious involvement.

The first question was intended to find out how the respondents felt generally about candidates expressing a religious belief. What effect a candidates' religious expression might have was hard to say in this election---but at the national level candidates commonly let it be known that they are a Catholic, as in the case of the Kennedy brothers; "born again", as in the case of Jimmy Carter, Ronald Reagan, and John Anderson; it was difficult to think of a candidate who said he was an atheist. A candidate expressing his religious beliefs is probably the mildest form of religious involvement in politics, and even though most candidates do it, it is interesting to note in this case study that a large percentage of the respondents were against it.

The second question in Table Five left a majority of respondents saying they did not know whether they would be more or less likely to

Table Five. Religious Involvement by Vote.

Type Involvement	Nun/Rai (N=48)	All Others (N=321)
Should candidates make their religious beliefs known:		
Yes	40	25
Neutral	29	36
No	30	40
More of less likely to vote for 'born again Christian':		
More Likely	19	5
Neutral	55	54
Less Likely	25	41
Should religious organizations be- come politically involved:		
Yes	22	9
Neutral	30	35
No	48	56

vote for a self-described "born again" Christian. Many told the writer something like, "I would have to know more about the candidate and his issues." The greater number of negative responses than positive responses among all voters, however, indicated a candidate might well be best advised to avoid saying things about his religion.

The third question spoke directly on the subject of this study, and even among those who voted for Nunnally or Ralph, a near majority were against religious organizations becoming involved in politics. The results strongly supported the view that even if conservative religious groups reached a larger number of people than they did, the candidates associated with these groups would probably be more likely to be hurt at the polls than helped. As for those who did vote for Nunnally and Ralph and were against religious institutions' involvement, this could be explained that either these respondents did not care about the involvement or they did not know about it; given the low recognition levels of the pair, the latter could be the case.

Table Six shows the respondents' views on involvement by their party identification and it shows a similarity between the votes cast for Nunnally or Ralph and Republican identification, with one exception: respondents who said they were Republicans generally were much more likely to hold a negative view of religious organizations becoming involved in politics than Nunnally/Ralph voters specifically.

In Norfolk's Senate elections, a candidate must win the votes of large numbers of Democrats and Independents, and clearly a candidate who became associated with politically active religious organizations would tend to have trouble. Nonetheless, if a candidate of any description was associated with a religious organization, and if these percentages were reflective of the general population, such a candidate would probably

lose.

Other polls support the contention that association with religious organizations is a dangerous activity for a candidate. Just prior to the 1980 presidential election, the Virginia Republican Party polled Republicans and found Jerry Falwell had a "negative rating" of thirty-two percent, the highest of any public figure mentioned, and while ten percent said they would be more likely to vote for an "evangelical" candidate, thirty-one percent said they would be less likely, and fifty-three percent said it would have no effect on their vote.²⁵ An "exit" poll of over 1,500 voters nationally showed that among voters who described themselves as "born again Christians", sixty-one percent said churches and religious organizations should not get involved in politics. Of these voters, four percent said they voted purposefully for the candidate endorsed by their clergyman, while seven percent said they purposefully voted against their clergyman's candidate; eighty-seven percent said it made no difference.²⁶

Other polls, conducted by Gallup, indicated there was little national support for the issues agitated by the Conservative Sect. For example, seventy-eight percent of respondents said abortion should be the woman's choice or legal under certain circumstances, and a plurality of Republicans and majorities of Democrats and Independents said they supported the Equal Rights Amendment.²⁷ Other Gallup polls indicated few voters--three percent--though the "moral decline" of America was America's most important problem.²⁸

For Nunnally and Ralph, running on a church-based "moral" platform, there was little change of success, indeed, if more voters had known about them, their vote totals might have been smaller. This case study is, of course, just a limited view of a local state senate election, and

one must be careful in making generalizations about its findings to the larger arena of political activity. What this case study does do, however, is give one an idea of how conservative religious candidates might carry out their campaign and how well they might fare.

NOTES FOR CHAPTER V

1. William Ralph and Wayne Nunnally interviews with author. All of the candidates were interviewed individually by author at various campaign functions, by telephone, and at their offices. Nunnally and Ralph interviews cited here were conducted on 7 October 1979.

