

**A Kingdom Divided: New Media, the Fragmentation of Evangelical Cultural Values, and
U.S. Politics**

Christopher W. Boerl

A thesis submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
(Politics and International Relations)

Royal Holloway College, University of London

2011

Supervisor: Professor Andrew Chadwick

I declare that the work presented in this thesis is my own.

Christopher W. Boerl

September 10, 2011

ABSTRACT OF THESIS

A Kingdom Divided: New Media, the Fragmentation of Evangelical Cultural Values, and U.S.

Politics

Religious movements are a powerful force in politics, but there is no research that analyzes the relationship between new communication technologies and Christian political mobilization in the United States. In addressing this deficit, this thesis has three interrelated aims. First, beginning from an analysis of social capital, civic engagement and mobilization, it provides a historical overview of the U.S. evangelical community and its rise as a dominant cultural and political force. It argues that changing social norms provided the conditions for a strong reactionary religious movement to take root, while the social effects of broadcast media helped to concentrate evangelical energies on issues such as abortion, homosexuality, and school prayer. Second, this thesis develops an understanding of the impact of the Internet upon evangelical organizations based on original research and fieldwork. It demonstrates that in contrast to the effects of broadcast media, which served largely to unify evangelical cultural attitudes, the Internet is instead a source of significant theological fragmentation and political pluralization. By serving as a conduit through which dissident religious elements are better able to connect, organize, and mobilize, the Internet is revealed to be a powerful tool for movements such as “creation care” and the “emerging church,” which in years past have been unable to gather significant cultural strength due to the limitations of prevailing communication infrastructures. Collectively, these movements have emerged as a source of considerable unrest and internal religious division. Finally, this thesis discusses the political and electoral implications of a fragmented evangelical community and the ways in which the U.S. Democratic Party may capitalize on these developments.

For my mom and dad.

Despite what the doctors and specialists said, you always saw me for the man I could be.

For that I am eternally grateful. I love and miss you both.

A great debt of gratitude is similarly owed to my supervisor, Professor Andrew Chadwick, who was forced to endure numerous drafts of poorly spelled words and improper grammar. Your patience throughout this process has helped me see this thesis to its completion and has been greatly appreciated. I would also like to thank Dr. Chris Perkins, who has given tirelessly of himself throughout this endeavor and who is, hands down, one of the best damn academics I have ever met. To the greatest friend a friend could have, Mike Valanzola, I eagerly await the days when we will sit in the Corner Office, smoking our cigars, drinking our scotch, saying, “This is my friend...” To my friends at The Crown: Ant, Matt, Massimo, Franco, Lord Sam, Big Tom, Eva, Ray, Andrew, Magic Dave and everyone else, thank you for making me apart of your community. To Courtney and Mike, thank you for all the crazy trips. They were often just the break I needed and provided me with a renewed spirit and a refreshing take on the challenges ahead. To Eric, thank you for your words of comfort and solace while in Connecticut. I will always remember our nights of Galactica. To Jill, thank you for taking me in when I had nowhere else to go and for being the kind of friend a guy is lucky to have. To Justin, you have always been a dear friend and were the first to call on that terrible day in 04’. Thank you for everything. To James, always remember, you are not a statistic, you are a factor. But on a slightly more serious note, thank you for the fun, the advice and the support. To my dear friend, The Lovely Lavina, thank you for joining me on my English adventure. I will forever remember our time on that strange and exotic island, which was for four years, home. Finally, to my best friend, my great love, my beautiful wife, thank you for being that rock I so long ago lost. Your presence in my life is an abundant source of joy and an endless supply of strength. In you, this world has no equal. I love you today, I’ll love you tomorrow, and I’ll love everyday thereafter.

TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	5
LIST OF FIGURES.....	10
CHAPTER ONE – IN THE BEGINNING.....	12
What is the New Media Environment?.....	20
What is an Evangelical?.....	22
What is the Evangelical Community?.....	24
What is the Christian Right?.....	27
What is Creation Care?.....	30
What is the Emerging Church Movement?.....	39
Hypotheses.....	44
Methodology.....	47
Plan of Thesis.....	60
CHAPTER TWO – A REVIEW OF LITERATURE EXAMINING THE EFFECT OF THE INTERNET ON SOCIAL CAPITAL, CIVIC ENGAGEMENT AND MOBILIZATION.....	63
Social Capital and Civic Engagement.....	65
Changes in Civic Engagement and the Pluralized Nature of Contemporary Society.....	80
Mobilization.....	87
Conclusion.....	94
CHAPTER THREE – EVANGELICALS AND AMERICAN POLITICS: RELIGION, MEDIA AND CULTURE.....	98
Eschatology and the Public Square.....	101

Monkeys, Satellites, and a Catholic President: How Societal Upheaval Brought Evangelicals to the Political Fold.....	104
Media and the Unification of American Evangelicals.....	110
The Fall of the Religious Left.....	118
Evangelicals and the Reagan Presidency.....	121
Why Democrats Lost the Catholic Vote and How It Further Empowered Evangelicals.....	124
Evangelical Voters and the Election of George W. Bush.....	128
The 2004 Presidential Race.....	132
Is there a Changing Evangelical Landscape?.....	140
Conclusion.....	144
CHAPTER FOUR – FROM MONOLOGUE TO DIALOGUE PART I: HOW THE INTERNET IS EMPOWERING THE EVANGELICAL PERIPHERY.....	147
Broadcast Media, Mobilization and the Faithful.....	150
How Media are Changing the Church.....	156
Conclusion.....	173
CHAPTER FIVE – FROM MONOLGUE TO DIALOGUE PART II: THE ONLINE EVANGELISM OF THE CREATION CARE AND EMERGING CHURCH MOVEMENTS.....	176
Informing.....	178
Involving.....	190
Connecting and Mobilizing.....	202
Conclusion.....	211

CHAPTER SIX – THE CHANGING BIBLICAL POLITICS OF THE MODERN	
AMERICAN EVANGELICAL TRADITION.....	214
The Mechanical Forces that Shape Our Preferences.....	215
Group Polarization.....	221
Beyond the Sterile Polarities of the Christian Right?.....	229
Changing Political Attitudes.....	240
Conclusion.....	260
CHAPTER SEVEN – THE DEATH AND RESURRECTION OF THE AMERICAN	
RELIGIOUS MARKETPLACE	264
Evangelism in Decline.....	266
Christianity-Lite.....	273
No Faith but the Patriotized Faith.....	282
A Return to Innovation and Niche-Oriented Religious Marketing.....	288
Conclusion: Religion and Politics in America’s Near Future.....	294
CHAPTER EIGHT – EVANGELICAL ENVIRONMENTALISM AND THE POLITICS	
OF CLIMATE CHANGE.....	299
The Current State of Environmental Politics.....	301
Understanding Evangelical Environmental Resistance.....	305
The Historical Roots of Evangelical Environmental Activism.....	307
Creation Care and Evangelical Tensions.....	310

The Political Sophistication of Evangelical Environmentalism.....	314
From Evangelical Interest Groups to an Evangelical Interest.....	317
The Political Impacts of Evangelical Environmental Activism.....	325
Conclusion.....	327
CHAPTER NINE – WHEN CONSTITUENCIES COLLIDE: ABORTION, FAITH	
OUTREACH AND THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY.....330	
The Socially Conservative Candidate.....	333
Abortion Politics and the Democratic Base.....	335
The Changing Dynamics of the Evangelical Vote.....	338
The “Pro-Life” Politics of Evangelical Environmentalism.....	344
Can There be an Abortion Compromise?.....	347
Faith Outreach and Party Tensions.....	351
Have Congressional Democrats Moved to the Right on Abortion?.....	356
Explanation of Findings: The Importance of Congressional Agenda Control	359
Conclusion.....	363
CHAPTER TEN – THE END IS NEAR.....366	
New Media and the Cultural Fragmentation of the Evangelical Tradition.....	369
New Media and the Cultural Polarization of the Evangelical Tradition.....	374
The Pluralization of the Evangelical Tradition and a Return to Religious	
Competition.....	376
The Politics of Evangelical Environmentalism.....	379
Faith Outreach, Abortion Politics and the Democratic Party.....	383
Final Remarks.....	385

BIBLIOGRAPHY.....388
SURVEY LINK AND INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTIONS.....408

LIST OF FIGURES

1.1 Creation Care Framed as a Sanctity of Life Issue.....	33
1.2 A Popular Bumper Sticker by Restoring Eden.....	37
1.3 Restoring Eden Bumper Sticker Citing Scripture in the Promotion of Creation Care.....	38
4.1 Dates Various Creation Care Groups Were Founded.....	165
5.1 Organizational Information Available Online.....	180
5.2 Frequency of Online Scriptural Citations.....	182
5.3 Screen Shot of EEN Facebook Group Page.....	189
5.4 ESA Events Calendar.....	200
5.5 How Members Become Active With Studied Organizations.....	210
6.1 A Comparison of Abortion Views.....	249
6.2 A Further Comparison of Abortion Views.....	250
6.3 A Comparison of Views on Evolution.....	252
6.4 A Comparison of Views on Biblical Literalism.....	253
6.5 A Comparison of Views on Homosexuality.....	254
6.6 A Comparison of Views on American Foreign Engagement.....	255
6.7 A Comparison of Views on American Militarism and Diplomacy.....	256
6.8 A Comparison of Views on Environmental Protection.....	257
6.9 A Comparison of Political Identification.....	258
6.10 A Comparison of Political Party Identification.....	259

9.1 A Comparative NRLC Scorecard of House Democrats: The 105th Congress through the 111th Congress.....	358
9.2 Number of Abortion Votes by Congress.....	362

CHAPTER ONE
IN THE BEGINNING

Plato's *Phaedrus* recounts a visit by the god Theuth, the inventor of numbers, arithmetic, geometry and writing, to King Thamus of Naucratis. During the visit Theuth described to the King each of his inventions, and as he did the King passed judgment, expressing his approval or disapproval. When he got to the invention of writing, Theuth declared, "here is an accomplishment, my lord the King, which will improve both the wisdom and the memory of the Egyptians."¹ To which Thamus replied:

Most ingenious Theuth, one man has the ability to beget arts, but the ability to judge of their usefulness or harmfulness to their users belongs to another; and now you, who are the father of letters, have been led by your affection to ascribe to them a power the opposite of that which they really possess. For this invention will produce forgetfulness in the minds of those who learn to use it, because they will not practice their memory. Their trust in writing, produced by external characters which are no part of themselves, will discourage the use of their own memory within them. You have invented an elixir not of memory, but of reminding; and you offer your pupils the appearance of wisdom, not true wisdom, for they will read many things without instruction and will therefore seem to know many things, when they are for the most part ignorant and hard to get along with, since they are not wise, but only appear wise.²

It is tempting to fault King Thamus as overly critical in his appraisal of Theuth's invention. However the King deserves some measure of praise for having the foresight and

¹ *Phaedrus* dialogue on rhetoric and writing (274b-277a).

² *Ibid.*

wisdom to perceive how the introduction of the written word, which in itself is a tool to record and recall, would diminish memory and undermine the era's dominant method of communication, namely oral recollection which he holds in much higher regard. Whether or not oral recollection is indeed superior to the written word is a moot point. However, it is certain that throughout history, humanity has made numerous innovations, which, for better and for worse, have dramatically altered our historical trajectories in ways that could not have been predicted.

When a new communication technology is first introduced, its most profound social effects are often not immediately understood. Neil Postman gives the example of the clock to illustrate this. Invented by Benedictine monks between the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the clock revolutionized the way we both perceive and record time. Postman notes:

The impetus behind the invention was to provide a more or less precise regularity to the routines of the monasteries, which required, among other things, seven periods of devotion during the course of the day. The bells of the monastery were to be rung to signal canonical hours, and the mechanical clock was the technology that could provide precision to these rituals of devotion. And indeed it did. But what the monks did not foresee was that the clock is a means not merely of keeping track of the hours but also of synchronizing and controlling the action of men. And thus, by the middle of the fourteenth century, the clock had moved outside the walls of the monastery, and brought a new and precious regularity to the life of the workman and the merchant.³

³ Neil Postman, *Technopoly: The Surrender of Culture to Technology* (New York: Vintage Books, 1993), 14.

For Postman, the clock is a prime example of what he calls the “ecological” nature of technology.⁴ While the clock succeeded in bringing about greater regularity to religious routines, it also became integral to the scheduling of our daily lives. In an ironic twist, invented to bring about greater religious devotion, the clock’s most lasting social impact has been the reorganization of trade and commerce, the accumulation of wealth, and the worship of Mammon, rather than the God of Abraham. The printing press is another example of a technology that is hugely important not because it either adds or subtracts from society, but rather because it changes it altogether. For instance, following the invention of the printing press in Europe, Europe became much more than Europe with movable type, or Europe without the scribes. Instead, the introduction of printing press helped spread Luther’s rebellion against the Catholic Church and is widely credited as contributing to the conditions necessary for the Protestant Reformation.⁵

Today, society finds itself in the midst of another technological revolution. Recent advances in computer sciences have dramatically altered the way we live our lives, communicate with one another, and understand the world around us. As we increasingly move toward an environment of instant and near infinite information, it is less crucial for individuals to “know, memorize, or recall information and more important for them to be able to find, sort, analyze, share, discuss, critique, and create information and knowledge.”⁶ As a result of this change, schools are finding it less important to teach students how to be knowledgeable and are instead focusing on making students knowledge-able—that is, able to “actively examine, question and

⁴ Ibid., 18.

⁵ See for instance, Elizabeth Eisenstein, *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979).

⁶ Michael Wesch, *Podcast: Michael Wesch on the New Media Environment*, March 24, 2011. Found online at: <<http://www.educause.edu/blog/gbayne/PodcastMichaelWeschontheNewMed/226117>> (Accessed May 15, 2011).

even re-create the (increasingly digital) structures that shape our world.”⁷ This shift in pedagogical focus is but another renegotiation of the way we relate to one another and it entails disruptive changes to our economic, social and political structures.

Media has had, and continues to have, a tremendous influence in shaping American values and in defining the American character. One historical example of this is the heavy reliance of the early American patriots on local newspapers and printed pamphlets to help spread their message of liberty and convince others to join the cause for national independence. For instance in the first three months of its publication, Thomas Paine’s *Common Sense*, a 79-page pamphlet offering plain arguments for American succession, sold more than 120,000 copies in the colonies alone and helped solidify public support for the Revolution.

In the 235 years since the signing of the Declaration of Independence, America has changed in remarkable ways. For instance, during this time the American Republic has grown from being little more than a scattered collection of loosely affiliated state governments to a modern day empire (albeit one in decline). Yet despite America’s many changes over the years, religion has remained an indelible source of identity for millions of Americans. As the Pew Research Center notes:

Religion is much more important to Americans than to people living in other wealthy nations. Six-in-ten (59%) people in the U.S. say religion plays a very important role in their lives. This is roughly twice the percentage of self-avowed religious people in Canada (30%), and an even higher proportion when compared

⁷ Ibid.

with Japan and Western Europe. Americans' views are closer to people in developing nations than to the publics of developed nations.⁸

In any given month, some 63% of American adults will attend worship at a Christian church, while 67% will utilize some form of Christian media, such as listening to Christian radio, watching a televangelist on T.V. or reading a Christian book. That equates to roughly 132 million American adults attending church each month, and 141 million interacting with Christian media.⁹ The Barna Group further notes that an increasing number of Americans are “using the Internet for faith exploration and communications.”¹⁰

Yet despite the fact that religious movements and organizations remain a powerful force in American politics, relatively little work has analyzed the relationship between the new media environment and evangelical political activity. This academic deficit is perplexing, particularly when one considers the vast amount of research exploring the relationship between broadcast media and the rise of the Christian Right. It is also troubling given the immense influence the Christian Right continues to wield within the Republican Party. Through the concepts of social capital, civic engagement and mobilization, this thesis addresses this deficit by tracing the impact of the new media environment on American evangelicals and their continued engagement with the political process. This thesis similarly identifies broadcast media, such as radio and television, as platforms with high entrance costs and ones conducive to the unification of political principles. By contrast, the Internet, as a many-to-many medium with its relatively low

⁸ Pew Forum Staff Writer, “U.S. Stands Alone In Its Embrace of Religion Among Wealthy Nations,” *Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life*, December 19, 2002. Found online at: <<http://pewglobal.org/2002/12/19/among-wealthy-nations/>> (Accessed May 20, 2011).

⁹ Barna Group Staff Writer, “Christian Mass Media Reach More Adults With the Christian Message Than Do Churches,” *The Barna Group*, July 2, 2002. Found online at: <<http://www.barna.org/barna-update/article/5-barna-update/77-christian-mass-media-reach-more-adults-with-the-christian-message-than-do-churches>> (Accessed May 22, 2011).

¹⁰ Ibid.

cost of entry, has created a plural media environment, which as we shall later see, has helped diversify the American religious marketplace. Additionally still, while evangelical Christianity often appears homogenous in nature, in actuality, it is a rich and diverse religious tradition. One reason for this perception of uniformity is due to the fact that broadcast media has enabled a small group of religious leaders to fix down important religious messages and meanings, while simultaneously emphasizing shared cultural values, which among other things includes the protection of “unborn life” and the defense of so-called traditional marriage. In doing so, broadcast media has played an important role in enabling those with control of this medium to advance a narrowly defined conservative agenda. Moreover, in emphasizing issues with broad cultural support, televangelists, radio preachers and other evangelical leaders have largely succeeded in elevating the broader evangelical community above the fray of smaller theological squabbles and minor scriptural disputes, and have instead intensified evangelical activities towards the political arena. By contrast, the Internet lowers the threshold for engagement and amplifies the voices of the many. It subverts centralized control of information and messaging and instead affords for greater de-centralized ownership of material and content, and facilitates multifaceted engagement. Thus, while broadcast media is uniquely suited to fix meaning and aid in the monopolization of knowledge and messaging, the Internet instead enables a diverse set of actors to challenge prevailing ideas and values, leading to ever-greater pluralization. As evangelicals increasingly turn to the Internet for purposes of religious devotion, guidance and education, the amalgamating effects of the broadcast age are weakened, resulting in growing theological fragmentation. In particular, growing support for evangelical environmentalism (or creation care as it is commonly known) and the emerging church movement (social justice evangelicalism) have proven to be sources of considerable religious unrest within the evangelical

community. This thesis focuses on these specific movements as through an examination of them and those organizations affiliating with them, much can be learned about how the confluence of new media technologies and American evangelicals is reshaping religious and political landscapes in America. Moreover, in elevating issues such as environmental protection and economic inequality, the creation care and emerging church movements are reorienting religious dialogues away from the so-called “culture war” issues of the 80s and 90s, and in so doing, are creating new political realities and tensions.¹¹

As these movements continue to gather strength, new social possibilities will continue to be actualized. In particular, the spread of the emerging church movement is renewing religious interest in the social gospel, while successfully promoting an alternative understanding of what it means to be a Christian. In this it serves as a critical counterweight to the long-held religious hegemony of the Christian Right and thus rejuvenates the American religious marketplace. Similarly, evangelical environmentalism is forcing many elected Republicans to reconsider past environmental positions, while providing Democrats with a unique opportunity to make political inroads among a core Republican demographic. In an effort to capitalize on these recent evangelical developments, Democrats are increasingly courting evangelical voters through a combination of faith outreach and the running of socially moderate candidates. This strategy has won some elections but some Democrats wonder, at what price? These Democrats view this strategy as undermining core political values, in particular, the party’s historic support of

¹¹ The term “culture war” is a metaphor often used to describe the political and social tensions between conservative and progressive Americans. While the term itself has long been used in one form or another, it entered the American popular lexicon in the 1990s and has received considerable lip service since 1992 when Pat Buchanan declared at the Republican National Convention that, “there is a religious war going on in our country for the soul of America. It is a cultural war, as critical to the kind of nation we will one day be as was the Cold War itself.” For a complete transcript of Buchanan’s speech, see Patrick J. Buchanan, “Address to the Republican National Convention,” *American Rhetoric*, August 17, 1992. Found online at: <<http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/patrickbuchanan1992rnc.htm>> (Accessed July 9, 2011).

abortion rights. This thesis confronts such concerns and shows how they ignore important institutional factors, such as agenda control, which can act as a crucial defense for reproductive choice.

