

American Foreign Policy & The Muslim World

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Chapter Two

The Rise of Christian Evangelicalism in American Politics: Its Genesis and Process

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Introduction

The modern American history starts with the opening of the American continent to the Europeans. It begins with the discovery of America by Columbus in 1492, the year Islamic Spain fell. America, popularly known as the “New World” became an attractive permanent settlement destination for many European migrants. The European migrants did not arrive in the “New World” in a demographic vacuum. Actually what was a “New World” to the migrants had been home to hundreds of tribes of “Native Americans” for millennia, who were mistakenly called “Indians” by Columbus.¹ There were a host of factors that motivated many in Europe to settle in America.²

Religious Strife

These were very turbulent times in Europe. People were concerned about salvation, being saved in the eternal life. “Catholic doctrine taught that a person could be saved by faith in God and by his or her own good works by leading a virtuous life, observing the sacraments (such as baptism, the Mass, and penance), making pilgrimages to holy places, and praying to Christ and the saints.”³ The Church officials also sold indulgences. The believers who were afraid of punishment in the life hereafter could buy indulgences. “...the purchase of an indulgence promised to shorten that punishment by supposedly drawing on a ‘treasury of merit’ amassed by the good works of Christ and the saints.”⁴ The emphasis of the Catholic Church on rituals and good works combined with its ability to sell indulgences gave it enormous power in society, which was abused and exploited by the Church officials. This caused disenchantment with the Catholic Church resulting in protests leading to the Reformation Movement. Martin Luther (1483-1546), a German priest, and John Calvin (1509-1564), a French lawyer-turned-theologian were the main intellectual architects of the Reformation ideas of the time.

The first division in Christianity occurred in 1054 when it was split between the Eastern Church led by the Byzantine emperor and the Roman Catholic Church, led by the Pope.⁵ After that the Roman Catholic Church maintained the unity of Christianity under its banner in Western Europe. In the 16th century the Protestant Reformation created serious division in Western European Christianity too. Western Europe was now split on theological grounds.



The competition for the loyalties of the believers and converts led to persecution and censorship. “*The Index of Prohibited Books* became an institutional part of the church’s life.”⁶ The struggle for political power led to wars in the 16th century in which Catholics and Protestants slaughtered each other. These killings and the persecution of Protestants led to their mass migration from Europe to America.⁷

Some Major Religious Characteristics of Early American Society

Due to this massive inflow of Protestants into America the early modern white American society came to have the following major characteristics:

1. An absolute Protestant majority.
2. The prevalence of conservative Protestantism.
3. An emphasis on self-discipline and hard work, both of which were regarded as virtues.

The prevalence of conservative Protestantism meant that the idea of the personal salvation of the individual through his efforts fully dominated the thoughts and actions of the members of the society. Under this paradigm “...it was believed that good intentions and an abundance of zeal would with God’s help be adequate to handle the difficult problems.”⁸

Progress, Prosperity and Problems

America’s independence from British rule in 1776 unleashed the New World’s vast potential and abundant opportunities for growth and industrialization. In the 1st century after independence this potential was exploited to a great extent. In the realization of this potential the use of science and technology played an important role which resulted in industrialization, urbanization, rapid economic progress and increasing prosperity. However, by the end of the 19th century it had become quite obvious that from the point of view of its social implications, rapid growth and industrialization had turned out to be a mixed blessing for the American people. On the one hand, it brought jobs: wealth and prosperity; on the other, it caused serious socioeconomic problems: increasing income inequalities, crowded cities, inadequate housing, rising crime rates, etc.

Reason versus Tradition

Soon the above problems occupied society’s centre stage. The dominance of science and technology also led to the increasing use of reason in the society as against the blind following of tradition. The forces of reason were pushing



new ideas like social reform whose social and philosophical implications posed some serious challenges to conservative Protestantism which had all this while advocated the individual's pursuit of his salvation as the panacea for all the problems. Darwinism had not only gained acceptance but was included in the curriculum by the education system at various levels.⁹

The new theology, which adopted the approach of reform on the basis of reason came to be known as Social Gospel. The doctrine of the Social Gospel recognized the gravity of the reality and advocated that the solution of social problems was not in "revival" (the individual's efforts for his own salvation) but in the improvement of the social reality and structural conditions that were the actual cause of these problems. Hence the adherents of the Social Gospel advocated social reform which they justified on the basis of the Bible.

A Split in American Protestantism: The Birth of Contemporary Christian Fundamentalism

As the popularity of the Social Gospel increased with time, the conservatives, who had no intellectual response to this rational interpretation, responded by hardening their position. Their rigidity grew with time, ultimately leading to a split in American Protestantism. The indefensible conservative position led to a change of heart in believers. There was a mass exodus from conservative churches to the New Gospel doctrine. "By the 1910s, the majority of Protestant ministers and theologians had abandoned the conservative positions as indefensible."¹⁰

Although the Social Gospel was becoming increasingly popular and conservative churches were experiencing a decline in membership, the fundamentalists were not willing to recognize their weakness. They were determined to fight back. It was under their pressure that a number of states passed the anti-evolution laws,¹¹ Tennessee being one of them. The law made it illegal for any public school teacher "to teach any theory that denies the story of the divine creation of man as taught in the Bible."¹² The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) considered this law to be a repressive measure and "...offered free counsel to any Tennessee educator willing to defy the law and become defendant in a test case."¹³ In 1925 a biology teacher named John T. Scopes committed the violation. He was arrested and tried in court.¹⁴

Although the fundamentalists won the case on the grounds that the teacher had violated the law, they lost the big debate of fundamentalism versus rationalism. After this showdown the fundamentalists changed their strategy. They had realized that their advocacy of orthodoxy lacked intellectual substance. Thus



they withdrew from the public scene and focused on education and research. They aggressively launched a movement to establish their own private schools. They also started emphasizing and promoting a culture of wide reading and knowledge-seeking in the fundamentalist community at large.