2. See V. O. Key, Jr., Southern Politics. New York: Vintage Books, 1949. pp. 6-8, 553; John Shelton Reed, The Enduring South. University of North Carolina Press, 1974. chap. 6.

3. See Virginius Dabney, Virginia: The New Dominion. Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Co., 1971. chap. 3; Larry Sabato, Virginia Votes, 1975-1978. University of Virginia Government Dept., 1979.

4. Albert Teich telephone interview with author, 4 October 1979.

5. Ralph, Nunnally interviews, op. cit.; and Norfolk Beacon, 4 November 1979. p. E-22.

6. Nunnally told the author he would know better next time, had to "curb his tongue", and said the media took statements out of context.

7. Beacon, Ibid., p. E-22.

8. Ibid.

9. Ibid., p. E-10.

10. Meeting at the Norfolk Jewish Community Center, attended by author, 10 October 1979.

11. Norfolk Virginian-Pilot, 4 November 1979. p. B-1.

12. Ken Geroe interview with author by telephone, 20 October 1979.

13. Ibid.

14. Virginian-Pilot, p. B-1.

15. Conoly Phillips telephone interview with author, 3 June 1978.

16. See Alan I. Abramowitz, "Ideological Realignment and the Nationalization of Southern Politics: A Study of Party Activists and Candidates in a Southern State." Unpublished paper, Dept. of Government, the College of William and Mary, September, 1978. p. 27; Sabato, op. cit., pp. 90-92.

17. See Questionnaire in Appendix.

18. The Norfolk Democratic Party was kind enough to lend a copy of their computer list of all registered voters, broken down by precinct, and including telephone numbers of all registered voters. Using this list, it was a simple task to ensure that a balanced number of responses were drawn from the precincts.

19. Ken Geroe telephone interview with author, 6 November 1979, evening.
20. NBC/AP Exit Poll of 1,548 voters, the Associated Press, 14 November 1980.
21. Virginian-Pilot, 25 October 1980 p. A-1.
22. Bill Keller, "Evangelical Conservatives Move from Pews to Polls, But Can They Sway Congress?", Congressional Quarterly, 6 September 1980. p. 2627.
23. The Associated Press, 16 October 1980.
24. Ronald L. Johnstone, "Who Listens to Religious Radio Broadcasts Anymore?", Journal of Broadcasting, Winter, 1971-72. p. 101.
25. Virginian-Pilot, 25 October 1980. p. A-1; cf., a poll of Virginians done by Professor David Magleby, the University of Virginia, showed among 230 respondents, 45 percent had not heard of Moral Majority, and 83 percent said they would not be likely to follow the political advice of their clergymen, while 10 percent said they would be likely to. Of the 55 percent of the respondents who said they had heard of Moral Majority, 3 percent said they would follow its recommendations and 8 percent said they would vote against. News Release from University of Virginia, 28 October 1980.
26. NBC/AP Poll, op. cit.
27. See Gallup Opinion Index, June, 1980. pp. 4, 7.
28. Index, Ibid., in November, 1979, three percent said "moral" issues were the most important problem; in April-May, 1980, two percent said "moral" problems were the most important.

CONCLUSION

Many of the commentaries on the 1980 elections referred to the "new" political Christians, or the "emerging" religious right, as if Jerry Falwell, Richard Zone, Paul Weyrich, et al, were the leaders of a brand new movement. The "newness" of this "movement" is contradicted by the presence of conservative, politically minded preachers since the beginning of American political history--preachers like Jedidiah Morse, Billy Sunday, and Carl McIntire. Whether the contemporary expressions of conservative sect protest--Moral Majority, Christian Voice, etc.--constituted a "movement" was also questionable; Hofstadter's use of the word "style" was probably more appropriate because the Conservative Sect was always hampered in its political activities by its lack of cohesiveness, orderly selection of leaders, and its inability to agree on doctrine. What it did share was a unique style.