Changes in communication technology have historically had a great impact on religious bodies, and the new media environment is no exception. With its ability to bring far-flung yet like-minded individuals together, the Internet is fostering an environment in which new and alternative forms of religious activity can better flourish. With it comes a shifting cultural landscape, the impact of which is reverberating throughout the political process. Identifying the effects of this impact is crucial to understanding the ever fluid American political scene and will enable policy makers and political activists alike to make better-informed decisions. But before we get too far ahead of ourselves, some definitions are in order.

What is the New Media Environment?

As Clay Shirky states, prior to this most recent media revolution (the new media environment), “there are only four periods in the last 500 years where media has changed enough to qualify for the label of ‘revolution.’”¹² These periods include: The invention of the printing press, the advent of two-way communication and conversational media, first with the telegraph, then with the telephone, the introduction of recorded media other than print, such as photography, sound (records), movie reels, and finally, the broadcast age. Today, however, we are living through what Shirky argues is the “the largest increase in expressive capability in

¹² Clay Shirky, “Clay Shirky: How social media can make history,” *TED Talks*, June 2009. Found online at: <http://www.ted.com/talks/clay_shirky_how_cellphones_twitter_facebook_can_make_history.html> (Accessed March 10, 2012).

human history.”¹³ To validate this point, Shirky notes a curious asymmetry of the older media regimes. Namely, “the media that is good at creating conversation is no good at creating groups, and the media that is good at creating groups, is no good at creating conversation.”¹⁴ The Internet, however, is the first medium in human history that “has native support for groups and conversations at the same time.”¹⁵ A key component of this process is digitalization. For instance, “as all media gets digitized, the Internet also becomes the mode of carriage for all other media. Phone calls migrate to the Internet, magazines migrate to the Internet, movies migrate to the Internet, and that means that every medium is right next-door to every other medium.”¹⁶ Another way to think of this process is that as media increasingly finds a home online, media is becoming less just a source of information, and increasingly more a network for coordination. To better illustrate this point, it is worth recalling the work of Marshall McLuhan. In describing the media environment of the day, McLuhan famously used the term “media ecology,” writing that such ecology is the:

...arranging [of] various media to help each other so they won't cancel each other out, to buttress one medium with another. You might say, for example, that radio is a bigger help to literacy than television, but television might be a very wonderful aid to teaching languages. And so you can do some things on some media that you cannot do on others. And, therefore, if you watch the whole field, you can prevent this waste that comes by one canceling the other out.¹⁷

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Stephanie McLuhan and David Staines eds., *Understanding Me: Lectures and Interviews by Marshall McLuhan*, (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2004), 271.

However, when we speak of the new media environment today, what we are referring to is the consolidation of media ecology into one easily accessible and navigable platform: The World Wide Web. In this ecology, “what matters here isn’t technical capital, it’s social capital.”¹⁸ This is so, as these new media tools, “don’t get socially interesting until they get technologically boring,”¹⁹ a process that lowers entrance barriers and widespread adoption. As Shirky aptly notes, “it isn’t when the shiny new tools show up that their uses start permeating through society, it’s when everybody is able to take them for granted.”²⁰ And because of this, media is now more “socially capable,” to the point where “innovation can happen anywhere that people can take for granted the idea that we are all in this together.”²¹ As a result, what we are seeing in this new media environment is a landscape where “innovation is happening everywhere and moving from one spot to another[,]”²² where distinctions between media consumers and media producers is not so much blurred as non-existent.

Who is an Evangelical?

When an individual identifies him or herself as a Catholic, there is little doubt as to what they mean. In all likelihood, they are referring to a specific Christian denomination whose believers are led by the Pope and the Holy See. By contrast, when someone says they are ‘evangelical’, they are not affiliating themselves with any particular denomination or formal creed. Over the years, significant scholarly work has attempted to answer the question: What is

¹⁸ Shirky, 2009.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

an evangelical? From a historical perspective, the evangelical movement can trace its roots to the works of such radical preachers as John Wycliffe (1330-1384) and Jan Hus (1372-1415), as well as other pre-reformation theologians such as Peter Waldo (1140-1218) and Girolamo Savonarola (1452-1498). However, the shape of modern evangelicalism is more appropriately attributed to the work of leaders of the Protestant Reformation.²³

According to the Institute for the Study of American Evangelicals at Wheaton College, the term ‘evangelical’ is itself “a wide-reaching definitional ‘canopy’ that covers a diverse number of Protestant groups.”²⁴ Noted religious scholar David Bebbington holds that the evangelical adheres to four core tenets. These include *Crucicentrism*, whereby particular focus is placed on the doctrine of substitutional atonement; *Biblicism*, in which the Bible is placed at the center of corporate worship; *Conversionism*, a belief which asserts the need for each individual to convert to Christianity in order to achieve eternal salvation; and finally *Activism*, in which evangelicals openly and actively proclaim the Lord’s “Good News.”²⁵ Alister McGrath adds another widely accepted tenet, namely *Christocentrism*, which holds that God’s eternal “Word” became human in the flesh of Jesus Christ who went on to reveal God to all humanity.²⁶ Collectively, these five tenets are widely regarded as the defining beliefs of the evangelical Christian.

In the United States, political scientists have come to view evangelicals as an important voting bloc in their own right. Occasionally referred to as the “evangelical bloc,” or the “evangelical voting bloc,” this segment of the population is more commonly identified as the

²³ David Hilborn, “What is an Evangelical?,” *Evangelical Alliance*, October 28, 2008. Found online at: <http://www.eauk.org/about/what_is.cfm> (Accessed December 14, 2009).

²⁴ Institute for the Study of the American Evangelicals Staff Writer, “Defining Evangelicalism,” *The Institute for the Study of American Evangelicals at Wheaton College*, 2009. Found online at: <<http://isae.wheaton.edu/defining-evangelicalism/>> (Accessed November 17, 2009).

²⁵ David B. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989).

²⁶ Alister McGrath, *Evangelicalism and the Future of Christianity* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1995).

“Christian Right.” Culturally speaking, the Christian Right is a political movement of conservative, mostly evangelical Christians and Christian organizations, which despite various denominational differences, have coalesced around certain political issues, such as opposition to abortion and gay rights, the teaching of evolution in public schools, and, more generally, the perceived secularization of American society. Throughout this thesis, the terms “Christian Right,” “evangelical bloc,” and “evangelical voting bloc,” are often used when referring to the political activities of the conservative evangelical community.

On a final note, the word “evangelical” is often preceded in popular and scholarly literature by the word “white,” as while many African-Americans are technically evangelical, their political voting habits are quite different than the rest of the evangelical bloc. As such, when this thesis uses the term evangelical it is referring more generally to white evangelicals.²⁷

What is the Evangelical Community?

While the above section provides a workable, as well as technical, understanding of who is an evangelical, little has thus far been said of another equally important term which appears frequently throughout this thesis: the evangelical community. As we shall see in chapter 3, evangelicals are a theologically diverse collective encompassing countless denominations, many thousands of congregations, and nearly one out of every five Americans.²⁸ To lump such a vast array of believers and religious practitioners into such a broad community begs much larger questions, namely what is a community, and what is meant by the use of the term, “the

²⁷ The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life demarcates the white evangelical tradition from what it calls the “Historically Black Churches,” which refers to churches that minister predominately to African Americans.

²⁸ Albert L. Winseman, “U.S. Evangelicals: How Many Walk the Walk,” *Gallup*, 2005. Found online at: <<http://www.gallup.com/poll/16519/us-evangelicals-how-many-walk-walk.aspx>> (Accessed February 24, 2012).

evangelical community?” To answer these questions, we would do well to turn briefly to literature not typically associated with the study of religion and social capital.

Since its publication in 1983, Benedict Anderson’s *Imagined Communities* has become required reading in the study of nationalism.²⁹ In it, Anderson conceives of the nation as a socially fabricated or “imagined” community. As Anderson notes, “all communities larger than primordial villages of face-to-face contact (and perhaps even these) are imagined,” as according to Anderson, “communities are to be distinguished, not by their falsity-genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined.”³⁰ As such, it is impossible for nations, or for that matter, any sizable gathering of people to be what Anderson calls “true” communities. Instead, members of these larger social collectives are a part of an imagined community, as while they will only ever have a personal relationship with but a few members of this community, they nonetheless hold a strong emotional affinity for their fellow members. As such they engage in a number of activities, from war to sporting events for the perceived benefit of this community. Anderson’s formulation of community is particularly relevant to this study, as he explicitly links the rise of imagined communities, such as the nation, to advances in communications technology. The rise of the newspaper and the arrival of other print commodities, such as the novel, or what Anderson calls “print-capitalism,” helped disseminate languages nationally, spread political ideologies across broad swaths of land, and allowed previously unconnected people to be a part of a shared experience and have a collective identity.³¹

The American evangelical community is constituted much in the same way as the imagined communities discussed by Anderson. As we shall see in the coming chapters,

²⁹ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections and on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism, Revised and Expanded Edition* (London: Verso, 1991).

³⁰ Anderson, 6.

³¹ Anderson, 43

American evangelicals often perceive themselves as an “other,” a divinely ordained community battling the corrosive forces of sin and secularization. In this regard, evangelicals have set themselves apart from the rest of society, while much of American society has in-turn come to view evangelicals as something different from themselves. Similarly, when we consider the role print-capitalism played in the formation of national identity, we see many striking similarities. While chapter 3 will discuss the role of media and the formation of the evangelical identity in much greater depth, briefly, the advent of broadcast media figured significantly in the formation of the “imagined” evangelical community. For instance, Simon Coleman writes that such technology served as a powerful tool in resolving tensions among early evangelicals, namely because it aided televangelists and radio preachers in focusing their audiences attention on issues that enjoyed broad evangelical support, while exposing these very same viewers to shared religious experiences which cut across denominational differences. As Colman notes:

Videos fix the Word in physical, predictable, repeatable form yet also reproduce the appearance of inspired spontaneity. They provide a new way, complementary to that of sacred texts, of storing, transporting and scrutinizing language, but unlike writing retain a record of the original ‘event’ of verbal creation in time and space. The sacred words of the sermon and the service keep their place within the flux of evangelical experience while also offering the distant viewer or listener the opportunity to vicariously sample such experience.³²

³² Simon Coleman, “Words as Things: Language, Aesthetics and the Objectification of Protestant Evangelicalism,” *Journal of Material Culture*, 1 no. 1 (1996): 111 of 107-128.

Coleman continues, arguing that such personal experience becomes a marketable “collective representation.”³³ With these forces in play, an evangelical economy has been constructed over the last 30 years (much the same way earlier printers and publishers created ‘print-capitalism’), and as a result, broadly shared faith experiences regularly occur while a narrowly defined evangelical religious identity is constructed. Thus, when this thesis speaks of the evangelical community, it is referring to a loosely affiliated “imagined community” of believers and congregations, that while diverse in their traditions, have nonetheless come to share many core values, and adopt for themselves a sacredly-charged language as well as a strong sense of comradery, and purpose.

What is the Christian Right?

This thesis takes deliberate efforts to distinguish between the Christian Right and evangelicals, as while the Christian Right is comprised overwhelmingly of evangelicals, not all evangelicals are members of the Christian Right. While the above section covering the core tenets of evangelical Christianity has offered a definition of evangelical Christianity; this section instead focuses on what constitutes the Christian Right. The broadest distinction between the two groups is in terms of political activity. While evangelicals are certainly politically active and vote based on their political preferences (preferences that are often informed by their religious views), evangelicals do not necessarily seek to rigidly impose their religious values on society at-large. By contrast, however, the Christian Right is comprised of active Christian organizations and Christian social movements that believe theology should drive American public policy. As Abraham Foxman, National Director of the Anti-Defamation League notes, the Christian Right

³³ Ibid.

looks “to ‘Christianize’ all aspects of American life, from the halls of government to the libraries, to the movies, to recording studios, to the playing fields and local rooms of professional collegiate and amateur sport, from the military to SpongeBob SquarePants.”³⁴ In short, what the Christian Right looks to achieve is the transformation of the American Republic into an American Theocracy.

As Chapter 3 will discuss in much greater detail, the Christian Right, or the “New Christian Right” as it is sometimes called,³⁵ arose in the 1970s in response to what many conservative Christians perceived to be the secularization of American society. At that time, the Christian Right was largely viewed as a non-partisan religious movement, though by the 1980 presidential election, it was becoming increasingly clear that both the Democratic Party and the Carter administration were anything but dependable allies. Instead Christian Right leaders turned to Ronald Reagan and the Republican Party, who in recognizing the vast influence such leaders held over the growing ranks of America’s evangelical community, eagerly embraced the movement and adopted their agenda.

Historically, the Christian Right has been largely dependent upon the presence of a strong and vocal leadership. Such a need was greatly aided by advent of broadcast technologies, which played a crucial role in raising the national profiles of several religious leaders, and similarly helped in unifying the cultural and political values of evangelical Christians more broadly. While Catholic groups such as the Catholic League for Religious and Civil Liberties and the Catholic Conference of Bishops are apart of America’s Christian Right, relations between evangelicals and the Catholics have often been tenuous, and at times, down-right hostile. For

³⁴ Christian Right Watch Staff Writer, “Glossary,” *Christian Right Watch*, 2012. Found online at: <http://www.religiousrightwatch.com/glossary/christian_right.htm> (Accessed March 10, 2012).

³⁵ While it is somewhat uncommon, occasionally previous periods of religious awakening, such as the first and second ‘Great Awakening’ are referred to as Christian Right movements. “The New Christian Right” refers the most recent incarnation of the political organizing of conservative Christians.

instance, although conservative Catholics and conservative evangelicals share many core values, such as the protection of so-called “traditional marriage” and the abolition of reproductive rights, many Catholics are suspicious of evangelical efforts to reinsert state sponsored prayer in the public schools out of fears that such prayer would take a more protestant slant. Moreover, the Catholic Church and many evangelical leaders differ on several important issues such as capital punishment, and the role government should play in alleviating poverty and promoting other issues more typically aligned with the social gospel. These differences, combined with the conservative electoral propensity of American evangelicals, and the continued political alignment of many everyday Catholic parishioners with the Democratic Party, have allowed evangelicals to have a far greater influence in shaping the political agenda of Christian Right.

Finally, many scholars and social observers will regularly refer to the “Religious Right” when in fact they are referencing the Christian Right. To be clear, the term “Religious Right” refers to politically active organizations and movements rooted in fundamentalist and conservative religious doctrine, irrespective of religious creed. In this regard, the Religious Right is a much larger categorical canopy under which the Christian Right falls. Much like the Christian Right, members of the Religious Right similarly look to impose their religious ideologies and theological doctrines upon society. While various Religious Right groups and movements exist within the United States, their overall numbers outside of the Christian Right are sufficiently small as to make them political insignificant.³⁶

³⁶ The one notable exception is the Jewish Right. While fewer than 2% of the American population is Jewish, the Jewish Right, and in particular, the pro-Israeli lobby exerts considerable influence in the shaping of American foreign policy. There are two primary reasons for this: First, although the overall Jewish population in the United States is small, in the important swing state of Florida, Jews constitute around 10% of the voting population. Second, according to various biblical interpretations, certain earthly conditions must be met prior to the second coming of Christ. One of these conditions is the restoration of Israel and Jewish control of the Jerusalem. Thus, while many conservative evangelicals in the United States believe that Jews will not be saved during the end-times, they are more than happy to adopt a fierce pro-Israel foreign policy, while conversely, many Israeli politicians have

What is Creation Care?

Evangelical environmentalism, or creation care, is a movement of evangelical Christians who view environmental stewardship as a biblical mandate. Supporters argue that God's commandment instructing Adam and Eve to "keep" the Garden of Eden applies to Christians even today.³⁷ They also believe that environmental degradation is adversely affecting the poor and developing world, which evangelicals view as the "least among them."³⁸ In February of 2006, 86 leaders of the evangelical community, including Rick Warren and Jim Wallis, signed the Evangelical Climate Initiative's Call to Action. It reads in part:

As American evangelical Christian leaders, we recognize both our opportunity and our responsibility to offer a biblically based moral witness that can help shape public policy in the most powerful nation on earth, and therefore contribute to the well-being of the entire world. Whether we will enter the public square and offer our witness there is no longer an open question. We are in that square, and we will not withdraw.

We are proud of the evangelical community's long-standing commitment to the sanctity of human life. But we also offer moral witness in many venues and on

gladly exploited this widely held eschatological belief, as American support for Israel (irrespective of the motivation behind this support) is crucial to security of the Israeli state.

³⁷ In Genesis 2:15, God commands Adam and Eve to till and "keep" the garden. The word "keep" comes from the Hebrew word "Shamar" which means a loving care. It is the same "keep" found in Numbers 6:24, "The Lord bless you and keep you." For further information, refer to Sherry Golden, "Keeping the Sabbath to Keep the Earth," *Shared Earth Network*, October 4, 2008. Found online at: <http://shareearthnetwork.org/articleStFrancisContest.html> (Accessed May 29, 2011).

³⁸ In Matthew 25:40, Jesus tells his disciples, "The King will answer and say to them, 'Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, even the least of them, you did it to Me.'"

many issues.