The Post-Second World War Rise of Christian Fundamentalism

After their withdrawal from the public scene the fundamentalists remained busy on the educational and organizational fronts of their movement until the end of the Second World War. This was also a period of soul searching, strategic thinking and organizational work. After the Scopes trial, new recruitment and organizational work had acquired central importance for the fundamentalists. This was due to the fact that the poor intellectual substance presented by the movement in the Scopes trial had created the danger that the younger generation would not be attracted to fundamentalism. Hence ways and means had to be found to take the message directly to the masses without confronting liberalism and rationalism.

Utilizing the freedom of expression and freedom of religion guaranteed under the secular but democratic constitution of the United States, the conservative leaders established their own radio/TV networks for religious programs. Millions of conservative and fundamentalist Protestants became regular audiences, members, and eventually donors of these programs. Some of the prominent tele-preachers were Jerry Falwell, Billy Graham, Oral Roberts, Pat Robertson and Jimmy Swaggart.

A study in 1984 by Gallup and the Annenberg School of Communications placed the regular audience for religious broadcasts at about 13.3 million.¹⁵ According to a 1978-1979 *Christianity Today* Gallup survey quoted by George Marsden, between 40 and 50 million Americans were classified as Evangelicals.¹⁶ By 1980 the annual circulation of Billy Graham's newspaper *Decision* had exceeded 24 million.¹⁷

This huge following brought weight and prestige to the fundamentalist TV preachers and Billy Graham obtained his first meeting with a US President during Truman's presidency in 1950.¹⁸ After this first meeting he was frequently invited to the White House by successive Presidents: Eisenhower, Johnson and Nixon. However, until the 1960s, fundamentalists adhered to a policy of political non-involvement.¹⁹



Supreme Court Decisions Awaken the Sleeping Giant

Although the fundamentalists had been committed to a policy of non-involvement in politics, the events of the 1960s and 1970s made many of them change their minds. The social tensions and the outcomes of legal battles shook the Evangelists and fundamentalists and their leaders felt obliged to enter the political arena. Among the developments:

1. *The Desegregation Decision:* In 1954, the US Supreme court had ruled against racially segregated schools, requiring public schools to open their doors to racial minorities. In response to this, many fundamentalist communities and churches established their own “Christian academies” where, ostensibly, “...children of believers could be educated in ‘creationist’ science and traditional values.”²⁰ These academies also fulfilled the hidden agenda of segregation, as only white children were accepted. These academies enjoyed tax exempt status. Then, in 1964, Congress passed the Civil Rights Act. This Act declared racial segregation illegal and demanded integration instead. The academies which wanted tax exempt status had to meet the Civil Rights Act’s requirements.
2. *The Supreme Court Decision on School Prayer:* In 1962, a Supreme Court decision ended the school sponsored prayer and devotional Bible reading on the ground that it violated the constitutional separation of Church and State. This angered the fundamentalists.²¹
3. *The Abortion Decision:*²² In 1973, in *Roe v Wade*, the Supreme Court granted women the right to obtain abortions.
4. *The Stormy Sixties and Seventies:* The 1960s and 1970s witnessed the Vietnam War, violent social disorder, drug culture, the sexual revolution and Watergate, all of which shocked the country. “During the 1970s, divorce rate increased 67 percent. Families headed by unwed mothers rose 356 percent. By the end of the decade, 21 percent of families with children under eighteen were headed by single parents.”²³ This situation disturbed the Evangelicals who felt that there was something wrong in society that needed to be corrected through social activism to influence the political system which had allowed this situation to occur.

These developments alarmed the fundamentalists and they concluded that liberalism itself was the major cause of all these problems, and that the situation would improve only if traditional moral values could be restored. Since liberalism was being advocated and implemented by the state through its various organs and institutions, the state had to be tamed through political power. The Supreme Court was an obvious case in point. It was the liberal judges who were interpreting



the constitution and the law in a liberal way. If the judges were conservative, this would not happen. But the judges were nominated by the President and confirmed by Congress. So if the judiciary were to consist of conservative judges, the pre-condition was that both the executive and legislative branches should also be sensitive to, and respectful of the fundamentalist concerns. The only way to ensure this was to enter the political arena, set the agenda, mobilize the forces in the democratic system and get the right leaders elected to the White House and Congress to do the job.