Protestantism inherently suffers of its own schismatic tendencies; the Conservative Sect, likewise, tends to cleave into sub-sects, and, in this, the Conservative Sect suffers politically because of its disorganization and inability to form coalitions. The associations it did form--with the "Federalist-Whig-Republican Party"--tended to be associations of convenience, based upon shared, narrow issues (e.g., anti-immigrant, anti-communist, anti-homosexual,)

The religious roots of the Conservative Sect attracted the attention of people desirous of fundamentalist preaching, but, ironically, these roots limited the number of people who could join the sect, and, further

tended to engender negative reactions among the groups of people left outside the sect's separatist circle. The membership of the sect was limited to people who agreed to adhere to strict, fundamentalist dogma; unless the sect develops a theology to attract the flock of the much larger mainline churches (e.g., the Methodist and Catholic churches), it will be consigned to minority status, despite its claim that it speaks for a majority of "moral" Americans. And, the groups of people left outside the sect tend to react negatively: first, on theological grounds, people outside the sect had a difficult time accepting that they were "immoral" or "sinful" merely because they did not interpret the Bible in the same way as the Conservative Sect. Second, outsiders tended to react negatively on political grounds because they were fearful of a religious-political mix of any description. History tends to show the "founding fathers" were concerned about secular matters and crafted a constitution accordingly, and indeed, the only mentions of religion (Article Six and the First Amendment) are negative commandments requiring a wide space between religion and government, lest one encroach upon the other. Poll data examined in the last chapter seemed to support the idea that many people still believe that secular matters are the first priority of government and that religion and politics should remain separate.

Nonetheless, assume all of the above is mistaken--assume the Conservative Sect is a viable movement, attracts many people by its theology, and few are worried about mixing politics and religion--and the Conservative Sect still have a serious problem to overcome before it gains major political power, because its political rhetoric attempts to persuade people to undertake an impossible task--to legislate the reversal of certain social and political trends. If all legislation guaranteeing equal economic and political rights to women were repealed, would that quell

the feminist movement? If abortion and pornography were legislated out of existence, would they disappear? If homosexuality was harshly prosecuted, would there still be homosexuals? If the State required teachers to lead prayers and inculcate students with the story of Genesis, would America be more moral?

Even if the Conservative Sect accomplished its legislative goals it would find that government, as an instrument of morality, leaves much to be desired, as it is more suited to raising taxes, building roads, and making war, and politics is more suited to arguing about how to best accomplish these mundane, amoral tasks.

It is one thing for a clergyman to run for office (as many have) and use his robes as a part of his image; it is quite another thing for a clergyman to say his robes and his Bible are the reasons why he should be elected, that voters should believe God wants this clergyman elected, and that this clergyman is on God's side of the political issues of the day. Senator Hatfield and President Carter wore their religion on their sleeves, but neither ever said, "Vote for me, I'm God's choice." On the other hand, Reverends Sunday, McIntire, Falwell, Ralph, and others, each talked of what God really wants done (ban immigration, ban communism, ban homosexuality, etc.), and each urged voters to give them the clout to accomplish these tasks. The problem is, voting is not a religious duty, like saying prayers, reading the Bible, or keeping kosher, it is a civil responsibility.

While preachers and politicians are engaged in similar professions--- both need rhetorical skills, a devoted following, and a "cause"---data suggest the two professions mix poorly. A preacher adept at soul-winning is not necessarily adept at winning votes, and by attempting to win votes, a preacher places at hazard his integrity and the moral strengths of his

church. Similarly, a politician who posits a political theology runs the risk of losing more votes than he gains.

The Conservative Sect is driven by social and political change. Assuming that society and politics will continue to change, there will always be a Conservative Sect, ready to protest the changes. The chances of success for the Conservative Sect, however, are likely to remain small.

APPENDIX

1. In the election for the State Senate in your district, the candidates were: Peter Babalas, Joseph Fitzpatrick, Wayne Nunnally, William Ralph, Meyera Oberndorf, and Stanley Walker. You could vote for three. Do you recall for whom you voted?
(IF ANSWER IS "DEMOCRATS", ETC., PROBE THEM--"DO YOU RECALL WHICH CANDIDATES THOSE WERE?")