Over the last several years many of us have engaged in study, reflection, and prayer related to the issue of climate change (often called “global warming”). For most of us, until recently this has not been treated as a pressing issue or major priority. Indeed, many of us have required considerable convincing before becoming persuaded that climate change is a real problem and that it ought to matter to us as Christians. But now we have seen and heard enough.³⁹

Within the evangelical environmental movement several creation care organizations exist. Of these, four organizations have been selected for closer examination. They are:

The Evangelical Environmental Network (EEN)—Founded in 1993 as a ministry of Evangelicals for Social Action, the EEN is the largest creation care organization in existence today. Its high public visibility, along with its prominent national leadership, both past and present, and its successful advocacy of past environmental issues, has made it the target of numerous conservative religious leaders and groups. One of the more vocal opponents of the EEN is Tony Perkins, President of the Family Research Council, one of the nation’s largest evangelical pressure groups. Although the EEN often frames its environmental message in pro-life terms, Perkins remains unimpressed. “Unfortunately,” as Perkins notes, “a number of religious leaders have joined the alarmist crusade and are attempting to make the environment the most

³⁹ Christians and Climate Staff Writer, “Climate Change: An Evangelical Call to Action,” *Christians and Climate*, 2006. Found online at: <<http://christiansandclimate.org/learn/call-to-action/>> (Accessed June 3, 2011).

important issue in the church.”⁴⁰ This Perkins argues is not unlike “the young prophet who ran to King David before he heard the message [See 2 Samuel 18:22–28]. They have zeal and a desire to change things, but they do not have the message the church needs at this time.”⁴¹ Similarly, Bishop Harry Jackson, Jr., co-author of *Personal Faith, Public Policy* with Perkins writes, “a million abortions are performed in the United States every year...[but] can EEN cite even one instance where it expressed outrage or even concern about these deaths? Can it cite one instance when it criticized abortionists, or supported calls to reduce federal funding from abortion clinics...?”⁴² Irrespective of these criticisms, the EEN is genuinely concerned about protecting the quality of life, both born and unborn. On the front page of their website, for instance, the EEN has a picture of sleeping infant wrapped in a plush blanket under a banner which reads “The Menace of Mercury.” By click on the banner link, visitors are immediately taken to a webpage entitled “Mercury and the Unborn” and are greeted by the below advertisement:

⁴⁰ Harry R. Jackson, “Our Children are at Risk: Evangelical Environmental Network Needs to get it Right,” *Right Side News*, October 5, 2011. Found online at: <<http://www.rightsidenews.com/2011100614651/life-and-science/energy-and-environment/our-children-are-at-risk-evangelical-environmental-network-needs-to-get-it-right.html>> (Accessed March 12, 2012).

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid.

Figure 1.1

Creation Care Framed as a Sanctity of Life Issue



* Screen shot of EEN webpage framing creation care as a pro-life issue. Found online at:

<<http://www.creationcare.org/mercury/>> (Accessed February 5, 2012).

Below are numerous videos where visitors learn about the damning effects of mercury on the unborn, and below visitors are provided with a key mission statement of the EEN:

As a pro-life, creation-care organization, protecting and enhancing life is at the heart of what we do. A key dimension of this is protecting human health, and that's why we want to stop the mercury poisoning of the unborn.

One in six babies, over 700,000 each year, are born with harmful levels of mercury in their blood, and coal-burning power plants are the largest source of domestic mercury pollution.

Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these."

We believe this is an urgent and escalating moral crisis which calls for immediate action!

PROTECT LIFE

Christians are called to protect life, and for us that includes the unborn. Jesus taught us to love our neighbours and treat others as we would want to be treated. Protecting the unborn and children from mercury poisoning and air pollutions in keeping with Jesus' commands. It is time to stop the mercury poisoning of the unborn.

LONG OVERDUE

The unborn were provided legal protection from toxic pollution like mercury in 1990. We've had two decades of bi-partisan foot-dragging, with the courts finally ordering the federal government to enforce the law and protect the unborn.⁴³

⁴³ EEN Staff Writer, "The End Mercury Poisoning Pledge," *Evangelical Environmental Network*, May 18, 2011. Found online at: <<http://www.creationcare.org/mercury/>> (Accessed March 12, 2012).

As the nation's largest and arguably wealthiest creation care group, the EEN has invested millions of dollars in various ad campaigns and have extensive grassroots outreach effort which aims to cultivate support at the congregational level. And while many creation care groups have since joined the EEN in its call for greater environmental protection, the EEN remains one of the most divisive organizations in the evangelical community.

Flourish—Founded in 2008 by former EEN members Rusty Pritchard and Jim Jewel, Flourish promotes itself as a “connector” within the creation care movement. The organization sees itself as facilitating conversations and partnerships between parties who might not otherwise come together, such as the scientific and religious communities. As a general rule, Flourish does not take positions on issues perceived to be divisive, such as humanity's role in the warming of the earth. Instead, Flourish looks for ways to integrate creation care into church life and everyday living. In seeking to avoid polarizing issues, its hope is to raise the profile of environmental ministries with evangelical churches, and encourage lay parishioners to think more deeply about the way their lives impact their communities and environment.

Renewal: Students Caring for Creation—Throughout its relatively short history, Renewal has been a remarkably active organization. Founded in 2008 by a group of college student and recent graduates, Renewal focuses its energies primarily on cultivating support on college campuses, by raising awareness and activism among this population. Past activities have included the nation-wide “Green Awakening Tour,” a letter writing campaign to the White House, national days of prayer and national days of service. Many of its original founders have gone on to publish authors, radio and television commentators, and one, Ben Lowe, a graduate

from the prestigious evangelical Wheaton College, ran for Congress in Illinois 6th Congressional District, in which Wheaton is located. While Lowe won the Democratic Primary, he ultimately failed in his bid to unseat the incumbent, though his campaign succeeded in bringing considerable attention to both Renewal and the Creation Care movement. More recently, Renewal has strengthened its partnership with Restoring Eden, another creation care organization, and co-sponsors several campus events with that organization.

Restoring Eden—As a growing network committed to grassroots advocacy, Restoring Eden has garnered a reputation for its public lobbying efforts. Much of its work focuses on supporting marginalized groups such as “small island nations that are disappearing due to climate change, the people of Appalachia being impacted by mountain top removal, [or] the unborn children impacted by pollution from coal plants.”⁴⁴ Long known for its creative marketing strategies and innovative form of political activism, Restoring Eden has flourished under the leadership of Peter Illyn, who holds degrees in both divinity and ad campaigning. One of Illyn’s greatest strengths appears to be his willingness to take head-on conventional evangelical attitudes in ways that appeal directly to evangelical youth and young adults, as evident by the below bumper sticker:

⁴⁴ Restoring Eden’s Facebook Interest Page. Found online at: <<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Restoring-Eden/102243046502415>> (Accessed May 29, 2011).

Figure 1.2

A Popular Bumper Sticker by Restoring Eden



* Restoring Eden bumper sticker can be found online at: <<http://restoringeden.org/resources/Merchandisefolder>>

Another way in which Restoring Eden looks to bolster their claims that God wants evangelicals to care for the environment is by regularly citing scripture. Considering that evangelicals believe the Bible to be the ultimate arbiter of what is right, just and moral, using scripture to highlight God's greener side seems like a no-brainer. As we shall see, however, scriptural citation remains a practice surprisingly underutilized within the broader creation care movement, this despite the fact that the Bible has many eco-friendly verses. For their part, Restoring Eden views the Bible's many environmentally friendly verses as a persuasive argument that can be used to win over skeptical evangelicals. Evidence of this belief has led this organization to cite scripture abundantly on its websites and traditional printed material such as pamphlets and brochures. And in following their more unorthodox marketing approach, Restoring Eden is even spreading the Good Word with bumper stickers:

Figure 1.3

Restoring Eden Bumper Sticker Citing Scripture in the Promotion of Creation Care



* Restoring Eden bumper sticker can be found online at: <<http://restoringeden.org/resources/Merchandisefolder>>

And while some might view the use of bumper stickers as lighthearted, perhaps even childish, bumper stickers remain a popular means of expressing one's views and advancing causes close to one's heart.

Founded initially as a response to the GOPs repeated environmental attacks, Restoring Eden is today one of the nation's most prominent evangelical environmental organizations. Its more aggressive forms of environmental activism coupled with its unorthodox methods of proselytizing is in many ways a reflection of the prevailing counter-cultural attitudes of the Pacific Northwest, from where Restoring Eden is headquarters. In addition to the many seminars and conferences Restoring Eden either runs or participates in, it is also active in lobbying political leaders, organizing direct protest actions, and hosts a number of nature appreciation programs, such as camping retreats, which Restoring Eden believes helps to focus the soul on creation.

What is the Emerging Church Movement?

The emerging church is a religious movement, or “conversation” as some involved prefer to call it, which seeks a radical re-conceptualization, or perhaps more accurately, re-grounding, of the Christian message. Movement leaders, such as Brian McLaren, Tony Jones and Phyllis Tickle are determined to keep the movement little more than a loose association of individuals who want to explore and discuss the Christian faith, Christian theology, and Christian praxis in the post-modern world.⁴⁵ In its present form, the emerging church is largely a movement reacting against the dominant expression of the evangelical tradition. It is for this reason that the movement is often referred to as “post-evangelical.” As Andrew Perriman notes:

This reaction has been driven largely, I think, by dissatisfaction with evangelical church culture at various levels—a dissatisfaction that has often been explained in terms of a perceived shift in the wider culture from modernism to postmodernism: from objectivism to relativism, from certainty to doubt, from singularity to plurality, from story to stories. Emerging church is an attempt to replot Christian faith on this new cultural and intellectual terrain.⁴⁶

Another area of departure from the larger evangelical tradition is the emerging church’s willingness to “pursue a wider engagement with the public sphere.”⁴⁷ Not only is the emerging

⁴⁵ Scott McKnight, “What is the Emerging Church?,” *Fall Contemporary Issues Conference*, Westminster Theological Seminary, October 26-27, 2006. Found online at: <http://www.andyrowell.net/andy_rowell/files/scot_mcknight_what_is_the_emerging_church.pdf> (Accessed May 30, 2011).

⁴⁶ Andrew Perriman, “What is the Emerging Church?,” *Open Source Theology*, November 22, 2003. Found online at: <<http://www.opensourcetheology.net/node/229>> (Accessed May 30, 2011).

⁴⁷ Ibid.

church happy to engage a broader spectrum of religious practices, including Catholic and Orthodox traditions, but it also promotes social activism on issues that have historically not been associated with evangelicals, such as economic and social justice.⁴⁸ Unlike evangelical environmentalism, few formal organizations exist within the emerging church; however, of those that do, the most prominent is undoubtedly Emergent Village, though Evangelicals for Social Action (ESA) are similarly active on the social gospel front.

Emergent Village—Like the broader emerging church movement, Emergent Village is a largely decentralized venture and consists primarily of individual cohorts. Cohorts are locally based groups that meet in a wide-variety of places, such as coffee houses, bars, restaurants and even private homes, to freely engage in theological discussion. Due to its decentralized nature and the diversity of its members, Emergent Village has at times struggled to define what exactly Emergent Village is. With no set doctrine or organizational creed, Emergent Village, or more precisely, its affiliated cohorts are, as its website proclaims, “a meeting place for friends who wish they could hang out together more often.” More recently, Emergent Village has succeeded in codifying four core values, which they call their “Order and Rule.” These values are have been listed below, as well as a brief explanation which appears on their website:

1. A commitment to God in the way of Jesus:

We are committed to doing justice, loving kindness, and walking humbly with God. In the words of Jesus, we seek to live by the Great Commandment: loving God and loving our neighbors – including those who might be considered “the least of these”

⁴⁸ Ibid.

or enemies. We understand the gospel to be centered in Jesus and his message of the Kingdom of God, a message offering reconciliation with God, humanity, creation, and self.

We are committed to a “generous orthodoxy” in faith and practice – affirming the historic Christian faith and the biblical injunction to love one another even when we disagree. We embrace many historic spiritual practices, including prayer, meditation, contemplation, study, solitude, silence, service, and fellowship, believing that healthy theology cannot be separated from healthy spirituality.

2. A commitment to the Church in all its forms:

We are committed to honor and serve the church in all its forms – Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Protestant, Pentecostal, Anabaptist. We practice “deep ecclesiology” – rather than favoring some forms of the church and critiquing or rejecting others, we see that every form of the church has both weaknesses and strengths, both liabilities and potential.

We believe the rampant injustice and sin in our world requires the sincere, collaborative, and whole-hearted response of all Christians in all denominations, from the most historic and hierarchical, through the mid-range of local and congregational churches, to the most spontaneous and informal expressions. We affirm both the value of strengthening, renewing, and transitioning existing churches and organizations, and the need for planting, resourcing, and coaching new ones of many kinds.

We seek to be irenic and inclusive of all our Christian sisters and brothers, rather than elitist and critical. We own the many failures of the church as our failures, which humbles us and calls us to repentance, and we also celebrate the many heroes and virtues of the church, which inspires us and gives us hope.

3. A commitment to God's World:

We practice our faith missionally – that is, we do not isolate ourselves from this world, but rather, we follow Christ into the world.

We seek to fulfill the mission of God in our generations, and then to pass the baton faithfully to the next generations as well.

We believe the church exists for the benefit and blessing of the world at large; we seek therefore not to be blessed to the exclusion of everyone else, but rather for the benefit of everyone else.

We see the earth and all it contains as God's beloved creation, and so we join God in seeking its good, its healing, and its blessing.

4. And finally, a commitment to one another:

In order to strengthen our shared faith and resolve, and in order to encourage and learn from one another in our diversity through respectful, sacred conversation, we value time and interaction with other friends who share this rule and its practices.

We identify ourselves as members of this growing, global, generative, and non-exclusive friendship.

We welcome others into this friendship as well.

We bring whatever resources we can to enrich this shared faith and resolve.⁴⁹

In recent years, the emerging church movement has experienced rapid growth, particularly within evangelical circles. The popularity of emergent Christianity concerns many conservative evangelicals who view the movement as threat to core evangelical values, beliefs and practices. Conversely, many prominent emerging Christians such as Mark Driscoll and Shane Claiborne, believe Emergent Village exercises too much influence within the emerging conversation and have thus publicly distanced themselves from some of the more radical theological expressions of Emergent Village. On a final note, this thesis uses the term “emergent” as well as “emerging.” To clarify, “emergent” is used in a narrow capacity to describe members of Emergent Village, whereas “emerging” is used when referencing members of the broader emerging church movement.

Evangelical for Social Action (ESA)—Though it has no formal affiliation with Emergent Village or the emerging church movement, ESA is an evangelical think-tank seeking solutions to social and economic problems. Since its inception in 1973, ESA has led the charge to revamp the political and social aspirations of American evangelicals, and was for a time viewed with great

⁴⁹ Emergent Village Staff Writer, “Values and Practices,” *Emergent Village*, 2011. Found online at: <http://emergentvillage.org/?page_id=77> (Accessed March 12, 2012).

suspensions by more conservative evangelicals. While these suspensions have subsided in past years, thanks largely to the continued and purposeful engagement of ESA with the greater evangelical community, some on the right continue to hold considerable animosity towards ESA due the connections with several evangelical environmental organizations, as well as for the sympathies many ESA members hold with the emerging church movement. As the parent organization of the EEN, it would seemingly fit to place ESA among the creation care ranks. However, as this thesis will show, the religious, social, economic and political aspirations of ESA have always been far broader than those of the above creation care organizations. Indeed, these aspirations are in much greater synchronicity the core values of Emergent Village and the social gospel message of the broader emerging church movement. Thus, while ESA is a sort of hybrid organization, occupying space in both the emerging church and creation care realms; I have included it as a unit of study within the emerging church movement for the reasons stated above.

Hypotheses

Within academic literature, one of the more discussed social effects of the rapid proliferation of Internet usage has been the fragmentation and polarization of American political discourse; what Bruce Bimber sees as a consequence of “accelerated pluralism.”⁵⁰ This is taken up in more depth in Chapter 2, but for now, briefly, accelerated pluralism views social segmentation as stemming largely from new forms of electronic media. With the abundance of

⁵⁰ Bruce Bimber, “The Internet and Political Transformation: Populism, Community, and Accelerated Pluralism,” *Polity* 31, no. 1 (1998): 133-160.

choice they offer, these media spur their consumers to retreat into spheres of increasingly atomized interests. In this, they work to radicalize preexisting political and social bias.

As a starting point this thesis acknowledges that over a period of several years new theological divisions have emerged within the American evangelical tradition. These divisions have proven not only contentious, but in many respects seemingly irreconcilable as competing religious interests have become firmly convinced of the righteousness of their respective causes. This thesis seeks to establish whether Bimber's theory of accelerated pluralism can help account for these divisions. To that end the following hypothesis has been developed as a possible explanation:

- 1) Recent evangelical fragmentation is to some extent been facilitated by the proliferation of the Internet, whereby dissident cultural and theological elements are afforded more efficient means of organization and networking, thus enabling them to better challenge the established orthodoxy of the evangelical tradition.

However, given that religious organizations are often incubators of significant social capital, which in turn affects mobilization and civic engagement thresholds, it is similarly hypothesized that:

- 2) While the Internet has greatly contributed to the success of many newer, theologically divergent evangelical organizations, existing church apparatuses, which place a premium on in-person meet-ups and collective gatherings, have similarly played an

important role in the success of said organizations by affording an intimate setting more suitable for proselytizing and community development.

With the evangelical tradition moving in radically new directions, the need exists to re-examine evangelical political values. For instance, recent theological concerns over environmental degradation are causing a rift between many evangelical environmentalists and the Republican Party. As such it is further hypothesized that:

- 3) Given the growing popularity of the creation care movement, environmental protection is increasingly becoming an important electoral issue among evangelical Christians, and is putting new pressure on Republican politicians to support greener environmental policies.

For their part, Democrats have been eager to leverage the shifting values of evangelical Christians for political gain. However, it has not been without its challenges; not least because while many evangelicals are embracing a broader social platform on the whole, they remain adamantly opposed to abortion. In fact the Evangelical Climate Initiative's Call to Action casts the fight for environmental protection in clearly "pro-life" terms, and the declarations and mission statements of numerous creation care groups describe similar worldviews. To overcome this challenge, Democrats have been running pro-life candidates in more heavily evangelical districts and states. As already noted this strategy has had some electoral success, but has also

worried the party's more liberal base, in particular women's groups, who view such a strategy as jeopardizing the party's support of reproductive rights. However, I hypothesize that these concerns are largely misguided as:

- 4) Despite the growing number of pro-life Democrats in congress, abortion rights will remain unaffected at the Federal level so long as Democrats retain their congressional majorities, as party leaders are unwilling to bring legislation restricting the rights of women to a floor vote.

Methodology

As Joel Smith observes, all too often in the social sciences, we scrabble about how to do something, rather than just doing it.⁵¹ This has largely been my own experience of political science. While many political scientists are uniquely qualified to speak in their area of expertise, it seems few are all that interested in genuinely engaging with the political process. As David Adamany remarked at the 2010 Annual State Politics and Policy Conference in Springfield, Illinois, “[i]t seems to me a fair characterization that research in political science has steadily distanced itself from the concerns of policy makers and political activists.”⁵² Adamany continues, noting:

⁵¹ Joel Smith, “A Methodology for the Twenty-First Century Sociology,” *Social Forces* 70, no. 1 (1991): 1-17.

⁵² David Adamany, “Are Political Scientists Ready for Politics?,” *Remarks at the Annual State Politics and Policy Conference*, Springfield, Illinois, June 5, 2010.

