

November 1994

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Recommended Citation

Green, John C.; Guth, James L.; Kellstedt, Lyman A.; and Smidt, Corwin E. (1994) "Uncivil Challenges? Support for Civil Liberties Among Religious Activists," *Journal of Political Science*: Vol. 22 : No. 1 , Article 2.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.coastal.edu/jops/vol22/iss1/2>

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Uncivil Challenges? Support for Civil Liberties Among Religious Activists

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A central feature of democratic regimes is routine and vigorous challenges to those in power. Such challenges require both legal protection for civil liberties and popular support for the norms of political tolerance. On the surface, the American regime is substantially democratic, enjoying vital opposition and constitutionally protected civil liberties. But deeper investigation reveals that popular support for civil liberties has often been remarkably low, threatening the actual operation of democracy. Indeed, the mass public's intolerance has led some scholars to contend that civil liberties are preserved only by the values of the "political strata" of elites and activists. Even among them, however, critics have found a distressing lack of tolerance, particularly among some of the most vigorous challenging groups.

Protestant fundamentalism and other forms of religious traditionalism have long been identified as wellsprings of such "uncivil challenges," from Gerald L. K. Smith and Charles Coughlin in 1930s, through Carl McIntire and Billy James Hargis in the 1950s, to Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson more recently (Ribuffo 1983). Less colorful and controversial religious activists have often been suspected of intolerance as well (Streiker and Strober 1972). Seldom, however, have such evaluations been based on survey evidence on grass-roots religious activists, relying instead on inferences from the pronouncements of leaders and the association of religiosity with political intolerance in the

The authors wish to acknowledge major financial support provided by the Institute for the Study of American Evangelicals at Wheaton College. Further assistance was provided by the Research and Professional Growth Committee of Furman University, the Ray C. Bliss Institute of Applied Politics at the University of Akron, and the Calvin Center for Christian Studies.

mass public. Indeed, religious activists, like other elements of the political strata, have received less scrutiny than warranted by the expectations of theorists (Sullivan, Shamir, Walsh, and Roberts 1985).

In this essay, we take a systematic look at support for civil liberties in a large sample of religious activists, members of groups which have recently challenged the power structure from the right and from the left. We find that religious activists resemble their secular counterparts in most ways with respect to tolerance, but more importantly, that religious factors have a special impact. In line with conventional wisdom, we discover that fundamentalism is indeed connected with intolerance, but we also find that other dimensions of religion are either unrelated to, or actually foster support for, civil liberties. We argue that "uncivil" challenges from religious groups originate in broad pessimism about the practices and products of politics as usual, while more "civil" challenges reflect narrower grievances and a more optimistic view of the political process. Both are rooted, however, in divergent theological perspectives.

Religious Activists, Political Challenges, and Civil Liberties

Religion has often been a source of challenges to the dominant American political order. After all, the Revolutionaries invoked divine authority to sanction their rebellion, an example followed by many "unruly" (Gamson 1975) movements thereafter. This tendency was encouraged by constitutional arrangements which facilitate religious mobilization in politics: the First Amendment's prohibition of a religious establishment and guarantee of free exercise combined with the great diversity of American society to produce a vital and variegated religious community. Operating in this environment, religion has been a potent resource for many challenging movements, from abolition to civil rights, as well as for more routine opposition via the ballot box, the bar, and the lobby.

Of course, religious activists have also sided at times with the status quo and opposed challenging groups with great vigor, especially when these demanded innovations in social roles and behaviors (Berger 1967). Nevertheless, one must resist the temptation to think of "conservative" religion as part of the American "establishment": even when socially traditionalist, religion has been a potent source of political opposition and dissent. The Christian Right is just the most recent example of a conservative religious challenge to state power (Wilcox 1992). In fact, conservative and liberal believers have often expressed similar grievances and often used the same beliefs in their challenges, a point well illustrated by the 1988 presidential campaigns of Pat Robertson and Jesse Jackson (Hertzke 1993).

Religion is an important source of opposition to regime policies because it can mobilize both institutions and beliefs. First, the religious can often activate strong, grassroots institutions that are both independent of the state and repositories of valuable resources such as money, organizational skills, and most important, highly committed members. Second, religion produces powerful worldviews and allegiances among many adherents. Such beliefs can make religious institutions distinctive and often put them at odds with political arrangements. Drawing on transcendent authority for standards of behavior, religious leaders routinely critique the "powers of the earth" on a wide range of topics. Their constant reinterpretation of beliefs in light of everyday experience can provide an ideological focus for political opposition and dissent.

Ironically, in challenging the American political order religious activists are often accused of not respecting the very civil liberties which permit such challenges. How valid is this charge? The literature on tolerance provides some clues about the political tolerance of religious activists. First, research has consistently shown that the political strata are markedly more tolerant than the mass public, so religious activists may be more supportive of civil liberties than the religious mass public. But second, the two major explanations advanced to account for tolerance, elite socialization and ideological dominance, both suggest there may be considerable variation in tolerance among religious activists.

Beginning with Stouffer (1955) and supported by a host of other studies (McClosky and Brill 1983; Nunn, Crockett, and Williams 1978; Jackman 1972), scholars have argued that the political strata are more tolerant because elites have learned and relearned the value of civil liberties through a variety of mechanisms. Formal education is crucial to this process because it expands individual choice, broadens social horizons, and inculcates libertarian norms. In the same ways, the cosmopolitan culture of large cities and professional occupations creates greater tolerance. In addition, youth has been strongly associated with tolerance because of the increasingly libertarian themes of popular culture experienced by those coming of age since World War II and, especially, since the 1960s (Roof 1993). Participating in public affairs also socializes and resocializes activists to libertarian norms: more informed and active individuals develop tolerance through the rough and tumble of politics (Sullivan, Shamir, Walsh, Barnum, and Gibson 1993).