BABALAS, FITZPATRICK, NUNNALLY, RALPH, OBERNDORF, WALKER

2. I'd like to ask you about the media coverage of the election. How much information did you receive from the following sources:

Newspapers:

A GREAT DEAL, SOME, VERY LITTLE, OR NONE

Television:

A GREAT DEAL, SOME, VERY LITTLE, OR NONE

Radio:

A GREAT DEAL, SOME, VERY LITTLE, OR NONE

Other organizations, like the PTA, League of Women Voters, etc.:

A GREAT DEAL, SOME, VERY LITTLE, OR NONE

Church or religious meetings:

A GREAT DEAL, SOME, VERY LITTLE, OR NONE

3. Do you recall having read or heard about the religious beliefs of the candidates: (IF YES, WHICH ONES?)

BABALAS, FITZPATRICK, NUNNALLY, RALPH, OBERNDORF, WALKER

4. In general, do you think candidates should make their religious beliefs known to the voters?

YES NO NO OPINION

5. In general, would you be more or less likely to vote for a candidate who described himself as a "Born Again Christian"?

MORE LESS NO OPINION

6. In general, do you believe churches or religious organizations should or should not become involved in political campaigns?

SHOULD SHOULD NOT NO OPINION

7. I'd like to ask you about two of the candidates. First, Wayne Nunnally. What have you heard about him?

(CODE RESPONSE) REPUBLICAN CHRISTIAN NO OPINION

Second, William Ralph?

(CODE RESPONSE) REPUBLICAN CHRISTIAN NO OPINION

8. Would you describe your reaction to Wayne Nunnally as:

VERY FAVORABLE, FAVORABLE, UNFAVORABLE, VERY UNFAVORABLE, NO OPINION

Would you describe your opinion of William Ralph as:

VERY FAVORABLE, FAVORABLE, UNFAVORABLE, VERY UNFAVORABLE, NO OPINION

9. Would you describe your religious orientation as:

PROTESTANT, CATHOLIC, JEWISH, OR SOMETHING OTHER? (CODE CHRISTIAN)

(IF PROTESTANT, WHICH DENOMINATION: _____)

10. Do you describe yourself to be:

VERY RELIGIOUS, FAIRLY RELIGIOUS, NOT VERY OR NOT AT ALL RELIGIOUS

11. How often would you say you attend church?

AT LEAST ONCE A WEEK, FEW TIMES A MONTH, FEW TIMES A YEAR, RARELY

12. Generally speaking, how much attention do you pay to politics?

A GREAT DEAL, SOME, NOT VERY MUCH, OR NONE

13. How often do you vote?

ALMOST ALWAYS, USUALLY, OCCASIONALLY, ALMOST NEVER, OR NEVER

14. In politics, do you generally consider yourself to be a:

DEMOCRAT, REPUBLICAN, OR INDEPENDENT (CODE CHRISTIAN)

15. May I ask you your approximate age?

20-30 30-40 40-50 50-60 60-70 plus

16. What was the last year of formal education you received?

LESS THAN H.S. H.S. TECH DEGREE SOME COLLEGE ASSOCIATES BACHELORS
MASTERS DOCTORAL

17. Are you:

WHITE BLACK OTHER RACE

18. Sex (CODE RESPONSE)

F M

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OTHER SOURCES

There is a nearly infinite amount of literature produced by conservative church organizations, and most of it has no publisher, no author, and no date. The author of this study contacted the The Christian Broadcasting Network, Virginia Beach, Virginia, and Moral Majority, Lynchburg, Virginia, and asked to become a member of their groups. Each week, at least, the author received literature in the form of brochures, articles, and fund-raising letters from these groups. It would be pointless to list this literature because it is inadequately cited; further, the material measures a foot-thick and citations would run for many pages.

A scholar interested in this material should contact the religious organization's public relations department, and should ask to be placed on their mailing list.

Another source of material on conservative religious organizations is their religious broadcasts over radio and television. Jerry Falwell's "Old Time Gospel Hour", Pat Robertson's "The 700 Club", and Jim Bakker's "P-T-L Club" are good sources. Transcripts of past shows are available from their respective public relations departments. The author spent many hours watching these shows, and gleaned a considerable amount of useable material from them.

One final source of primary material on the conservative religious organizations, and their involvement in politics, is the American Civil Liberties Union and the Anti-Defamation League. Both of these organizations provided a wealth of material.

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