The Power Base of Christian Fundamentalism

At this point the question naturally arises: What is the power base of American Christian fundamentalism? The term power base includes:

1. The philosophy or set of beliefs.
2. The kind of people who adhere to it.

The power base of American fundamentalism is a group of Protestants called “Evangelicals.” Evangelicalism is a phenomenon unique to Protestantism. However, it may be noted that:

1. All Evangelicals are Protestants, but not every Protestant is an Evangelical.
2. An Evangelical can belong to any Protestant denomination or mainline church.
3. In its broad sense, Evangelicalism calls for a simple conceptual unity. According to Marsden, Protestants belonging to any denomination will be evangelical if they emphasize the following doctrines:²⁴
 - a. The Reformation doctrine of the final authority of the Scripture.
 - b. The real, historical character of God’s saving work recorded in the Scripture.
 - c. Eternal salvation only through personal trust in Christ.
 - d. The importance of evangelicalism and missions.
 - e. The importance of ‘self’ through a spiritually transformed life (i.e., conversion or ‘having been born again’).

The Evangelicals take the importance of “self” as emphasized in Protestantism to an extreme and the “self” is given a new meaning in terms of the doctrine of a spiritually transformed life.

With few exceptions religious conservatives believe in conversion, the act of faith and forgiveness through which sinners are brought from

sin into a state of everlasting salvation. And with few exceptions, they have experienced conversion themselves, having been born again in dramatic, life changing moments of transformation. Thus conversion (the experience of being born again) lies at the core of their character. It is this experience which transforms their character and personalities and changes their lives. Moreover, it serves as a starting point for constructing a sense not only of autonomy and identity, but also of social order and practical purpose.²⁵

It is in this sense that Robert Zwier views the activism of the Christian Right as “born again politics.”²⁶

The phenomenon of conversion, generally known as being “born again,” is at the core of evangelicalism. Describing this concept in simple terms, William Martin says, “...to those who use it, the term ‘born again’ refers to the point in their lives at which they began seriously to consider themselves Christians.”²⁷ The American Evangelicals are “...one fourth of the total population of the United States and about two-fifths of all Protestants.”²⁸ They do not have a formally structured nationally and/or globally centralized hierarchical organization (unlike the Roman Catholic Church). They have a host of umbrella organizations that network with evangelical churches spread across the United States, and even around the world.

The 1976 Presidential Election: The Evangelical Voters and a “Born again” Candidate

The 1976 presidential election took place against the backdrop of the Watergate scandal. The incumbent Republican President Ford was challenged by Democratic candidate Jimmy Carter, a former governor of Georgia. The Carter campaign’s basic theme was anti-Washington. His slogan was that he was an outsider and he would clean up the Washington mess. Carter had also declared that he was a born again Christian. Given the post-Watergate mood of the nation and Carter’s proclamation that he was a “born again Christian,” Billy Graham understood the need of the moment and told his television audience that America was experiencing, “...a deeper national yearning, a turning toward spirituality, a yearning for morality. Americans want more than anything else in their president this year, the spiritual qualities.”²⁹ For Falwell’s evangelical audience, being “born again” was the precondition to spirituality and Carter was a declared born again. So great was the enthusiasm for Carter among evangelicals that in a keynote address to fifteen thousand pastors and laypersons of the Southern Baptist Convention, the organization’s popular future president, Bailey Smith, proclaimed that this country needs “a born-again man in the White



House... and his initials are the same as our Lord's."³⁰ Carter also received a strong endorsement from Pat Robertson, the most popular TV preacher.³¹

Finally, in November 1976 Carter won, defeating Ford by a margin of only two popular vote percentage points. In this election, Carter outpolled Ford among white Baptists by 56% to 43%. Evangelicals gave him his margin of victory not only in the South (where he was also helped by regional pride), but also in such key northern states as Pennsylvania and Ohio with large rural populations that usually voted Republican.

During his election campaign Carter had promised that, "...if he were elected, he would appoint qualified Evangelical Christians to positions in the federal government."³² After winning, the Carter administration not only did not keep this promise, but did not even pursue priority evangelical agenda on issues like abortion, school prayer, etc.

The Moral Majority (MM) in a Liberal Democracy: God's Army to Subjugate Caesar

As the 1980 presidential election approached, the Republican strategists believed that within the family values kit, the abortion issue was the one that could unite fundamentalists across the denominational and faith lines; that is, the evangelicals, other fundamentalist Protestants, fundamentalist Jews and the Catholics. The Catholics, who had traditionally voted for the Democrats, could now especially be pulled into the Republican Party due to an aggressive anti-abortion platform. Thus in May 1979, the conservative strategists of the Republican Party met Jerry Falwell in his hometown of Lynchburg, Virginia to share the plan with him and ask him to motivate, organize and mobilize the evangelicals politically in support of the new radical agenda of the Republican Party. Falwell agreed, and in June 1979 he announced the establishment of a movement-cum-organization by the name of the MM. He was to lead it. Falwell listed the goals of the MM as follows:³³

...to exert a significant influence on the spiritual and moral direction of our nation by: (a) mobilizing the grassroots of moral Americans in one clear and effective voice; (b) informing the moral majority what is going on behind their backs in Washington and in state legislatures across the country; (c) lobbying intensively in Congress to defeat left-wing, social-welfare bills that will further erode our precious freedom, (d) pushing for positive legislation such as that to establish a Family Protection Agency, which will ensure a strong enduring America; and (e) helping the moral majority in local communities to fight pornography, homosexuality, the advocacy of immorality in school text books and other issues facing each and everyone of us.