From this perspective, tolerance is the product of individual development, part of a broader constellation of democratic procedural values that distinguishes the political strata from the public. This view has been challenged by Sullivan, Piereson, and Marcus (1982), however, who adopt a more explicitly political view of tolerance. Using

innovative methods which allowed respondents to choose the group they disliked most, Sullivan found the United States to be characterized by "pluralistic intolerance." Intolerance is widespread because most citizens are intolerant of some group which they fear or intensely dislike. Ideology influences the choice of "target" group: citizens fear or dislike groups on the far side of the political spectrum. Thus, on the surface, liberals and conservatives are just as likely to support civil liberties, but for different kinds of groups, and the greater tolerance of the political strata is largely an artifact of survey measures asking about groups that elites and activists do not fear. Similarly, the final distribution of tolerance is a product of both ideological predispositions and choice of target groups: when all factors are considered, liberals are more tolerant than conservatives, in part because of general ideological support for democratic norms, and in part because of the fewer threats perceived from the groups they dislike (Sullivan et al. 1982, 232-236).

This line of research argues that perception of threat is central to tolerance and has three components. First, the specific activities which are to be tolerated matter. Behaviors that are potentially dangerous or damaging are less likely to be accepted. Second, the nature of the target group is important: "dangerous" or "antidemocratic" groups are less likely to be tolerated. Third, the level of hostility citizens hold toward the political process also has an effect. Those who feel marginalized or maligned by politics as usual are less likely to be tolerant.

Previous research using the Sullivan technique on political activists has revealed that "pluralistic intolerance" is not an accurate description of their views, but that tolerance is indeed associated with ideology (Guth and Green 1991). Overall, liberal activists are the most tolerant, but their support for civil liberties is part of a broader political agenda. Their libertarian values are part of an "ideology of rights," dedicated to the expansion of substantive advantages for groups they support. Conservative activists are less tolerant, in large part because they oppose the liberal "rights" agenda. Thus, activists' attitudes toward controversial social issues advanced by contemporary movements are central to explaining their support--or lack of it--for civil liberties.

Religion plays an important role in both elite socialization and ideological explanations of tolerance. Religious training is an element of socialization and religious beliefs are an important component of ideology. Numerous studies have found that absence of religiosity or "secular detachment" (often correlated with cosmopolitanism) is an important source of tolerance (Sullivan et al. 1982, 135-139). For many theorists, religiosity has the opposite effect of education and living in cosmopolitan environments: religious belief reduces the range of individual choice, social involvement, and support for libertarian values. Religious commitment supposedly reinforces the "dogmatic" tendencies of belief. Beside their negative impact on socialization into

libertarian norms, religious beliefs routinely underlie political ideology, particularly in the political strata (Green, Guth, and Fraser 1991). Such connections vary by religious tradition, of course, but within each tradition, doctrinal orthodoxy is often linked to political conservatism, particularly on social or moral issues, while more heterodox beliefs are associated with more liberal views (Smidt and Penning 1982; Beatty and Walter 1984).

Religiosity and orthodoxy aside, certain doctrinal systems would seem to have particular relevance. Here we focus on a very important American Protestant movement: fundamentalism. This term is commonly misused in popular and scholarly discourse to refer variously to strict doctrinal orthodoxy, extremely strong religious commitment, or intense dogmatism. While fundamentalism can be associated with these traits, it properly refers to a specific theological outlook that arose among Protestants early in this century in opposition to modernist or liberal theological trends, eventually extending to a thorough critique of modern society (Marsden 1980). Fundamentalists insisted on the inerrancy of the Bible, belief in the "fundamentals" of historic Christian orthodoxy, and ecclesiological and social separation from those who did not accept these beliefs. Fundamentalists were also heavily influenced by "End Times" thinking, encouraging them to "save" all the souls they could before the Second Coming of Christ (Boyer 1992).

This understanding of the nature of the world, religious truth, and the future sharply restricts the range of individual choice, social connections, and acceptance of legitimate differences of opinion. Fundamentalists are pessimistic about the world, interpreting life as a cosmic struggle between God and Satan, where there is no margin to tolerate "error" nor those who accommodate it. A literal reading of Scripture, especially the prophetic visions in the Old and New Testaments, provides the warrant for this and other convictions, including confidence in the imminent return of Christ to join in a cataclysmic battle that will end human history. In addition to the theological elements of fundamentalism which reduce support for civil liberties, several cultural tendencies of the movement might also produce less support. The deep antagonism that fundamentalists have towards the modern world may reduce their exposure to and appreciation of different kinds of people and ideas. Along these lines, fundamentalists are deeply concerned with the "moral decay" of the country, producing strongly conservative views on social issues, which may contribute to intolerance. Finally, fundamentalists view themselves as victims of "cultural aggression" by the political establishment, and this sense of threat could affect support for civil liberties as well.

These fundamentalist views, coupled with the prodigious intellectual effort undergirding their many variations, arose to counter

modernist or liberal theologies which attacked Manichean worldviews, ahistorical readings of sacred texts, and detailed apocalyptic scenarios (Hutchinson 1976). By their very nature, such critical departures from the "old time religion" enhanced individual choice, encouraged social interaction, and legitimated disagreement even on sacred things. Thus, modernist or liberal theological perspectives, which focus on more "worldly" conflicts, could have the opposite effect from fundamentalist doctrine, expanding libertarian values, promoting liberal attitudes, and encouraging a benign view of the political system.