There was also a time when many in public service considered themselves members of the political science profession, belonging to the American Political Science [Association], and receiving—even occasionally reading something in—the *American Political Science Review* or another of our journals. It is within my memory when in presidential election years, the annual meeting of the APSA featured a major address by a presidential or vice presidential candidate, a national party chairman, or some other highly placed political figure who believed that political science mattered in their real world. But that was decades ago.

What has changed I believe is the trajectory of research in political science. Its methodology has advanced dramatically in the direction of quantification, statistical methods, and modeling. Our research is no longer within the grasp of those who practice politics and, in a great many cases, no longer within the grasp of our undergraduate students. The science in political science looms larger, the politics in political science smaller.⁵³

To conclude, Adamany argues that the consequence of this distance “may be that we have less and less to say to those who are active participants in the political and governmental processes. In turn, we may know less and less about the work they do, the issues they face, and methods of their vocation. And we are, consequently, less able to be effective participants in that other world.”⁵⁴ The shame in this, I believe, is that unlike most politicians, academics are

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

uniquely qualified to probe deeply the many complexities facing society, as well as to advance good policy and (hopefully) influence public discourse.

I do not wish to suggest that methodology is unimportant. Indeed methodology is the crossroads where theory and methods intersect and serves to shape inquiry.⁵⁵ To this end, a sound methodological approach that is both comprehensive and able to adopt a variety of research methods and techniques is needed, particularly when breaking new ground. With this in mind, we would be wise to heed the argument of John Law that the social sciences suffer from a perceived need to be overly scientific. As Law notes, “the world is not to be understood in general by adopting a methodological version of auditing. Regularities and standardizations are incredibly powerful tools but they set limits....And they set even firmer limits when they try to orchestrate themselves hegemonically into purported coherence.”⁵⁶ The need then, at least according to Law, is for a methodological approach that values heterogeneity and variation, as such an approach makes possible the discovery of new knowledge, while accepting that society is a “generative flux of forces and relations that work to produce particular realities.”⁵⁷ I have followed Law’s advice and have borrowed from several methodological practices. Yet before we can delve too deeply into a discussion of methodologies, it is important to note that guiding this methodology is the research design.

While a tendency exists to view methodology and research design as essentially the same process, it is important to bear in mind that the research design is a much broader operational canopy incorporating the methods by which research questions are answered and proper conclusions drawn. Within the social sciences, there are two types of research questions;

⁵⁵ Abraham Kaplan, *The Conduct of Inquiry: Methodology for Behavioral Science* (San Francisco: Chandler Publishing Company, 1964).

⁵⁶ John Law, *After Method: Mess in Social Science* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 6-7.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 7.

descriptive research questions which answer “*What is going on?*” and explanatory research questions, which address “*Why it is going on?*” As an observer of religion and politics in the United States, I have for some time now been witnessing an important cultural shift within evangelical circles, whereby a growing number of evangelicals have been breaking with the Christian Right and adopting a broader social and political agenda than has historically been the case. From the onset, the growth of evangelical environmentalism and the emerging church movement served as a point of scholarly interest, while questions regarding the political ramifications of these respective movements served as the initial catalyst for this thesis. With my curiosity roused, I naturally sought a greater descriptive understanding of these movements, and was similarly interested in knowing why this was happening.

While answers to the first of these questions came relatively easy, answers to the latter proved more elusive. In grappling with understanding why these movements were growing, greater clarity arrived in my first year of grad school, when by happy chance I began a side project exploring the political impacts of new media. As I became increasingly exposed to the communicative ideas and theories within in this literate (literature which will be discussed later in this thesis), answers to the latter questions came into greater relief. Armed with this information, I set forth the hypotheses which you have just read. From there, I laid a methodological framework which I believed was be best suited to test these hypotheses and which are laid out in greater detail below. In testing these hypotheses, however, another equally important question surfaced.

Throughout this research, I have been keenly aware that the phenomenon under study is in many ways affecting American politics (though I believe the greatest impacts are yet to come). For this reason, I have never been fully satisfied to merely know what is going and why, and

have instead been compelled to push this research one step further. Simply put, not only do I want to know the “what” and “why” answers, but I also want to know the impacts of these phenomena, particularly as they pertain to the American political process. With these considerations in mind, I commenced this thesis with Joel Smith’s admonition that researchers would do well to consider the following five questions, both at the onset of their research, as well as throughout its duration.⁵⁸ These questions are:

1. What does one want to know and why?
2. What is to be observed?
3. Which and how many objects are to be examined?
4. How are the phenomena of interest to be observed?
5. And finally, how are answers to be decided and conclusions drawn?

Before proceeding any further, I feel the need to justify the autobiographical underpinnings of my research design. While classical positivism demands the removal of the researcher as a subjective participant, the study of the social sciences makes such demands all but impossible. Juergen Habermas, for instance, has used hermeneutics to show the limits of positivism in the study of social phenomena, while at the same time demonstrating how overly traditional hermeneutical approaches in the study of social sciences undermines social criticism and retards future innovation and understanding by fixing researchers to inelastic methodologies and modes of thinking.⁵⁹ In taking these criticisms onboard, the English philosopher Roy Bhaskar has developed critical realism. Briefly, critical realism looks to provide explanations of

⁵⁸ Smith, “Methodology,” 11.

⁵⁹ Juergen Habermas, *Theory and Practice*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1973).; see also, Juergen Habermas, *Knowledge and Human Interests*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1968).

events and phenomena, rather than simply descriptions. Such an approach has many applications beyond the confines of “specific research subjects and sites,” yet at the same time upholds the researchers “hermeneutic insight into the pre-interpreted nature of their subjects matter and the reflexive implications of their research practice.”⁶⁰ Moreover, while Bhaskar contends that the debate between positivism and hermeneutics has tended to concentrate on epistemological approaches, or the ways in which we know, Bhaskar’s critical realism instead focuses first on ontological questions, before shifting to the epistemology at hand.⁶¹ Doing so, allows researchers to provide “a more subtle and complex view of society in which human agents are neither passive products of social structures nor entirely their creators...”⁶²

In keeping with my own views on the role of the researcher as well as the nature of their research, I have instinctually gravitated towards Bhaskar’s critical realism and have seen no reason to stray from it in this thesis. As a social scientist, I believe my obligation is to present my research in a fair and honest manner. With that said, I cannot as a researcher, whose identity is informed by a complex variety of social forces and whose very existence continually reshapes the realities of those around me, remove all tinges of bias from this thesis. Nor should I. The best I can do is acknowledge this bias, both to myself and you the reader, and design and execute a research model that accurately represents the facts, rigorously tests its hypotheses, and fairly reports its findings. To the best of my ability I have done just this and now leave these findings to you. Make of them what you will.

⁶⁰ Charlotte Aull Davies, *Reflexive Ethnography: A Guide to Researching selves and Others*, (New York: Routledge, 1998) 18.

⁶¹ Roy Bhaskar, *Plato Etc.: The Problems of Philosophy and Their Resolution*, (London: Verso, 1996).

⁶² Davies, 19.

What Do I Want to Know and Why?

This thesis is interested primarily in assessing the impacts of information and communication technology (ICT) on the core concepts of social capital, civic engagement and mobilization in relation to evangelical Christian political activity.

What is to be Observed?

The case studies for this thesis are the creation care and emerging church movements of the evangelical community. In particular, this thesis studies the ways in which the new media environment has helped direct these movements away from the evangelical periphery towards mainstream acceptance, and explores the larger social and political impacts of that quickly growing acceptance.

Which and How Many Objects are to be Studied?

A number of organizations exist within the selected case studies. I have already identified four separate organizations for further examination within the creation care movement: the Evangelical Environmental Network, Flourish, Renewal and Restoring Eden. Unlike the creation care groups, the emerging church movement is a collection of decentralized cohorts and home churches. Many of these bodies are, however, affiliated with the umbrella organization Emergent Village, which rather than acting as a cohesive unit, serves more as a clearing house and space, both online and in the physical world, for all things emergent. In addition to these

groups, Evangelicals for Social Action has also been singled out due to its many sympathies with the emerging church movement and for its early work in advancing the cause of evangelical environmentalism. To better explore the contentious nature of these groups, organizations and individuals opposed to the aspirations of the selected case studies are similarly explored. These groups include Focus on the Family, the Family Research Council, the Ethics and Religious Liberties Commission, and are joined by religious leaders and laity.

How are the Phenomena of Interest to be Observed? And finally, How are Answers to be Decided and Conclusions Drawn?

This thesis takes a comparative-historical approach. That is, primarily a qualitative comparison and historical analysis of various phenomena to explain large-scale outcomes. A common tool for those engaged in comparative-historical analysis is so-called “pattern matching”—or what is sometimes referred to as cross-case analysis—a procedure that helps researchers identify similarities across different case studies to test the validity of stated hypotheses. A common use of cross-case analysis is to provide what is known as causal narrative inference, wherein researchers validate aggregate cross-case associations by analyzing variables into constitutive sequences across disaggregated events.⁶³ Moreover, causal narrative inference has the added benefit of supporting event structure analysis, which provides “a formal apparatus for unpacking events and reconstructing their constituent parts as a causal interpretation of historical processes.”⁶⁴ Such a methodological approach is well suited for this

⁶³ James Mahoney and Dietrich Rueschemeyer, *Comparative Historical Analysis in the Social Sciences*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 366.

study, as any exploration into the relationship between the new media environment and evangelical political activity requires an examination of multiple variables and events.

Understanding how past advances in communication technologies have impacted the political behavior of evangelical Christians is a critical starting point in this thesis's search to identify case study patterns, but must be coupled with an intimate knowledge of the social and historical variables pertaining to such change. This is because communication technology does not operate in a vacuum, but is rather used by actors responding to external stimuli. By comparing various moments in the history of the American evangelical community, this thesis can confidently assert that the rise of the creation care and emerging church movements are indeed noteworthy changes, and can begin to explore possible reasons explaining their ascent. One explanation this thesis will test is Bimber's theory of accelerated pluralism, which, briefly, asserts that the Internet is eroding the influence of organization and group leaders while leading to a restructuring of community and social order.⁶⁵ In testing this hypothesis, a number of variables must be taken into account, particularly the high stocks of social capital embedded in religious communities and the ease with which these communities can be mobilized for political and civic engagement. If the hypothesis holds, this thesis can then study the broader social impact of an increasingly fragmented evangelical community.

To better understand the creation care and emerging church movements, this thesis also utilizes the ethnographic research techniques of observation and semi-structured interviews. Selected organizations and individuals were engaged in a variety of settings, including church meetings, worship services, camping trips, at bars, in cafés and restaurants, on college campuses, online, over the phone, and in individual homes. The structure of each encounter was determined by the schedule of the observed participants or groups. Whenever possible,

⁶⁵ Bimber, "Internet and Political Transformation."

analytical interpretations of key issues and events were discussed with relevant parties, the data recorded and archived.

32 interviews with participants in 9 states were conducted. These interviews were both with “managerial” or “elite” evangelicals, as well as with activists on the ground. Interview subjects were chosen based on several criteria, which included their formal or informal leadership in a given organization/movement, or their knowledge of, membership to, or activism on behalf of, a particular movement or group. Many of the interviews were semi-structured. Semi-structured interviews have long been used in the social sciences for better data collection and comparative analysis as they free researchers from the rigidity of stringent interview guides and thus provide the flexibility to explore unforeseen developments and probe provoking questions. Although all reasonable attempts were made to conduct interviews in-person, as a result of geographic disbursement some interviews inevitably had to be conducted over the phone or online. Some of the shortcomings of online interviews are that they limit the ability of the researcher to moderate the interview and eliminate the sense of immediate contact. These shortcomings are arguably offset by the fact that online interviews give respondents ample time to fully consider their answers.⁶⁶ When interviews were conducted online, both synchronous and asynchronous data collection occurred. In every case, deliberate care was taken towards building trusting relationships with interview subjects, an important consideration in any online environment.⁶⁷ Similarly, when asynchronous online interviews are used, Bampton and Cowton’s approach of small batch questions was frequently employed, whereby regular contact

⁶⁶ H. O’Conner and C. Madge, “‘Focus Groups in Cyberspace:’ Using the Internet for Qualitative Research,” *Qualitative Market Research* 6, no. 1 (2003): 133-143.

⁶⁷ F. F. Curasi, “A Critical Exploration of Face-to-Face Interviewing vs. Computer-Mediated Interviewing,” *International Journal of Market Research* 43, no. 1 (2001): 361-375.

was maintained over the course of several days, weeks, even months, and only a few questions asked at a time.⁶⁸

As Andrew Abbot notes, a common approach in the social sciences is to:

[t]hink about cases independent of one another and, often, of the past. We characterize cases by properties like gender, race, totalitarianism, or bureaucratization and then ask how these properties are connected together in something we call a causal chain. Our methods are founded almost exclusively on such a model of social reality. And they have produced much interesting knowledge.⁶⁹

Yet this approach, as Abbot notes, has significant drawbacks. “[I]t doesn’t do very well by its own standards: Variance explained is often small, and effects are often substantively minimal despite their statistical significance. Rather than cumulating, we see diminishing returns.”⁷⁰ Put another way, while statistical surveys are useful in explaining independent events, without proper contextualization, they are poor substitutes for explaining why a social phenomenon has occurred and what such developments mean more broadly.

Despite their drawbacks, statistical surveys can be used to complement qualitative analysis. Given the extraordinary financial costs of nationally representative surveys and the modest monetary means of this research, such surveys play a limited, yet important role in this study. However, in addition to relying on public opinion polls and the surveys of other, much

⁶⁸ R. Bampton and C. J. Cowton, “The E-Interview,” *Forum Qualitative Social Research* 3, no. 2 (2002). Found online at: <<http://www.qualitative-research.net/fqs/>> (Accessed March 3, 2009).

⁶⁹ Andrew Abbot, “Sequence Analysis: New Methods for Old Ideas,” *Annual Review of Sociology* 21, no. 1 (2002): 94 of 93-113.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

larger established research groups such as the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, I conducted an online poll (N = 850) for this thesis. The poll itself, which is entitled the *Internet and Evangelical* survey, was a 45-question survey and took around twenty minutes to complete. Data was collected from January 21, 2009 through February 27, 2010. Respondents were not chosen, but rather answered online pleas that were posted on various web pages, such as Facebook group pages and blog postings. Renewal, the ESA, Restoring Eden, and various Emergent Village cohorts similarly encouraged their members to participate in the survey. In these cases, a link to the survey was sent out to members on group list servers, or to all members of a Facebook group page.

The *Internet and Evangelicals* survey derives many of its questions from the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life's, *2008 US Religious Landscape Survey*. Without doubt, Pew's survey is the largest and most comprehensive investigation into the religious habits, practices and beliefs of the American people to date. In all, more than 35,000 Americans aged 18 and older participated in this survey. In seeking a reliable control against which the *Internet and Evangelicals* survey can be compared, I have purposely retained several questions asked in the *US Religious Landscape Survey*, as doing so will better allow me to better analyze of potential trends and political deviations between the respondents of the respective surveys. Determining which of Pew's questions to include was somewhat of a subjective decision, though I sought to use a cross-section of questions on a wide-range of economic and social issues. These questions include those likely to illicit more emotional responses, such as those pertaining to abortion, gay rights and the likes, as well as those likely to be more benign, such as questions on foreign policy and economic regulations.

It is important to note that while several demographic questions such as age, gender, religious attendance, political persuasion, and party identification were asked, questions pertaining to income and education levels were intentionally left out of the *Internet and Evangelicals* survey. This was done because three of the six organizations that participated in this survey are comprised primarily of college students. Thus, asking about income and educational attainment would have failed to provide either a stable measurement or an accurate barometer, as educational and income levels fluctuate significantly for the average twenty-something American. Including these questions in the survey would muddled findings and could lead to inaccurate conclusions based on information that rapidly changes. Finally, the *Internet and Evangelicals* survey was never intended to be a representative survey. Such surveys require an enormous financial investment and are beyond the means of this thesis. Instead, the *Internet and Evangelicals* survey was conducted to compliment the qualitative nature of this thesis. As such, it is best to view this poll as an exhaustive archive of 850 structured interviews that serves to supplement the qualitative analysis of this thesis.

Much like personal interviews, web analysis plays an important role in this thesis as it sheds light on the structure and practices of the six organizations affiliated with the selected case studies. In particular, Kristen Foot and Steven Schneider's conceptualization of web spheres as a unit of analysis is employed to gain a better understanding of the online activities of the selected case studies.⁷¹ Such an approach allows for a comprehensive study of the evolving cyber practices of the creation care and emerging church movements through improved analysis of web content, processes and practices.

⁷¹ Kristen Foot and Steven Schneider *Web Campaigning* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2006).

Plan of Thesis

As this thesis will demonstrate, the rise of the new media environment is pushing American evangelical Christianity into uncharted theological and political waters. To better address how the Internet is affecting the interplay between religion and politics in the United States, this thesis has grounded much of its research in an analysis of social capital, civic engagement, and mobilization, as these topics are important variables that can shed considerable understanding on the social changes and unrest currently gripping the evangelical community. Chapter 2 of this thesis, “A Review of the Literature Examining the Effect of the Internet on Social Capital,” serves as a review of relevant social capital, civic engagement, and mobilization literature, and presents key theories and arguments upon which much this research is built. Chapter 3, “Evangelicals and American Politics,” continues the work of the literature review by providing empirical evidence of the above theories in action. Not only does this chapter provide a contextualization of these theories in terms of on-the-ground developments, but it also offers a historical review of the political rise of the Christian Right, while noting the crucial importance of media in this narrative.

Chapter 4, “Breaking the Monologue Part I: How the Internet is Empowering the Evangelical Periphery,” offers empirical evidence demonstrating the influence of the Internet on the religious fragmentation of the American evangelical community, while Chapter 5, “Breaking the Monologue Part II: The Online Evangelism of the Creation Care and Emerging Church Movements,” provides specific insight into how various evangelical groups are using the Internet and other media to advance their message and gain broader public support. Chapter 6, “New Political Orientations in Evangelical Christianity,” extends the work of the previous chapters by

examining the many emerging and often polarizing theological debates within the evangelical tradition. Chapter 6 similarly argues that these changing theological perspectives are leading many evangelical Christians down an alternative cultural and political path than that of their parents and grandparents.

