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The promise keepers : religious revival or third wave of the religious right?

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THE PROMISE KEEPERS:
RELIGIOUS REVIVAL OR THIRD WAVE OF THE RELIGIOUS RIGHT?

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of Sociology

San Jose State University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

by

Sean Farley Everton

August 1999

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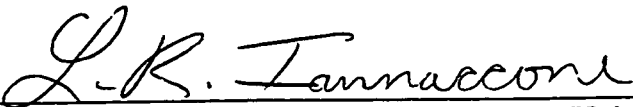
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ABSTRACT

THE PROMISE KEEPERS: RELIGIOUS REVIVAL OR THIRD WAVE OF THE RELIGIOUS RIGHT?

by Sean F. Everton

This thesis explores the Promise Keepers movement's attitudes toward gender roles and racial inequality. Research has found that while sectarian religious movements initially tend to attract socially disadvantaged followers, typically over time their followers demonstrate more upward social mobility than the rest of society, and the movements accommodate their social attitudes to those of the surrounding culture. It was hypothesized that because American evangelicals have demonstrated more upward social mobility than have other Americans, their attitudes toward racial inequality and gender roles would show convergence with those of other Americans. Moreover, since the Promise Keepers draws its followers from American evangelicalism, its attitudes on these issues would not differ significantly from American evangelicals. Both hypotheses found support, which challenges critics of Promise Keepers who argue that it is a political, rather than a religious, movement, seeking to promote the racist and patriarchal policies of the religious right.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The racial climate in America today is much more tense than people realize. . . if you talk to individuals of white America, they wonder what's all the fuss about? They say "We've had the Civil Rights Act of 1964. We've had desegregation. We've had affirmative action. Why is all this noise still being made?" And they don't have a clue about the depth of oppression that is still felt and still happening throughout America.

Raleigh Washington, Promise Keepers
Vice President of Reconciliation

Researchers have uncovered another common ingredient to happy marriages: supporting your spouse's goals. They say the strongest relationships are ones in which each partner encourages the other's pursuit of their dreams – whether it's becoming a doctor or learning to whittle wood. But the benefits don't stop there: people who know that their mate was behind their dreams are more likely to accomplish those goals.

New Man Magazine

It can be said that the first wisdom of sociology is this – things are not what they seem.

Peter L. Berger

Although the Promise Keepers movement had attracted its share of attention since its founding in 1990, it was its "Stand in the Gap" rally held in Washington D. C. on October 4, 1997, where nearly 700,000 men gathered for a "sacred assembly" on the Washington Mall, that catapulted it to the top of the nation's headlines and made it the subject of much debate. Some have praised the movement (e.g., Leo, 1997), others have denounced it (e.g., Conason, Ross, & Cokorinos, 1997), while others have expressed somewhat more measured views (e.g., Pharr, 1996). Even First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton has weighed in on the group, giving it a cautious thumbs up (Clinton, 1996).

What is the Promise Keepers (PK) movement? It is a Christian men's movement that espouses theological beliefs congenial to conservative American Protestantism such as the authority of the Bible, the deity of Christ, the presence of the Holy Spirit, the sinfulness of humankind and the need for personal redemption. Men involved in the movement are asked to commit themselves to the "Seven Promises of a Promise Keeper":

1. A Promise Keeper is committed to honoring Jesus Christ through worship, prayer, and obedience to His Word, through the power of the Holy Spirit.
2. A Promise Keeper is committed to pursuing vital relationships with a few other men, understanding that he needs brothers to help him keep his promises.
3. A Promise Keeper is committed to practicing spiritual, moral, ethical, and sexual purity.
4. A Promise Keeper is committed to building stronger marriages and families through love, protection, and biblical values.
5. A Promise Keeper is committed to supporting the mission of the church by honoring and praying for his pastor and by actively giving his time and resources.
6. A Promise Keeper is committed to reaching beyond any racial and denominational barriers to demonstrate the power of biblical unity.
7. A Promise Keeper is committed to influencing his world, being obedient to the Great Commandment (Mark 12:30-31) and the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20) (Jansen & Weeden, 1994, p. 8).

It is best to think of PK as an evangelical, as opposed to fundamentalist, movement. It is not unusual for critics to confuse the two terms, but as we will see below, American evangelicalism is a movement that has consciously sought to separate itself from American fundamentalism. While fundamentalists tend to withdraw from the world in order to preserve the purity of the gospel, evangelicals tend to engage it in a variety of ways. This has led evangelicals to downplay doctrinal differences between faith traditions in order to promote interdenominational cooperation. This ecumenical spirit is evidenced in PK's 6th promise where it calls upon its followers to reach beyond

denominational walls. As we will see shortly, PK's ecumenism is a target of criticism, especially for those who are theologically more conservative than PK.

The PK movement was founded in 1990 by Bill McCartney, the former head coach of the University of Colorado football team. In March of that year McCartney and a friend, David Wardell, while driving to a Fellowship of Christian Athletes banquet, discussed how their faith had changed their lives and how they wished they could help bring the Christian faith to other men. In the midst of the discussion, McCartney began to envision athletic stadiums filled with men coming together to worship, pray and learn. Four months later his vision became a reality: the first PK rally was held. Only 4,200 men attended that first meeting, but the movement grew rapidly, reaching its peak in 1996 when over 1.1 million men attended twenty-two conferences across the nation. Attendance has fallen off somewhat since then. In 1997 nineteen conferences attracted just over 638,000 men (not including those who attended the "Stand in the Gap" rally), while in 1998 the same number of conferences attracted just 453,000 men. In addition to its conferences, PK holds special clergy conferences (sometimes in conjunction with, and sometimes independently of, its regular conferences). It is also committed to the formation of "accountability groups," that is, small groups of men that meet in local churches where they can hold one another accountable to the seven promises.

In the fall of 1997 PK decided that, beginning in 1998, it would no longer charge an admission fee (\$60) to its conferences in order to remove all financial barriers from attending such conferences, and instead rely on donations by individuals, churches and other institutions to fund its ministry. However, because up until that point admission

fees had provided 72% of its total revenues, PK ran into a cash shortfall in early 1998 and was forced to announce that it would lay off all of its 345 full-time, salaried employees at the end of March 1998. A flood of donations in March and April, though, allowed PK to recall some 200 of its employees and to proceed with the nineteen stadium and arena conferences it had already scheduled for 1998. Another fifteen conferences are scheduled for 1999.

A major emphasis of PK is racial reconciliation. In addition to its 6th promise (listed above), it has issued a statement on reconciliation. Critics have nevertheless questioned the movement's commitment to racial integration. Some argue that by using the term "reconciliation" rather than "integration," PK holds on to the naive belief that by changing people's attitudes nationwide, racial reconciliation will take place (Kimmel, 1997). Others argue that by using the language of "reconciliation" instead of "integration," PK avoids criticizing the conservative economic program of its conservative backers. According to these critics if this program – "as exemplified by the agenda of the Republican freshman" – were ever put into practice, it would eliminate "the social and economic infrastructure of communities of color" (Conason et al., 1997, p.14). Still others, such as David Love, go so far as to suggest that PK is not in the least bit interested in racial reconciliation and only uses the term to deflect criticism:

One of the primary themes of this movement is a call for racial "reconciliation." Surely the word "reconciliation" was chosen very carefully. As a concept reconciliation is quite different from equality or justice. If two individuals reconcile that does not mean they both get what they want. A slave and a slave master may reconcile but that will not necessarily alter their fundamental relationship. The "Christian" Right does not seek racial justice in the United States. Throughout history it has stood in the way of freedom for all Americans (as cited in Promise Keepers and Racial Reconciliation, 1997).

Many of those who express suspicion of the group's motives or the effectiveness of its commitment to overturning racism often note that in spite of the group's public commitment to diversity, its gatherings are still "mostly white" (e.g., Conason et al., 1997; Kimmel, 1997).

The movement also calls upon its followers to recommit themselves to their wives and families, but it has done so in ways that have raised the ire of women's groups across the nation. Although PK claims that it is nothing more than a Christian movement seeking to bring about a religious revival among men, critics argue that its real purpose is to turn the clock back on many of the gains made by the feminist movement over the last 30 years. They point out that in calling on men to take responsibility for their lives and families, they do so in ways that specifically encourage men to take back their roles as leaders of the family:

I can hear you saying, "I want to be a spiritually pure man. Where do I start?" The first thing you do is sit down with your wife and say something like this: "Honey, I've made a terrible mistake. I've given you my role. I gave up leading this family, and I forced you to take my place. Now I must reclaim that role." Don't misunderstand what I'm saying here. I'm not suggesting that you *ask* [original emphasis] for your role back, I'm urging you to *take it back* [original emphasis] . . . there can be no compromise here. If you're going to lead, you must lead. Be sensitive. Listen. Treat the lady gently and lovingly. But *lead!* [original emphasis] (Evans, 1994, pp. 79, 80).

Not surprisingly, statements such as this has led organizations such as the National Organization of Women (NOW) to sound the alarm and call upon their members to take action against this "male-supremacist" movement (Ireland, Gandy, Johnson & Toledo, 1997; see also Novosad, 1996; Pollitt, 1997).

What alarms some of the movement's critics even more is the close ties many of its leaders have to the Religious Right (e.g., Conason et al., 1997; Hitchens, 1997; Kimmel, 1997). McCartney, for example, has been an outspoken opponent of gay rights and publicly supported a 1995 ballot initiative in Colorado that sought to deny the extension of civil rights protections to gays and lesbians. Moreover, many of the Religious Right's leaders have been supportive of and involved with PK. Pro-life and anti-gay rights psychologist, James Dobson, who exerts considerable public influence through his nationally syndicated radio program and ministry, Focus on the Family, and his political lobbying group, the Family Research Council, has been a frequent speaker at PK events.¹ Likewise, Bill Bright, founder of Campus Crusade for Christ, who has opposed abortion and gay rights since the 1950s, has also spoken at PK rallies, and Pat Robertson, the former Republican presidential candidate and founder of the Christian Coalition, has promoted the movement on his nationally syndicated television program, "The 700 Club" (Abraham, 1995). This has led some to argue that PK constitutes nothing less than the "third wave of the religious right" (Conason et al., 1997).² Its true purpose, according to these critics, is political, not religious:

Promise Keepers is one of the most important new organizations on the right. Deceptive and carefully conceived, Promise Keepers attempts to mainstream its image by using a seductive vocabulary of male-only self-improvement, opposition to religious "denominationalism," and an alleged commitment to racial "reconciliation," to advance the strategic political agenda of the Christian right (Promise Keepers Watch, 1999).

¹Focus on the Family also helped keep PK solvent in its early days by paying some of its bills until funds began flowing in from its conferences. It has also published many of PK's books.

²The first two waves being, respectively: (1) Jerry Falwell's Moral Majority and (2) Pat Robertson's Christian Coalition.

Ironically, PK has more than its share of critics on the right as well. Many theologically conservative Christians condemn the movement as too inclusive and accepting of different Christian faith traditions (in particular, Roman Catholicism). They attack PK and a great many other evangelical groups for breaking down denominational barriers at the expense of theological truth (Rugh, 1994). Religious conservatives also criticize the PK message as overly influenced by humanistic psychology. They believe that this reliance upon secular psychology, combined with the movement's ecumenical spirit, dilutes the biblical message:

We are afraid of Promise Keepers . . . The men who are reached through this ministry will not be . . . grounded in the truth. They will not be taught to keep themselves pure from apostasy and heresy. They will not be trained in discerning false gospels from the true. Rather they will be instructed in unscriptural ecumenism; they will be taught that doctrine is not crucial, that to fight for the truth is unspiritual. They will be encouraged to accept even apostate denominations as genuine expressions of Christianity. We know this is true because of the leaders involved in promoting Promise Keepers. Few men are more radically ecumenical than James Dobson [of Focus on the Family] and Stephen Strang [publisher of *Charisma*, a magazine for charismatics, and *New Man*, the officially endorsed magazine for Promise Keepers]. Both accept Roman Catholicism as genuine Christianity.

Those who get involved with Promise Keepers will also be trained in a blasphemous mixture of humanistic psychology and corrupt Christianity. The presence of psychologist James Dobson within this movement guarantees this (Cloud, 1994, p. 1).

Critics on the right and the left both worry about the close association between PK's leadership and the Vineyard movement. The Association of Vineyard Churches (AVC) is a loose association of Pentecostal churches that emphasize the gifts of the Holy Spirit (e.g., speaking in tongues, revelations from God, miraculous healings and the casting out of demons). Some liberal critics decry the AVC's "theological extremism," noting that its beliefs are highly controversial in evangelical circles as well (Conason et al., 1997).

However, AVC is primarily controversial in the most extreme fundamentalist as opposed to evangelical circles,³ groups that condemn James Dobson and other Christian Right leaders as too liberal.

Interestingly, PK critics on the left and right also share a concern over AVC's ecumenism. One of AVC's goals, not unlike PK's 6th promise, is to break down the denominational walls that separate Christians from one another. They hope this will lead to the elimination of "doctrinal distinctions and organizational structures in the world's mainline churches [and] a 'postdenominational' phase in which Christianity would be dominated by charismatic theologians claiming to be 'apostles' and 'prophets'" (Conason et al., 1997, p. 19). Again, however, such an ecumenical emphasis is not unique to AVC or PK. It is shared by most contemporary American evangelical institutions and has been a major goal of mainline (liberal) Christianity as well.⁴

As it is readily evident from this brief overview, a number of criticisms have been directed at PK, and while it would be impossible in this thesis to explore them all, this essay will focus on two. Specifically, it will examine PK's commitment to racial reconciliation and its understanding of gender roles. It will compare the attitudes of PK

³See below for a brief discussion on the difference between American evangelicalism and fundamentalism.

⁴Since the early 1900's, moderate and liberal Christians have been involved in an ecumenical movement that has been institutionalized in groups such as the World and National Council of Churches. Through these institutions Christians have looked for ways to transcend their doctrinal differences so that they will be able to come together as a united church.

toward racial justice and gender roles to those found in American evangelicalism and American society in order to determine whether significant differences exist between these groups.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Much of the early writing on PK by social scientists addressed the group's popularity. Robert Bellah and his *Habits of the Heart* colleagues suggested that PK's success derives from its ability to tap into the perception that many of the problems facing today's families would be solved if men would only start taking responsibility for their own lives (Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler, & Tipton, 1996). They argue that many people see the breakdown of the American family as a sign of inadequate manhood. Hence, if men would only start acting like "real" men, family life would improve and social problems would be solved. Bellah et al. view this "notion that if men would only be men then all would be well in our society [as] a sad cultural delusion" (Bellah et al., 1996, p. 514). Despite their sympathy for PK's familial concerns, they trace current social problems back to structural forces such as the economy and the political environment.