In sum, then, religion is an important source of challenges to the political system, and there is reason to believe that fundamentalist religious challenges may be associated with intolerance. Like other elements of the political strata, religious activists are likely to be more tolerant than the public, but the distribution of tolerance among them is likely to reflect the same factors as their secular counterparts. More specifically, religiosity and orthodoxy are likely to reduce tolerance, particularly among activists influenced by fundamentalism. By the same token, modernist or liberal theology may be associated with support for civil liberties.

Data and Methods

This study is based on a national mail survey of religious activists taken in 1990-91. A stratified random sample was drawn from the membership of eight prominent interest groups with ties to religious communities, deliberately chosen to span the ideological spectrum. Several of the groups are central to the Christian Right, others are drawn from a less publicized Christian Left, with the rest falling in between.¹ The survey generated a 56.9% return rate for a total of 4,995 usable returns of a ten-page, 250-item questionnaire.

¹The groups sampled included: Bread for the World, an anti-hunger lobby founded in 1973; JustLife, a political action committee in operation from 1986 to 1993, which promoted a "consistent life ethic" on abortion, economic justice and the arms race; Evangelicals for Social Action, formed in 1978, represents progressive evangelicals on a range of political and social issues; the National Association of Evangelicals is the primary voice of Evangelical Protestantism dating from 1942 and the counterpart to the mainline National Council of Churches; Prison Fellowship was founded by Chuck Colson in 1976 and lobbies for prison reform; Focus on the Family has been led by its founder, radio psychologist James Dobson, since 1977 and advocates traditionalist family policies; Americans for the Republic, a political action committee created to finance Pat Robertson's 1988 presidential campaign was the base for the Christian Coalition, an interest group which organizes evangelicals at the grassroots; Concerned Women for America is an evangelical organization advocating traditional values since 1978. For more details see Smidt, Kellstedt, Green and Guth (1994).

To tap support for civil liberties, we modified the Sullivan et al. (1982) "content-controlled" measure for a mail instrument. The item asked: "Many people believe there are dangerous political organizations and groups in America today. Would you name THE political organization that you regard as MOST dangerous to the country right now?" After a space for the answer, the respondent was asked if the group just named should be allowed to make political speeches, run candidates for public office, demonstrate in the community or teach in public schools, and if the government should be allowed to outlaw the group or tap their telephones. In each case, the response categories were "yes," "not sure," and "no." We ask a similar set of questions in a 1982 survey of a broader sample of political party and interest group activists, allowing us to put the present sample in context (Guth and Green 1991).

We used these data to develop *Tolerance* and *Group Threat* scales. The *Tolerance* scale summed the three-point responses to the six activity items into a single thirteen-point scale, ranging from fully intolerant to fully tolerant responses. This scale is highly reliable ($\alpha=.82$) and versions of it using only the most highly correlated items generated very similar results. This *Tolerance* scale serves as the dependent variable in following analysis. The *Group Threat* scale was constructed in two steps. First, the groups named by the respondents were recoded into nine categories according to a combination of ideological (liberal to conservative) and procedural criteria (reflecting the extent to which the groups named had a history of not respecting democratic procedures), with "extremist left" (communists, socialists) and "extremist right" (Ku Klux Klan, neo-Nazis) anchoring each end, and "centrist" groups (more moderate ideological groups, the major political parties) filling in the middle (see Table 1). This categorization was then recombined into a three-point scale to isolate the procedural dimension of target group selection, with all "extremists" at one end and "centrists" at the other. In the following analysis, this *Group Threat* scale is used to control for the potential threat of the groups targeted.

Tolerance among Religious Activists

Just how tolerant are these religious activists? Table 1 gives an overview of our measures of support for civil liberties. First, note that like other elements of the political strata, religious activists are quite tolerant: nearly two-thirds would allow a group regarded as "dangerous" to make a public speech, and more than three-fifths would prohibit the government from tapping telephones or outlawing the group. A similar proportion would allow the group to run candidates for office. On the other hand, only slightly more than one-half would allow the group to demonstrate in their community, probably reflecting their concerns

about the potential for violent confrontation, and only one-fifth would allow a member to teach in public schools, exhibiting the special sensitivities associated with education (Jelen and Wilcox 1990). Such patterns are consistent with previous research: distant and purely political activities are more acceptable than those closer to home and less clearly political (Gibson 1987a). Indeed, the demonstrating and teaching items add significantly to the variation in our Tolerance scale. And religious activists seem more sensitive to these activities than their secular counterparts.

Table 1
Support for Civil Liberties Among Religious Activists
(N=4384)

<i>Would Allow "Dangerous" Group To:</i>	Percent of Sample
Make a speech in a public place	65.5
Prohibit government to tap telephone	63.5
Prohibit government to outlaw group	61.4
Run candidates for public office	61.1
Demonstrate in respondent's community	55.0
Member teach in the public schools	20.9

Tolerance Scale:

Top quarter (highly tolerant)	49.8
Second quarter	13.0
Third quarter	19.9
Bottom quarter (highly intolerant)	17.3

Source: 1990-91 Wheaton Religious Activist Survey.

As a group, religious activists compare quite favorably with the mass public and other political activists. For example, 50% of Sullivan's 1978 Twin City mass sample would allow a public speech by a dangerous group and only 19% would allow teaching in public school (Sullivan et al. 1982); Gibson's (1987b) national sample showed 50% and 18% on these same items, respectively. In contrast, our 1982 political activist study found that 81% would allow a public speech and 52% teaching in public school. Thus, these religious activists stand between other activists and the mass public on the most tolerated activity, speech, but resemble the mass public on the activity least tolerated, teaching in public school. Over all, religious activists look

more like their secular counterparts than like the mass public, however, with almost one-half falling into the top one-quarter of our Tolerance scale (Guth and Green 1991).