Having established that new media is indeed leading towards the theological and political fragmentation of the American evangelical community, Chapter 7, “The Death and Resurrection of the American Religious Marketplace,” departs from earlier chapters to begin a multi-chapter exploration of the political and social implications of this development. Chapter 7 argues that a fragmented evangelical community is rejuvenating the American religious economy by providing believers with greater religious choice. As a result, not only are more liberal expressions of Christianity benefiting from this change, but also non-traditional forms of religious worship, such as so-called “house churches” and other small religious cohorts. Moreover, changes such as these further cripple the long held religious monopoly of the Christian Right and are leading towards a moderation of religious and political beliefs among many American evangelicals. A key area where we are witnessing significant evangelical moderation is the environment. While evangelical environmentalism admittedly remains controversial within the evangelical tradition (a point which serves to further reinforce the religious fragmentation argument) the fact that many evangelical Christians are eagerly embracing environmentalism as a religious imperative offers new and critical opportunities to advance the cause of global environmental stewardship. Chapter 8, “Evangelical Environmentalism and the Politics of Climate Change,” explores these opportunities in much greater depth. One of the main arguments advanced in this chapter is that Democrats can make substantial inroads with the evangelical community by more aggressively campaigning on

matters of environmental stewardship. Doing so will have the added benefit of pressuring Republicans to adopt a more friendly environmental platform. However, while such religious outreach is increasingly common among Democrats, some in the party are uneasy as they worry that an embrace of these more conservative voters will lead to an abandonment of core party principles, most notably on issues of women's reproductive rights. Chapter 9, "Abortion, Faith Outreach and the Democratic Party," explores this point in greater depth and concludes that the increase number of pro-life Democrats in the United States House of Representatives during the 110th and 111th Congress had a negligible effect on status of abortion rights. It concludes with the argument that Democrats would be wise to take advantage of the changing evangelical community by continuing recent faith outreach efforts, and if need be, by running pro-life Democrats in more socially conservative districts and states where, despite moderation on many issues, political support of abortion rights continues to be an electoral impediment separating the party from broader evangelical affirmation.

CHAPTER TWO

A REVIEW OF LITERATURE EXAMINING THE EFFECT OF THE INTERNET ON SOCIAL CAPITAL, CIVIC ENGAGEMENT AND MOBILIZATION

On Halloween night American children are no longer given candied apples. Instead, parents have come to rely on the safety of pre-wrapped miniature chocolate bars and other sweets, as trust in one's own community has deteriorated. Across the country, membership to long established organizations is dwindling, while neighbors are increasingly becoming strangers, and co-workers are quickly assuming the role of acquaintances. Cities are growing, suburbs are expanding and every year more new services roll onto the market that promise the same thing: buy this product and you can enjoy less direct interaction with others. It is a frightening trend for many, but one Americans are not unfamiliar with. For instance, "as families left cities for the suburbs in a national migration throughout the 1940s and '50s, they sought ways to establish community ties. Churches were an obvious anchor, and church membership shot up to record levels."⁷² In the half century since then those historic levels have dropped just nine points, with some 40 percent of the current American population attending church on a weekly basis⁷³. However, academics and politicians alike continue to note a far more precipitous decline in social capital, civic engagement and a demobilized American electorate. An impressive literature examining these vital areas of political participation has emerged of late, and substantial work has explored them on both empirical and theoretical fronts. Not only has this collective work laid the foundations for a new area of academic study, but it has also captured the attention of policy makers and the public. Most recently, a growing subset of this work has focused considerable attention on the social effects of the Internet. The scholars engaged in this work, as will be demonstrated, are largely divided into three camps: those who view the Internet as increasing community connectedness, those who believe the opposite to be

⁷² Amy Sullivan, *The Party Faithful: How and Why Democrats Are Closing the Gap* (New York: Scribner, 2008), 27.

⁷³ Pew Forum Staff Writer, "Church Attendance," *The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life*, March 27, 2008. Found online at: <<http://pewforum.org/docs/?DocID=294#church>> (Accessed June 18, 2008).

true, and finally, those who hold that the Internet effectively does neither, but rather serves as just another medium through which existing relationships are maintained.

As already noted, existing scholarly research has failed to address how the Internet affects the interplay between religion and politics in the United States. However, there is much relevant material on the Internet's effect on the key concepts of social capital, civic engagement and mobilization. Given that American religious organizations and institutions have historically relied on strong internal community and a deep sense of theological symmetry (belonging) in order to mobilize their supporters behind particular civic and political engagements, understanding how the Internet is effecting these areas is a crucial first step.

Social Capital and Civic Engagement

Traditional understandings of “capital” largely derive from economic conceptualizations and are usually perceived in relation to labor markets. This purely economic understanding of “capital” and “labor” has not been particularly contested historically, insofar as scant disagreement has emerged as to who or what has routinely been in a position to command labor forces:⁷⁴ those with power, or, more particularly, those with cash. However, French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu argued that an explicitly economic conception of capital is insufficient for understanding many common social situations.⁷⁵ Bourdieu distinguishes between three different types of capital: cultural, economic and social. With some overlap, these various kinds of capital exert their influence in quite distinct fashions. While economic capital makes use of labor

⁷⁴ See Chuck Dyke, “Bourdieuian Dynamics: The American Middle-Class Self-Constructs,” in *Bourdieu: A Critical Reader*, ed. Richard Schusterman (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1999).

⁷⁵ Pierre Bourdieu, “The Forms of Capital,” in *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*, ed. J.G. Richardson (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986).

markets and the laws governing supply and demand, cultural capital relies on those forces and institutions, such as schools, which are used to replicate prevailing social norms, mores and practices. Social capital, on the other hand, mediates power through the social relations an individual develops. These relations commonly play out through activities of civic engagement, such as membership in formalized associations or political parties, as well as voluntary and informal associations. In this context, one's social status—usually brought about through the networks one belongs to—is of equal importance, and in some cases more important, than economic capital. It is with social capital that our analysis begins.

Two Traditions of Social Capital

Concern over the vitality of communities and the health of societies is by no means a contemporary debate.⁷⁶ Indeed, the field of sociology developed in concert with societal changes brought about by industrialization, bureaucratization and urbanization.⁷⁷ However, in recent years debate over the relative health of society has returned to the public forum with increased vigor and focused attention on the concept of “social capital.” While no accepted definition of social capital yet exists, two defining traditions have emerged.⁷⁸ *The critical tradition* of social capital recognizes its work on predominantly two fronts: prestige and social relations.⁷⁹ As regards prestige, the social status of an individual plays a significant role in one's ability to

⁷⁶ Keith N. Hampton and Barry Wellman, “Examining Community in the Digital Neighborhood: Early Results from Canada's Wired Suburb,” in *The Wired Homestead: An MIT Sourcebook on the Internet and the Family*, eds. Joseph Turow and Andrea L. Kavanaugh (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2003).

⁷⁷ Pamela Paxton, “Is Social Capital Declining in the United States? A Multiple Indicator Assessment,” *American Journal of Sociology* 105, no. 1 (1999).

⁷⁸ Marleen Huysman and Volker Wulf, eds., *Social Capital and Information Technologies* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2004).

⁷⁹ Bourdieu, “The Forms of Capital;” see also, James Coleman, *Foundations of Social Theory* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990); and Nan Lin, *Social Capital* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

acquire goods and services. For instance, the purchasing power of \$10,000, regardless of whoever possesses it and however it was acquired, has merely the *purchasing power* of \$10,000. Similarly, a twenty-dollar bill given to a clerk at Macy's is simply a twenty-dollar bill and is therefore not indicative of one's social standing. Yet at the same Macy's, a Platinum American Express Credit Card tells the clerk far more about the customer.⁸⁰ In this case, the social value of a platinum credit card, even one twenty dollars from its credit limit, is of considerably more social value than a mere twenty-dollar bill. As regards social relations, the critical tradition perceives social capital to be "the product of investment strategies, individual or collective, consciously or unconsciously aimed at establishing or reproducing social relationships, which are directly usable in the short or long term."⁸¹ In other words, it pays to know the right people. Among the scholars who have emerged as significant figures in this tradition is Nan Lin, who places additional significance on social networks, insisting that social capital be viewed as an individual "investment in social relations with expected returns in the marketplace."⁸² For Lin, society is the marketplace, and the returns of which she speaks are those goods and services made possible through one's social position, networking, or some likely combination of the two.

On the political front it is easy to see how the critical tradition, with its emphasis on the strategic interactions of individuals or groups of individuals for the purpose of fostering gainful social relations, could be useful in evaluations of power and power relations. In stark contrast to the critical tradition is *the communitarian tradition*, which maintains that "a person's family, friends and associates constitute an important asset, one that can be called on in a crisis, enjoyed for its own sake, and leveraged for material gain."⁸³ In this tradition, social capital resides in the

⁸⁰ Lin, *Social Capital*.

⁸¹ Bourdieu, quoted by Huysman and Wulf, *Social Capital*, 2.

⁸² Lin, *Social Capital*, 19.

⁸³ Michael Woolcock and Deepa Narayan, "Social Capital: Implications for

community and serves as the lubricant by which trust is established, communities are built and democracies thrive.⁸⁴ For communitarians, this non-individualistic tradition has a much larger role to play in the relative health and prosperity of communities. In between this individualistic/communitarian dichotomy is a collection of scholars whose work attempts to bridge the divide. For instance, Francis Fukuyama perceives social capital to be both an individual asset as well as a communal good. Fukuyama asserts that social capital is a utility that “permits individuals to band together to defend their interests and organize to support collective needs.”⁸⁵ From this vantage point it is easy to understand how the interests of a relatively homogenous group of individuals, such as an organization of dedicated journalists committed to the principles of a free and open press, could likewise serve a greater social good.

Underpinning the critical and communitarian understandings, as well as those attempts that seek to bring them together, are the concepts of trust and reciprocity. This is due to the fact that “social capital is produced by the intentional activities of individuals who are connected to one another by ongoing networks of social relationships.”⁸⁶ A consequence of social interaction is the generation of accepted levels of trust between participants. Presumably, therefore, the closer and more intimate the relationship is between one individual and another the higher the levels of trust. Reciprocity is also established through continued interaction: the more my friend scratches my back, the more likely I become to scratch theirs. Conversely, when social relations are weak, or when strong relations deteriorate, aggregate levels of trust and reciprocity diminish.

Development Theory, Research and Policy,” *The World Bank Observer* 15, no. 2 (2000): 226.

Found online at: <<http://www.csae.ox.ac.uk/conferences/2000-oia/pdfpapers/woolcock.pdf>> (Accessed January 18, 2008).

⁸⁴ Huysman and Wulf, *Social Capital*; see also, David Riesman, “The Suburban Sadness,” in *The Suburban Community*, ed. William M. Dobriner (New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1958).

⁸⁵ Francis Fukuyama, “Social Capital and Development: The Coming Agenda,” *SAIS Review* 22, no. 1 (2001): 22-37. Italics are the authors.

⁸⁶ Ronald La Due Lake and Robert Huckfeldt, “Social Capital, Social Networks, and Political Participation,” *Political Psychology* 19, no. 3 (1998): 569 of 567-584.

In this manner, it must to some degree be taken for granted that higher levels of community involvement and social relations create higher levels of trust and reciprocity. Without this axiom the social capital literature would be unable to expand its scope of study.

Evidence supporting both the critical and communitarian understandings of social capital can be found among religious organizations. As this thesis will demonstrate, the prestige of respected church leaders has proven a decisive advantage for evangelical political mobilization and civic engagement, while the network of evangelical churches, mission societies, universities and bible colleges, radio and television stations, publishing houses, lobbying groups and the like, have provided a critical apparatus for reaching the public and influencing public policy. At the same time, the evangelical community is much more than an extensive network of para-ministry organizations, while respected church leaders and opinion makers are not limited to those individuals with a radio program or best-selling book. Every Sunday, tens of millions of Americans attend worship at an evangelical church and the associations made there often shape individual identities and deeply influence political persuasions. When studying relationships such as these, one would fall prey to a false dichotomy to choose either an analysis of the critical or communitarian tradition at the exclusion of the other. This is so as social relationships are both bonds that constitute greater social goods, as well as resources upon which people depend. Among the evangelical community, the tight weave bringing together individual relationships and broader institutional coherence requires us to adopt different modes of analysis (communitarian and critical) depending on the object and circumstances under review.

Are Social Capital and Civic Engagement in Decline?

Analyzing a number of trend surveys, time logs and census data reports, among other resources, Robert Putnam has concluded that Americans connectedness has substantially declined since the mid 1960s.⁸⁷ Among the many culprits recognized as contributing to this decline are: urban sprawl,⁸⁸ television and other forms of multi-media,⁸⁹ a general decline in face-to-face interaction,⁹⁰ two-career families,⁹¹ a dip in both religious attendance and civic participation,⁹² the professionalization of political activities and the rise of interest groups,⁹³ increased cynicism towards government and politicians and/or decreased confidence in governmental institutions,⁹⁴ lower levels of social and inter-personal trust and increased civic fear largely generated by sensationalism in mainstream media.⁹⁵

Working largely from the above findings, and drawing heavily upon the writings of Alexis de Tocqueville, Putnam attempts to illustrate the dangers associated with declining levels

⁸⁷ See Robert D. Putnam, "Social Capital and Public Affairs," *Bulletin of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences* 47, no. 8 (1994): 5-19; Putnam, "Bowling Alone: America's declining social capital," *Journal of Democracy* 6, no. 1 (1995): 65-78; Putnam, "The Strange Disappearance of Civic America," *The American Prospect* 7, no. 24 (1996): 34-48; Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (London: Simon and Schuster, 2000); Putnam, ed., *Democracy in Flux: The Evolution of Social Capital in Contemporary Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002); Laura Pappano, *The Connection Gap: Why Americans Feel So Alone* (Piscataway, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2001); Theda Skocpol, *Diminished Democracy: From Membership to Management in American Civic Life* (Tulsa: University of Oklahoma Press, 2003); and Eric M. Uslaner, "Trust, Civic Engagement, and the Internet," *Political Communication* 24, no. 1 (2004): 223-242.

⁸⁸ Putnam, *Bowling Alone*.

⁸⁹ Putnam, *Bowling Alone*; Putnam, *Democracy in Flux*; Pappano, *Connection Gap*; Uslaner, 'Trust'; Ellen Seiter, "Television and the Internet," in *Wired Homestead*; see also, Merrill Morris and Christine Ogan, "The Internet as a Mass Medium," *Journal of Communication* 46, no. 1 (1996): 39-50.

⁹⁰ Putnam, *Social Capital*; Putnam, 'Bowling Alone'; Putnam, 'Strange Disappearance'; and Putnam, *Bowling Alone*.

⁹¹ Putnam, *Bowling Alone*.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Ibid.; see also, Skocpol, *Diminished Democracy*.

⁹⁴ Putnam, *Bowling Alone*; see also, Elaine Ciulla Kamarack and Joseph S. Nye Jr., eds., *Governance.com: Democracy in the Information Age* (Harrisonburg, Virginia: R. R. Donnelly and Sons, 2002); and Paul Starr, "The Public Vanishes," *The New Republic*, August 14, 2000. Found online at: <<http://www.princeton.edu/~starr/articles/articles00/Starr.Review.BowlingAlone-8-00.htm>> (Accessed November 17, 2007).

⁹⁵ Jorge Reina Schement, "Three for Society: Households and Media in the Creation of Twenty-First Century Communities," in *Wired Homestead*; see also, John C. Pierce and Nicholas P. Lovrich, Jr., "Internet Technology Transfer and Social Capital: Aggregate and Individual Relationships in American Cities," *Comparative Technology Transfer and Society* 1, no. 1 (2003): 49-71.

of social capital and civic engagement. While exploring the newly forged American Republic, Tocqueville took considerable notice of Americans' many associations (pools of social capital), commenting, "Americans of all ages, all stations in life, and all types of disposition are forever forming associations."⁹⁶ For Tocqueville, these voluntary associations played an essential role in facilitating American democracy by fending off political repression and reigning in any would-be tyrant. "No countries," Tocqueville decried, "need associations more—to prevent either despotism of parties or the arbitrary rule of a prince—than those with a democratic social state."⁹⁷ As Putnam perceives it, diminished civic and social involvement represents a historic shift in the nature of the American character and threatens to tear the fabric of American social and political life. Here again he draws on Tocqueville, for just as in colonial America, Tocqueville's native France had recently undergone radical social upheaval, in which an "aristocratic, communally oriented society" gave way to a "democratic, individualist society."⁹⁸ However, democracy in these countries took rather divergent paths. In France, the revolution subsequently resulted in a form of "atomistic despotism, in which politically equal citizens" tended to their own self-interests, thereby leaving the door open for a "few rulers to grab and centralize" power, while in America, by contrast, "public-spirited mores and institutions of civil society" served to check centralizing forces and help to reinforce attitudes of democratic equality.⁹⁹ Thus, if Putnam is indeed correct in his assertion that American stocks of social capital are in decline, such decay could have disastrous effects on the performance and structure of public governance.

⁹⁶ J. P. Mayer, ed., and George Lawrence, trans., *Alexis de Tocqueville: Democracy in America* (New York: Harper and Row, 1969), 513.

⁹⁷ Tocqueville, quoted in *Alexis de Tocqueville*, 192.

⁹⁸ Putnam, *Democracy in Flux*, 13.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

Despite strong empirical data suggesting levels of American social capital has been declining for the better part of the last half-century, Putnam and his supporters are not without their critics. Everett Carl Ladd, for instance, directly questions Putnam's assertion that civic activity has waned. Ladd attempts to show that Americans are just as politically active today as they were in years past, and that in fact, charitable giving and time spent volunteering have actually increased over the years.¹⁰⁰ Nancy Ammerman is another who disagrees with Putnam, particularly his assertion that American's are losing touch with one another. She writes:

Knowing that people are not bowling in leagues does not tell us that they are necessarily bowling alone. They may be bowling with informal friendship groups, their families, or their Sunday school classes. The decline in one form of associational participation—while disconcerting to those with an economic investment in that form—does not necessarily mean a decline in association as such.¹⁰¹

Similarly, taking aim squarely at Putnam's overall thesis, Paul Rich argues that "historical evidence indicates that associations come and go,"¹⁰² and that for some time now "it has been apparent that individual associations rise and fall and that no complex society has discovered

¹⁰⁰ Everett Carl Ladd, *The Ladd Report: Startling New Research Shows How an Explosion of Voluntary Groups, Activities and Charitable Donations is Transforming Our Town and Cities* (New York: The Free Press, 1999); see also, Star, "Public Vanishes."

¹⁰¹ Nancy T. Ammerman, "Bowling together: Congregations and the American civic order," *The Arizona State University Lecture in Religion*, February 26, 1996. Found online at: <<http://digilib.bu.edu/dspace/bitstream/handle/2144/43/bolwing.pdf?sequence=1>> (Accessed November 14, 2007).

¹⁰² Paul Rich, "American Voluntarism, Social Capital, and Political Culture," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 565, no. 1 (1999): 17 of 15-34.

the secret of organizational equilibrium.”¹⁰³ Additionally, Rich writes that “different kinds of voluntarism are constantly being invented.”¹⁰⁴ Rich continues, stating that the World Wide Web has “created a whole new voluntary world, which is just beginning to find its voice.”¹⁰⁵ By raising the topic of the Internet as a new means of civic engagement, Rich is entering into a hotly contested debate that is thus far anything but settled and that merits additional attention.