After the establishment of the MM, during the remaining period until the presidential election of 1980, Falwell was constantly on the move and traveled more than 300,000 miles addressing rallies and mobilizing pastors to energize the congregations. He urged each community to establish local chapters of the MM and use their churches for voter registration. These local chapters were fed with information on abortion and other issues of concern to them. Falwell's policy was that since the MM was a political organization, and not a religious one, its doors were open to all; whether Jews, Roman Catholics, Protestants or Mormons, and even non-religious people who shared its views on family, society, and the country, for example anti-abortion, strong national defense and support for Israel.

Since religiously devoted fundamentalists were committed to their church, there was an urgent need to ensure the active involvement of their pastors in politics. Once the pastors were activated and got involved, then their church members would automatically follow. Thus Falwell mobilized the pastors around the nation.

In the 1980 elections, the Republicans nominated Ronald Reagan while the Democratic candidate was the incumbent President Carter. In the July 1980 Republican convention the party nominated Ronald Reagan and the fundamentalist agenda dominated the party's platform. Reagan defeated Carter. It was a major victory for the Christian fundamentalists.

The Reagan Presidency was the first ever experience in politicking for the fundamentalists. On their domestic agenda (school prayer, homosexuals and abortion), they were not able to change the status quo despite having contributed to Reagan's victory. In fact, Reagan annoyed the fundamentalists by appointing Justice Sandra Day O'Connor of Arizona to the US Supreme Court, as she was a strong supporter of Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) and was also pro-choice.³⁴ However, Reagan under fundamentalist pressure, became "...the first incumbent president to endorse a school prayer amendment."³⁵ Overall, the fundamentalists were happy with Reagan when he took a number of bold stands on foreign policy issues,³⁶ such as the following:

1. He opposed communism, and declared the Soviet Union to be an "evil empire."
2. Instead of going for detente he supported the Afghan resistance against the Soviet invasion of the country.
3. He increased the defense spending for Strategic Defence Initiative (SDI).
4. He reduced taxes, which meant less money for the welfare state, and hence less for public schools.
5. In October 1982, his administration sent US forces to invade the tiny Caribbean island of Grenada to topple a left inclined government there.



The entire 12-year period of the Reagan-Bush Presidencies (1980-1992) was a period of learning for the fundamentalists. They realized that merely getting a president elected to the White House was not enough. It was equally important to understand how Congress worked, because at the end of the day the members of Congress voted on bills, and if a bill failed to get the required majority of votes, then it was of no use. They learned that the members of Congress did not vote on the basis of “right” and “wrong.” Instead, their criteria were very narrow. Their sole concern was about winning the next election. Thus they would vote in a way that the largest part of the active voters were happy with them, even if that meant voting for something which was morally wrong. William Martin quotes a fundamentalist, Connie Marshier, who finally understood the voting criteria in the American Congress under the highly acclaimed American democracy. She said:

They did not realize the degree of depravity of most politicians, [who make] decisions on how they are going to vote based on “Who can put the most pressure on me? Who can cause me the most difficulty in my re-election campaign?” rather than “What do I think is right?” Leading somebody to salvation is very different from leading them to vote your way. You don’t lead them; you force them.³⁷

In 1992, Clinton, a liberal, was elected president because at the time of the election, the economy was in bad shape due to the recession. Although President Bush was riding high in popularity polls in 1991 after defeating Saddam Hussein, recession had set in by the time of the election, and people wanted change, so Clinton won the White House as he had made the economy an issue.

Although Clinton was liberal, his liberalism was duly checked by the fundamentalists’ right at the beginning of his first term. Within the first month of its presidency, the Clinton White House announced, “...that in the future, gays would no longer be discharged from the military.”³⁸ Congress, the Pentagon and the fundamentalists all demonstrated such a strong opposition to this proposal that the White House retreated from this policy to a compromise based on the “don’t ask, don’t tell” principle.³⁹ The conservative forces also dealt a fatal blow to Clinton’s healthcare plan which was prepared by first lady Hillary Clinton.

The mid-term Congressional elections of 1994 witnessed a stunning victory for the Republicans, as it gave them a majority in both the houses for the first time since 1952. The incoming Republican speaker of the House, Newt Gingrich, started exerting pressure on the White House by developing a Republican program of federal government reform he called a “Contract with America.”⁴⁰

Tax cuts and welfare reduction were an important component of the Contract with America. The fundamentalists were also in favor of this as they wanted a reduction in the tax burden on families, and welfare work to be transferred to private charities by cutting welfare spending.⁴¹ This forced Clinton to abandon his liberal stance, and instead compromise on a number of issues. The impact of this right wing assault was that taxes were reduced, especially for the rich, and public spending on welfare state was reduced. This was the agenda of the economic conservatives but it could not have materialized without the right wing majority in Congress which was created by the Christian fundamentalist vote bank because the economic conservatives themselves did not have such a strong vote bank that they could elect a congressional majority to implement their agenda.