The religious activists differ markedly from the 1982 sample, however, in the groups they chose as dangerous. As Table 2 shows, only about one-twentieth listed extremist left groups, almost five times fewer than the 1982 sample of activists (5% versus 24%), and more than one-fifth named extremist right groups, more than twice the number in the broader sample (22% versus 10%). The difference is made up by listings of more mainstream liberal and conservative groups; the

Table 2
Group Threat and Support for Civil Liberties
Among Religious Activists
(N=4384)

	Percent of Sample Naming Type of Group	Percent Naming Group In Top Quarter of Tolerance Scale
<i>Dangerous Groups</i>		
Extremist Left	5.1	29.8
Feminist, Pro-Choice	22.5	44.0
Secularist	31.8	49.8
Other Liberal	4.2	50.0
Centrist	7.9	53.3
Other Conservative	4.1	79.5
Anti-feminist, Pro-Life	0.7	91.8
Christian Right	1.8	93.3
Extremist Right	21.9	49.1
<i>Group Threat Scale</i>		
Extremist Groups	27.0	45.4
Mainstream Ideological	56.7	52.4
Centrist Groups	16.2	58.8

Source: 1990-91 Wheaton Religious Activist Survey.

former are nearly twice as common here (58% to 27%) and the latter almost six times less frequently named (6% to 29%). Some of these differences from the 1982 sample reflect the changed political world:

communists and other leftists no longer dominated the international headlines in 1991. Nevertheless, religious activists clearly have distinctive contemporary concerns. Feminist groups, such as NOW and pro-choice organizations, receive much attention, and special ire is reserved for "secularist" groups, perceived as hostile to religion, such as People for the American Way and the ACLU. (In fact, the ACLU was by far the most commonly mentioned group.) On the other side, Christian Right and pro-life groups are barely mentioned, even by liberal activists, who oppose them politically but apparently do not regard them as dangerous. About an equal number of standard liberal (e.g. environmentalists) and conservative (e.g. business) groups are mentioned, nearly matching the number of centrist groups such as the major parties. Taken together, these mainstream groups are less commonly named than secularists and feminists, but much more feared than Christian Rightists and their allies.

Table 2 also shows the distribution of tolerance across the kinds of groups named. Only about one-third of those mentioning extremist left groups fall in the top one-quarter of the tolerance scale, while about one-half of those naming extremist right groups are highly tolerant. Those naming feminist and secularist groups are much less tolerant than those mentioning pro-life, Christian Right, or centrist groups. Finally, Table 2 provides some evidence on the Group Threat scale, revealing that the nature of the group named is linked to tolerance

Table 3
Ideological Cluster and Support for Civil Liberties
Among Religious Activists
(N=4384)

	Percent in Top Quarter Of Tolerance Scale
<i>Ideological Cluster</i>	
Christian Right	41
Traditional Conservatives	42
Christian Moderates	53
Pro-Life Liberals	71
Christian Left	73

Source : 1990-91 Wheaton Religious Activist Study

quite apart from ideology: respondents listing extremist groups are much less tolerant than those who list centrist groups.

Ideology is not only a factor in target group selection, but in the civil liberties granted target groups as well. Some direct evidence on this point is presented in Table 3. Using the numerous political items in the survey, we divided respondents into five opinion clusters: the "Christian Left," "Pro-Life Liberals," "Christian Moderates," "Traditional Conservatives," and the "Christian Right" (cf. Smidt, Kellstedt, Green and Guth 1994). Note the monotonic increase in the proportion of each group in the top quarter of the Tolerance scale. Clearly, liberal activists are more tolerant, resembling the liberal social movement activists surveyed in 1982. The Christian Right activists are the least tolerant, matching the figures for the 1982 representatives of the Christian Right, but also paralleling the patterns for business and conservative activists (Guth and Green 1991). Taken together, all these measures show that religious activists resemble the broader activist corps, including considerable variation in tolerance linked to ideology and perceived threat.

The Correlates of Tolerance

What accounts for the variation in tolerance among these religious activists? Table 4 offers some evidence on the religious, political and demographic correlates of tolerance, beginning with bivariate correlations in the first column, followed in the second column by the results of a regression analysis for each category of variables, and finally in the third column, a regression analysis combining all of the variables. To simplify presentation, Table 4 reports the results for scales combining a number of specific variables, which are of some interest individually and will be discussed in the text.

Religion. This survey contains extensive batteries of religious questions which provide a detailed look at the link between religion and support for civil liberties. Analysis of these questions produced three measures that were negatively and persistently associated with tolerance: *fundamentalism*, *charismatic beliefs*, and *piety*. We also included other measures of religion more commonly used in other studies of tolerance, such as *religious tradition*, *Christian orthodoxy*, *religious salience* and *religious involvement*. As we shall see, although these facets of religion are often correlated with tolerance at the bivariate level, this tie disappears when other variables are taken into account.