Sociologist Michael Kimmel initially attributed PK's success to its ties with muscular Christianity (1996), an analogy made by others (e.g., Balmer, 1997; Hackett, 1998; Marty, 1997). According to Kimmel, muscular Christianity was first brought to America from England through the novels of Charles Kingsley and Thomas Hughes. Its goal was: "to revitalize the image of Jesus and thus remasculinize the Church" (Kimmel, 1996, p. 177). Perhaps the most famous muscular Christian was Billy Sunday, a former professional baseball player who left baseball to become an evangelist. He once declared that Jesus was "the greatest scrapper who ever lived" and declared that his goal was to

“strike a death blow at the idea that being a Christian takes a man out of the busy whirl of the world’s life and activity and makes him a sinless effeminate proposition” (Kimmel, 1996, pp. 177, 179). Because PK meets in sports stadiums and uses sports metaphors to communicate its message, Kimmel initially concluded that “the enormous response to the. . . Promise Keepers is a testimonial to the sustained drawing power of a muscular Christian vision” (Kimmel, 1996, p. 313).

After attending a PK conference at Shea Stadium in New York, however, he modified his view. There he noted that he searched in vain for the “hypermasculine bravado” one would expect to find at a muscular Christianity gathering.

Gone. . . are the virulent misogyny, the homophobia, and the spectre of theocracy that has brought most of the criticism of the organization. Instead, one is struck by the immense sincerity of the guys in attendance, the earnestness of their searching, the heartfelt expressions of remorse. Were it not for the exclusion of women and the endless, tacky sports stuff, this could have been a Billy Graham Crusade. And were it not for the Christian fundamentalism, this might have been a mythopoetic men’s meeting with Robert Bly and Sam Keen (Kimmel, 1997, p. 47).

Kimmel’s reflections dovetail with those of Van Leeuwen, who argues that PK men “project an image of being ‘weekend weepers,’ not ‘weekend warriors’” (1997a, p. 31), and Bartkowski, who has noted the relatively high degree of intimacy that can be found in PK accountability group meetings (in press-b). This is not to say that Kimmel thinks that the PK movement is harmless. As we will see below he is quite critical of the group’s approach to racial reconciliation and its “kinder, gentler patriarchy.”

Promise Keepers and Racial Reconciliation

As noted in the introduction, PK emphasizes racial reconciliation and has even issued a separate “Statement of Reconciliation” to address the issue. Kimmel argues,

however, that the call for racial reconciliation is not a call for supporting those programs that would uplift minorities and bring about racial equality. It is addressed at the individual rather than the collective level. Thus, he concludes that it is ultimately racist as well:

This is not about anti-discrimination legislation or affirmative action--heck, it's not even about integration. It's about being kinder and more civil. It's about hearing their pain, not supporting its alleviation. It's choosing to be nicer, but not about policies that force us to be fairer. In the PK worldview, racial reconciliation is an individual posture, but not a collective struggle. Being less racist in one's personal life may be laudatory, but without a program of institutional remedies, it leaves untouched the chief forces that keep that inequality in place (Kimmel, 1997, p. 49).

Diamond raises similar concerns. Like Kimmel, she criticizes PK for only addressing the problem of racial injustice at the individual but not the structural level. She notes that while the theme of racial reconciliation is present at all PK rallies, speakers seldom address the question of racial injustice directly (Diamond, 1998). This is not to say that she does not believe PK's commitment is genuine. She notes, for example, that in 1996 PK established a reconciliation division and announced that its staff would now consist of 30% minorities in order to better reflect the ethnic makeup of the United States: 16% African American, 13% Hispanic, and 1% Native American (1998, p. 226).⁵ Diamond challenges PK's progressive critics to stop repeating the mantra that the Christian Right is simply racist and that the only Christians truly concerned about racial justice are those found in liberal, mainline denominations:

Now that PK has begun to open conservative men's minds about racial injustice, it is not impossible that PK, with its goal of molding a "new man," may surprise

⁵When he was still the head coach of the University of Colorado football team, Bill McCartney was the only coach who had an equal number of whites and minorities on his staff. Furthermore, after he retired in order to run Promise Keepers full time, he filed a formal complaint (with Jesse Jackson!) against the University for hiring a white coach to replace him.

critics by addressing some of the excesses of male irresponsibility. . . . Today, the most active efforts at racial integration are underway within conservative denominations, not within liberal churches (Diamond, 1998, p. 241).

Bartkowski draws similar conclusions about the group's commitment to "breaking down the walls" between races and social classes based on his analysis of PK accountability groups. He notes that several of the accountability groups that he observed consist of members who differ in age, class, ethnicity and denomination. Furthermore, they meet in circles, facing one another, eliminating the social hierarchies that often separate them in the secular world, thus symbolizing the ideal of equality that the movement espouses (Bartkowski, in press-b). He also points out that egalitarian themes have long been a part of evangelical Christianity even though not all evangelicals have embraced them. This helps explain, he believes, why PK's commitment to racial reconciliation resonates with its followers. Although he notes that leadership structures based on a variety of stratification mechanisms do often emerge within these groups, this leadership is usually limited to calling meetings and leading discussions.

Promise Keepers and Women

While PK's commitment to racial reconciliation has attracted its share of attention, it is the patriarchal message found in some of its books and on the lips of some of its speakers that seems to concern its critics the most. Kimmel argues that PK offers a "kinder, gentler patriarchy" in order to provide answers to men searching for meaning and community (1997, p. 48). Messner draws similar but somewhat harsher conclusions (1997). He compares PK to the mythopoetic men's movement (usually associated with Robert Bly and Sam Keen) because both call upon men to rediscover what it means to be

truly, or essentially, male. Both also call on men to reclaim “their natural positions of leadership in their communities” (1997, p. 17; see also Van Leeuwen, 1997a, p. 31). However, Messner argues that while the mythopoetic movement blames Western society’s overt rationalism for stripping men of their masculinity, PK blames the feminist, gay and sexual liberation movements. According to Messner, PK leaders interpret highly selective biblical texts in ways that allow them to argue that biological differences exist between women and men, differences that naturally suit women for some roles and men for others. Not surprisingly, women are seen as being best suited for being “mothers and domestic caretakers” while men are seen as being best suited for being “providers, protectors and leaders” (Messner, 1997, p. 31). Like most critics, he quotes Tony Evans’s infamous “take back” statement as evidence of PK’s sexist attitude. Ultimately, Messner describes the PK movement as an “organized and highly politicized antifeminist backlash” (1997, p. 35). His analysis, however, relies on very little empirical evidence (Lundskow, in press), and he admits that additional research is required before drawing any definitive conclusions (1997, p. 35).

Additional research has been carried out. Social scientists have attended PK rallies and accountability group meetings, interviewed rank-and-file Promise Keepers, and performed extensive discourse analysis of PK “advice manuals” (e.g., Bartkowski, 1998, in press-a, in press-b; Bernotsky & Bernotsky, 1998; Conrad, 1998; Diamond, 1998; Lundskow, in press; Van Leeuwen, 1997a). Interestingly, their findings lead to a far more nuanced picture of the movement than captured by Messner. For example, both Conrad and Bernotsky and Bernotsky appear to accept PK’s claim that it is not a self-

conscious political movement but merely a religious one seeking to bring about a religious revival among Christian men (Bernotsky & Bernotsky, 1998; Conrad, 1998). This is not to say they think the movement should be ignored. In particular, Conrad argues that PK interprets and communicates cultural symbols from the institutions of gender, religion and sport in ways that not only resonate with the experiences of those involved in the movement, but also contribute to the larger cultural backlash aimed at the contemporary feminist movement. Similarly, Bernotsky and Bernotsky argue that the combination of the movement's ability to mobilize large groups of men and its patriarchal rhetoric means that PK needs to be taken seriously as a political force whether it is self-consciously one or not (1998).

Lundskow's and Bartkowski's analyses of PK express fewer reservations than Kimmel, Messner, Bernotsky and Bernotsky or Conrad. Both interviewed several men involved in the movement's "accountability groups," and both found that the views and practices of these men do not necessarily reflect the patriarchal attitudes voiced by some of the movement's leaders (Bartkowski, 1998, in press-a, in press-b; Lundskow, in press). For example, Lundskow argues that PK is not the virulent movement Messner and others would have us believe. Instead he agrees with self-proclaimed "lesbian leftie" Suzanne Pharr, who has concluded that PK members are not the "patriarchal monsters we thought they were" (cited in Lundskow, in press). Lundskow also notes that while PK men tend to hold conservative views on abortion and homosexuality, they do not exhibit signs of intolerance or aggression toward those who disagree with them, nor do they express any desire for the movement to become politically active (Lundskow, in press).

Bartkowski combined his ethnographic research with a detailed analysis of PK “advice manuals” (in press-a, in press-b). He found that two types of gender discourses, which he calls instrumentalist and expressive visions of masculinity, are advanced in these manuals, and these visions compete with one another in PK accountability groups. According to Bartkowski, the instrumentalist vision advances a view of gender “which privileges radical notions of gender difference, advocates a patriarchal family structure, and is explicitly anti-feminist,” while the expressive vision advances a view “which defends androgynous gender conceptualizations and marital egalitarianism” (Bartkowski, in press-a). He also notes that PK men interpret and negotiate these competing visions in ways that are at once “inclusive and exclusive, egalitarian and authority-minded, strong and sensitive” (Bartkowski, in press-b). He thus concludes that to characterize evangelicals in general, and PK in particular, as unambiguously authoritarian is simply wrong. Instead, he argues, the attitudes of men involved in the movement reflect a mixture of old-time patriarchy and progressive egalitarianism.

Van Leeuwen uncovers the same tensions in her analysis of the movement. She argues that PK sends its followers a mixed message. Leaders “equivocate on the nature of gender reconciliation in a way they don’t on racial reconciliation” (Van Leeuwen, 1997b, p. 933), and when pressed, organizational representatives state that PK takes no official position on male headship although the movement’s founder, Bill McCartney, often does:

[W]hen PK’s CEO Bill McCartney publicly proclaims, as he did on National Public Radio days before the Washington event, that “God almighty has proclaimed husbands to be the spiritual leaders of their families,” . . . why should anyone *not*

[original emphasis] assume that this is PK's official position, disclaimers about kingdom equality notwithstanding (Van Leeuwen, 1997b, p. 933)?

Van Leeuwen notes that PK's mixed message concerning gender roles could reflect the strong revivalist impulse found within PK itself. She notes that, historically, this impulse has often led to a tolerance of views on issues that were seen as peripheral to the core gospel message (Van Leeuwen, 1997a, p. 36).

Diamond has also noted this mixed message. She points out that while PK continues to give voice to traditional notions of family and biblical concepts such as "male leadership," she believes that it is, at the same time, trying to come to terms with a world where gender equality is being taken for granted more and more. She notes how McCartney, when asked about his repeated references to "male leadership," went on to argue that in using the term he does not imply male domination but rather "servanthood." Just as Christ served the disciples, McCartney argued, PK is calling upon men to go home and become servants to their wives and kids (Diamond, 1998, pp. 228-229). "That the PK men waffle about 'leadership' and 'servanthood' while they work on improving communication with their wives is a sign that the feminist principle of equality has crept into even the staunchest bastion of sexism" (Diamond, 1998, p. 234). She goes on to challenge liberals to refrain from dismissing the movement as an example of backward thinking and to take seriously its stated commitment to treating women with respect and honor:

[C]alling the Promise Keepers a bunch of misogynists is unfair and will ring increasingly hollow as the years go by and the organization proves itself to be teaching men to "respect and honor" women. If anything, PK should be challenged to live up to all of its talk about male responsibility. Let's call PK to account: to

take on, for example, the deadbeat dads who pay no child support or the male bosses who harass women in the workplace (Diamond, 1998, p. 241).

These conclusions correspond to what other research has uncovered about American evangelicals in general. Lundquist, for example, found that while many evangelical men continue to hold on to traditional biblical language such as male headship, they reinterpret it in more egalitarian ways (1998). Likewise, Bartkowski notes that “evangelical family commentators” do not present a unified front with regards to spousal authority. Although some continue to defend traditional notions of male headship and wifely submission, there are a number of evangelical leaders who espouse an egalitarian vision of the family (Bartkowski, 1997). He also notes that some evangelical families have incorporated this vision of biblical egalitarianism into their own marital practices (Bartkowski, 1998).

Summary

While enlightening, none of the previous analyses of PK has asked a critical question: is the PK movement more conservative or more liberal, or no different from mainstream evangelicalism regarding race and gender roles? For example, while all of the analyses make it clear that, at times, PK embraces traditional language concerning gender roles, how does its interpretation of this language compare with interpretations found within mainstream American evangelicalism? A study of the role of women in the Mormon Church from 1950 to 1986 found that, to a certain extent, the Church accommodated itself to the change in women’s roles (Iannaccone & Miles, 1990). Based upon Bartkowski’s examination of evangelical family commentators (1997), it appears likely that a similar accommodation has occurred within American evangelicalism and

may be reflected in the PK literature. Similarly, how does PK's commitment to racial reconciliation compare to mainstream evangelicalism?

This essay seeks to address and answer such questions, but before doing so, we need to review of certain current theoretical developments within the sociology of religion. Chapter 3 begins this process by summarizing "secularization theory" and how data on religious participation have undermined this theory and have led to a paradigm shift in the field. This chapter's discussion then moves to an examination of the concept of religious economies, which draws upon network exchange and rational choice theories. As we will see, this theoretical approach helps to explain why certain types of religious movements, such as American evangelicalism, succeed while others do not. It also helps to account for the church-sect cycle first noted by H. Richard Niebuhr seventy years ago and how American evangelicalism fits into this cycle. This leads to a series of predictions concerning the attitudes and actions of PK with respect to racial reconciliation and traditional women's roles.