The Internet As Diminishing Civic Engagement and Social Capital

With a rapid expansion of research examining the impact of the Internet on society, considerable literature has emerged alleging a negative correlation between Internet use and social capital.¹⁰⁶ One of the more common and re-occurring themes to surface throughout this body of work has been the assertion that the more time one spends on-line, the less time one has to foster and care for existing social relations. Putnam, while acknowledging the potential the Internet poses in displacing time spent in-front of television, concludes that “the commercial incentives that currently govern Internet development seem destined to emphasize individual entertainment and commerce rather than community engagement.”¹⁰⁷ Such a development, if true, could lead to further “social isolation and depression.”¹⁰⁸ On this point Putnam is far from alone. Robert Kraut et al. relay the concern of many authors, alleging that the “ease of Internet

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 15.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ See for instance, J. Cummings, B. Butler and R. Kraut, “The Quality of Online Social Relationships,” *Communications of the ACM* 45, no. 7(2002): 103-108; see also, N. H. Nie, “Sociability, Interpersonal Relations, and the Internet: Reconciling Conflicting Findings,” *American Behavioral Scientist* 45, no. 3 (2001): 420-435.

¹⁰⁷ Putnam, *Bowling Alone*, 179.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

communication might encourage people to spend more time alone, talking online with strangers or forming superficial ‘drive by’ relationships, at the expense of deeper discussion and companionship with friends and family.”¹⁰⁹ Furthermore, considerable apprehension has been expressed over the validity of on-line communications. Many people, for instance, regard email as a less serious mode of communication for maintaining social relationships.¹¹⁰ Additionally, legislators and public officials consider email correspondence less seriously than other forms of communication.¹¹¹ One reason for this last may be due to the difficulty in knowing whether or not the sender is an actual constituent. Similarly, email is often perceived the same way as formatted mass mailings, as the effort required to produce such correspondence is considerably less than what is required for writing a hand written letter or in making a personal phone call.

Analyzing contemporary lifestyles, Jorge Reina Schement puts forward the argument that the modern home serves as a haven away from public life, where individuals retreat to the safety of their own nests, thereby avoiding considerable civic participation. Aiding greatly in this public withdrawal has been the convergence of computer-mediated communication (CMC) and the American consumer culture. For Schement, the home has today become a “market-window” offering “many opportunities to avoid the shoving and nastiness associated with shopping in

¹⁰⁹ Kraut et al., “Internet Paradox Revisited,” in *Wired Homestead*; see also, Robert LaRose, Matthew Eastin, and Jennifer Gregg, “Reformulating the Internet Paradox: Social Cognitive Explanation of Internet Use and Depression,” *Journal of Online Behavior* 1 no. 2 (2001). Found online at: <<http://www.behavior.net/JOBv1n2/paradox.html>> (Accessed November 17, 2007); Malcolm Parks and Lynn Roberts, “Making MOOsic: The Development of Personal Relationships On Line and a Comparison to Their Off-line Counterparts,” *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships* 15 no. 1 (1998): 517-537; and Jeffrey Cole, “Surveying the Digital Future,” *The UCLA Internet Report* (2000). Found online at: <<http://WWW.CCP.UCLA.EDU/pages/internet-report.asp>> (Accessed December 12, 2007).

¹¹⁰ Robert Kraut and P. Attwell, “Media Use in a Global Corporation: Electronic Mail and Organizational Knowledge,” in *Culture of the Internet*, ed. S. Keisler (Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum, 1997).

¹¹¹ Lilliard E. Richardson Jr., Linda M. Daughy and Patricia K. Freeman, “E-mail Contact Between Constituents and State Legislators,” *State and Local Government Review* 33, no. 1 (2001): 23-31.

public.”¹¹² As a result of the privatization of this once highly public exercise, consumers are less acquainted today with their local surroundings than they once were.

The Internet as Subsidizing Existing Levels of Social Capital and Civic Engagement

In contrast to the view that growing Internet use is resulting in declining levels of social capital and civic engagement, is the position that the Internet neither creates nor directly diminishes either.¹¹³ Rather, it is held by some that the Internet subsidizes existing social relations and civic participation.¹¹⁴ In this view, the Internet will not awaken “a new spirit of community,” but will rather serve as “an additional outlet for people who are already connected to other people.”¹¹⁵ Giovanna Mascheroni advances this point by demonstrating how so-called “global nomads” (back-packers) use the Internet to maintain existing social relationships.¹¹⁶ Furthermore, additional evidence is accumulating that shows Internet use conforms to existing patterns of communications and simply augments more traditional technologies.¹¹⁷

When attention is shifted to the types of participation taking place online, we find that Internet activities are similar to off-line patterns. As such, socioeconomic biases that exist in nearly all conventional forms of political participation seem unlikely to disappear on the Internet,

¹¹² Schement, “Three for Society: Households and Media in the Creation of Twenty-First Century Communities,” 416.

¹¹³ James Katz and Ronald E. Rice, *Social Consequences of Internet Use* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2002).

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁵ James Katz and Phillip Apden, as quoted by Uslaner, “Trust,” 231.

¹¹⁶ Giovanna Mascheroni, “Global Nomads’ Network and Mobile Sociality: Exploring New Media Uses on the Move,” *Information, Communication and Society* 10, no. 4 (2007): 527-546.

¹¹⁷ Andrew J. Flanagin, Cynthia Stohl and Bruce Bimber, “Modeling the Structure of Collective Action,” *Communication Monographs* 73, no. 1 (2006): 29-54; see also, Caroline Haythornthwaite, “Social Networks and Internet Connectivity Effects,” *Information, Communication & Society* 8, no. 2 (2005): 125-147.

even as Internet access gradually widens to reach the electronically disadvantaged.¹¹⁸ As access to the Internet continues to grow, off-line activities, such as the viewing of passive entertainment, video gaming, gambling and other activities void of any civic benefits, increasingly finds a home online. This expansion of online activities could potentially keep politically apathetic individuals away from meaningful public discourse and civic engagement as their choices in online activities continues to diversify and as competing media outlets continue to vie for their attention. Thus the result of greater Internet use will most likely be an ever-enlarging intellectual gap between the well-informed and the rest of society.

Quan-Haase and Wellman note that there is no strong statistical association demonstrating a positive or negative correlation between Internet use and active participation; people who engage in political and organizational activities tend to use the Internet as much as those who are disengaged.¹¹⁹ Nonetheless, the Internet remains a viable medium for political activists to propagate their message and to contest public policy, as the dichotomy that once separated online political activity from its off-line counterpart has all but faded into oblivion. Today, individuals who are politically active online are likewise active off-line and with increasing vigor, and those who are active off-line are increasingly finding the Internet as another medium for political participation.¹²⁰ Despite this trend, however, several authors have questioned the Internet's overall impact on the political process. Prior to the success of the Obama campaign in defeating Democratic rival Hilary Clinton, Elaine Ciulla Kamarack noted that while the Internet had helped candidates raise funds, mobilize supporters and spread their

¹¹⁸ Murdock and Golding as quoted by Pippa Norris, *Digital Divide: Civic Engagement, Information Poverty and the Internet Worldwide* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

¹¹⁹ Anabel Quan-Hause, Barry Wellman, James C. Witte and Keith N. Hampton, "Capitalizing on the Net: Social Contact, Civic Engagement, and Sense of Community," in *The Internet in Everyday Life*, eds. Barry Wellman and Caroline Haythornthwaite (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2002).

¹²⁰ Wayne McIntosh and Paul Harwood, "The Internet and America's Changing Sense of Community," *The Good Society* 11, no. 3 (2002): 25-28.

message, it had thus far failed to secure any insurgent candidate their party's nomination for president.¹²¹ The question thus remains: What was it about Obama's campaign that proved so dramatically different? We will return to this question shortly.

The Internet as Fostering Additional Civic Engagement and New Forms of Social Capital

The belief that the Internet helps to maintain existing social capital, as well as creates more, is the third major argument commonly advanced in the existing literature. While this position, often described as 'utopian,' has long been present in on-going debates, it has recently gained considerable traction, as increasingly authors once hostile to this position have come to embrace it. Most famous among them is arguably Kraut et al., who in a substantial revision of their 1998 work, found that the Internet allowed socially isolated individuals to avoid feelings of loneliness and despair.¹²² This position was also reflected by Adam Kushner of Newsweek who reported that many high school and college graduates are opting out of reunions as the social networking site Facebook affords a quick and easy way to remain in touch with old friends.¹²³ In addition to making existing relationships more manageable, it has also been noted that the Internet connects geographically dispersed people with common interests, similar histories, or rare afflictions, and serves as a medium through which meaningful affinities are formed and various types of support offered.¹²⁴ In addition to bridging geographic gaps, some evidence suggests that the Internet is likewise re-acquainting individuals with their local community.

¹²¹ Kamarack and Nye, *Governance.com*.

¹²² Kraut et al., "Internet Paradox Revisited," in *Wired Homestead*.

¹²³ Adam Kushner, "See You at Reunion. Or Maybe Not.," *Newsweek*, June 7, 2008. Found online at: <<http://www.newsweek.com/id/140480>> (Accessed June 16, 2008).

¹²⁴ Denise Carter, "Living in Virtual Communities: An Ethnography of Human Relationships in Cyberspace," *Information, Communication and Society* 8, no. 2 (2005): 148-167.

Moreover, a number of authors have also found a positive correlation between Internet use and inter-personal trust.¹²⁵

Through the use of prolific online social networks such as Facebook and Craigslist, individuals are discovering a host of people, groups, and organizations with which to identify, and are using these communities to form altogether new affiliations. Evidence further indicates that “individuals who are members of several social networks are using the[ir] membership to strengthen weak ties across different groups,”¹²⁶ and making friends where friends once did not exist. Activity such as this is a crucial first step in the process of mobilization and further serves as an adhesive for civil society. Additionally, the strengthening of weak ties that occurs via the Internet often leads participants to meet face-to-face.¹²⁷ Similarly, increased social trust, which Kobayashi et al. argue is “enhanced through the collective use of the Internet, may in turn enhance the level of social participation in the offline world.”¹²⁸

Advances in Internet technologies and changes in its usage have likewise forced a critical re-evaluation of social capital and civic engagement. Such changes have not only brought about new online possibilities in areas from political campaigning to entertainment media, but as access to the Internet has gradually widened, the daily practices of habitual users have been steadily transformed. Rasanen and Kouvo, for instance, argue that Internet users spend less time watching television and listening to the radio,¹²⁹ while other Internet technologies such as text

¹²⁵ Pierce and Lovrich, “Internet Technology Transfer”; see also, Hangwoo Lee, “Implosion, Virtuality, and Interaction in an Internet Discussion Group,” *Information, Communication & Society* 8, no. 1 (2005): 47-63.

¹²⁶ Andrea Kavanaugh, “Community Networks and Civic Engagement: A Social Network Approach,” *The Good Society* 11, no. 3(2002): 19 of 17-24.

¹²⁷ Pekka Rasanen and Antti Kouvo, “Linked or Divided by the Web? Internet Use and Sociability in Four European Countries,” *Information, Communication & Society* 10, no. 2 (2007): 219-241.

¹²⁸ Tetsuro Kobayashi, Ken’ichi Ikeda and Kakuko Miyata, “Social Capital Online: Collective Use of the Internet and Reciprocity as Lubricants of Democracy,” *Information, Communication & Society* 9, no. 5 (2006): 605 of 582-611.

¹²⁹ Pekka and Kouvo, “Linked or Divided?.”

messages and emails are often employed to arrange face-to-face meetings.¹³⁰ Similarly, Anita Blanchard argues that “[i]nternet activity supplements interactions with others [and] increases activity in civic and political groups.”¹³¹ On this point, Ji-young Kim adds:

The Internet seems to herald a new political culture and to foster a vibrant civil society by providing channels through which the public can react to what is happening at the centre of politics, and by remapping the relationship between government officials and politicians and their public, as well as between members of the public at large.¹³²

Yet rather than serve to reinforce the centralization of power and bureaucratization of government, Joseph Nye Jr. notes that “new information technologies have tended to foster network organization” and have helped to form “new types of community.”¹³³ Further evidence of this point can be found through consideration of Obama’s 2008 Presidential campaign.

By tapping into public dissatisfaction with the status quo and merging it with a message of change and hope, rather than just that of anger and dissatisfaction (as Dean had done four years prior) Obama was able to build a transformative campaign and a community of loyal Obama fanatics. His reliance on online donations, viral campaigning and the growing netroots of the Democratic blogosphere not only brought down the Hilary Clinton machine, but also introduced countless millions to the political process. His strong support among younger Americans, a heavy online demographic, also illustrates another important aspect in the evolving

¹³⁰ Mascheroni, “Global Nomads”; see also, Kobayashi, Ikeda and Miyata, “Social Capital Online.”

¹³¹ Anita Blanchard, “Virtual Communities and Social Capital,” in *Social Capital*, 57.

¹³² Ji-Young Kim, “The Impact of Internet Use Patterns on Political Engagement: A Focus on Online Deliberation and Virtual Social Capital,” *Information Polity* 11, no. 1 (2006): 35 of 35-49.

¹³³ Ciulla and Nye, *Governance.com*, 9.

nature of the political process. Brian Stelter, for instance, notes that, “younger voters tend to be not just consumers of news and current events, but conduits as well—sending out e-mailed links and videos to friends on their social networks. And in turn, they rely on friends and online connections for news to come to them.”¹³⁴ Thus, far from leading to social atomization, as some authors assert, the Internet appears to be a “technology through which social capital can be created [as] it draws people into contact with others to create shared resources and communal concerns.”¹³⁵ Nan Lin observed this phenomenon with the rapid outpouring of support for and the quick mobilization of Falun Gong supporters in response to the Chinese crackdown on the faith. Quan-Haase and Wellman have further observed that “the fact that people are not interacting in visible public spaces does not mean that they are in isolation.”¹³⁶ Rather, contemporary analysis of social capital and civic engagement must take this virtual reality into consideration. Failure to do so will present a partial picture when a more comprehensive examination is required.

Changes in Civic Engagement and the Pluralized Nature of Contemporary Society

When dealing with a static culture measuring corresponding levels of social capital and civic engagement from year to year can be a relatively straightforward process. However, when changes occur to a population that either alter the make-up of that population, or changes the way in which the population engages one another, measuring social capital and civic engagement becomes a more problematic task. The following sections will address this difficulty by

¹³⁴ Brian Stelter, “Finding Political News Online: The Young Pass It On,” *The New York Times*, March 27, 2008. Found online at: <<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/03/27/us/politics/27voters.html>> (Accessed May 2, 2008).

¹³⁵ Katz and Rice, *Social Consequence*, 337.

¹³⁶ As quoted by Huysman and Wulf, *Social Capital*, 132.

illustrating some of the important changes that occurred in America between the years of 1960 and 2000, and then by discussing what these changes have meant to the larger social fabric.

Changes in the Nature of Civic Engagement

If there is one overriding principle learned from the study of society, it is that societies are anything but static. Changes in political order—from the very small, such as the peaceful exchange of power from one political party to another, to the very large, as in the overthrow of political regimes as witnessed with the fall of Saigon or the collapse of the Soviet Union—are evidence enough that societies are perpetually on the move. Perhaps even more telling than the political fortunes of various communities and people are changes to the very structure of social orders. As Mancur Olson reveals, the nature of social organization has altered significantly with time. For instance, where once the family unit served as the dominant and near exclusive social institution, new associations gradually emerged that have taken on many tasks once associated with the family (such as education and employment), thereby effectively expanding the parameters of reliance for most individuals today.¹³⁷ When one considers the contemporary roles played by non-kinship structures such as the state, schools and large multi-nationals, the evolutionary nature of society is placed into greater relief.

Given the importance of historically contingent factors, such as changes in the economy, a growing and diversified culture, expanded possibilities for political participation via non-traditional venues and outlets, as well as technological advancements that have altered the way in which individuals communicate with one another and gather information, it is surprising that

¹³⁷ Mancur Olson, *The Logic of Collective Action: Public Goods and the Theory of Groups* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1965).

Putnam has given such changes so little attention. Yet this is precisely what Putnam does throughout much of his work. Far from taking such social changes into account, Putnam chooses instead to compare snapshots of 1960s America with America at the end of the twentieth century. While such a technique is useful when comparing periods of relatively little change, the two Americas Putnam compares are just that, two very different countries, much the same way Europe was a different place following the invention of the printing press. As Caroline Tolbert and Ramona McNeal justly point out, the last two decades are by themselves a unique historical period, in which major transitions were underway “in terms of how political information is transmitted to voters,”¹³⁸ as well as in terms of how the average citizen is political engaged. Among the many political changes that characterize this historical period was a dramatic rise in the number of and membership to large issue-oriented organizations such as Greenpeace and Amnesty International. While Putnam acknowledges gains made by such mass-membership organizations and even goes so far as to view them as having “growing political importance,”¹³⁹ he is ultimately dismissive of their growth and questions the overall positive impact such groups have upon society. “In many respects,” Putnam suggests, “such organizations have more in common with mail order commercial organizations than with old-fashioned face-to-face associations.”¹⁴⁰ Yet far from holding a monopoly over opinion, Putnam’s criticism represents but one side of what has become a heated debate. While certainly a number of academics see civic engagement declining, others perceive modes of civic engagement as having significantly evolved over the course of the past several years.¹⁴¹ Thus, Debra Minkoff is far more

¹³⁸ Caroline J. Talbot and Ramona S. McNeal, “Unraveling the Effects of the Internet on Political Participation?,” *Political Research Quarterly* 56, no. 2 (2003):176 of 175-185.

¹³⁹ Putnam, *Bowling Alone*, 51.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁴¹ Margaret Talbot, *Who Wants to be a Legionnaire?*, June 25, 2000. Found online at: <<http://www.nytimes.com/books/00/06/25/reviews/000625.25talbot.html>> (Accessed 12, December 2007).

enthusiastic regarding the gains of mass-membership organizations. Though she concedes to Putnam that these groups are less likely to generate face-to-face social relations, Minkoff believes mass membership organizations to be “more likely to generate societal conflict than consensus,”¹⁴² thereby contributing to the democratic dialogue of the American people and adding “to the stability and growth of civil society.”¹⁴³

As for the supposed loss of face-to-face interaction, Nicolas Lemann has found that such interactions rely less today on formal organizations such as Parent Teacher Associations, Boy Scouts and Putnam’s much beloved bowling leagues, and more on informal groups and gatherings such as “informal parents groups, ‘soccer mom’ networks, singles groups, fitness clubs and the so-called on-line communities of the Internet.”¹⁴⁴ In addition to the expansion of informal associations within society and the achievements of many mass-membership organizations, another political phenomenon has likewise cultivated considerable public attention and support: grassroots organizations.

The emergence of grassroots organizations represents a historic shift away from institutional reliance and appeals directly to participatory engagement. Vital to this phenomenon has been the advent of the Internet and other forms of technology that free individuals from their local surroundings and allows them to “choose what information to access and when to access “ it.”¹⁴⁵ Due to this newly actualized transcendence of local space, information and communication technologies (ICTs) require us to reconsider political engagement as “a series of places

¹⁴² Debra Minkoff, “Producing Social Capital: National Social Movements and Civil Society,” *American Behavioral Scientist* 40, no. 5 (1997): 611 of 606-619.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Bruce Bimber, *Information and American Democracy: Technology in the Evolution of Political Power* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 125.