Our fundamentalism scale captures adherence to the essential doctrines of that movement (Kellstedt and Smidt 1991). Of the component elements, our measure of "religious separatism" (the belief that true Christians remain separate from the "world") shows the single largest bivariate correlation with tolerance among the fundamentalism items (-.27), rivaling the impact of education. Religious separatism is followed closely by Biblical literalism, also a central doctrine of

fundamentalism (-.26), and then by belief in the "rapture" of the church (-.23), Biblical prophecy (-.21), and a premillennial view of Scripture (-.17), all closely linked to yet another "fundamental," the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.² Other fundamentalist beliefs and identifications also correlate negatively with tolerance, including the historicity of Adam and Eve (-.22), opposition to women clergy (-.20), conversion by a sudden "born again" experience (-.17), fundamentalist self-identification (-.17), and belief in the inherent sinfulness of human nature (-.10). Respondents who reject these views (and are found at the other end of the fundamentalism scale) are strikingly more tolerant.

This evidence also reveals the analytic importance of separating fundamentalism from religious orthodoxy or simple piety. We find doctrinal orthodoxy per se is not part of the fundamentalism scale (even though most fundamentalists are quite orthodox). Beliefs central to historic Christianity, such as salvation only through Jesus Christ, that He was fully God and fully man, and the historicity of the Virgin Birth and Resurrection are not associated with intolerance once fundamentalism is taken into account. Many orthodox activists are, in fact, quite tolerant. Much the same applies to religious tradition: Evangelical Protestants (the category including most fundamentalists) are modestly less tolerant than the Mainline Protestants and Catholics, but this association also fades once adherence to fundamentalist doctrine is controlled (cf. Jelen and Wilcox 1990).³ And, finally, other measures sometimes correlated with intolerance in previous research, such as religious salience and church involvement, are not related here, once fundamentalism is in the equation.

Two other religious measures are closely tied to tolerance in the bivariate analysis, but do not persist in the final regression. Piety (including witnessing, attending revival meetings, frequent prayer and Bible reading) and charismatic beliefs (belief in the "second baptism" of the Holy Spirit, speaking in tongues, and Pentecostal or charismatic identification) are both negatively linked to tolerance, perhaps reflecting the intense social experiences associated with these activities. But it is their link with fundamentalism and other non-religious factors that accounts for their relationship with intolerance.

²The elements of fundamentalism are so closely linked as to make distinctions among them difficult. However, careful multivariate analysis suggests that Biblical literalism has the strongest independent effect on tolerance, followed by premillennialism, and separatism, although all three have similar magnitudes.

³Our measure of religious tradition includes Evangelical Protestants, Mainline Protestants and Catholics. We posited that political tolerance would be lowest among Evangelicals, higher among Mainliners, and highest in the Catholic tradition. For more detail on religious traditions, see Legee and Kellstedt (1993).

Among these activists, then, fundamentalism is strongly related to
 Table 4
 Correlates of Tolerance
 Among Religious Activists
 (N=4384)

	Bivariate Correlation	Categorical Regression	Combined Regression
<i>Religious Variables</i>	(r)	(beta)	(beta)
Fundamentalism	-.29*	-.29	-.16
Orthodoxy	-.16	.ns	.ns
Charismatic	-.13	-.10	.ns
Tradition	-.09.	.ns	.ns
Piety	-.07	-.06	.ns
Involvement	-.06	.ns	.ns
Salience	-.01	.ns	.ns
Multiple r		.32	
r ²		.12	
<i>Political Factors</i>			
Christian Militancy	-.35	-.24	-.20
Social Conservatism	-.28	-.12	-.10
Information Use	.27	.16	.11
Target Group Scale	.18	.20	.20
Economic Conservatism	-.13	-.06	.ns
Political Participation	.14	.13	.12
Multiple r		.37	
r ²		.14	
<i>Demography</i>			
Education	.32	.25	.09
Age	-.20	-.16	-.10
Cosmopolitan	.18	.08	.07
Gender	-.14	-.08	-.05
Multiple r		.36	.57
r ²		.13	.33

* All coefficients significant at the .05 level or better; .ns = not significant

Source: 1990-91 Wheaton Religious Activist Survey.

intolerance, and its nemesis, theological modernism or liberalism, is conducive to support for civil liberties, while broader measures of belief and religiosity show no independent association. These findings may be an artifact of this special sample, but the very crude measures of religion used in nearly all studies of civil liberties probably obscure as much as they reveal about the specific religious forces which influence tolerance. We are confident that precise doctrinal measures will produce more accurate results even in mass samples (Leege and Kellstedt 1993).

Political Factors. Given that this is a sample of the political strata, it should come as no surprise that political variables are strongly associated with tolerance. Once again, in Table 4 a large number of attitudinal items were reduced to three measures associated with support for civil liberties. The most important is what we call *Christian militancy*, which shows the largest negative relationship with tolerance at the bivariate level and holds much of its power in the combined analysis. *Social conservatism* and *economic conservatism* are also negatively associated with tolerance, but only the former is significant in the combined analysis, having about one-half the impact of Christian militancy. As noted above, *Group Threat* is negatively linked to tolerance, and its effects persist in the combined analysis, matching the effects of militancy. Finally, the sources of *political information* and level of *political participation* also contribute to support for civil liberties, rivaling the impact of social issues, but in the opposite direction. Each measure deserves a detailed explanation as well.

The *Christian militancy* scale is made up of a fascinating combination of attitudes. The strongest is the view that the country needs a "Christian" political party ($r = -.34$ with tolerance). This demand is closely connected with other attitudes: that candidates' religious beliefs are important in vote choice ($-.28$); that there is one correct "Christian" view on political issues ($-.28$); that a diversity of moral views does not "create a healthy society" ($-.23$); that social problems would be solved if "enough people were brought to Christ" ($-.21$); and, that religious people need "special protection for their rights" today ($-.21$). These items reveal a deep-seated distrust of the political process, accompanied by an aggressive response to being a "mistreated minority" rather than a "moral majority." These patterns are confirmed by answers to an open-ended question on the most serious problems facing the nation: Christian militants list more political process problems than non-militants. Conversely, a more optimistic view of the political process is associated with greater tolerance.