CHAPTER 3: THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS

On Paradigms, Secularization, and Religious Economies

Some years ago the philosopher of science Thomas Kuhn (1970) argued that scientists, rather than operating out of fixed knowledge structures (as it is often assumed), actually go about their work in and through “worldviews,” which Kuhn christened scientific paradigms. Paradigms are the ways in which scientists look at the natural world; they typically go unchallenged for years. Basing their work upon the theoretical assumptions of the dominant paradigm of the time, scientists hypothesize, test, and record empirical data, drawing conclusions as to how well the data fit the paradigm’s assumptions. Most of the time the data fit the model although, from time to time, they may lead scientists to modify the paradigm somewhat. Seldom, however, are the paradigm’s basic assumptions challenged. Kuhn calls the process of hypothesizing, testing and recording within the framework of a paradigm “normal science” (1970, pp. 10-42).

Eventually, however, some of the data they uncover are inconsistent with the paradigm’s assumptions. Initially, scientists treat these inconsistencies as anomalies rather than admitting that perhaps their paradigm could be deficient. However, once these anomalies reach a point at which they can no longer be ignored, the old paradigm begins to break down. Scientists come to the realization that something is amiss with their worldview and they begin to search for a new paradigm that explains the data better. Eventually, one is found and normal science resumes, albeit under the theoretical assumptions of the new paradigm. Kuhn calls this process of paradigm shifts scientific

revolutions. A good example is that sixteenth-century Ptolemaic astronomy (a paradigm) could not account for the empirical data that Copernicus and his fellow scientists kept uncovering. “Predictions made with Ptolemy’s system never quite conformed with the best available observations” (Kuhn, 1970, p. 68). These anomalies eventually led to what Kuhn calls the Copernican revolution (1957), which was nothing short of a new way of looking at the heavens.

Sociologist Stephen Warner has recently argued that a paradigm shift, of sorts, is under way in the sociological study of religion in the United States (1993, 1997). The old paradigm, of which Peter Berger is probably the most representative, argues that pluralism and secularization lead to religious privatization and institutional atrophy. According to Berger, human beings, unlike other animals who possess a fixed relationship between their biological character and environment, do not have a “species-specific environment” (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p. 47). Instead, we are capable of adapting to any number of environments. Moreover, unlike non-human animals, whose drives are directed toward and suited to their surrounding environments, our innate drives are underdeveloped. As such, it becomes imperative for us to create a world that channels our drives in socially appropriate directions. Without such a world we would simply flounder. Berger calls this process of world-creation “externalization.” Once our humanly created world is externalized, however, it takes on a life of its own. It becomes an objective reality, much like the mountains and the sun, so that we forget that we are its creators. Berger calls this the process of “objectification.” Finally, Berger argues that after we objectify our world, we subjectively appropriate it and make it a part of our own

consciousness. That is, we transform its objective structures into the structures of the subjective consciousness. Berger calls this final stage the process of “internalization.” Thus, our socially constructed world has both an objective and subjective aspect to it. It is both “out there” and “in here.”

Furthermore, Berger argues that we do not experience reality as a unified whole but rather as something containing different zones, such as the zones of dreaming and aesthetic experience. There is one zone, however, that is privileged above all others: namely, the zone of intersubjectively or the reality of everyday life (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, pp. 18-46; Berger, 1979, pp. 34-35). According to Berger, everyday reality tends to be orderly and pragmatic. We take it largely for granted. In it we know our place (Wuthnow, 1986). It does not, however, provide us with answers to the meaning of life. For that, Berger argues, we need an overarching reality that he calls a symbolic universe. A symbolic universe is a body “of theoretical tradition that integrate(s) different provinces of meaning and encompass(es) the institutional order in a symbolic totality” (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p. 95). It provides us with a purpose in life around which to structure our lives, and like other zones of reality, is a human creation and, as such, is as malleable as is our physical environment. Religions are a type of symbolic universe. In fact, they are potentially the most powerful types of symbolic universes because not only do they provide explanations for human tragedies such as suffering, death, injustice, and so on, they embed these explanations in the sacred order of the cosmos. In premodern times religions were probably the most common form of symbolic universes. They

provided integrated definitions of reality that served as a common universe of meaning for societies and their members (Berger, 1967, p. 134).

According to Berger, in today's secular world religions no longer serve such a function. The process of secularization, which Berger defines as the "process by which sectors of society and culture are removed from the domination of religious institutions and symbols" (Berger, 1967, p. 4), reduces the role that religion plays in society, and this role reduction takes place at both the objective and subjective level. Thus, not only have religious institutions lost their political and economic influence (e.g., Popes no longer bless Kings, Church and State have been constitutionally separated), religion itself has lost its status in the minds of believers. Believers no longer take religious worldviews for granted. Instead, they see them, including their own faith traditions, as different options competing for allegiance. As such, Berger argues that in secular societies religion has undergone a plausibility crisis. In premodern societies a particular religion's plausibility was sustained and reinforced by social consensus and control, but in countries where secularization has taken root,⁶ such reinforcement no longer occurs. Social consensus has been weakened, and religion has increasingly become a private matter and, therefore, publicly impotent.

The problem, at least for Berger's theory, is that it has not. Religion has not become increasingly privatized and impotent. For the past few years social scientists have kept uncovering empirical data that did not fit into the Bergerian paradigm:

⁶While Berger credits modern science for contributing to secularization, following Weber he traces it to the secularizing impulses found in Christianity itself and argues that Christianity is its own gravedigger (Berger, 1967, pp. 105-125).

Berger's theory told them to expect religious particularism in the backwaters of society, but. . . they were finding it in midstream. Too many of them wasted valuable intellectual energy trying to create room for their observations within the basically inhospitable intellectual confines of the old theory; they reminded me in this respect of Copernicus grappling with Ptolemy (Warner, 1997, p. 93).

According to Warner, the results of these studies have led to a paradigm shift within the sociology of religion where the Bergerian model has, for the most part, been discarded in favor of a new model that better explains the empirical data uncovered by theorists.⁷

While some social scientists employ a more interpretive and qualitative approach to explain this phenomenon (e.g., Ammerman, 1997; Neitz, 1987), the most influential theorists to date have drawn upon network exchange and rational choice theories where the concept of religious economies plays a central role (e.g., Finke, 1997; Finke & Stark, 1992; Iannaccone, 1991, 1992, 1997, 1999; Iannaccone, Finke & Stark, 1997; Stark, 1996; Stark & Finke, in press).⁸

A religious economy consists of all the religious activity going on in any society. Religious economies are like commercial economies in that they consist of a market of current and potential customers, a set of *religious firms* seeking to serve that market, and the religious "product lines" offered by the various firms (Stark, 1996, p. 193-194).

Much like regular market economies, religious economies can be found to lie on a continuum between monopolized economies on the one hand where one religious "firm" controls the market (e.g., the medieval Roman Catholic Church) and

⁷To be fair, Berger has since "repented" of his position and modified his theory (1992, 1996/1997).

⁸See also Smith who combine both qualitative and quantitative approaches to theory building within this new paradigm (1998).

unregulated religious economies on the other where several firms compete with one another for the loyalty of religious consumers (e.g., the contemporary United States).

A key to this theory is the proposition that unregulated or free-market religious economies lead to high religious participation rates because (1) they allow for “niche” marketing and (2) they encourage competition among religious groups (Iannaccone, 1999; Stark & Finke, in press). In unregulated religious markets religious groups are free to target the specific needs of religious consumers. No single religious group can meet every person’s spiritual needs. That is why in religious economies where a single religious group controls the market, the needs of many potential religious consumers go unmet, and, as a result, religious participation rates tend to be lower than need be. For example, in the United States the Metropolitan Community Church (MCC) came into existence in order to provide worship and fellowship opportunities for gay and lesbian Christians whose needs were largely unmet by mainline and evangelical Christian denominations. It is unlikely that the MCC would have come into existence in a monopolized religious economy where a single religious firm controlled the market, such as the Roman Catholic Church does in Ireland and Poland. Instead, the MCC needed a religious economy that permitted and, in fact, encouraged religious choice.

Critics of this theory often point to medieval Europe when the Roman Catholic Church dominated the religious scene as an example of where this theory does not hold. Recent social and historical scholarship, however, has found that contrary to conventional wisdom, medieval Europe was not characterized by widespread religious devotion. Instead, widespread religious apathy and low levels of church participation (Stark &

Iannaccone, 1994) characterized it. The Roman Catholic Church may have “wielded vast political and economic power but [it] generated relatively little observable spirituality” (Iannaccone et al., 1997, p. 362). This is not to say that in monopolized religious economies, religious participation will necessarily be low (e.g., the religious participation rate in Poland is very high).⁹ It simply suggests that a single religious group, by its very nature, cannot meet the spiritual needs of as many people as a plurality of religious groups can. As a result, *everything else being equal*, religious economies that encourage religious pluralism should tend to have higher participation rates than those that do not.

American church history is a case in point. Back in 1776 when most state governments supported specific religious groups, the religious adherence rate was approximately 17%. However, by 1850, seventeen years after the state of Massachusetts became the final state to disestablish religion (they stopped collecting taxes on behalf of the Congregationalists), the adherence rate had jumped to 34%. By 1906 it had reached 51%, and by 1980 it had reached 62% (Finke & Stark, 1992, p. 16).

As noted above, competition is a necessary condition. It breeds efficiency (Finke, 1997; Finke & Stark, 1992; Iannaccone et al., 1997; Stark & Finke, in press). In monopolistic religious economies “the clergy have little incentive to mobilize popular support” (Finke, 1992, p. 51). However, in free-market religious economies, where the clergy rely upon the voluntary contributions of followers for their livelihood, they tend to

⁹Iannaccone identifies two factors that may help explain Roman Catholicism’s success with monopoly. One is the internal diversity of the Roman Catholic Church; Roman Catholics are often free to choose from a wide range of worship options (e.g., charismatic, liturgical, and folk masses). A second factor is that contemporary Roman Catholic monopolies are not as tied to and supported by the state as their Protestant counterparts (e.g., Lutheran churches in Norway, Sweden and Denmark); thus, they are not as beset by internal inefficiencies as other religious monopolies (Iannaccone, 1991, pp. 170-171).

pay close attention to and attempt to meet the spiritual needs of the people they serve. Of course, free-market religious economies can be as ruthless as secular ones. They reward those religious groups that meet peoples' needs and punish those that do not. Churches that provide people with a high rate of return (i.e., meeting spiritual, psychological, and social needs) on their investment (i.e., time, money, behavioral demands, and so on) tend to thrive, while those that do not tend to wither and often die. Only the strong survive. It is social Darwinism at its best (or worst, depending on one's point of view).

Church-Sect Cycle

Sociologists of religion have noted that over the course of American history, religious denominations that have accommodated themselves most fully to secular culture have tended to be the (membership) losers, while those that have maintained a moderate degree of tension with secular culture have tended to be the winners (Finke & Stark, 1992). In the early days the winners were the Methodists and the Baptists, whose theologies were somewhat in tension with secular society. They maintained this tension for a time by not employing seminary-trained clergy in local churches but instead by using lay leaders who earned their living working alongside their fellow worshippers.¹⁰ However, over time, as both groups became more secularized,¹¹ they were supplanted by newer sectarian groups such as the Nazarenes and the Assemblies of God. In turn, as the Nazarenes and the Assemblies of God have begun to

¹⁰The Methodists did employ paid clergy known as circuit riders, but, at least in the early stages of American Methodism, these circuit riders did not pastor specific churches but instead spent their time traveling and visiting several churches on their circuits.

¹¹It is necessary to draw a distinction between Northern and Southern Baptists. Northern Baptists, now known as American Baptists, did follow the pattern of accommodation whereas the Southern Baptists, for the most part, did not.

accommodate themselves to secular culture, they are beginning to be upstaged by even newer sectarian movements such as the Mormons and Jehovah Witnesses.

In order to explain this process of secularization and renewal sociologists have often drawn upon Weber's church-sect typology (1905/1958). According to Weber, church-type religious bodies are those that are inclusive and welcome all who are born into their midst, while sect-types are those that are exclusive and demand that prospective members undergo a religious conversion before becoming members. Church-type religious bodies include groups such as the Roman Catholics and the Lutherans who baptize their infants under the assumption that they will be brought up and grow into their respective faiths. Sect-type religious bodies, on the other hand, are groups such as the Baptists and the Amish who generally do not baptize anyone until they have made conscious decisions to follow Jesus (i.e., to be born again). In such communities children of adult members do not become members themselves until they undergo conversion experiences. While Weber may have introduced the typology, it was his pupil Ernst Troeltsch who popularized it by using it to delineate the two dominant types of Christian faith communities found in 19th-Century Europe (1911/1960). Troeltsch elaborated upon the typology by identifying additional characteristics of both the church- and sect-types that further differentiated them from one another. However, when other sociologists of religion took Troeltsch's elaborated typology and attempted to match it with religious groups from another time and place, they discovered that the match was seldom a good one.

Part of the reason this occurred can be traced to the nature of the church-sect typology in the first place. As others have noted, the typology classifies, rather than explains, religious differences (Stark & Bainbridge, 1979; Stark, 1996). Such classifications may be useful in comparing differences between various religious groups, but they do not explain why such differences exist. As Stark and Bainbridge note (1979), Benton Johnson simplified matters when he recast the church-sect typology as a continuum based upon the degree to which a religious group is in a state of tension with its social environment (1963): He defined the ideal church-type as a religious group that accommodates itself to its social environment (low-tension) and the ideal sect-type as a religious group that rejects its social environment (high-tension). In Johnson's modified model, Weber's two types serve as poles on either end of the continuum rather than as two distinct types into which all religious groups must fit. As such, it allows sociologists, if they so choose, to first measure the tension level between religious groups and their surrounding social environment, and then explore the relationships that exist, if any, between various factors and these groups (Stark & Bainbridge, 1985).

Niebuhr was the first to apply the church-sect typology in a fruitful manner to the American religious scene (1929). He attempted to provide an explanation for the vast number of competing Protestant denominations in the United States and the continual emergence of new ones. What he noted at the outset was the different ethical stances of the two types of churches: Institutional churches (church-types) tend to be "closely allied with national, economic, and cultural interests" and, as a

result, tend to accommodate their ethics to the ethics of society; that is, their ethics “represent the morality of the respectable majority, not the heroic minority” (Niebuhr, 1929, p. 18). Sectarian churches, on the other hand, tend to hold orthodox interpretations of Christian ethics and prefer isolation to compromise (Niebuhr, 1929, p.19). Thus, at times they refuse participation in the government [e.g., Jehovah Witnesses], at other times they reject war [e.g., Quakers], and still at others they seek to separate themselves as much as possible from American society [e.g., Amish]. He also noted that sectarian churches are typically composed of the poor and disinherited:

In Protestant history the sect has ever been the child of an outcast minority, taking its rise in the religious revolts of the poor, of those who were without effective representation in church or state and who formed their conventicles of dissent in the only way open to them, on the democratic, associational pattern (Niebuhr, 1929, p. 19).