¹⁴⁵ Caroline J. Tolbert and Romona S. McNeal, “Unraveling the Effects of the Internet on Political Participation,” *Political Research Quarterly* 56, no. 1 (2003): 175 of 175-185.

embodying reconstructed models of citizenship and new forms of political activism.”¹⁴⁶

Embedded within this realm of civic activity are networks of wired activists who, among other things, have been:

Creating online petitions, developing public awareness Web sites connected to traditional political organizations...building spook sites that make political points...creating online sites that support and propel real-life (RL) protest...and creating online organizations that have expanded to do traditional RL activities.¹⁴⁷

Activities such as these have not only changed the nature of political participation, but have also demonstrated why a new conceptualization of civic engagement is indeed needed.

As a growing number of individuals increasingly find their way online and as regular daily habits change as a result, challenging new questions arise concerning the complexities of contemporary social relations, civic engagement and contested political activity.¹⁴⁸ For instance, the widely adopted practice of conscience driven consumption, such as the purchasing of “fair-trade” goods, certified “organic” produce and “conflict-free” diamonds, illustrates the difficulty of measuring contemporary civic engagement, as measuring this sort of activity can be difficult to quantify. The Internet, however, aids in this practice by empowering citizens to quickly and easily seek information that would otherwise require a significant investment. As a result of this,

¹⁴⁶ R. Kahn and D. Kellner, “New Media and Internet Activism: From the ‘Battle of Seattle’ to Blogging,” *New Media and Society* 6, no. 1 (2004): 91 of 87-95.

¹⁴⁷ Martha McCaughey and Michael D. Ayers, *Cyberactivism: Online Activism in Theory and Practice* (New York City: Routledge, 2003), 1-2.

¹⁴⁸ Bimber, “Internet and Political Transformation.”

thresholds for civic engagement are lowered and more citizens are becoming increasingly aware of possibilities for political activity.¹⁴⁹

In addition to lowering thresholds for engagement, the Internet is also fostering new networks and repositories of citizenship with its ability to connect far-flung individuals and groups with shared or similar interests. By serving as a vehicle through which bottom-up grassroots activity is made easier, the Internet has evolved into an effective medium through which the power of individuals is both greatly enhanced and better positioned to serve larger collective goods. For instance, the case of the American Libertarian Party's successful opposition of the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation's (FDIC) so-called "Know Your Customer" proposal, illustrates clearly how a relatively small group of individuals can have significant political impact by acting as a watchdog group and by raising awareness with other groups with sympathetic positions.¹⁵⁰

Accelerated Pluralism

As this chapter has illustrated already, contemporary debates on social capital and civic engagement are ongoing. While a number of academics believe America to be increasingly plagued by waning levels of civic engagement, others have come to the conclusion that America is instead witnessing a historic period marked by the proliferation of issue oriented causes. In finding the latter to be the case, Bruce Bimber argues that America is on a path towards what he calls "accelerated pluralism." Underlying the premise of accelerated pluralism is the understanding that society is undergoing significant fragmentation whereby previous interest-

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ Bimber, *Information and American Democracy*.

based group politics is shifting towards a more fluid issue-based group politics, consequentially resulting in declining institutional coherence.¹⁵¹ The Internet has aided this process extensively by providing a medium through which individuals with similar interests can freely engage with one another.¹⁵² In cyberspace, for instance, individuals are better able to “overcome place based limitation to communication,”¹⁵³ thus allowing “stamp collectors, organic gardeners and knitting enthusiasts in Australia (to) exchange news, gossip and items of interest with similar enthusiasts in Mexico and Mauritius.”¹⁵⁴ In some cases, “access to the Internet provides the opportunity to participate in networks and interests communities that would be unavailable otherwise.”¹⁵⁵

However, not everyone finds the move towards a more pluralistic society to be a positive development. Francis Fukuyama, for instance, while acknowledging the importance of voluntary associations to the health of any democracy, nonetheless writes, “while it may be true that democracy is not possible in the absence of civil society, too much civil society can often be the bane of democracy.”¹⁵⁶ Recognizing the need people have to belong to groups, Fukuyama continues, “people are picking and choosing their values on an individual basis, in ways that link them with smaller communities of like-minded folk.”¹⁵⁷ Yet this tendency to build “in-group” solidarity comes at the expense of outsiders. For societies with too many tightly bonded groups or networks, the risk of social fragmentation and community strife increases.¹⁵⁸ Hanwoo Lee expands upon this point, noting that while people purposely seek out others with shared or

¹⁵¹ Bimber, “Internet and Political Transformation.”

¹⁵² Uslaner, “Trust.”

¹⁵³ Liza Hopkins, Julian Thomas, Denise Meredyth, and Scott Ewing, “Social Capital and Community Building through an Electronic Network,” *Australian Journal of Social Issues* 39, no.4 (2004): 373 of 369-378.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁵ John C. Pierce and Nicholas P. Lovrich, Jr., “Internet Technology Transfer and Social Capital: Aggregate and Individual Relationships in American Cities,” *Comparative Technology Transfer and Society* 1, no. 1 (2003): 53 of 49-71.

¹⁵⁶ Fukuyama, “Social Capital,” 31.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 26.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

similar interests, when those interests are of a political nature, hostilities often arise as group membership tends to entrench participants into more radical and extreme positions, and often at the expense of meaningful and constructive dialogue.¹⁵⁹ When political information is sought online, individuals are likely to visit sites that reflect their own views. In these cases, “*the acquisition of new information does not necessarily make citizens better informed in a rational or objective sense.*”¹⁶⁰ This apparent paradox turns on the fact that citizens acquire and learn information in ways that are biased toward reinforcing previously held beliefs and mental constructs.” Even more troubling is the fact that “new information resources are likely to be used mainly by the most well informed, who are already most likely to be engaged.”¹⁶¹ This being the case, a situation in which those already rich in politically relevant social capital will likely obtain more, while those poor in political information will not take full advantage of this new medium.¹⁶²

Mobilization

Classical mobilization theory developed at a time in which the Internet was still in its infancy and was used primarily at research institutions and in the Armed services. With today’s widespread use of the Internet and other forms of ICTs, many scholars are re-visiting theories of mobilization to synchronize them better with the realities of today’s world.

¹⁵⁹ Lee, “Implosion, Virtuality.”

¹⁶⁰ Bimber, *Information and American Democracy*, 207. Italics are the author’s.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 209.

¹⁶² Lake and Huckfeldt, “Social Capital,” 567-584.

Revisiting the Theory of Collective Action

Popularized by Mancur Olson, the theory of Collective Action (CAT) rests on two essential tenets. The first of these asserts a public need to discourage so-called free riding, whereby individuals contribute either too little or too late in a project to significantly enhance public goods. The second tenet concerns the need for formal organization in “locating and contacting potential participants in collective action, motivating them, and coordinating their actions.”¹⁶³ Yet as a result of emerging ICTs, and the means by which they are regularly deployed, Bimber et al. raise significant questions regarding the ability of CAT to address contemporary models of collective behavior. Perhaps the easiest way to identify these new challenges resides with the latter of these tenets.

In the absence of advanced ICTs, organizations play a central role in the collection and distribution of information and in coordinating the activities of group members and sympathetic supporters. Yet with the dawning of the Internet age, what once took a large library and a small army of researchers can now be readily achieved by a determined graduate student with a reliable connection. All the more telling is the speed by which such a student is now able to collect vast amounts of information and the ease by which they are able to transmit such knowledge at little to no cost. As Bimber and company explain:

Recently, an array of actions in which technologies of information and communication are central has proven theoretically and empirically intriguing from a collective action standpoint. Self-organization online groups, rapidly

¹⁶³ Bruce Bimber, Andrew J. Flanagin and Cynthia Stohl, “Reconceptualizing Collective Action in the Contemporary Media Environment,” *Communication Theory* 15, no. 4 (2005): 365 of 365-388.

assembled networks of protesters, “meet ups,” new structures for interest groups, and “viral” e-mail lists are all examples of collective behaviors employing advanced communication and information technologies....As a result of emerging information technologies, communication is not necessarily as costly, difficult, time consuming, or limited by the cognitive constraints of individuals as it once was.¹⁶⁴

What results from such activities is an environment in which considerable power flows from the grassroots up. Thus, the networks one has access to prove just as important, if not more so, than associational memberships or the organizations to which one belongs. In taking advantage of the Internet’s ability to lower transaction costs across the board, actors have new organizational possibilities that are increasingly emancipated from the material resources and coordinated mechanisms of the past. Furthermore, much of the information one now receives online comes from an already trusted source, either because that individual has purposely chosen to visit a site, or because it has come from a close friend or family member. Such trust is what drives viral campaigning and news distribution.

In addressing the emerging challenges new information and communication technologies pose to CAT, scholarly work has thus far been straightforward and required little clarification by way of examining the changing importance of organizations. The question of free riding, however, is substantially more complex as it looks not only at motivational factors, such as the lowering of thresholds for active participation, but also requires a recalculation as to what constitutes an act of contribution to a collective endeavor and explores the blurring of public/private boundaries.

¹⁶⁴ Bimber et al., “Collective Action,” 365-366.

In what is termed “second-order communality,” Bimber asserts, individuals are increasingly contributing to “information repositories with no or only partial knowledge of other participants or contributors and without a clear intention or knowledge of contributing to communal information with public goods properties.”¹⁶⁵ Examples are increasingly common and widely found on the web, and include the posting of information “on a web page or weblog, contributing to discussion[s] on an electronic bulletin board, participating in online ‘credentialing’ activities of various forums, revealing the identities of networks of friends and common interests in social-networking environments, and even passing forward a list of useful e-mail addresses in the header of a message.”¹⁶⁶ However, in many cases, for such activities to be of any use to a larger collective action, individuals must be able to sift through the Internet’s endless pools of information and misinformation. For this reason, web search engines and so-called “pro-sumers,” individuals who add on to the value of a product or service, have taken on new importance and play a vital role in both the gathering and transmission of knowledge. As a result of “second-order communality,” the line separating the useful contributor and the free rider becomes blurred and it is increasingly difficult to differentiate between the two.

Just as the roles of contributor and free rider are becoming less distinct through Internet activity, questions regarding the disappearance of public/private boundaries are similarly being raised. These boundaries have largely vanished as a more flexible nature of collective activity comes to the fore. For instance, second-order communality has not only changed the ways in which information flows, but it has also enabled people to better “exploit technology for performing basic collective action functions in the absence of traditional organization and

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., 372.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

accumulated resources.”¹⁶⁷ As a result of this more fluid understanding, individuals cross public/private boundaries all the time, most notably when they alert others of their interests. When such an intention is acted upon, a collective action takes place.¹⁶⁸ By its very nature, however, the Internet jeopardizes the confidentiality any group attempts to secure, no matter how small and exclusive, by placing considerable control over the dissemination of their interests into the hands of others. Thus, what may have been an email intended for small readership, may well be forwarded to many more mailboxes.

As a result of technological forces reshaping social group dynamics, Bimber and his colleagues advance a compelling re-conceptualization of CAT. Other scholars have adopted this new paradigm as they attempt to better illustrate the many ways in which new technologies have morphed organizational behavior. For example, Andrew Chadwick demonstrates how “traditional interests groups and parties are experiencing Internet fueled increases in grassroots influences,”¹⁶⁹ which he argues is leading many of these hierarchical organizations to adopt practices akin to their smaller and less structured counterparts. Chadwick further asserts, “[f]ormal hierarchical means of mobilization in pursuit of specific goals are being augmented by forms of behavior.”¹⁷⁰ Examples include “posting messages to online forums and collaboratively maintaining data repositories, e-mail lists, and blogs in which the information and communication resources required for mobilization are ‘happy accident’ outcomes of countless small-scale individual contributions.”¹⁷¹ As a result of this phenomenon, traditional ideologies and the organizations that represent them are being forced to find new ways to attract support. In

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., 377.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

¹⁶⁹ Andrew Chadwick, “Digital Network Repertoires and Organizational Hybridity,” *Political Communication* 24, no. 1 (2007): 286 of 283-301.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., 290.

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

their place, a politics of coalition building in which ad-hoc interests converge for a period of time and then disperse, are increasingly coming to fill an ever-enlarging role in public discourse.

While the examination of the changing nature of organizations has proven a worthwhile endeavor meriting considerably more attention, any analysis into mobilization literature would be incomplete without an exploration of the motivational factors that propel individuals from passive observer to active participant. What follows is such an examination.

Collective Behavior

The positive and negative implications prescribed to each action are important in the decision making process of any rational actor. In theory, the greater the negative effects (or the lower the positive effects), the higher the “threshold” for action will be. For instance, a person compelled to join a riot is more likely to do so when a sufficient number of their peers have already joined because, as the number of rioting participants rises, the likelihood that an individual will be arrested for rioting are exponentially lowered.¹⁷² To put this more bluntly, when individuals question whether or not they should join in an activity, particularly those on the margins of social acceptability, they find safety in numbers. Admittedly, however, rioting is an extreme example of collective behavior, and one that does not take place on a regular basis. However, similar social patterns can be found in the more mundane activities of day-to-day life. For example, Granovetter argues that when it comes to supporting political candidates “one’s decision to vote for a particular candidate may depend heavily on how many others have already

¹⁷² Mark Granovetter, “Threshold Models of Collective Behavior,” *American Journal of Sociology* 83, no. 6 (1978): 1420-1443.

decided to do so.”¹⁷³ This can be so for any variety of reasons, such as an individual’s innate desire to blend in with one’s peers, or supposed wisdom of crowds.

To presume, however, that every social influence has equal weight is a fallacy. In the case of the participant who is debating whether or not they should join a riot, the action of a single close friend or beloved family member may well serve as a far more compelling reason than that of the combined actions of many strangers. In cases such as these, it is easy to see the importance strong social ties carry and, as such, where social capital studies hold considerable relevance in the examination of mobilization behavior.¹⁷⁴ It is therefore not at all surprising to learn that the groups we choose to join and the people we associate with tend to hold a sizable influence in determining our own behavior. In the United States, outside of the family, no group is arguably of greater importance than the religious organization. For in such associations, not only are communal needs often met through the supportive structures found in churches, synagogues, mosques and other houses of worship, but so too are deep personal and spiritual needs. As such, it is easy to understand the tremendous sway a much beloved religious leader is able to exert over their congregation. While the example of Church serves as an extreme case of collective action, Granovetter highlights a case study in which peer pressure amongst friends was likewise examined. In the case of delinquent youths, individuals were asked for their views on illegal activity. In private, most of the boys in this study “did not think it ‘right’ to commit illegal acts or even particular[ly] want[ed] to do so. But group interaction was such that none could admit this [to the group] without a loss of status.”¹⁷⁵ The threshold for committing illegal acts was comparably low for this group, as refusal to do so would diminish social standing.

¹⁷³ Ibid., 1423.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., 1435.

In many social settings, such as work, we are limited in our ability to choose whom we can interact with. Nevertheless, the desire to be selective in choosing our friends and other close personal relationships is by no means new. Lazarsfeld and Merton's work shows how friendships are often formed via homogeneity, and further illustrate how it is only natural to extend our social selectivity to the political organizations we engage in.¹⁷⁶ Yet in groups where homogeneity reigns supreme or where diversity is whittled away, there is far more risk that more extremist positions will triumph. In the online world, there is every reason to believe similar results occur. For example, Freeman and Rogers have shown how Internet technologies help in shaping shared ideologies and are often used to recruit new members with sympathetic positions.¹⁷⁷ Additionally, with the relative anonymity afforded by the Internet and the ease by which geographic space is conquered, the World Wide Web serves as a ready venue for fringe groups to propagate.

Conclusion

Declining participation in traditional civic activities, such as church attendance and bowling leagues, has brought attention to the state of American communities and the relative health of American society. Alarmed by these developments, several scholars have arrived at the conclusion that both social capital and civic engagement are declining in the United States. Far from having universal support, however, these claims have spurred a barrage of questions over the general assertion that social capital and civic engagement are in decline, to the methodology used to arrive at such a conclusion. Noting significant changes in both the character of the American

¹⁷⁶ P. Lazarsfeld and R. K. Merton, "Methodological Analysis," in *Freedom and Control in Modern Society*, eds. Monroe Berger Theodore Abel, and Charles H. Page (New York: Van Nostrand, 1954).

¹⁷⁷ Bimber et al., "Collective Action."

people and the technological advancements that have reshaped society, a growing group of scholars argue that measurements of social capital and civic engagement are best understood when new types of relationships and new forms of engagement, such those found online, are taken into account. This more fluid approach to understanding contemporary levels of social capital and civic engagement has caused considerable debate regarding the social implications of the Internet. Among those to have ventured into the this debate, most fall into one of three categories: those who see the Internet as further eroding social capital and civic engagement, those who see the web as subsidizing existing activities and relationships, and those who believe the Internet fosters new relationships and activities. In examining the relevant data and current trends, most recent academic work asserts a positive correlation between Internet activity, social capital and civic engagement.

In bringing groups of people together, such as dispersed communities and those with similar interests or worldviews, the Internet not only generates substantial in-group solidarity, but it also runs the risk of fragmenting society into smaller associations of likeminded individuals. While most communities can healthily withstand such fragmentation to some extent, too much, as it has been argued, poses a threat to the general demos of civil society. As such, considerable attention has been paid to exploring newer ways in which people connect to one another and engage in society more broadly. Such research has not only forced a critical re-evaluation of civic engagement, but also questions classical notions of mobilization theory. Classical theories of mobilization, developed before the introduction of ICTs, put emphasis on large, well-financed hierarchical organizations. At that time, information gathering was both costly and restrictive and the dominant media through which information was efficiently disseminated worked on a one-to-many model. As a result of this, few social actors aside from

large organizations could bear the considerable costs associated with widespread political activity. However, with the advent of the Internet and other many-to-many mediums, the high costs once associated with information gathering and its dissemination, as well as that of widespread social and political organization, have been substantially lowered. Thus, newer groups with less rigid hierarchies and more fluid notions of membership have not only emerged as a major force within society, but have also led many older, more established organizations to adopt practices commonly associated with grass-roots activities. This in turn has raised significant questions about the desirability of a society that predominantly engages civically through mass membership organizations. Similarly, the growing importance of mass membership organizations appears to be directing civic political engagement from interest-oriented towards issue-oriented activity.

With its ability to transcend geographical limitations, the Internet has proven to be an impressive tool, enabling individuals to participate in activities and belong to networks far beyond their local communities. As a result, American society is undergoing a period of marked transformation, and one that is increasingly defined by political fragmentation and issue pluralization. This of course is not the first time American society has undergone social upheaval, nor will it be the last. During past periods of transformation, American churches and houses of worship have served as crucial anchors for community life. However, in a rapidly changing media environment, the nature of church, and more specifically, the social bonds that have for so long served as an indelible source of strength within these religious communities, is being tested in potentially perilous new ways.

As shown in the introduction of this thesis, changing communication technologies can have dramatic consequences on religious and political landscapes. In the course of the last half-

century, other innovations in communication have played a decisive role in reorienting American religious communities. Such innovations, however, are not isolated occurrences, but rather occur on a broader historical and social continuum. Exploring this continuum will provide critical insight into the events reshaping American society today. To this end, the following chapter explores important technological and historical developments that have helped transform the evangelical community into a powerful political force.