The Path to Christian Terrorism: From Expectations and Hope to Hopelessness

Unlike the civil rights movement which fought against white racism and oppression of the Afro-American minority by using non-violent means, the Christian fundamentalist movement introduced violence and terrorism in American politics. In the 1976 presidential election the Christian fundamentalists had supported Carter with the hope that his administration would implement their agenda. But Carter disappointed them. Hence, in the 1980 presidential election they dumped Carter and instead supported the alliance's Republican candidate, Ronald Reagan, who won the election. This raised their expectations again. Reagan lowered the taxes and paid a lot of lip service to the Biblical legislation but did little in this regard. When a vacancy opened in the Supreme Court, Reagan appointed Justice Sandra Day O'Connor, the first woman judge to Supreme Court in American history. She was known for her favourable views towards pro-choice⁴² (i.e., right to choose abortion as one of the options) movement. This was a big blow to the fundamentalist's expectations and aspirations.

When despite having elected three presidents consecutively to the White House (Carter, Reagan and Bush Senior) the 16 years' wait under these presidents (1976-1992) did not deliver the goods the frustrations started running high and many radical fundamentalists lost hope. They had done everything they could within the framework of the democratic system yet there was no progress on the horizon. Hence, those full of dynamism and religious commitment and eager for concrete results lost all hope, and the hopelessness led them to terrorism.



Hopelessness and the Rise of Christian Terrorism in Support of Biblical Agenda

During the last 30 years the Christian fundamentalists opposed to abortion have used force, violence and terrorism, “In the early 1990s, anti-abortion extremists concluded that murdering providers was the only way to stop abortion. The first provider was murdered in 1993.”⁴³

The Christian terrorists have a vast underground network spread all over the United States and also internationally. This network enables them to commit acts of terror anywhere in the US and escape from the crime scene and travel to and hide in the other states in the US or to other countries overseas, especially in Europe. Some of the organizations that champion the causes pursued by the Christian terrorists are:⁴⁴ Operation Rescue (OR), Institute of Mobilized Prophetic Activated Christian Training (IMPACT),⁴⁵ and Defensive Action. One of the roles of these organizations is to provide sympathy and whenever needed, moral and material support to the terrorists in general, particularly in situations when they are in trouble or on the run.

The OR was founded by Randall Terry in the 1980s. It plays two important roles for the Christian terrorists. First it conducts vigils, demonstrations and blockades in front of abortion clinics and harasses their staff. In these activities it attracts average peace loving religious citizens who are against abortion. Through these demonstrations and blockades the OR transforms these peace loving religious citizens into hard-line activists for this cause. This process enables the over zealous recruits to be in the forefront and cultivates their potential for extremism. These extremists are ideologically indoctrinated to take the movement as a Biblical mission. This is evident from Terry’s philosophy “Our goal is a Christian nation. ... We have a biblical duty, we are called by God to conquer this country. We don’t want equal time, we don’t want pluralism. ... Theocracy means God rules. I’ve got a hot flesh. God rules.”⁴⁶

One of Terry’s close associates in OR, James Kopp,⁴⁷ who had been trained at a fundamentalist retreat in the 1980s in the Swiss Alps and had also been associated with Mother Teresa’s Missionaries of Charity in New York City, eventually became a member of the Army of God (AOG) and shot and killed an abortion providing doctor, Dr. Bennett Slepian on 23 October 1998. Dr. Slepian was murdered at his residence in Amherst, New York. Kopp was caught, found guilty of murder by the court and was given the maximum sentence of 25 years for life in prison in 2003.⁴⁸

The AOG⁴⁹ is the most dangerous Christian terrorist organization. It celebrates terrorism. This celebration is an annual event known as White Rose banquet, hosted by its leader Michael Bray.⁵⁰



The G. W. Bush Presidency: A New Millennium, a New Politics

The eight years of the Clinton-Gore (1992-2000) administration were a period of remarkable economic stability and growth, low unemployment and inflation in the US together with domestic peace and the unchallenged global power of the US. Under these circumstances, Gore should have definitely won a decisive victory over George W. Bush; but in reality Gore was never even able to take a convincing lead over Bush during the entire election campaign. Finally, Bush came so close that he was within a hair's-breadth of effectively striking a fatal blow at Gore, which he did. The question is why, despite the economic boom, full employment and general prosperity, did the voters not give Gore a decisive lead over Bush? The answer lies in the new ideological map of the United States. Bush carried most of the South, which is the Bible Belt of the country, and the centre of evangelicalism. The South is the heartland of Christian fundamentalism. One is astonished to see Gore losing in his own state, Tennessee. Given its far right ideological leaning, Tennessee is popularly known as "...the old Buckle of the Bible Belt."⁵¹ In 1992, the fundamentalists of the South had voted for Clinton because Bush Senior had not only broken his promise by raising taxes but also failed to stimulate an economy in recession.

In 2000, the economy was doing fine but Clinton had earned a bad name due to his involvement in the Monica Lewinsky affair. Prior to that, Clinton was alleged to have had relations with Jennifer Flower when he was the governor of Arkansas. There had been some other alleged financial scandals involving Clinton which came to be known as the "White-water affair."⁵² All these liabilities snowballed and the evangelicals, inspired by religious and moral values, voted for Bush Jr. Most of these voters were concentrated in the South and its extensions.⁵³ In the end, it was the "Bible Belt" (i.e., the evangelical voters of the South and its extensions) which emerged as the solid pro-Bush vote bank in the 2000 US presidential election, and established itself as a political powerhouse in American politics. In the 2004 presidential election the Bible Belt repeated the same feat, sending a strong message to the politicians that unless they respected its views they would not get anywhere.