Network exchange and rational choice theorists explain this phenomenon by pointing to the rewards offered and the costs extracted by different types of religious groups. While both low-tension (church-type) and high-tension (sect-type) religious groups offer rewards that cannot be gained in this life (e.g., the promise of life after death) nor monopolized by any single group, religious groups at the low end of the tension continuum offer very different rewards than do those at the high end. For example, low-tension groups (hereinafter referred to as “institutional churches”¹²) offer rewards that appeal to people higher up the socioeconomic ladder such as status,

¹²Because low-tension religious groups tend to attract people of high socioeconomic status (SES) and high-tension groups tend to attract people of low SES, to avoid confusion low-tension groups will be referred to as institutional churches and high-tension groups will be referred to as sectarian churches.

the socialization of children into commonly accepted cultural values, and an educated clergy that preach “intellectually responsible” sermons (Finke & Stark, 1992; Stark & Bainbridge, 1987/1996). Thus, it is not uncommon for institutional churches to market themselves to the educated populace through the use of advertisements such as the one the Episcopal church ran recently in some newspapers which depicted Christ’s face along with the slogan: “He Died to Take Away Your Sins, Not Your Mind” (Norris, 1998, p. 239).

At the same time, institutional churches demand far less from their members than do sectarian churches by embracing ethical stances that do not deviate too far from those of society as a whole. For example, seldom do followers have to reject capitalism, adopt distinctive lifestyles (Iannaccone, 1988, 1994), or embrace therapeutically unpopular theological doctrines such as “sin” (Witten, 1993) in order to be members in good standing. Thus, moving back and forth between their secular and religious “worlds” is relatively painless. Simply put, the costs of joining institutional churches are relatively low, and this helps explain why people whose livelihoods are very much tied up with the way things are (i.e., the status quo) find such churches more attractive than they do sectarian churches (Stark & Bainbridge, 1987/1996).

On the other hand, high-tension groups (i.e., sectarian churches) offer their members rewards that they cannot generally obtain from institutional churches or secular society. Such rewards include emotional worship services that help participants release bottled-up frustrations, rituals such as prayer that provide

suplicants ways to seek divine aid, assurance and comfort, and doctrines that help to ease the burdens of this life (e.g., through promises of heavenly recompense for their earthly suffering) while providing members with feelings of moral superiority over their wealthier counterparts (Stark & Bainbridge, 1987/1996, p. 46; Stark, 1996).

Sectarian churches also demand a lot from their members in terms of high commitment levels, distinctive lifestyles, and ethical stances that are often at odds with society as a whole. However, because most of the people who join sectarian churches tend to have very little invested in the status quo, the opportunity costs of joining a sectarian church is far lower than for someone heavily invested in the status quo. To take an extreme example: it is far more likely that an out-of-work farmer will join the Old Order Amish than will a successful investment banker.

Niebuhr also noted that most institutional churches began as sectarian movements. In their infancy institutional churches such as the Methodists, Congregationalists and Presbyterians were protest movements that broke away from institutional churches that had become, at least in the opinion of the protesting groups, too worldly. However, over time these churches took on the worldliness they had decried so much in the first place and became institutional churches themselves. Although Niebuhr does not let on, such “sect-to-church” transformations are actually quite rare. Most sectarian groups stop growing or die out within a few years of their founding because they exist in such a high state of tension with society, they are simply unable to recruit enough people to keep their movement alive (Stark & Bainbridge, 1985; Stark & Finke, in press).

Sectarian churches that do survive do so because they reduce the tension between themselves and society. This enables them to attract enough new members to keep their movement alive and growing. What causes such groups to reduce their tension level? Niebuhr believed it is due to the passage of generations:

By its very nature the sectarian type of organization is valid only for one generation. . . Rarely does a second generation hold the convictions it has inherited with a fervor equal to that of its fathers, who fashioned these convictions in the heart of conflict and at the risk of martyrdom. As generation succeeds generation, the isolation of the community from the world becomes more difficult (1929, pp. 19-20).

Niebuhr appears to have been correct although he never identified the factors causing this generational transformation. One likely factor is that although sectarian groups tend to attract people of lower socioeconomic status (SES), their leadership positions are often captured by elites. While elites tend to prefer low-tension groups, they often play leading roles in the formation of sectarian groups. In fact, it “is unlikely that any sect movement (or at least any modestly successful one) was entirely the work of the dispossessed. Most sects begin with a significant number of more privileged persons who, for a variety of idiosyncratic reasons, prefer intense religion” (Stark & Finke, in press), and while a sectarian movement’s privileged founders typically do not seek to reduce the tension between themselves and society, it is likely that their children play such a role (Stark & Finke, in press). Stark has demonstrated that this was probably the case for early Christianity (Stark, 1996), and there is no evidence to suggest that this does not hold true for more contemporary sectarian movements.

Another likely factor is the statistical phenomenon known as “regression to the mean.” This is simply the tendency for groups of people, over time, to become more

average. Thus, the children of parents who score low on various measures (e.g., IQ, height, weight, etc.) will, on average, score higher than their parents, and the children of parents who score high on various measure will tend to score lower than their parents. An example of this is children of extremely tall parents. As a group they will, on average, not grow to be as tall as their parents. Put simply, they will grow to a height closer to the mean (average) height of the population, hence the term, “regression to the mean.” We saw earlier that sectarian groups tend to attract individuals who are deprived in terms of secular rewards such as wealth, power and prestige. While their lack of access to these rewards is attributable to some degree to structural forces, social mobility is also a function of ability. Because of this, it is statistically unlikely that second generation members of sectarian groups will, on average, be as deprived as their parents. Put simply, as a group they should “regress toward the mean” and become more like the rest of society:

Suppose we were to pick a group of parents who are extremely low scorers on a variety of traits that tend to give power. Assume that these are not wholly ascriptive characteristics and thus vary intergenerationally. It is entirely predictable that their children will have a higher score on these traits. Because these are power-giving traits, one would also predict a substantial amount of upward mobility between the first and second generations. If it is true, as much evidence suggests, that sects are greatly over recruited initially from among extreme low scorers on many power-giving attributes, then it follows that the arrival and maturation of the second generation will result in a great deal of upward mobility by sect members (Stark & Bainbridge, 1985, pp. 154-155).

As sectarian groups begin to move up the socioeconomic ladder with the passage of generations, they simultaneously begin to reduce the tension between themselves and society. This, in turn, helps them attract people of even higher SES who eventually pressure their groups to reduce the tension level even more. Thus, over time, groups that

began as sectarian protest movements accommodate themselves more and more to the world and abandon the otherworldly principles that gave rise to their movement in the first place. However, as they accommodate themselves to the surrounding society, they set the stage for new sectarian movements to rise up in protest, and the church-sect cycle begins anew (Stark & Bainbridge, 1985).

American Evangelicalism

American evangelicalism is an example of a religious movement that has moved from sectarianism to a moderate degree of accommodation with its surrounding culture. It is somewhat unique in that it is a parachurch, as opposed to denominational, movement. Rather than being tied to a distinct faith tradition such as the Assemblies of God or Church of the Brethren, American evangelicalism is a loose association of churches, institutions and individuals. It began in the mid twentieth-century as a self-conscious attempt by moderate fundamentalist pastors, evangelists, and scholars to fashion a faith that would engage, rather than withdraw, from the world. In this latter respect it differed substantially from the fundamentalism from which they were trying to distance themselves. Evangelical leaders shared the opinion that fundamentalism's separatist character was hindering, rather than helping, the spread of the Gospel. Moreover, many of them were budding intellectuals who believed it important to bring well-reasoned Christian perspectives to the important intellectual debates of their day, something that fundamentalists, until that time, were reluctant to do. Finally, many of them believed that conservative Protestants should be socially and politically active. In their view Jesus Christ was the answer to the

world's problems, but they knew – given fundamentalism's separatist tendencies – it would never engage the world in any sustained way (Smith, 1998, p. 10).¹³

In a sense these leaders were attempting to recapture a time when isolation was not the *modus operandi* of conservative Protestants. Prior to the modernist-fundamentalist controversies of the early twentieth-century that culminated with the famous Scopes trial, conservative American Protestants held positions of respect in American society (e.g., as college presidents, businessmen, etc.) and actively took part in the world around them. They played major roles in the abolition of slavery, prison reform, the creation and running of hospitals, and providing services to the poor and dispossessed (Smith, 1998, p. 4). With the rise of the scientific world view and the disdain heaped upon them after the Scopes trial, conservative Protestants turned away from the world and embraced a theological world view outlined in a series of tracts called *The Fundamentals* from which the label “fundamentalism” has been taken.

It took a generation before the efforts of mid-century moderate fundamentalist leaders gave birth to the social movement we now know as modern American evangelicalism. They accomplished this through a series of events. They founded the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE) and held their first meeting in 1942. Reflecting their ecumenical commitment, they extended invitations to religious groups such as Anabaptists and Pentecostals, groups that had not, until that time, been warmly received by fundamentalists. At this meeting “speakers stressed the need for

¹³ Except where noted the following discussion draws largely from Smith (1998).

unity and love among different Protestant traditions for the sake of the Gospel and the world” (Smith, 1998, p. 11). In addition to founding the NAE, they also lent their support to the formation of educational institutions and the promotion of evangelistic crusades that encouraged ecumenical cooperation among local churches, most notably those led by Billy Graham. Finally, in 1954 Billy Graham helped launch *Christianity Today*, an evangelical magazine that offered an alternative to the two liberal Christian journals, *Christian Century* and *Christianity and Crisis*. Graham hoped to put together a journal that would “plant the evangelical flag in the middle of the road, taking the conservative theological position but a definite liberal approach to social problems. It would combine the best in liberalism and the best in fundamentalism without compromising theologically” (as cited in Smith, 1998, p. 12). Since the 1940s, American Evangelicalism has grown substantially. Dozens of new magazines have been started, hundreds of Christian colleges, seminaries, parachurch organizations and publishing houses have been founded, and evangelicals are increasingly engaged with the world intellectually, socially and politically (Martin, 1996).

It is no accident that it was second-generation, rather than first-generation, fundamentalist leaders who sought to reduce the tension level between themselves and the world around them. As we saw earlier, this is not unusual. We also saw that once this process is set in motion it tends to become self-perpetuating. As sectarian groups reduce the tension level between themselves and society, the more they attract people of higher SES who, in turn, bring additional pressure to reduce the tension level even more,

which, in turn, attracts people of even higher SES, and so on. Smith (1998) has confirmed these expectations in his study of American evangelicalism, which investigated, among other things, American evangelical intergenerational social mobility.

It follows from this and from the previous discussion concerning the church-sect cycle, that over the past 40 years, American evangelicals have accommodated their social attitudes toward the social attitudes of the surrounding society. That is, over time their social views have come to resemble more the attitudes of “the respectable majority” than they do “the heroic minority” (Niebuhr, 1929, p. 18). Furthermore, if, as it has already been argued, PK draws its followers from American evangelicalism and remains grounded in evangelicalism, then the values and attitudes expressed by PK should not differ significantly from those of most American evangelicals, nor, for that matter, from those of the respectable majority. Stated propositionally:

- H1. In societies with unregulated religious economies, the social attitudes of sectarian religious movements, such as American Evangelicalism, will tend to converge, over time, toward the social attitudes of the surrounding society.
- H2. The social attitudes of parachurch religious organizations, such as Promise Keepers, will not significantly differ from the social attitudes of the overall religious movements, such as American Evangelicalism, from which they draw their followers.

CHAPTER 4: DATA AND METHODS

An ideal test of hypotheses 1 and 2 would track the social attitudes of American evangelicals over time, comparing them first to those embraced by the rest of American society and second to rank-and-file PKs. Unfortunately, while the social attitudes of conservative Protestants have been surveyed several times over the years, it has only been in recent years that survey researchers have sought to distinguish evangelicals from other conservative Protestants. Moreover, no publicly available surveys have been taken of men involved in the PK movement. This situation forced a creative approach to the testing of these two hypotheses. The first hypothesis was tested using data from the National Opinion Research Center's (NORC) General Social Surveys (GSS) from 1972 through 1996, and the second using data drawn from a comparative content analysis of PK and American evangelical written materials.

American Evangelicalism and American Society

Drawing upon GSS data from 1972 through 1996 (Davis & Smith, 1996), the trends of conservative Protestant social attitudes were tracked over time to those of other Americans. In order to do this, the classification scheme used by the GSS that aggregates the various religious groups with which people identify into three manageable categories – fundamentalist (conservative), moderate, and liberal – was used. The GSS assigns Protestants to the three categories based upon the scheme developed by Tom Smith, one of the principal investigators of the GSS (1990). It includes Roman Catholics in the moderate category and includes Jews and those who responded “none” in the liberal category. While this classification scheme is far from perfect (see Appendix A), it

isolates conservative Protestants, those whom the GSS calls “fundamentalists,” from other religious groups, allowing a comparison of the attitudes of conservative Protestants over time. Although the GSS’s classification scheme does not distinguish between fundamentalists and evangelicals, because evangelicals are a part of conservative Protestantism, if there has been a substantial convergence between the social attitudes of evangelicals and other Americans, then there should also be a similar convergence between all conservative Protestants and other Americans.

In order to test whether such a convergence has taken place, a series of logistic regressions were performed in order to compare the attitudes of conservative Protestants toward racial equality, gender roles and abortion with other Americans. Attitudes toward racial equality were measured by two questions:

1. If your party nominated a [Negro, Black, African-American] for President, would you vote for him if he were qualified for the job?
2. Do you think there should be laws against marriages between [Negroes/Blacks] and whites?

Attitudes toward gender roles were also measured by two questions:

3. If your party nominated a woman for President, would you vote for her if she were qualified for the job?
4. Do you approve or disapprove of a married woman earning money in business or industry if she has a husband capable of supporting her.

Finally, attitudes toward abortion were measured by a single question:

5. Please tell me whether or not you think it should be possible for a pregnant woman to obtain a legal abortion if the woman wants it for any reason.