The Group Threat scale parallels the militancy scale conceptually: respondents who fear groups with a history of not respecting democratic norms are less tolerant, as the literature predicts. But Christian militancy and Group Threat are unrelated statistically and represent

different phenomena: the former reflects perceived threats from the political process, while the latter measures threats from particular groups within the process. Although it may be tempting for some observers to ascribe personal alienation or rigid personalities to respondents who feel these threats, there is little evidence on either point in this survey.⁴ What is clear, however, is that concern with moral decay and the consequent disorder are also strongly associated with the perception of threat for many activists.

The connection between the threat of disorder and tolerance is amply illustrated by three items not used in the analysis. First, respondents who disagreed with the statement that "We should be more tolerant of people who choose to live according to their own moral standards even if they are very different from our own" were much less tolerant than those who agreed (35% versus 74% in the top quarter of the tolerance scale). Similarly, respondents who disagreed with allowing the "followers of Reverend Moon" the same access to public school classrooms before and after school as other religious groups were less tolerant than those who agreed (20% versus 74%), and those who felt that the drug problem was so serious as to require "sacrifice" of civil liberties were also less tolerant (34% versus 69%). These data suggest an unwillingness to accept behaviors likely to unravel the social fabric, and little respect is accorded those who advocate or defend such behaviors. To be sure, other activists feel the social fabric threatened by economic injustice, environmental degradation--and even a loss of civil liberties! Not surprisingly, such views *are* associated with tolerance.

Social issue conservatism also has an independent impact on tolerance, confirming previous findings (Guth and Green 1991). Important items in this measure include opposition to gay rights (-.36); support for school prayer (-.25); opposition to providing birth control information in schools (-.22) and to teaching evolution without also teaching creationism (-.21); support for capital punishment (-.21); opposition to affirmative action (-.20), support for regulating pornography (-.20), and a pro-life position on abortion (-.18). All these involve controversial questions of substantive rights; opponents of expanding substantive rights to liberal constituencies are less supportive of procedural rights, and vice versa.

The positive role of information sources and political participation on tolerance supports the findings in the literature concerning the socializing and resocializing effects of engagement in public affairs (Sullivan et al. 1993). Our information index combines the use of two

⁴Although some earlier scholars argue for a psychological explanation for tolerance (cf. Sullivan et al. 1982), we have no direct measures of psychological rigidity or dogmatism. Although a few of our religious and political measures may seem to tap those dimensions, we suspect that they are better thought of as ideological characteristics, not psychological ones.

different kinds of media: religious sources that are used principally by conservative religious communities and public sources used by everyone. Religious media use is negatively associated with tolerance, including religious television (-.21), religious radio (-.19), direct mail (-.12), and the clergy (-.09). On the other hand, use of public media is positively associated with tolerance: newspapers (.14), news magazines (.13), opinion magazines (.11), and radio news (.07). When all these items were combined into a single scale, ranging from high and exclusive religious media use to high and exclusive use of public sources, the results are impressive: information use is one of the largest correlates of tolerance at the bivariate level, rivaling the impact of education and fundamentalism. Political participation shows a similar impact. While many forms of political activity were not associated with tolerance, actions that involve the exercise of civil liberties were. These include contacting public officials (.13), participating in a boycott (.10), writing a letter to the editor (.08), participating in a demonstration and signing a petition (both .07). An additive index using these items was employed in the analysis. Although participation has roughly one-half the impact of information sources at the bivariate level, it persists in multivariate analysis, and eventually exceeds the importance of information sources in the combined analysis.

In conclusion, a host of political variables influence tolerance. These include perceptions of threat from the political system, particular groups, and rivals on substantive issues. These findings confirm earlier researchers' arguments on the political nature of support for civil liberties. In addition, as political theorists have long argued, the socializing and resocializing effects of involvement in public affairs enhance tolerance as well.

Demography. What about the influence of broader forms of socialization identified in the literature? Do *age, gender, education* and *cosmopolitan demography* influence tolerance in this relatively high status sample of religious activists? In line with previous studies, education is strongly and positively associated with tolerance, rivaling fundamentalism and social conservatism. Cosmopolitanism shows a smaller positive effect, while age and gender have modest negative associations. All of these variables survive multivariate analysis, although age ranks first in the combined analysis.⁵

⁵College major was coded according to the liberal nature of the course of study, with social science and humanities majors at one end of the scale and applied majors at the other. The kind of college attended was coded according to the prestige of the institution, ranging from elite universities to community and Bible colleges. Occupation is also coded according to prestige, with "New Class" professions at one end of the scale and blue-collar employment at the other. Income is coded in a standard fashion. Place of residence is coded according to size of place, ranging from rural

Our education measure is actually made up three variables, all strongly related to tolerance: years of education ($r=.30$), college major (.26), and the kind of institution attended (.24). The combination of all three factors captures the libertarian impact of formal education (Selvin and Hagstrom 1960). Age also had the expected relationship with tolerance; activists under 35 years of age hold the most libertarian values and those over 65 the least. Exposure to cosmopolitan culture has a similar impact, with higher status occupation (.17), higher income (.11), and metropolitan residence (.10) making positive contributions. Interestingly enough, region is not associated with tolerance here: southerners are only modestly less tolerant than other activists. Because of the large number of conservative women in this sample, gender has a negative impact as well, representing one place where religious activists differ from their secular counterparts: gender has no impact in broader samples. So, cosmopolitan demography is associated with tolerance independent of fundamentalism and political attitudes.