According to the US Constitution, although people vote in the presidential election, it is not the popular vote but rather the electoral vote that decides the ultimate winner. Each state is assigned a certain number of electoral votes. The total number of electoral votes in the US is 538 and in a two way race a candidate winning 270 of them becomes the President of the US.⁵⁴ It is worth noting that in his 1992 election Clinton won 370 electoral votes and won his second term in 1996 with 379 electoral votes by capturing 31 states plus the District of Columbia



(Washington, D.C.).⁵⁵ In the 2000 election, Gore was able to win only 20 states, plus the D.C. The remaining 11 states Clinton had pocketed in his 1996 re-election were lost to Bush. These 11 states were Arizona (8), Arkansas (6), Florida (25), Kentucky (8), Louisiana (9), Missouri (11), Nevada (4), New Hampshire (4), Ohio (21), West Virginia (5) and Mr. Gore’s own home state, Tennessee (11). The numbers given in parentheses here show the number of the electoral votes of the respective states. The total electoral votes of all these 11 states amount to 112. Except for New Hampshire, which is in the Northeast, all the remaining 10 states are located in the South and the Midwest of the US. These 10 states are traditionally conservative and fall in either the Bible Belt or Sun Belt regions of the country. These regions are traditionally conservative and the Bible Belt is the heartland of fundamentalist and evangelical Protestantism. The people of these regions are family oriented and believe strongly in traditional values and moral character. According to a survey, in the 2000 election, 56% of Protestants voted for Bush, while only 42% voted for Gore.⁵⁶ In the 2004 presidential election the Bible belt repeated the same feat and stood firmly behind G.W. Bush, giving him a decisive victory as Bush won 51% of the popular vote and 274 electoral vote whereas his Democratic rival John Kerry managed to get only 48% of the popular vote and 252 electoral votes.⁵⁷ An analysis of the national vote by voter characteristics reveals the depth of support of Christian fundamentalists for Bush as shown bellow:⁵⁸

	Voter Characteristics	Bush	Kerry
1	Once-a-week church goers	58%	41%
2	Moral values being the most important factor	79%	18%
3	War on terrorism as the most important factor	86%	14%

Conclusion

Christian revivalism in the US had started in the 1970s due to the problems created by materialism, unbridled capitalism, rising poverty due to growing income inequality, secularism and the abuse of power and corruption by political leaders. This revivalism manifested itself in many forms: cults, pseudo-faiths, the emergence of right wing racist groups and the rise of evangelical Christianity. Out of these, evangelical Christianity has been the most rapidly rising social and political force. As the American historian Alan Brinkley wrote in the year 2000: “Over 70 million Americans now described themselves as ‘born-again’ Christians - men and women who had established a ‘direct personal relationship with Jesus’. Christian evangelicals owned their own newspapers, magazines, radio stations, and television networks. They operated their own schools and universities.”⁵⁹

It would not be an exaggeration to say that the Christian fundamentalists, at the end of the 20th century, had emerged as a formidable force on the American political scene and at the dawn of the 21st century it seems that for many decades to come no political party, whether Republican or Democrat, would be able to make any significant headway in the elections without gaining their approval.



Endnotes

¹ Historically the Asians who crossed from Siberia over the Bering Straits to Alaska were the first to discover the American continent. This discovery, which took place between 16,000-18,000 years ago, started the Asian migration to the American continent. See: James West Davidson et al. (eds.), *Nation of Nations: A Narrative History of the American Republic*, 3rd edition (Boston: McGraw-Hill, 1998): 13; and see also: Alan Brinkley, *The Unfinished Nation: A Concise History of the American People*, 3rd edition (Boston: McGraw-Hill, 2000): 1.

² Alan Brinkley, *The Unfinished Nation*: 19-22.

³ James West Davidson et al., *op. cit.*: 24.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ The split of Christendom into the Eastern (Greek Orthodoxy) and Western (Roman Catholicism) was formally ratified in 1054, but the conflicts that led to this division were present from the very beginning. They were deeply rooted in every aspect of the religio-social identity of the followers on both sides, from the interpretation of the doctrine of the Trinity and other theological issues to tradition, geography, culture, language and calendar, to name a few. From Chidester's detailed discussion of these conflicts we briefly highlight here some of the major ones. According to the Eastern Orthodox belief, the ultimate religious authority resided in the Byzantine Emperor, as he was the source of the religious, political and cultural unity of the entire Christendom on a global scale, whereas Western Christianity ascribed all of this power to the Pope. Eastern Christianity also believed that the imperial dignity implied a power from God which gave the emperor the jurisdiction over the management and the human affairs of the Church; hence the Pope was subject to the emperor's authority. Western Christianity, on the other hand, advocated that the Pope, by virtue of being the heir of St. Peter (due to the unbroken succession) provided continuity and was "Vicar of St. Peter." Hence in this capacity the Pope was undisputed leader of the Universal Church of Christ. (Note that St. Peter was one of the twelve apostles of Jesus and is said to have been designated by him as "fisher of men" [or missionary] assigned the task to convert others to Christianity). Under this mission Peter is said to have gone to Rome where he was killed by the Roman emperor Nero during the persecution of Christians. The Eastern Orthodoxy designated Constantinople as the heir to the holy city of Jerusalem while Western Christianity bestowed this status upon the city of Rome, which is said to have been founded by St. Peter. The Eastern Orthodoxy adopted the Greek language as the language of worship while Catholicism adopted Latin for this purpose. The differences between Eastern and Western Christianity were so wide ranging that they encompassed almost every aspect of life - the calculation of the dates of Easter and Christmas, church practices and rituals, and management and organization of the church etc. For details see: David Chidester, *Christianity: A Global History* (New York: Harper San Francisco, 2000): 159-177; *Funk and Wagnalls New Encyclopedia*, s. v. PETER, Saint; and Marvin Perry et al. *Western Civilization: Ideas, Politics & Society* (Boston, and New York: Houghton Mifflin Co, 2004): 199-204.