These questions were selected because, while the NORC has not asked them on every GSS survey, they have repeatedly appeared on GSS surveys from 1972 to 1996. The

responses to these questions were recoded in such a way that a series of dichotomous variables were created. This coding scheme is summarized in Table 1:

Table 1: Dichotomous Coding Scheme of Dependent Variables for Use in Logistic Regression Analysis and Comparison Testing

<i>Question</i>	<i>Coding Scheme</i>		
	<i>Items coded "1" (original coding in parentheses)</i>	<i>Items coded "0" (original coding in parentheses)</i>	<i>Coded "Missing" (original coding in parentheses)</i>
Vote for black presidential candidate?	Yes (1)	No (2) Don't Know (8)	No Answer (9)
There should be laws against marriage between blacks and whites?	No (2)	Yes (1) Don't Know (8)	No Answer (9)
Vote for female presidential candidate?	Yes (1)	No (2) Not vote (5) Don't Know (8)	No Answer (9)
Support married women working?	Approve (1)	Disapprove (2) Don't Know (8)	No Answer (9)
Support abortion for any reason?	Yes (1)	No (2) Don't Know (8)	No Answer (9)

Recoding the variables in this way provided a way to track, over time, the mean of the liberal responses for each of the five variables.

Because the first hypothesis predicts that, over time, the social attitudes of sectarian religious movements such as American Evangelicalism will tend to resemble the social attitudes of the surrounding culture, it was determined whether significant changes have occurred among the three religious groups over the time period studied. In order to do this, each religious group was subsampled and then the effects of time on each issue for

each religious group were calculated. A significant logistic regression coefficient for year indicates a significant change in attitudes among members of the particular group. In order to account for the potential effects of other factors, the effects of time on religious conservatives were calculated, controlling for age, education, income, gender, region and race.

Next, the effects of each religious group (conservative, moderate, liberal) and year on each dependent variable were calculated using logistic regression. The religious groups were recoded as dummy variables. In order to ascertain if a change over time is significantly different for one group compared to the others, year by group interaction effects were tested for. If an interaction term proved to be significant, then the attitudes of that group have been changing at a different rate from the omitted category. If the sign of the interaction term is the same as the direction of the group's effect, then a divergence of attitudes has taken place. If the direction of the change is in the opposite direction, then a convergence has taken place. All regression equations were controlled for age, gender (female = 1), region (south = 1), and race (black = 1) but were not controlled for education and income because, as discussed earlier, these network exchange and rational choice theories argue that they contribute to the converging trend among conservatives and other groups.

Finally, beginning with the 1996 GSS, Protestant respondents were asked whether they identified themselves as fundamentalist, evangelicals, mainline, liberal or other Christians. Based upon the responses to this question a series of t-tests were performed in order to determine whether the attitudes of religious conservatives and American

evangelicals on the five dependent variables differ significantly from those of other Americans. Because there is not a strong correlation between respondents who identify themselves as fundamentalists and evangelicals and those whom the GSS groups into the religious conservative category (see Appendix A), two series of t-tests were performed. The first series compared the mean responses of all conservative Protestants to all other respondents on each issue. The second isolated self-identified evangelicals who belong to the Christian denominations grouped into the GSS religious conservative category, and then compared the mean responses of these evangelicals to all other respondents on each issue.

American Evangelicalism and Promise Keepers

Because no surveys of rank-and-file PKs are publicly available, in order to test the second hypothesis, a comparative content analysis was conducted of written materials representative of PK and American evangelicalism. PK materials selected for content analysis were chapters from four books with the PK imprimatur (Jansen & Weeden, 1994; Lewis, 1995; McCartney, 1992; Trent, 1996)¹⁴ and articles and editorials from *New Man* magazine. From May of 1994 through April of 1997, *New Man* was the official magazine of PK, and although it dropped its official ties with PK at that point, most of the members of *New Man*'s editorial board either work for PK or regularly speak at PK events. Although issues of *New Man* prior to the September/October 1995 issue were

¹⁴The books contain short chapters written by different authors on a variety of different topics that make them amenable to content analysis. The only exception to this is *The Power of a Promise Kept* (Lewis, 1995) which is a series of short stories. However, because each chapter addresses a different issue (i.e., examples of keeping PK's Seven Promises), they also lend themselves to content analysis.

unavailable, because chapters from PK books dating back to 1992 were analyzed, it is believed that a sample of materials representative of PK was obtained.

The magazine *Christianity Today* (CT) was selected as representative of American evangelicalism. As noted earlier in 1954 Billy Graham helped launch CT in order to offer an evangelical alternative to the two mainline Christian journals, *Christian Century* and *Christianity and Crisis*. Because it seeks to represent American evangelicalism as a whole, CT's articles reflect American evangelicalism's unique blend of conservatism and liberalism. For example, although it regularly editorializes against abortion rights, it recently editorialized against the death penalty. And while conservative commentator Charles Colson is a regular contributor to CT, other contributors and interviewees have included the Rev. Bernice King (daughter of Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr.), former President Jimmy Carter, Nobel Peace Prize winner Desmond Tutu, and Civil Rights hero Rosa Parks. Articles and editorials were selected for coding from issues beginning in January of 1991 through May of 1999.

Only those articles, editorials and book chapters from the PK and CT materials selected for testing were those that addressed the issues of gender roles and racial justice. The tables of contents of the books and magazines were reviewed to initially identify materials for coding. News items were not selected for analysis, but book reviews were if the reviewer's opinion could be readily ascertained. After completing this initial identification, the contents of the books and magazines were skimmed in order to determine whether or not any other articles, editorials or chapters should be included in

the analysis. In the end 172 PK and 146 CT articles, editorials and chapters were selected for coding.

Attitudes toward gender roles and racial justice were measured along a series of items (see Appendix B). In order to measure racial justice attitudes, two basic themes related to racial justice were coded: racial reconciliation and racial equality. The racial reconciliation items sought to measure whether or not (a) reconciliation occurs through interpersonal relationships and (b) interracial gatherings are promoted. The racial equality items sought to measure attitudes toward (a) interracial marriages, (b) the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. and/or the Civil Rights movement, (c) racial injustice, (d) anti-discrimination laws, and (e) affirmative action. Affirmative action attitudes were measured separately from attitudes toward anti-discrimination laws because as Wolfe has noted, while many Americans support the latter, they do not necessarily support the former, at least as it is presently conceived (1998). Three additive scores were constructed in order to obtain measurements on attitudes on racial reconciliation, racial equality and racial justice. Once the coding was complete and the additive scores computed, t-tests were run, comparing the mean averages of PK and CT scores on racial reconciliation, racial equality and racial justice in order to determine whether statistically significant differences exist between the two groups.

Items concerning gender roles identified for coding sought to measure (1) whether or not women should be able to pursue their own careers, including careers as evangelists, preachers and pastors, (2) whether or not husbands should help in the care of the home, (3) parenting roles, (4) marriage roles, (5) whether gender differences are

natural or socially constructed, (6) male expressiveness, and (7) attitudes toward four social issues: abortion, pornography, inclusive language and sexual discrimination. Items (4) and (5) were included in order to capture the instrumentalist and expressive visions of masculinity that Bartkowski found being advanced by PK leaders and operative in PK accountability groups (in press-a; in press-b). Three additive scores were constructed from the responses. One combined the scores of all items. A second combined the scores on all the items except the item measuring pro-life sentiments. A third combined the scores on all items except the items measuring pro-life sentiments and male expressiveness. Once the coding was complete and the additive scores computed, t-tests were run, comparing the mean averages of PK and CT on the various gender role scores in order to determine whether statistically significant differences exist between the two groups.

Items were coded “yes” or “no” only if the attitude was explicitly expressed in the article, editorial or chapter. For example, while some articles seemed to assume that mothers are the ones who stay at home in order to take care of young children, the article was only coded “yes” if it specifically stated for theological reasons that mothers should be the ones who stay home. This approach was utilized in order to avoid measuring cultural practices instead of theological beliefs. A quick review of *Parenting Magazine* reveals that most of its articles assume that mothers are the ones who stay home with their young children. Very few of its articles, however, state that it has to be that way. In other words, by assuming that the majority of parents who stay home with their children are mothers, it is unlikely that *Parenting Magazine* is advocating a particular position on

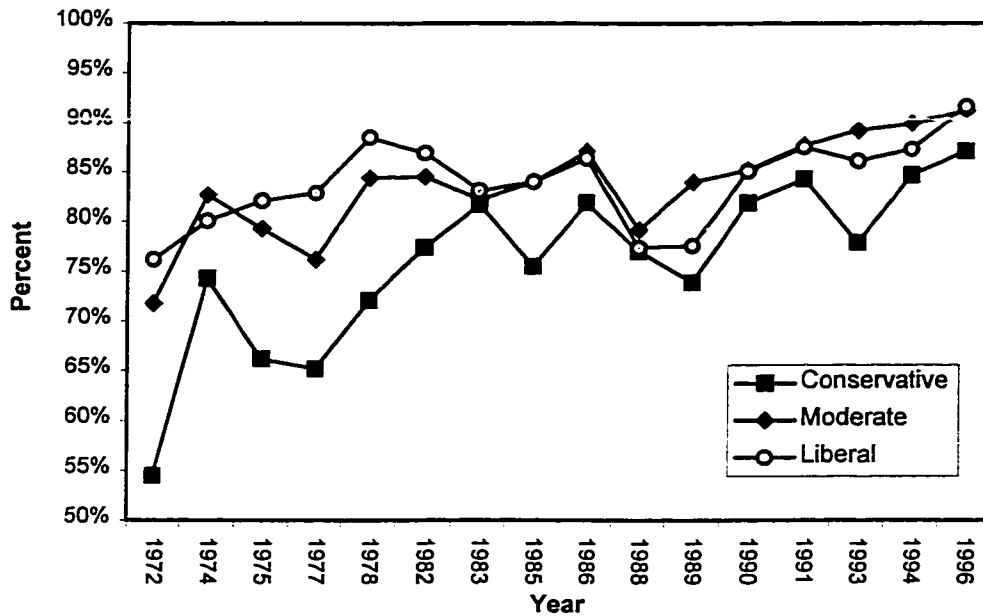
gender roles but is rather simply mirroring predominant cultural practices. It was measuring cultural practices such as this that one hopes were avoided by using this approach.

CHAPTER 5: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

American Evangelicalism and American Society

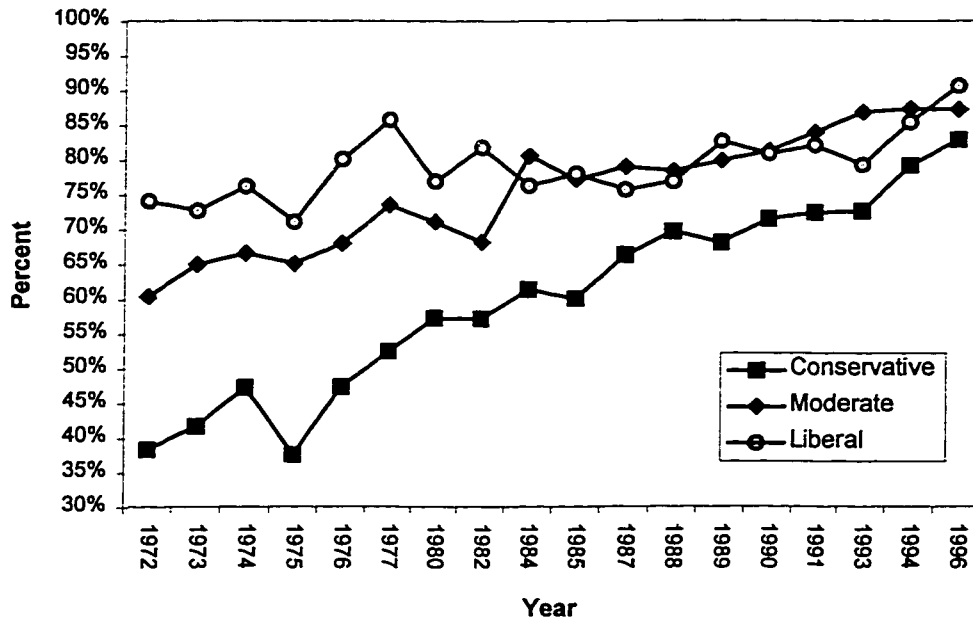
Hypothesis 1 predicted that over time the social attitudes of sectarian religious movements, such as American Evangelicalism, would tend to converge with the social attitudes of the rest of society. Figures 1a through 1e present graphically the trends in attitudes of the three religious groups.

Figure 1a: Vote for Black Presidential Candidate?



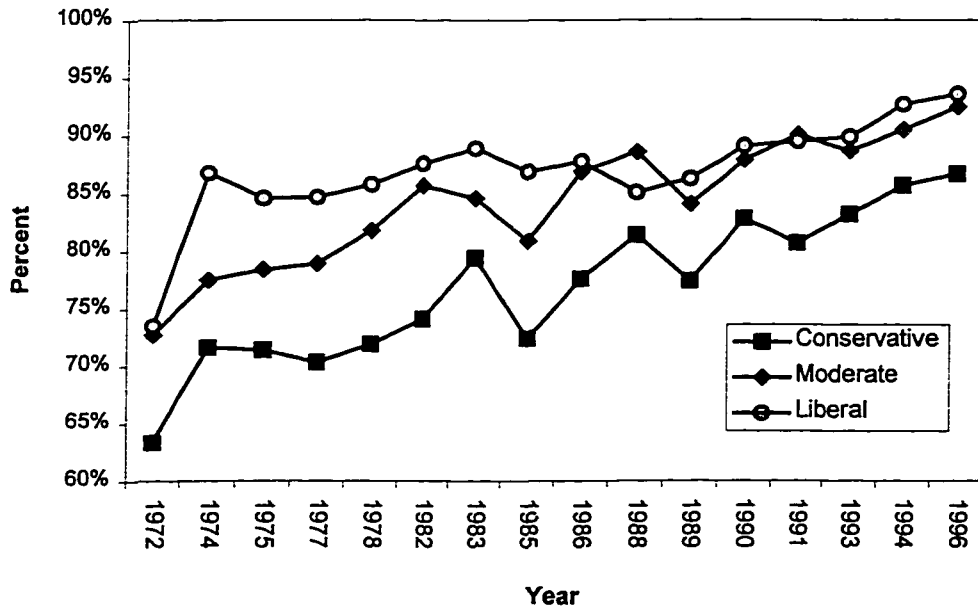
Source: General Social Surveys 1972-1996. Notes: Omitted category for groups is "Unaffiliated."