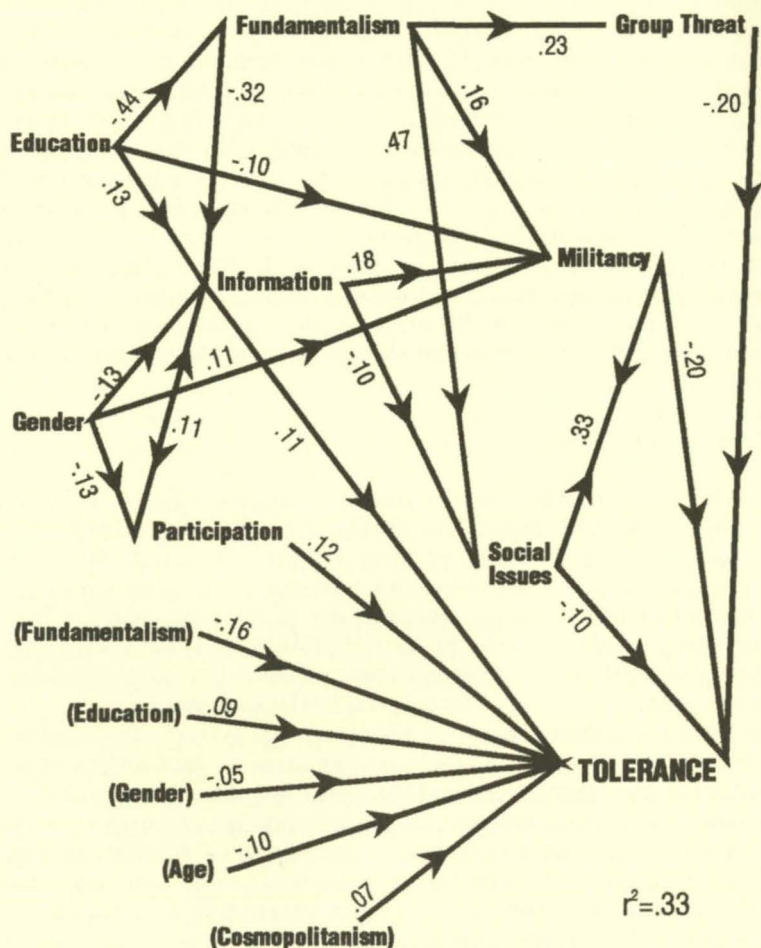
Sources of Tolerance

How do the correlates of tolerance fit together? Figure 1 and the accompanying table provide the results of a path analysis designed to estimate the overall impact of these variables. Although the model portrayed in Figure 1 is by no means complete, it represents a plausible set of relationships among the correlates of tolerance, and has been previously employed in the literature (Sullivan et al. 1982, 213; Guth and Green 1991, 337). The demographic variables (including education, gender, age, and cosmopolitanism) and fundamentalism are assumed to be the most distant sources of tolerance. (To simplify the diagram, direct effects of these variables are identified by parentheses at the bottom of the diagram, and indirect paths less than .1 are excluded.) Information sources and political participation are assumed to be the next most distant sources of tolerance, holding an intermediary position between demography and fundamentalism, on the one hand, and political attitudes and tolerance, on the other. Political attitudes are then assumed to be the most proximate sources of tolerance, including the Group Threat scale, Christian militancy, and social conservatism.

Education and fundamentalism are strongly and negatively related to one another even in this sample of high status activists, a finding that would surprise neither secular academics nor fundamentalist clergy. This starkly reflects the division between the modern, secular worldview and the anti-modern stance of religious traditionalists. Both sides of this dispute have important effects on other correlates of tolerance. On the

areas and small towns to major metropolitan areas.

Figure 1
Sources of Tolerance
Path Analysis



	Total Effects	Direct Effects	Indirect Effects
Fundamentalism	-.37	-.16	-.21
Militancy	-.25	-.20	-.05
Group Threat Scale	-.20	-.20	--
Social Issues	-.17	-.10	-.07
Age	-.12	-.10	-.02
Gender	-.09	-.05	-.04
Cosmopolitanism	.08	.07	.01
Pol. Participation	.13	.12	.01
Information Use	.16	.11	.05
Education	.19	.09	.10

one hand, education is positively associated with other measures of cosmopolitan demography, public information sources, and political participation, revealing the standard relationship between higher social status and political activity. Not surprisingly, education is also negatively linked to militancy. On the other hand, fundamentalism is positively associated with the use of religious information sources, the Group Threat scale, and social issue conservatism. The large number of conservative women in this sample gives gender a role comparable to fundamentalism, but with a smaller magnitude. And not surprisingly, the use of public information sources and political participation are positively related to one another, while Christian militancy and social issue conservatism show a similar connection.

What is the net effect of these relationships? The combination of moderate direct impact and strong indirect effects makes fundamentalism the largest negative influence on tolerance, followed distantly by the measures of threat on the strength of their direct effects: the Group Threat scale, Christian militancy, and then social conservatism. Age and gender are also negatively related to tolerance, but at a lower level, while cosmopolitanism, participation, information use and education are positively associated, in ascending order. Education roughly matches the total impact of the Group Threat scale on tolerance, and all the demographic variables have one-third to one-half the impact of fundamentalism.