⁶ James West Davidson et al., *op. cit.*: 344.

⁷ *Ibid.*: 76-105.

⁸ James Davison Hunter, "The Evangelical Worldview Since 1890," in Richard J. Neuhaus and Michael Cromartie (eds.), *Piety and Politics: Evangelicals and Fundamentalists Confront the World* (Washington, D.C.: Ethics and Public Policy Centre, 1976): 26. Hunter quotes it from Robert Handy, *A Christian America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971): 143.

⁹ James Davison Hunter, *op. cit.*: 19-53.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*: 32.

¹¹ Some of the states that passed these kinds of laws were: Arkansas, Florida, Mississippi, Oklahoma and Tennessee. See: James West Davidson et al., *op. cit.*: 858.

¹² Alan Brinkley and Ellen Fitzpatrick, *America in the Modern Times* (New York: The McGraw Hill Companies Inc., 1997): 226-228.



- ¹³ *Ibid.*: 226.
- ¹⁴ James West Davidson et al., *op. cit.*: 858-859.
- ¹⁵ A. James Reichley, “The Evangelical and Fundamentalist Revolt,” in Richard Neuhaus and Michael Cromartie, *Piety and Politics: Evangelicals and Fundamentalists Confront the World* (Washington, D.C.: Ethics and Public Policy Centre, 1976): 75.
- ¹⁶ George Marsden, “The Evangelical Denomination,” in Richard Neuhaus and Michael Cromartie, *Piety and Politics: Evangelicals and Fundamentalists Confront the World* (Washington, D.C.: Ethics and Public Policy Centre, 1976): 59.
- ¹⁷ Grant Wacker, “Searching for Norman Rockwell,” in Richard Neuhaus and Michael Cromartie, *Piety and Politics: Evangelicals and Fundamentalists Confront the World* (Washington, D.C.: Ethics and Public Policy Centre, 1976): 330.
- ¹⁸ William Martin, *With God on Our Side: The Rise of the Religious Right in America* (New York: Broadway Books, 1997): 30.
- ¹⁹ A. James Reichley, *op. cit.*: 75-76. For Billy Graham’s relations with and influence on the White House and the Congress, see also: William Martin, *With God on Our Side*: 25-46. Billy Graham even encouraged a reluctant General Eisenhower to run for the White House telling him that millions of Americans would like him to be the President of the US Eisenhower responded positively. See: William Martin, *With God on Our Side*: 32.
- ²⁰ A. James Reichley, *op. cit.*: 76. In the Plessy vs Ferguson case in 1896 the Supreme Court upheld a law of the State of Louisiana which had legalized racial segregation on the railroads on the ground that segregation does not necessarily imply the inferiority of either race to the other. However, in *Brown vs Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas* case in 1954 the Supreme Court overturned the above law and thus disallowed segregation. This was a major setback for the Evangelicals who had established their own academies, schools and institutions of higher learning in which blacks were not allowed. See also: Alan Brinkley and Ellen Fitzpatrick, *America in the Modern Times*: 56 and 434.
- ²¹ James West Davidson et al., *op. cit.*: 1071.
- ²² Matthew C. Moen, *The Christian Right and Congress* (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 1989): 12.
- ²³ A. James Reichley, *op. cit.*: 77.
- ²⁴ George Marsden, *op. cit.*: 59. For a detailed discussion see: *Ibid.*: 55-68.
- ²⁵ Michael Lienesch, *Redeeming America: Piety and Politics in the New Christian Right* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1993): 23.
- ²⁶ Quoted in: *Ibid.*
- ²⁷ William Martin, *With God on Our Side*: 150.
- ²⁸ Michael Lienesch, *op. cit.*: 72.
- ²⁹ William Martin, *With God on Our Side*: 151.
- ³⁰ Jimmy Carter and Jesus Christ both have the initials “J.C.”. See: *Ibid.*: 157.
- ³¹ A. James Reichley, *op. cit.*: 78.
- ³² *Ibid.*: 79.
- ³³ William Martin, *With God on Our Side*: 201.
- ³⁴ In the debate on the divisive issue of abortion, those who are against abortion are known as “pro-life,” whereas those who support a woman’s right to obtain an abortion are known as “pro-choice.”
- ³⁵ Glenn H. Utter and John. W. Storey, *The Religious Right: A Reference Handbook* (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO Inc., 1995): 35. Reagan endorsed the amendment in 1982. On 20 March 1984 it was voted by the Senate. It secured a 56-44 majority vote but fell short of the required two-thirds majority and hence failed but remains on the agenda of the Republican Party. For details see: *Ibid.*: 36.
- ³⁶ Alan Brinkley, *The Unfinished Nation*: 994-1007.
- ³⁷ William Martin, *With God on Our Side*: 230.