Figure 1b: Support for Black and White Intermarriage



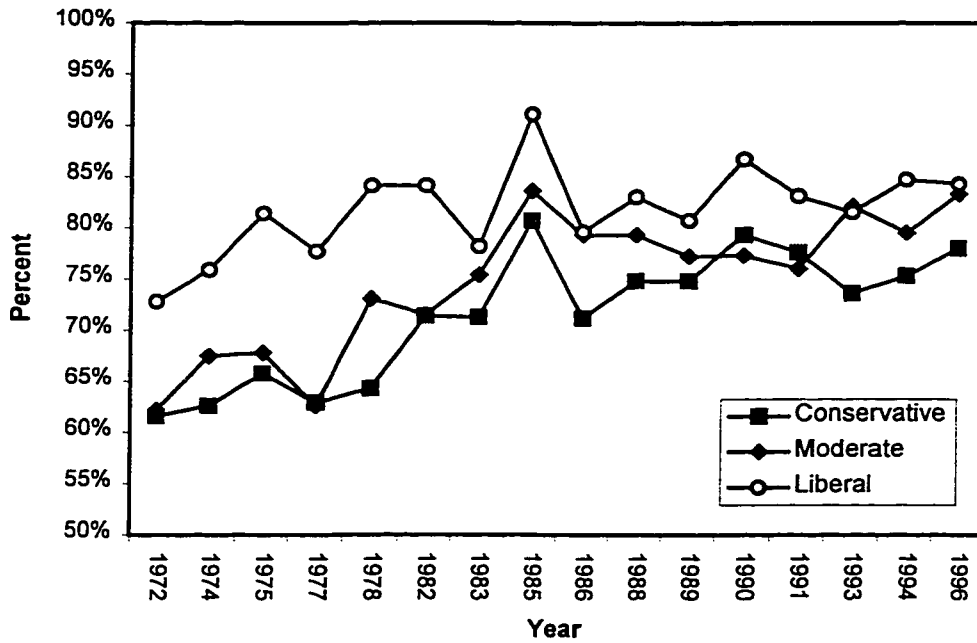
Source: See Table 1a. Notes: Omitted category for groups is "Unaffiliated."

Figure 1c: Vote for Woman Presidential Candidate?



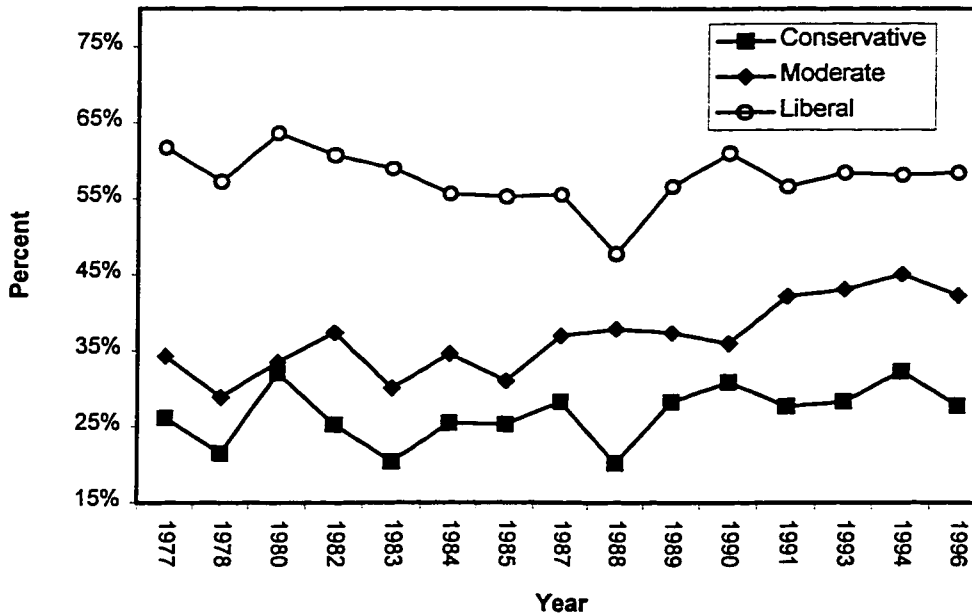
Source: See Table 1a. Notes: Omitted category for groups is "Unaffiliated."

Figure 1d: Support for Married Women Working



Source: See Table 1a. Notes: Omitted category for groups is "Unaffiliated."

Figure 1e: Support for Abortion on Demand



Source: General Social Surveys 1977-1996. Notes: Omitted category for groups is "Unaffiliated."

While it is difficult to draw definitive conclusions from such graphs, they do exhibit certain patterns. While conservative Protestants consistently report the most conservative attitudes on all five measures, their attitudes, except toward abortion on demand, appear to be moving closer to those found among other Americans. Moreover, all three religious groups appear to be becoming more liberal on all of the attitudinal measures except abortion on demand. There could be a ceiling effect at work here, of course. The percentage of religious liberals exhibiting liberal social views cannot grow beyond 100%, and because in 1972 a higher percentage of religious liberals exhibited progressive views than did religious conservatives, religious conservatives have had more room to “grow,” so to speak, in a liberal direction. It needs to be noted that in spite of a potential ceiling effect, convergence is not inevitable. As the attitudes toward abortion on demand illustrate, there is no guarantee that religious conservatives will become more liberal on all social issues. Moreover, whether there is a ceiling effect or not, it still does not change the fact that on four of the five issues the attitudes of religious conservatives appear to have converged with those of other Americans.

Nevertheless, Table 2 tests for any potential ceiling effects. It presents the initial logistic regression estimates for the effect of year on the attitudes toward our five dependent variables for each religious group subsample. Agreeing with the trend lines presented in Figures 1a through 1e, religious conservatives and moderates exhibit, over time, stronger liberal trends on all dependent attitudinal variables, including abortion on demand, than do religious liberals. Religious conservatives register the strongest estimates on the issues of black presidential candidates and interracial marriage between

blacks and the second strongest estimates on the issues of female presidential candidates, women working outside of the home, and abortion on demand. On these latter three issues religious moderates register the strongest estimates. These results indicate that the social attitudes of both religious conservatives and religious moderates have, over time, moved closer to those of religious liberals. They also lend support to the first hypothesis, which predicted that, over time, sectarian religious movements accommodate their social attitudes to those of society.

Table 2: Logistic Regression Estimates for Changes of Attitudes, Over Time, by Issue and Religious Group

	Vote for Black Presidential Candidate	Support Black & White Marriages?	Vote for Female Presidential Candidate	Support Married Women Working?	Support Abortion on Demand
Conservative	.0473***	.0766***	.0457***	.0343***	.0138**
<i>Standard Errors</i>	(.0043)	(.0035)	(.0038)	(.0036)	(.0047)
<i>Subsample N</i>	6,405	7,482	7,114	7,114	7,004
Moderate	.0409***	.0580***	.0529***	.0426***	.0289***
<i>Standard Errors</i>	(.0039)	(.0030)	(.0038)	(.0031)	(.0037)
<i>Subsample N</i>	9,573	11,087	10,081	10,064	9,019
Liberal	.0220***	.0287***	.0431***	.0209***	-.0046
<i>Standard Errors</i>	(.0054)	(.0043)	(.0056)	(.0048)	(.0050)
<i>Subsample N</i>	4,853	5,672	5,175	5,166	4,916
<i>N</i>	20,831	24,241	22,370	22,344	20,939

Source: General Social Surveys 1972-1996.

Notes: Omitted reference category is "Unaffiliated."

** p < .01; *** p < .001

Table 3 presents the logistic regression estimates for the effect of year on the attitudes toward our five dependent variables for religious conservatives, controlling for

age, education, income, gender, region and race. As can be seen, higher education, higher income (except for female presidential candidates) and being black (except approval of married women working) lead to more liberal views, while age and living in the South (except approval of married women working) lead to more conservative views. Females are more likely to support married women working outside of the home but are less likely to approve of interracial marriages between blacks and whites. Finally, the passage of time is positively related to liberal attitudes, except toward abortion on demand.

These findings are significant as the first hypothesis argues that, over time, sectarian religious movements will accommodate their views on social issues to those of the surrounding society *because with the passage of generations they will attract members with higher education and income*. The fact that education and income are positively related to more liberal social attitudes among conservative Protestants is not surprising in and of itself. Given the fact, however, that previous research has shown that the current generation of conservative Protestants is better educated and earns more than the previous generation (Smith, 1998), these results suggest that the rise in the educational and income levels of conservative Protestants could be significant factors in the convergence of conservative Protestants' social attitudes with those of other Americans. Further research in this area is needed, of course, before drawing any definitive conclusions.

Table 3: Logistic Regression Estimates of Changes by Issue for Religious Conservatives

	Vote for Black Presidential Candidate	Support Black & White Marriages?	Vote for Female Presidential Candidate	Support Married Women Working?	Support Abortion on Demand
Constant	.6893*** (.1942)	-.9178*** (.1768)	.9690*** (.1813)	.0196 (.1696)	-2.0300*** (.1807)
Age	-.0174*** (.0019)	-.0288*** (.0018)	-.0246*** (.0018)	-.0175*** (.0017)	-.0063*** (.0018)
Education	.0874*** (.0119)	.1961*** (.0114)	.0738*** (.0109)	.0996*** (.0103)	.0988*** (.0108)
Income (High = 1)	.1618* (.0727)	.2410*** (.0628)	.1282 (.0694)	.3483*** (.0644)	.1525* (.0609)
Sex (Female = 1)	.0001 (.0667)	-.1468* (.0593)	-.0678 (.0624)	.1346* (.0575)	-.0341 (.0578)
Region (South = 1)	-.7335*** (.0682)	-1.0101*** (.0598)	-.2155*** (.0618)	.0545 (.0568)	-.1434* (.0566)
Race (Black = 1)	2.2419*** (.1480)	2.1352*** (.0937)	.5137*** (.0757)	.0276 (.0653)	.3980*** (.0650)
Year	.0361*** (.0047)	.0623*** (.0146)	.0454*** (.0042)	.0279*** (.0038)	.0040 (.0049)
G ²	895.5560***	2282.2590***	606.5970***	533.7760***	219.9790***
N	6,341	7,407	7,037	7,038	6,932

Source: General Social Surveys 1972-1996.

Notes: Numbers in parentheses are standard errors

* p < .05; ** p < .01; *** p < .001

Table 4 presents the results of the complete logistic regression analysis. The results are, on the whole, consistent with previous research. It shows that the control variables significantly affect respondent attitudes toward the various issues. Being black leads to more liberal views on all issues, except for support of married women working where it

Table 4: Logistic Regression Estimates of Intergroup Changes Over Time, by Issue and Religious Group

	Vote for Black Presidential Candidate	Support Black & White Marriages?	Vote for Female Presidential Candidate	Support Married Women Working?	Support Abortion on Demand
Constant	2.0074*** (.2557)	2.9732*** (.2162)	2.3332*** (.1244)	2.1154*** (.2239)	.1061 (.2510)
Age	-.0247*** (.0010)	-.0436*** (.0019)	-.0294*** (.0010)	-.0300*** (.0009)	-.0125*** (.0008)
Sex (Female = 1)	.1016** (.0372)	-.1136*** (.0321)	.0303 (.0366)	.1183*** (.0321)	-.0227 (.0294)
Region (South = 1)	-.6357*** (.0398)	-.9210*** (.0346)	-.3479*** (.0393)	-.0959** (.0352)	-.2859*** (.0326)
Race (Black = 1)	1.9902*** (.1190)	1.6296*** (.0861)	.3135*** (.0596)	-.1830*** (.0497)	.1090* (.0482)
Year	.0545*** (.0158)	.0626*** (.0138)	.0432** (.0142)	.0291* (.0127)	.0243 (.0136)
Religious Groups:					
Conservative	-.1309 (.2604)	-1.0494*** (.2193)	-.2712 (.2464)	-.2482 (.2271)	-.6444* (.2613)
Moderate	.3735 (.2565)	-.2104 (.2153)	.1441 (.2438)	-.2206 (.2239)	-.4640 (.2554)
Liberal	.5547* (.2647)	.3161 (.2224)	.4318 (.2534)	.4563 (.2330)	.8930*** (.2627)
G ²	1724.785***	5153.586***	1658.478***	1705.788***	1596.632***
N	21,328	24,882	22,934	22,908	21,515

Source: General Social Surveys 1972-1996.

Notes: Omitted reference category is "Unaffiliated." Numbers in parentheses are standard errors.

No interaction effects were found between religious conservatives and year, religious moderates and year, and religious liberals and year.

* p < .05; ** p < .01; *** p < .001

leads to more conservative views, while age and living in the South lead to more conservative views. Females are more likely to vote for black presidential candidates and support married women working outside of the home, but they are less likely to approve of interracial marriages between blacks and whites. Surprisingly, being female is not a significant factor in determining whether someone will vote for a female presidential candidate or support abortion on demand. And once again, the passage of time is positively related to the liberal attitudes, except on the issue of abortion on demand.

Interestingly, when controlling for age, gender, region and race, religious classification had little effect on the attitudes studied. Religious conservatives are less likely than other respondents to support interracial marriage between blacks and whites and support abortion on demand, while religious liberals are more likely to vote for black presidential candidates and support abortion on demand. None of the year by religious group interaction terms were significant (interaction terms are not included in Table 4), indicating that changes in attitudes among each religious group over time did not differ from secular trends. What this suggests, given the results presented in Tables 2 and 3, is that factors other than education and income have contributed to the convergence of the social attitudes of religious conservatives with those of other Americans. The passage of time certainly appears to play a significant role as do both age and geographical location. Further study of these and other variables is certainly warranted.

Tables 5 and 6 present the results of the t-tests performed using 1996 GSS data. Table 5 compares the attitudes of respondents belonging to conservative Protestant denominations with those of other respondents, while Table 6 compares the attitudes of

self-identified evangelicals who belong to conservative Protestant denominations with those of other respondents. Table 5 indicates that although Tables 2 and 3 seem to indicate that, over time, religious conservatives have accommodated their social attitudes toward those of other Americans, the differences between religious conservatives and the rest of America remain statistically significant. Of course, with large sample sizes such as are used here, statistically significant differences can be found between mean responses that do not differ substantively from one another. It is clear from looking at Table 5 that the only substantive difference that exists between religious conservatives and other Americans is on the issue of abortion on demand.