We can now summarize the impact of religion on tolerance. Fundamentalists are indeed less supportive of civil liberties than other religious activists, though not perhaps as severely intolerant as some observers suppose. Their special worldview reduces support for civil liberties directly, but it also helps generate a higher level of perceived threat, an aggressive distrust of the political process, and intense concern about moral decay, all of which reduce tolerance. All these effects are intensified through the use of specialized religious sources of information and less cosmopolitan demography, particularly among women. On the other hand, non-fundamentalists, many of whom are quite orthodox and committed believers, are much more tolerant. This pattern results in part from the libertarian tendencies of modernist theology, but also because religious liberals have a reduced sense of threat, less hostility toward the political system, and fewer concerns about traditional morality. Cosmopolitan demography, especially higher levels of education, and fuller engagement in public affairs undergird these patterns. Of course, this situation is exactly what fundamentalists have long feared and vigorously opposed: the erosion of traditional values by the modern world. Indeed, the open embrace of alternatives to the "old time religion" by many of these highly religious activists gives credence to their complaint.

Religion and Uncivil Challenges

That fundamentalism should be the basis for any form of political action, let alone challenges to authority, is quite surprising. Throughout most of its history the movement has been aggressively apolitical and harshly critical of such "worldly" entanglements by religious people. Instead, fundamentalists dedicated themselves to saving souls from the sinful world before the end of human history left them to eternal damnation. No doubt fundamentalists were less tolerant than other people on these counts, but since they eschewed public affairs, their incivility usually went unnoticed.

At least three times in this century, however, fundamentalists have burst into the public square with a vigorous and uncivil challenge to the political establishment. Each time political observers were shocked by their appearance and stunned by their aggressiveness, including an apparent lack of respect for democratic norms (Wills 1990). Numerous explanations for these unexpected challenges have been advanced, most focusing on the personal inadequacies of fundamentalists, but the most satisfactory explanations emphasize rational political concerns as the most important factors (Wilcox 1992).

Our findings offer an insight relevant to both the sudden politicization of fundamentalists and the uncivil nature of their challenges. Simply put, fundamentalists are goaded into politics by sharp deviations from traditional morality that are accepted, or worse yet, endorsed and promoted by public authorities. Such a moral imperative provokes an angry reaction. Not only does it distract from otherworldly concerns, it threatens the well-being of humanity on a cosmic scale. Those who advocate such immorality are thus seen as serious threats, while the political system that allows them to flourish--and harasses "God's people" when they fight back--is viewed with great hostility. Indeed, fundamentalist challenges to the modern world are "defensive offensives" (Glazer 1987) designed to stave off moral calamity until the Lord's work on earth is completed. Thus, the very motivation for political action reduces the civility of their politics.

The more civil challenges of modernist or liberal religious activists also rest on moral imperatives: racial oppression, war, poverty, or environmental degradation goad modernists to seek "what the Lord requires." But unlike fundamentalists, these activists are more accommodated to the modern world. Liberal theology embraces ambiguity and complexity, reducing certainty about God's purposes and plans. Attention is shifted from individual sin to communal injustice, and approximating God's standards in this world becomes the focus of concern. Concern with worldly problems leads most directly to worldly solutions, including political action. Although the intensity of such politics surely varies, modernists are likely to be involved on a regular

basis. The use of and support for civil liberties thus comes naturally to liberal religionists, even in the face of strong moral imperatives.

Thus religion can produce both civil and uncivil challenges to "the powers that be." It is important to realize that it is not religion per se that generates intolerance, but fundamentalist theological perspectives. And although uncivil challenges are surely problematic, they may be valuable forms of opposition and dissent nevertheless, calling the concerns of large segments of the population to the attention of the political establishment. The longer-term question is whether the involvement of fundamentalist activists will threaten the procedural safeguards that guarantee their own activity. Beyond the various constitutional and legal safeguards for civil liberties, it seems likely to us that those religious activists who venture into politics for sustained activity will find the socializing effects of participation itself an important restraint. Indeed, fundamentalists who find the tolerance required for coalition-building and legislative compromise distasteful are likely to revert to the separatist religious pursuits which have long characterized that community.

Appendix

We use numerous multi-item measures of religion and ideology. These are factor scores isolated and derived by principal components analyses with varimax rotations. The lowest reliability score was a theta of .62 for the piety measure. These measures differ only slightly from measures used in earlier analyses reported in Guth, Kellstedt, Smidt and Green (1993a and 1993b).

Fundamentalism: Biblical literalism, separatism, civil law should be based on Old Testament law, human sinfulness, self-identified fundamentalism, the rapture of the church, premillennialism, Old Testament prophecy, the historicity of Adam and Eve, women's ordination, and born again experience.

Orthodoxy: Jesus the only way to salvation, historicity of Jesus' Virgin Birth and resurrection, and Jesus fully God and fully man.

Charismatic beliefs: belief in the second baptism of the Holy Spirit, self-identified charismatic or Pentecostal, speaking in tongues.

Piety: witnessing, attending revival meetings, frequency of private prayer and Bible reading.

Involvement: church membership, attendance, activity, and number of friends in congregation.

Christian militancy: need for Christian party, social ills solved by bringing people to Christ, one correct Christian view on politics, religion of candidates important, only one correct moral philosophy, newer lifestyles lead to social breakdown, religious people need special protection.

Social conservatism: support for traditional family, local regulation of pornography, opposition to the ERA, AIDS is God's punishment, ban gays from teaching public school, birth control information in public schools, teach creationism along with evolution, opposition to abortion, support for school prayer, and support for capital punishment.

Economic conservatism: world hunger, raise taxes to help the needy, raise taxes to reduce budget deficit, environmental protection, affirmative action.

Other measures are explained in the text or notes.

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