- ³⁸ William C. Berman, *America's Right Turn: From Nixon to Clinton*, 2nd edition (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998): 165.
- ³⁹ *Ibid.*: 165.
- ⁴⁰ On 27 September 1994, only a few weeks before the mid-term Congressional elections of November 1994, Newt Gingrich, the Republican Speaker of the House, signed the "Contract with America" together with 367 Republican members of the House at the doorstep of the Capitol. It was a ten-point program designed to mobilize American public opinion in favor of the right wing Republican agenda and put pressure on the Democratic Party in the coming elections. Some of the highlights of the Contract included the demands for: a balanced budget amendment, welfare reform, increase in defense spending, stringent measures to deal with crime, and 50% reduction in capital gains tax. The issue of abortion was excluded because of the fears that it could be divisive. For details see: *Ibid.*: 164-187.
- ⁴¹ William Martin, *With God on Our Side*: 340.
- ⁴² Pro-choice is simply, "favoring or supporting the legal right of women and girls to choose whether or not to continue a pregnancy to term." See: <http://www.answers.com/pro-choice&r=67>. In other words pro-choice means those who support the right to abortion. Pro-life are those who are against abortion and want it declared illegal.
- ⁴³ On the history of violence, see: <http://womensissues.about.com/gi/dynamic/offsite.htm?zi=1/XJ&sdn=womensissues&zu=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.prochoice.org%2F>
- ⁴⁴ William Martin, *With God on Our Side*: 34-35.
- ⁴⁵ A training institute organized by Terry Randall for Christian extremists immersed in the ideology of religious hatred recruited from throughout the country. The institute trains them in acts of harassment and various forms of violence and terror. See: *Ibid.*: 355.
- ⁴⁶ Terry's speech at an anti-abortion rally in Fort Wayne, Indiana, reported by *The News Sentinel* on 16 August 1993. Here the italics are ours for emphasis. The quote here is taken from the following sources:
http://wnd.com/news/article.asp?ARTICLE_ID=37979,
<http://mediamatters.org/items/20050322001>
- ⁴⁷ On James Kopp, see: <http://womensissues.about.com/gi/dynamic/offsite.htm?zi=1/XJ&sdn=womensissues&zu=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.prochoice.org%2F>
- ⁴⁸ On anti abortion extremists, see: <http://womensissues.about.com/gi/dynamic/offsite.htm?zi=1/XJ&sdn=womensissues&zu=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.prochoice.org%2F>
- ⁴⁹ *Ibid.*
- ⁵⁰ The Army of God Manual, see:
<http://womensissues.about.com/gi/dynamic/offsite.htm?zi=1/XJ&sdn=womensissues&zu=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.prochoice.org%2F>
- ⁵¹ "Bush and God," *Newsweek* (10 March 2003): 16.
- ⁵² William C. Berman, *op. cit.*: 171-172; and see also: Alan Brinkley, *The Unfinished Nation*: 1013 and 1018.
- ⁵³ For a detailed discussion on the Bible Belt and the 2000 US Presidential election see: Muhammad Arif Zakauallah, *The Cross and the Crescent*: 112-138.
- ⁵⁴ For a detailed treatment of the Electoral College System and the Electoral votes see: Walter Berns (ed.), *After The People Vote: A Guide to The Electoral College* (Washington, D.C.: The American Enterprise Institute Press, 1992): 8 and 71.
- ⁵⁵ For the electoral votes of Clinton in 1992 and 1996 see: James West Davidson et al., *op. cit.*: 1192-1198.
- ⁵⁶ "Breaking Down the Electorate," *Time Magazine*, Asian Edition (20 November 2000): 57.
- ⁵⁷ "How Bush Pulled it off," *Time*, Asian Edition (15 November 2004): 30-31; and see also: "How Bush Did It," *Newsweek*, Asian Edition (18 November 2004): 32-38.
- ⁵⁸ "How Bush Pulled it off," *Time*, Asian Edition (15 November 2004): 30-31.
- ⁵⁹ Alan Brinkley, *The Unfinished Nation*: 990.

This book takes an academic, well-documented and comprehensive approach in its analysis. With contributions from scholars based in Lebanon, Malaysia, the UAE, the UK, and the US, the primary objective of this book is to explain the domestic setting of American foreign policy-making and analyse its impact on issues that are considered vital to the Muslim world. The first part of this book explains the complex foreign-policy making system in the United States and assesses the role of Christian evangelicalism, neo-conservatism, the media, the pro-Israel lobby and the role of Muslim groups. The second part is devoted to a detailed analysis of the major characteristics of American foreign policy. The third part of the book provides an in-depth analysis of Americas' policy toward Afghanistan, Iraq, Iran, and Palestine. Barack H. Obama's foreign policy is also discussed. It is a must read book for those interested in understanding American foreign policy toward the Muslim world, and specialists, and students of Political Science, and International Relations.

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