Table 5: Tests Comparing Racial and Gender Role Attitudes of Respondents Belonging to Conservative Denominations with Other Groups

Attitudinal Variable	Conservatives			Other Respondents			t
	N	Mean (%)	SD (%)	N	Mean	SD	
Black Presidential Candidate?	286	87.06%	33.62%	701	91.58%	27.78%	2.177*
Black and White Marriages?	599	82.80%	37.77%	1,323	88.89%	31.44%	3.684***
Female Presidential Candidate?	581	86.75%	33.94%	1,374	92.21%	26.81%	3.794***
Married Women Working?	582	78.01%	41.46%	1,370	83.28%	37.32%	2.763**
Abortion on Demand?	597	27.81%	44.84%	1,318	49.54%	50.02%	9.093***

Source: General Social Surveys 1996.

* p < .05; ** p < .01; *** p < .001

Table 6 addresses the question whether the attitudes of American evangelicals, as a subgroup within conservative Protestantism, differ significantly from other Americans. What it indicates is that in (by) 1996 the social attitudes of evangelicals belonging to conservative denominations did not differ significantly from the social attitudes of other Americans on four out of the five social issues examined. The lone exception was

abortion. The fact that evangelicals are more liberal than religious conservatives in general is not surprising since American evangelicalism began as a self-conscious movement that sought to leave behind the separatist tendencies of fundamentalism so that it could engage the world in a sustained way. Given its beginning, it should be expected that the social attitudes of American evangelicals have moved closer to those of other Americans than have American fundamentalists.

Table 6: Tests Comparing Racial and Gender Role Attitudes of Evangelical Respondents Belonging to Conservative Denominations with Other Groups

Attitudinal Variable	American Evangelicals			Other Respondents			t
	N	Mean (%)	SD (%)	N	Mean	SD	
Black Presidential Candidate?	45	95.56%	20.84%	942	90.02%	29.99%	1.224
Black and White Marriages?	82	90.24%	29.85%	1840	86.85%	33.81%	.894
Female Presidential Candidate?	88	85.23%	35.69%	1867	90.84%	28.85%	1.763
Married Women Working?	88	79.55%	40.57%	1864	81.81%	38.58%	.538
Abortion on Demand?	81	13.58%	34.47%	1834	44.06%	49.66%	5.465***

Source: General Social Surveys 1996.

*** p < .001

The fact that the attitudes of religious conservatives in general, and American evangelicals in particular, toward abortion on demand have changed very little should not be interpreted as evidence against this hypothesis. Recall that it is those religious groups that maintain a moderate level of tension between themselves and society that tend to survive and attract numerous followers. Successful religious groups, in other words, tend not to accommodate themselves on every social issue, and it appears as if the issue of

abortion is the “line in the sand” drawn by conservative religious groups to distinguish themselves and their followers from mainstream society.

In summary, the results lend support for the first hypothesis. Table 2 indicated that the passage of time has indeed played a major role in bringing the social attitudes of religious conservatives into line with other groups, while Table 3 suggested that these changes could, in part, be traced to the higher education and income levels of conservative Protestants although further research in this area is needed. Table 4, however, indicates that education and income levels are certainly not the only factors influencing attitudes. Finally, Tables 5 and 6 show that in (by) 1996, while significant differences remained between the social attitudes of religious conservatives and other Americans, when comparing the social attitudes of evangelicals belonging to conservative religious denominations with other Americans, significant differences do not exist on four out of the five issues examined in this essay.

The question that remains is whether the views of PK differ significantly from American evangelicalism. It is to that relationship that this essay now turns. It begins by comparing PK and American Evangelicalism’s views on racial justice. After that it compares the two groups’ views on gender roles.

American Evangelicalism and Promise Keepers: Racial Justice

Table 7 presents the results of t-tests performed on the measures of attitudes toward racial justice obtained from the content analysis of PK books, *New Man* magazine and *Christianity Today* (CT). These results lend support to the second hypothesis, which predicted that the social attitudes of parachurch religious organizations, such as Promise

Keepers, would not significantly differ from the social attitudes of the parachurch religious movements from which they draw their followers. They indicate that no statistically significant differences exist between PK and American evangelicals with regards to racial justice. It is true that racial equality appears to be a more salient concern for American evangelicals than for PK. Of the CT and PK materials selected for coding, a higher percentage of the CT materials (80.70%) than the PK materials (58.33%) addressed issues concerning racial equality. When PK did address these issues, PK scored higher than did CT, although as we have already seen, the difference is statistically insignificant.

Table 7: Tests of Racial Justice Attitudes Between Promise Keepers and Christianity Today

Measurement	Promise Keepers			Christianity Today			t
	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD	
Racial Reconciliation	42	1.33	.48	40	1.27	.45	.568
Racial Equality	28	1.64	.73	46	1.52	.89	.607
Racial Justice	48	2.13	1.10	57	2.12	.95	.011

Table 8 presents the frequencies of the PK and CT materials selected for coding that addressed the various racial justice items for both PK and CT. Of the PK materials the most salient items were interpersonal racial reconciliation and interracial gatherings. This is not terribly surprising given the movement's emphasis on these two issues. This is not to say that PK was silent on racial justice. Several of the selected PK chapters, articles and editorials spoke out against racial injustice, while a few looked favorably upon Martin Luther King, Jr. and/or the Civil Rights movement and laws banning racial

discrimination. Not a single PK chapter, article or editorial, however, addressed the issue of affirmative action, and CT was almost as silent on affirmative action as was PK. Table 8 also indicates that like PK, interpersonal racial reconciliation proved to be a salient item among the CT articles and editorials selected for coding, but the issue it addressed the most frequently was racial injustice.

Table 8: Frequency Comparison of Articles, Editorials and Chapters Selected For Coding that Address Racial Justice

Racial Justice Item	Promise Keepers		Christianity Today	
	Total	%	Total	%
Racial reconciliation through interpersonal relationships?	29	60.42%	32	56.14%
Promotes interracial gatherings?	27	56.25%	19	33.33%
Supports interracial marriages between Blacks and Whites?	4	8.33%	3	5.26%
Evaluation of Martin Luther King, Jr. and Civil Rights Movement	11	22.92%	19	33.33%
Against racial injustice?	20	41.67%	36	63.16%
Supports laws banning racial discrimination?	11	22.92%	14	24.56%
Supports affirmative action?	0	0.00%	4	7.02%
<i>N</i>	48		57	

This analysis thus suggests that PK's attitude toward racial justice does not differ substantially from mainstream American evangelicalism. In fact, its commitment to racial reconciliation probably reflects a belief common in evangelical circles that in order to solve the problem of race, Americans need to go beyond affirmative action. Affirmative action, some evangelicals believe, can only accomplish so much. It can remove legal barriers that stand in the way of bringing people from different races

together, but it does not change people's attitudes. For that, a change of heart needs to occur. The Rev. Bernice King, daughter of the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., puts it this way:

I believe ultimately racism is a spiritual issue, and I think my father understood that. But he also understood that to create some kind of racial harmony we had to first deal with the legal barriers, the things that keep the races apart. Now that the races are together, we have to begin to do some self-examination, some identification, some calling out, some forgiving, some apologizing, some embracing, some crying – all of that, if we're going to deal with it realistically (Stetson, 1997, p. 34).

The phenomenon of addressing social issues at the interpersonal level is not limited to racial justice issues, but is characteristic of American evangelicalism as a whole (Hollinger, 1983). In an extended study of American evangelicalism Christian Smith and his colleagues found that “American evangelicals are resolutely committed to a social-change strategy which maintains that the only truly effective way to change the world is one-individual-at-a-time through the influence of interpersonal relationships” (1998, p. 187). According to Smith, this emphasis on interpersonal influence is both one of American evangelicalism's greatest strengths and one of its greatest weaknesses. On the one hand, it strengthens its internal vitality and subculture identity which, in turn, contribute to its strength as a religious movement. On the other, it prevents evangelicals from seeing how social structures, collective processes and institutional systems constrain and guide individual thought patterns and behaviors. Smith argues that this approach tends to encourage simplistic solutions to complex problems (1998, pp. 188-189).

Against this background, it is not surprising that PK emphasizes interpersonal racial reconciliation more than it does racial equality issues. The question remains: how well is PK doing in its efforts at racial reconciliation? Although PK is indeed a “mostly white”

movement, it is no more white than America in general. Moreover, it is far more integrated than most mainline Christian denominations.

It has already been noted that in 1996 PK established a reconciliation division and announced that its staff would consist of 30% minorities in order to better reflect the ethnic makeup of the United States: 16% African American, 13% Hispanic, and 1% Native American (Diamond, 1998, p. 226). Moreover, at the Stand in the Gap rally at the Washington Mall, approximately 80% of attendees were White, 14% were Black, 2% were Asian, and 5% were Hispanic¹⁵ (Promise Keepers Poll, 1997). Of course, one could argue that the high concentration of blacks living in Washington D. C. could account for the large black presence at the rally. However, Kimmel observed a similar racial composition at the 1996 rally in New York (1997; see also Hackett, 1998), and at the 1998 rally in Los Angeles approximately 30% of the attendees represented minority groups (Ferris, 1998). Furthermore, a 1995 survey of conference attendees conducted by the National Institute of Fathering found that 84% of the attendees were white, and Minkowitz estimated that approximately 25% of the attendees at a 1995 Florida rally were minorities (1995). Thus, the PK racial composition of the “Stand in the Gap” rally is evidently representative of other PK rallies.

Table 9 compares PK’s racial makeup with the United States and a handful of other Christian denominations. As it makes clear, the racial makeup of the PK organization and its gatherings are fairly representative of America’s racial makeup as a whole, and it is far more integrated than most mainline Christian denominations. The apparent

¹⁵Hispanic can be of any race.

exception of the American Baptist Churches USA is somewhat deceiving because it derives its racial diversity primarily from the large number of minority congregations that are a part of the denomination, as opposed to a significant number of racially integrated congregations.

Table 9: Racial Identity of the United States, Promise Keepers and Select Christian Denominations

	Racial/Ethnic Identity		
	White	Black	Other
United States of America	83%	13%	4%
Promise Keepers - 1995 NCF Poll	84%	[- 16% -]	
Promise Keepers - 1997 Washington Post Poll	80%	14%	6%
Promise Keepers - 1998 Organization	70%	16%	14%
American Baptist Churches	54%	42%	4%
Evangelical Lutheran Church of America	98%	1%	1%
Presbyterian Church USA	93%	3%	4%
Reformed Church of America	95%	2%	3%
United Church of Christ	93%	5%	2%
United Methodist Church	90%	4%	6%

Sources: United States (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1997); Promise Keepers (Diamond, 1998; Van Leeuwen, 1997; Washington Post, 1997); Denomination Data from Keith Wulff, Coordinator of Research Services, Presbyterian Church U.S.A., and Kirk Hadaway, Minister for Research and Evaluation, United Church of Christ, to the RRX list service of ECUNET, an ecumenical online Christian network.

In conclusion, the data obtained from a content analysis of selected PK and CT lend support to the second hypothesis: PK and American evangelicals hold very similar attitudes toward racial reconciliation and equality. Moreover, it appears that PK's commitment to racial reconciliation is genuine (insofar as it is consistent and frequently voiced) although critics may disagree with its method of addressing the issue. On this

point critics need to be careful. Just because PK tends to address the problem of racial justice at the interpersonal level and is silent on affirmative action, it is neither indifferent to the racial inequalities that currently exist in the United States nor has it refrained from making substantial and successful efforts at integrating its staff. As Alan Wolfe notes (1998), not everyone committed to racial justice, is equally committed to affirmative action. They agree on the goal, but not the methods. Thus, PK can be criticized for its approach to solving America's racial problems, but it is unfair to label it racist.

American Evangelicalism and Promise Keepers: Gender Roles

Table 10 presents the results of t-tests performed using the measures of attitudes toward gender roles obtained from the content analysis of PK books, *New Man* and CT. As it indicates the results lend mixed support for the second hypothesis. They show that some statistically significant differences do exist between PK and American evangelicals with regards to gender roles. Surprisingly, however, it is PK that tends to emerge from this data as more liberal than American evangelicalism. This counterintuitive finding can be traced primarily to a single item: abortion. In the two other t-tests, which did not include the abortion item, no statistically significant differences emerged. This is because the PK articles and book chapters selected for coding seldom addressed the issue, and when they did, they usually did so only in passing. Abortion was seldom the central issue of a PK article or chapter. By contrast CT was filled with numerous editorials and feature articles that expressed pro-life sentiments.

Table 10: Tests of Gender Roles Attitudes Between Promise Keepers and Christianity Today

Measurement	Promise Keepers			Christianity Today			t
	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD	
Overall Gender Roles Score	139	1.46	1.16	100	.33	1.58	6.446***
Gender Score less Abortion	135	1.56	1.10	60	1.50	1.32	.425
Gender Score less Abortion & Male Expressiveness	134	1.60	1.06	59	1.56	1.28	.297

*** p < .001

Table 11 presents the comparative frequencies of the articles, editorials and book chapters selected for coding on the various gender role items. As it indicates, abortion was by far the most salient item in the CT materials, far more salient than it was in the PK materials. The table also indicates that the issue of women pursuing their own careers was a highly salient item in the PK materials although they were relatively silent on whether or not women should be allowed to preach, become evangelists or be ordained into the Christian ministry. A higher percentage of the CT materials addressed these latter issues. Another salient item found in the PK materials was the issue of parenting. The articles, editorials and chapters that addressed this issue repeatedly emphasized that fathers should take an active role in parenting their children and not leave it up to their spouses. One article went so far as to tell the story of a couple who decided that it would be best for the father to stay at home with their children and let the mother continue pursuing her career. Table 11 also indicates that male expressiveness was a highly salient item in the PK materials but not in the CT materials. And not only did the PK materials address this vision of masculinity frequently, they voiced overwhelming support for it.

Article after article and chapter after chapter repeatedly called upon men to make themselves accountable to other men through the sharing of their deepest hopes and fears.

Table 11: Frequency Comparison of Articles, Editorials and Chapters Selected For Coding that Address Gender Roles

Gender Role Item	Promise Keepers		Christianity Today	
	Total	%	Total	%
OK for women to have their own careers?	42	30.22%	36	36.00%
OK for women to be evangelists, preachers, etc.?	7	5.04%	19	19.00%
OK for women to be head or co-pastors?	5	3.60%	16	16.00%
Husband should help with "women's work"?	9	6.47%	1	1.00%
Mother should stay at home with young children?	6	4.32%	7	7.00%
Parenting is the responsibility of both parents?	47	33.81%	9	9.00%
OK for the Father to stay at home?	4	2.88%	2	2.00%
Is the husband the leader of the family?	24	17.27%	10	10.00%
Marriage is described in terms of partnership?	37	26.62%	1	1.00%
Husband is supposed to be listener?	34	24.46%	11	11.00%
Male/female differences are natural?	9	6.47%	6	6.00%
Male expressiveness encouraged?	34	24.46%	1	1.00%
Pro-life?	8	5.76%	57	57.00%
Against pornography?	14	10.07%	8	8.00%
Uses inclusive language?	0	0.00%	4	4.00%
Openly opposes sexual discrimination?	7	5.04%	11	11.00%
<i>N</i>	139		100	

Finally, Table 11 indicates that in the PK materials three highly salient and interrelated items were whether the husband should be the leader of the family, whether marriages are described as partnerships, and whether husbands should be sensitive listeners rather than

macho overlords. While the PK materials consistently held on to the language of male headship, they went to extraordinary lengths to balance this by insisting that men treat their wives as partners, not property. They call on men to not lord it over their wives, but instead to serve them as Christ served the disciples.

Several conclusions can tentatively be drawn from this data. One is that PK is concerned about male absenteeism in the home. PK appears concerned that men are spending too much time at their jobs than with their wives and children. PK continually reminds men that their families are to take precedence over their vocations. A possible unintended consequence of this is that it could, over time, help the career prospects of women, in particular, married women with children. Researchers often note that married women with children are often unable to spend as much time on the job as their male counterparts, making them less competitive when it comes to career advancement. If PK men take seriously PK's call to spend less time on the job, then this could possibly help the career prospects of other women. Of course, this will only prove to be true if a substantial number of men are actively involved in PK. At the present time, however, there are no solid estimates of how many men actively participate in the movement. Thus, it is impossible to estimate the effects, if any, this aspect of the PK movement may have.

Another conclusion is that PK appears to be trying to retain traditional biblical language about male headship and leadership, while reinterpreting it in ways that support marriage as a partnership between two equals who serve one another. We noted earlier how Bill McCartney, when pressed about his use of the term "male leadership," stated

that by the term he does not mean male domination but servanthood. Just as Christ served the Church, McCartney argued, husbands should serve their wives. Wellington Boone, a frequent speaker at PK events, makes a similar argument in one of his books:

The man plays the major role in bringing revival to the home. Revival came to my family when I took the proper position of Christlikeness in my home – not just in serving, but in every area – because in Him is life. You absolutely will bring a revival to your home if you love and out-serve your wife. It's a game. Get competitive in serving her more than she serves you! You've got to "beat your wife" in doing every task. That takes a little effort, but it will be worth it. You old lazy thing, get off your behind and do some things around the house (Boone, 1997, p. 10)!

No doubt, some critics will ask why PK and other evangelicals do not simply discard such outmoded language rather than try to reinterpret it. This, however, is easier said than done. While non-evangelical Christians usually have no difficulty discarding biblical language they find inconvenient, it is not so easy for evangelicals to do so because of the high regard they hold for the Bible. For evangelicals, the Bible is nothing less than a revelation from God, so discarding a biblical term such as male headship is not like tossing out the garbage. Instead, it is far easier for evangelicals to hold on to such language but reinterpret it in the context of late twentieth-century America. By challenging the interpretation of God's revelation rather than God's revelation itself, they are able to preserve not only the integrity of God's revelation, but of God.

Finally, PK's virtual avoidance of the abortion issue seems to indicate that it is bending over backwards to remain apolitical. If PK truly does constitute the third wave of the religious right, then it would not be so reticent about abortion. As we saw earlier, abortion is one issue about which evangelicals refuse to accommodate, and virtually all evangelical leaders associated with the Christian Right address abortion regularly and

unambiguously. Thus, PK's silence on the issue speaks volumes. It appears that PK is doing its best to avoid this political hot potato. Such political silence could also explain why, as we saw earlier, PK emphasizes racial reconciliation more than it does racial equality.

To summarize, the data provide mixed support for the second hypothesis, which predicted that the social attitudes of Promise Keepers would not significantly differ from those of American Evangelicalism. PK's attitudes toward gender roles do differ significantly from those of American evangelicals, but the principal difference concerns abortion and PK's virtual silence on it. When the abortion issue is dropped from the analysis, then the statistically significant differences disappear. This leads to the tentative conclusion that PK is an apolitical religious movement, seeking to bring about a religious revival among men. It is also concerned that men spend too much time at their jobs and not with their wives and children, and although it clings to the language of male headship, it does so while balancing it with calls on men to treat their wives, not as property, but as equal partners in their marriage and in their roles as parents.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

The literature on the Promise Keepers movement is growing. Several papers on PK were presented at the American Sociological Association (ASA) and the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion (SSSR) meetings in 1998 and more are scheduled for 1999 meetings. The journal, *Sociology of Religion*, plans to devote an upcoming issue to various analyses of the group, and at least three books on PK are scheduled for release in 1999. As we have seen in this analysis, most of the literature to date on PK has been highly critical of the movement. Most of the criticism has come from the left, but PK has its share of critics on the right as well.

Drawing upon rational choice and network exchange theories, this essay predicted that the social attitudes of parachurch organizations such as PK would not differ substantially from the religious movements from which they draw their members. While by itself, this prediction was certainly not earth shattering, when combined with this essay's first hypothesis, which predicted that, over time, the social attitudes of sectarian religious movements such as American evangelicalism will come to resemble those of the surrounding culture, it does yield some interesting conclusions.

It was found that in 1996 the social attitudes of American evangelicals generally do not differ significantly from those of other Americans. The lone exception was the issue of abortion. American evangelicals remain unapologetically pro-life, and if their attitudes toward abortion parallel at all those of religious conservatives in general, they have not significantly changed for the last thirty years. Abortion is also the issue that divided American evangelicals from PK. When the measure of attitudes toward abortion

was not included in the comparative analysis of PK and American evangelicalism, we found that the attitudes in PK materials do not differ significantly from American evangelicalism. The attitudes of PK and American evangelicals toward issues such as racial justice and gender roles do not differ significantly from one another. However, when the attitudes toward abortion were included in the calculations, PK emerged as the more liberal, or at least the most consciously apolitical, of the two.

This analysis suggests several directions that are worthy of further study. First, because PK social attitudes do not appear to differ substantially from those of American evangelicals, it is likely that they do not differ substantially from America society in general. Although some of the movement's critics seek to paint it as substantially different than America as a whole, that appears to simply not be the case. Also, the extent to which what PK leaders, speakers and writers advocate takes hold among rank-and-file Promise Keepers could yield interesting results. Bartkowski and Lundskow have already made substantial inroads in this area, but further analysis is warranted.

PK's commitment to racial reconciliation appears to be genuine. While it tends to emphasize interpersonal strategies over structural ones for addressing this issue, the fact that the PK organization is far more integrated than many mainline Christian denominations and the United States as a whole, should put to rest any notions that PK is racist at its core. What should be of interest to researchers in the future is the impact that PK's racial reconciliation emphasis will have on the evangelical community over the next few years. PK also seems to be struggling to find ways to hold onto traditional biblical language concerning male headship while reinterpreting it in ways that are egalitarian in

nature. Given American evangelicals understanding of the Bible as nothing less than God's Word, this is no simple task, and how PK negotiates this struggle could prove interesting.

Finally, PK's relative silence on abortion seems to indicate that PK is trying very hard not to be a political movement. If PK truly is a third wave of the religious right, then it is going about its task in a very odd way. As we have seen, abortion is one issue on which evangelicals are very outspoken, and the fact that PK is virtually silent on the issue suggests that the Promise Keepers movement is what it claims to be: a religious movement, seeking to bring about a religious revival among men.

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APPENDIX A: IDENTIFYING EVANGELICALS AND OTHER RELIGIOUS GROUPS

Social scientists do not agree on how to best identify evangelicals and other religious groups (Smith, C., 1998; Smith, T., 1990). Some argue that they should be identified objectively through either denominational affiliation or theological beliefs, but these approaches have their limitations. For example, while researchers can divide denominations along Roman Catholic, mainline, Pentecostal, Black, and conservative Protestant lines, they cannot as easily distinguish evangelicals from fundamentalists because both groups can be found in most conservative Protestant denominations (Smith, 1998; Woodberry & Smith, 1998). Another drawback to the denominational approach is that a lot of people do not know to which denomination they belong. For example, they may know they attend a Baptist church, but they may not know whether it is an American Baptist, Conservative Baptist, Southern Baptist, or some other brand of Baptist church (Woodberry & Smith, 1998). Finally, the denominational approach ignores that considerable theological diversity exists within most mainline Christian denominations. For example, while some United Methodist churches exhibit low-tension characteristics, others exhibit high-tension ones. This diversity helps explain much of the infighting that occurs in mainline denominations even today. Having noted these objections, however, it must be said that the presence of theological diversity within a denomination is, in fact, a sign that the denomination has, at least to a certain extent, begun to accommodate itself to secular society. Moreover, theological diversity is rare, if non-existent, in the more sectarian denominations. Thus, denominational affiliation can still be used as a research tool if researchers use survey techniques that will help them more accurately identify the denominational affiliation of their respondents.

Researchers critical of objective approaches that classify respondents into various groups based upon the answers they give to questions about theological beliefs (e.g., Davis & Robinson, 1996) note that the questions found on most surveys are generally not useful in distinguishing evangelicals from other groups. For example, most surveys ask respondents questions about their views of the Bible, but these questions are generally too limited to measure any significant differences. Typically, they ask whether or not the Bible is without error and whether it should be interpreted literally, but there are major differences between what people mean by the terms “literal” and “without error” (Woodberry & Smith, 1998), and often these differences cut along evangelical and fundamentalist lines. Because of the limitations with single questions such as this, researchers have begun to measure the theological orientation of respondents by creating a theological index out of a series of religious belief questions. Not only is this approach more accurate, it also allows researchers to use sophisticated statistical techniques that would otherwise be unavailable. Unfortunately, many surveys do not ask a series of questions that are useful in distinguishing people of faith from one another (Woodberry & Smith, 1998).

Because of the drawbacks to the objective approach of identifying different religious groups, other researchers argue a subjective approach that simply asks people what they are: fundamentalist, evangelical, mainline, liberal, and so on. Proponents of this approach argue that it more accurately predicts people's attitudes and behavior better than denominational affiliation or theological beliefs (Smith, 1998). There are some problems with this approach as well, however. First, people can be part of a religious movement

without knowing it. This is very similar to people who do not know to what denomination they belong. Another is that some people identify with more than one movement. For example, some may consider themselves to be both mainline and evangelical. This is probably quite common among evangelical-minded individuals who attend mainline churches. Also, terms such as mainline, evangelical, fundamentalist, and so on mean different things to different people. For example, members of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America, a mainline Protestant denomination, may consider themselves to be evangelical although they may hold views more commensurate with liberal Christianity. Finally, regional differences probably play a part in how people identify themselves. The term “fundamentalist,” for example, may elicit more negative connotations in some parts of the country than in others. Thus, in those regions where the term is seen more negatively, people may be more inclined to identify themselves as evangelicals than they would be if they lived in a region where fundamentalism is seen positively.

APPENDIX B: CONTENT ANALYSIS CODING SHEETS

Promise Keepers and Racial Equality Coding Sheet (Final)

Title of Article/Chapter: _____

Number: _____

Author: _____

Date: _____

Source:¹ CT WMM 7PPK PPK GTD NM

	Yes	No	NA	Pages	Score
1. Racial Reconciliation					
a. Racial reconciliation occurs through interpersonal relationships?	Yes	No	NA	_____	_____
b. Promotes interracial worship services and other gatherings?	Yes	No	NA	_____	_____
2. Racial Equality					
a. Mixed-race couples accepted?	Yes	No	NA	_____	_____
b. Positive evaluation of Martin Luther King, Jr., 1960s Civil Rights movement?	Yes	No	NA	_____	_____
c. Against racial injustice?	Yes	No	NA	_____	_____
d. Advocates passage of laws banning discrimination?	Yes	No	NA	_____	_____
e. Supports Affirmative Action?	Yes	No	NA	_____	_____
3. Total Score					_____

¹ CT = Christianity Today; WMM = What Makes a Man?; 7PPK = Seven Promises of a Promise Keeper; PPK = Power of a Promise Kept; GTD = Go the Distance; NM = New Man Magazine.

Promise Keepers and Gender Roles Coding Sheet (Final)

Title of Article/Chapter: _____ Number: _____

Author: _____ Date: _____

Source:¹ CT WMM 7PPK PPK GTD NM

			Pages	Score
1. Career/Education:				
a. OK for married women to pursue careers of their own?	Yes	No	NA	_____
b. OK for women to be evangelists, preachers, etc.?	Yes	No	NA	_____
c. OK for women to be head or co-pastors?	Yes	No	NA	_____
2. Husbands should help with tasks around the home traditionally reserved for women?¹⁶	Yes	No	NA	_____
3. Parenting:				
a. Mother should stay at home?	Yes	No	NA	_____
b. Responsibility of Both Mother and Father?	Yes	No	NA	_____
c. OK for either Mother or Father to be stay-at-home parent?	Yes	No	NA	_____
4. Marriage:				
a. Is the man/husband to be the head/leader of the family?	Yes	No	NA	_____
b. Marriage is described in terms of mutual submission, partnership, equality of leadership, servanthood, etc.	Yes	No	NA	_____
c. Husband is supposed to be sensitive, a listener, etc., instead of	Yes	No	NA	_____
d. domineering, authoritative, aggressive, macho, etc.				_____
5. Male/Female Differences are natural?	Yes	No	NA	_____
6. Male expressiveness¹⁷ encouraged (soft feminism)?	Yes	No	NA	_____
7. Social Issues				
a. Pro-life?	Yes	No	NA	_____
b. Against pornography?	Yes	No	NA	_____
c. Supports inclusive language?	Yes	No	NA	_____
d. Against sexual discrimination? ¹⁸	Yes	No	NA	_____
8. Total Score				_____

¹ CT = Christianity Today; WMM = What Makes a Man?; 7PPK = Seven Promises of a Promise Keeper; PPK = Power of a Promise Kept; GTD = Go the Distance; NM = New Man Magazine.

¹⁶ e.g., cooking, cleaning the house, etc.

¹⁷ e.g., OK for a man to cry in front of other men, seek psychological counseling, express his feelings to other men, etc.

¹⁸ e.g., sexism, economic injustice, job discrimination, etc.