CHAPTER THREE
EVANGELICALS AND AMERICAN POLITICS:
RELIGION, MEDIA AND CULTURE

Even by American standards, the past three decades have been an unusually intense period of religious fervor and significant religious political activity. During this time, evangelical Christianity has emerged as both the nation's dominant religious expression and as an important pillar of Republican political support. This chapter addresses the historical roots of these developments, paying particular attention to the effects of broadcast media on the coalescing of the evangelical voting bloc. However, this chapter recognizes that communication technologies do not operate in a political vacuum, but rather are influenced by any number of external social factors. To avoid an overly technological determinist interpretation, this chapter considers the factors contributing to the political rise of evangelical Christianity within their historical context, viewing them alongside America's ever evolving media and political landscape.

It is generally acknowledged that the evangelical community is a distinct and influential cultural force in America, but that force did not develop spontaneously. Like all cultural forces, the evangelical community required careful cultivation in its infancy and even today demands continual maintenance. This is so as:

the cultural dimensions of civil society is not given or natural. Rather, it is in a state of social contestation: its associations and networks are a terrain to be struggled over and an arena wherein collective identities, ethic values and alliances are forged. Indeed, competing conceptions of civil society are deployed in a continual struggle either to maintain cultural hegemony by dominant groups or to attain counter-hegemony on the part of subordinate collective actors.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁸ Jean Cohen. "Trust, voluntary association and workable democracy: the contemporary American discourse in civil society," in *Democracy and Trust*, ed. Mark Warren (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 208-248;

In the United States, the Christian Right has enjoyed a position of both cultural and religious hegemony for the past thirty years. Its ultraconservative interpretation of biblical scripture and the Christian gospel has profoundly impacted American politics and has long served as the loudest, and at times seemingly only, religious voice in the country. In an effort to maintain this culturally advantageous position, evangelicals have made effective use of emerging and innovative communication technologies. Such technologies have played a critical role in proselytizing new converts to the “Word of God,” maintaining the allegiances of existing members, expanding church networks and infrastructure, and in developing organizational resources.

Beyond institutional growth there is, however, a more prophetic reason why evangelicals have historically embraced new communication technologies. As Jeffery Hadden notes, “[t]he sacred texts of Christianity command the followers of Jesus to preach the Gospel to every living creature on earth (Mark 16:15). Evangelicals take this commandment seriously, and many among them view the development of radio and television as instruments sent by God to help them fulfill this ‘Great Commission.’”¹⁷⁹ And as we shall see, the fortunes of the evangelical tradition have in many ways been inextricably linked to the development of communication technologies.

Historically, communication has developed along one of two singular paths, either broadcast (one-to-many) or inter-personal (one-to-one). In many respects, these platforms complement the sorts of communications that have been in existence in churches for years, as

see also, Barbara Arniel, *Diverse Communities: The Problem with Social Capital*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

¹⁷⁹ Jeffrey K. Hadden, “The Rise and Fall of American Televangelism,” *The Annals of the American Academy of Political Science* 30, no. 4 (1996); 113-130.

they merely replicate the preacher/congregant role, albeit on a larger scale. However, as a result of the computer age, newer communication technologies have emerged that have both radically changed the nature of communication and expanded upon the organizational potential of other, more antedated technologies. This is so as instead of simply mimicking the broadcast nature of past technologies such as radio and television, computer mediated technologies offer participants a many-to-many means of interaction and make audience penetration less costly. As noted in the previous chapters, with the proliferation of these newer technologies, cultural institutions built upon older communication regimes have been presented with dynamic new challenges. This is certainly the case for evangelical Christians.

For evangelicals, the rapidly changing media environment has rendered it impossible for a few elites to effectively control the Christian message, while simultaneously dictating the terms of what has long been a one-sided monologue. This in turn has placed considerable strain on the established evangelical orthodoxy and is working to reorient the nature of evangelical civic engagement. However, before we can properly examine how the Internet is affecting the interplay between religion and politics in the United States, it is crucial to understand prevailing evangelical worldviews and the influence of past media regimes.

Eschatology and the Public Square

School children learning the history of the American people are often told that the Puritans came to the new world in search of religious freedom. This is simply not true. Religious freedom was a luxury the Puritans already enjoyed in their adopted Holland. Instead, the real impetus for their colonization lay in the post-millennialist belief that humans had to work

towards and thus earn the second coming of Christ. As such, the Puritans sought to establish a fundamentalist society that England and other European countries would eventually look to as an example of pious living and would therefore be compelled to reform their own societies into greater accord with God's law. With time, post-millennialist views gradually gave way to premillennial dispensationalism, a theological position that believes the second coming of Christ is imminent. As such, it is important for dispensationalists to live each day as if it were the last (as they quite literally believe today may be just that). At present, roughly two out of every three Americans subscribe to some form of dispensationalism,¹⁸⁰ and though it is easy to understand how such a belief in the literal end-times can have far reaching implications on the way in which one would choose to conduct daily life, its implications for the broader electoral process are more complex.

Dispensational believers emphasize the point that biblical scriptures speak of Christ's imminent return and that to be accepted by the Lord, one must be loyal to God and do God's "duty and service while waiting."¹⁸¹ For much of American history, this duty and service was largely seen as distinct from public life and separate from political affairs. The late Jerry Falwell, an avid dispensationalist, crystallized this point in 1965 when he declared, "preachers are not called upon to be politicians, but soul winners."¹⁸² Of course Falwell later became an active political campaigner, thus the timing of this statement similarly helps to illustrate the point that while religion has long been a fixture within American society, it was only in the last quarter

¹⁸⁰ Paul Unger, *The Fall of the House of Bush* (New York and London: Scribner, 2007); see also, Daniel Wojcik, "Embracing Doomsday: Faith, Fatalism, and Apocalyptic Beliefs in The Nuclear Age," *Western Folklore* 55, no. 4 (1996): 297-330.

¹⁸¹ Cornelius Woelfkin, "The Religious Appeal of Premillennialism," *The Journal of Religion* 1, no. 3(1921): 261 of 255-263.

¹⁸² As quoted by Amy Sullivan, *Party Faithful*.

of the twentieth century that the pursuit for personal salvation became so intertwined with the political process.

The transition for many evangelicals from spiritual salvationists to political operatives began in earnest in the 1970s and was led in large part by Hal Lindsey. Lindsey was made famous by his best-selling dispensational account, *The Late Great Planet Earth*, which “reportedly sold eighteen million copies and which was described by the *New York Times* as the ‘number one non-fiction best-seller of the decade.’”¹⁸³ By the end of the 70s Lindsey had become a household name in many evangelical circles and his tremendously popular writings had sown the seeds of the evangelical political movement. In 1980 Lindsey expanded upon his earlier positions in *Countdown to Armageddon*, which, among other things, characterized evangelicals as a marginalized people, and included a concerted push for stronger links between religious practice and political activism.

In *Countdown* Lindsey called upon Christians to take back their country and to preserve its religious heritage. He argued that with Christ’s return imminent, “Christians should live as if Jesus could come today, and that means that we must actively take on the responsibility of being a citizen and a member of God’s family. We need to get active electing officials who will not only reflect the Bible’s morality in government, but will shape domestic and foreign policies to protect our country and our way of life.”¹⁸⁴ Others soon joined Lindsey in his call to action. Several of these, such as Pat Robertson and James Dobson, continue to exert considerable influence over the election of public officials and the development of public policy.

Another notable dispensationalist follower of Hal Lindsey is Tim LaHaye. LaHaye is a prominent evangelical leader and co-author of the best-selling *Left Behind* novel series: a

¹⁸³ Susan Harding, “Imagining the Last Days: The Politics of Apocalyptic Language,” *Bulletin of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences* 48, no. 3 (1994): 33 of 14-44.

¹⁸⁴ Lindsey, as quoted by Harding, “*Imagining*,” 34.

fictional account of the end-times which has sold an astonishing 65 million copies in the United States alone, a mark Harry Potter has yet to best. Today, the *Left Behind* franchise is deeply embedded in the American end-times movement and includes Left Behind Prophecy Conferences, where believers meet and discuss signs of the end-times; visits to the Holy Land and the Valley of Megiddo, the supposed sight where Jesus will vanquish his enemies and restore God's Kingdom on Earth (a popular activity encouraged by many churches); box-office movies; and online video games in which teenagers play as Christian soldiers caught up in the Tribulation.¹⁸⁵ Given the enthusiasm that *Left Behind* has managed to generate, it is unlikely that a major shift in eschatological thinking will occur within the American public any time soon. With this understood, the emergence of dispensational belief at the fore of American politics represents, to date, the apex of what has long been a reactionary movement. This point is reflected in *Countdown*, where Lindsey asks Americans to "take their country back." Yet the question remains: From whom does Lindsey want to take America back?

Monkeys, Satellites, and a Catholic President: How Societal Upheaval Brought Evangelicals to the Political Fold

In a century that gave us the counterculture and political unrest of the 1960s, it is easy to forget that the 1920s were an equally turbulent time for the American people. After decades of scientific and political advancement, in which rationalism gained broad public acceptance and women secured the right to vote, it seemed society began to stall. Not only did the decade kick

¹⁸⁵ The Tribulation is commonly viewed as the period of time occurring after the Rapture but before the Second Coming of Christ. For more information, see Unger, *Fall*.

off with the passing of the 18th Amendment, which prohibited all non-religious use of alcohol, but an increase in immigration from Eastern Europe helped to revive the Ku Klux Klan, whose ranks “swelled to 5 million members.”¹⁸⁶ And while the 1920s also saw the election of the first woman to the United States Congress, feminists had little reason to celebrate, as the first congresswoman was none other than Alice Robertson of Oklahoma. Robertson, who had previously served as president of the Oklahoma Anti-Suffrage Association proved to be anything but a friend of the women’s movement as she went on to oppose “everything the Women’s Joint Congressional Committee wanted.”¹⁸⁷ With this rocky start, it is little wonder that by 1933 only 13 women had come to serve in the United States House of Representatives, and of them, seven had assumed the seat vacated by their husbands.¹⁸⁸

Yet despite the cultural tensions of the 1920s, science continued to enjoy broad public support. Even Darwinism, which many evangelicals view today as a great social scourge, was, in 1920, largely accepted as a matter of fact. As David Greenberg notes:

Although Darwin’s theories had met fierce resistance when first proposed in 1859, in time they secured general approval. Even many Christian leaders, once hostile to evolution, endorsed the theory—one of several trends that split many Protestant denominations into modern (or liberal) and fundamentalist camps. “By the time of World War I,” wrote the historian William Leuchtenberg, “an attack on Darwin seemed as unlikely as an attack on Copernicus.”¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁶ David Greenberg, “The Legend of the Scopes Trial: Science Didn’t Really Win,” *Slate* (2005). Found online at: <<http://www.slate.com/id/2125492/>> (Accessed December 1, 2008).

¹⁸⁷ Stanley J. Lemons, *The Woman Citizen: Feminism in the 1920’s* (Charlottesville: The University of Virginia Press, 1990), 103.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁹ Greenberg, “Legend of Scopes.”

Yet all this began to change by the summer of 1925, when a clerk at a little known public advocacy group known as the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) read of the Tennessee Butler Act, which banned the teaching of evolution in public schools. Disturbed by what they perceived to be a deliberate attempt by the state legislature to undermine the wall that separated the state from church influence, the ACLU decided to challenge the law directly. At the time, however, the ACLU was still in its infancy, having been formed only five years prior, and thus lacked legal representation in the state. As such, the ACLU decided to take an ad out in a prominent Tennessee newspaper, promising to defend “any teacher who made a ‘friendly challenge’ to the law.”¹⁹⁰ Answering this call was a young Dayton man by the name of John Scopes.

At roughly the same time, and unbeknown to the ACLU, Williams Jennings Bryan, a three-time Democratic nominee for President and former Secretary of State under Woodrow Wilson, was increasingly troubled by the public’s embrace of evolution. It was not, however, the theory’s scientific application which bothered Bryan so greatly, as in fact he had nothing at all against evolution “as scientific theory.”¹⁹¹ Instead, what was troubling Bryan was the recent advance of ‘Social Darwinism,’ a popular social theory that argues human society is “an arena of struggle in which the strongest prevail, the fittest survive, and [where] the poor ‘misfits’ must be neglected in the name of social progress.”¹⁹² All of this flew in the face of everything Bryan ever staked a political claim upon, not to mention his Christian faith. Thus, when Bryan heard of the Tennessee challenge, he agreed to take the case as a prosecutor for the state. Scopes in turn

¹⁹⁰ Gary Wills, *Under God: The Classic Work on Religion and American Politics* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1990), 97-98.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 101.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*

accepted the help of Clarence Darrow, a famous New York defense attorney, who was determined to “show up Fundamentalism...to prevent bigots and ignoramuses from controlling the educational system of the United States.”¹⁹³

When the trial ended, Scopes was convicted of violating the Butler Act and fined 100 dollars. It was an outcome the ACLU had been expecting and it immediately appealed the case to the federal courts. What the ACLU had not anticipated, however, was the intense media attention the case drew. With such names as Bryan and Darrow involved, by the time the trial commenced in July of 1925 it had attracted the attention of the major press and media outlets and filled the daily headlines of the country’s many newspapers and movie reels. Throughout the course of the trial, the press largely depicted creationists as backwards thinking and ignorant of scientific theory.¹⁹⁴ One account by H.L. Mencken of the Baltimore Sun described fundamentalists as coming from the “lower orders” of humanity, from which “no man of any education or other human dignity” would dare to associate.¹⁹⁵ Faced with this onslaught of public attacks, fundamentalist Christians did what many groups do when fired upon: they dug in and became all the more resolved.

Following the trial, the people of Tennessee elected the state’s lead prosecutor to the U.S. Senate and rewarded a junior prosecutor with a seat in the House. Similarly, Governor Peay, the man who had signed the anti-evolution Butler Act into law, was overwhelmingly re-elected to serve a third term. Elsewhere across the South and the Midwest, the Scopes trial stood as

¹⁹³ John Fea, “An Analysis of the Treatment of American Fundamentalists in United States History Survey Texts,” *The History Teacher* 28, no. 2 (1995): 209 of 205-216. A good resource on fundamentalism is Akobus M. Vorster, “Perspectives on the Core Characteristics of Religious Fundamentalism Today,” *Journal for the Study of Religion and Ideologies* 7, no. 21 (2008). Found online at: <<http://jsri.ro/ojs/index.php/jsri/article/viewArticle/374>> (Accessed July 8, 2011); see also, Reuven Firestone, “Divine Authority And Mass Violence: Economies Of Aggression In The Emergence Of Religions,” *Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies* 9, no. 26 (2010): 220-237.

¹⁹⁴ Dan Gilgoff, “Falwell Launched the Modern Christian Right,” *USNews*, May 16, 2007. Found online at: <<http://www.usnews.com/usnews/news/articles/070516/16falwell.htm>> (Accessed December 1, 2008).

¹⁹⁵ Fea, “Analysis,” 210.

testament that laws forbidding the teaching of evolution could withstand judicial scrutiny. One result was that in due time some fourteen states considered similar legislation.¹⁹⁶ Another result was that high school biology textbooks nationally slowly began to remove any mention of Charles Darwin or his theory. This was in no small part due to the fact that educators and superintendents approve and buy high school textbooks, not specialists in the field. Thus, for teachers and school administrators wishing to escape the wrath of angry priests and upset parents, evolution became a strictly hands off topic.¹⁹⁷ Naturally, publishers wishing to sell their biology textbooks took notice of the public sentiment and adapted to meet the mood of the market.

And so it was that for roughly the next thirty years American children grew up largely ignorant of one of biology's most fundamental theories. However, this all changed in 1957 when Americans began hearing "an uncharacteristic note in their political discourse—self-doubt."¹⁹⁸ The origin of this doubt was the Soviet satellite Sputnik, which, as it lay in orbit around earth, served as a reminder to Americans that they were falling behind the Soviets. In the aftermath of Sputnik's launch, America recommitted itself to the schooling of its youth. Additional money for education was swiftly made available and before long evolution was back in the classroom. Early opposition from evangelicals was scant as many were lured by the prospect of a flush school budget to fight Communism, even if it meant discussing Darwin.¹⁹⁹ Gradually, however, outside social forces began to once again move American culture in a new direction. As time

¹⁹⁶ Marjorie George, "And Then God Created Kansas? The Evolution/Creationism Debate in America's Public Schools," *University of Pennsylvania Law Review* 149, no. 3 (2001): 843-872.

¹⁹⁷ Dorothy Nelkin, "From Dayton to Little Rock: Creationism Evolves," *Science, Technology, and Human Values* 7, no. 40 (1982): 47-53.

¹⁹⁸ Wills, *Under God*, 115.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

would demonstrate, there were limits to how far evangelicals could be pushed, and the historic presidential campaign of John F. Kennedy was the first to test them.

By itself, the election of the nation's first Catholic President did not push evangelicals over the edge. That said, the presidency of John F. Kennedy came at a time of immense social and cultural upheaval. In addition to grappling with issues of racial inequality, a second wave of feminist activism was sweeping through America. This time, however, women were not simply insisting on equality at the ballot box, but were instead demanding the right of reproductive autonomy. Adding to these tensions was a series of decisions made by the United States Supreme Court that severely curtailed the role of religion in the public sphere. For instance, in 1962, the Court handed down the Engel decision, which banned ecumenical public schools and served as a pre-cursor to the monumental 1963 Schempp ruling, which effectively outlawed sponsored Bible readings and prayer in public schools. These decisions greatly angered evangelicals and propelled some in the movement to take action. As David Hall notes, "success might have eluded [evangelicals] had it not been for the turmoil of the sixties and the division that opened up in the aftermath of the Supreme Court decisions and the 'cultural revolution.'"²⁰⁰ Paul Weyrich argues, however, that despite rapid change, what "galvanized the Christian community was not abortion, school prayer or the ERA....What changed their minds was Jimmy Carter's intervention against the Christian schools, trying to deny them tax exempt status on the basis of so-called de facto segregation."²⁰¹

Ultimately, it is unlikely that one particular issue angered the evangelical community enough to make them emerge from their self-imposed political isolation. What is more probable

²⁰⁰ David Hall, "From the Seventies to the Present," in *A Religious History of the American People, 2nd Ed.*, ed. Sydney E. Ahlstrom (New Haven and London: Yale University of Press, 1999), 1099.

²⁰¹ Weyrich as quoted in Aaron Haberman, "Into the Wilderness: Ronald Reagan, Bob Jones University, and The Political Education of the Christian Right," *The Historian* 67, no. 2 (2005): 239 of 234-253.

is that the culmination of these events so disturbed evangelicals, as well as others who had not previously identified with this group, that they felt they had few options but to fight for their way of life. This is so as people in rapidly changing times are often drawn to organizations that appear to offer some subjective sense of normality. Beginning in the 1960s and extending even to this day, Christian conservative groups “perceive themselves as culturally embattled and thus forced to become politically active in the hope that they can salvage some lifeworld protection.”²⁰² Yet to go from being a culturally “embattled” group to a major political force is no easy task. At the most fundamental level substantial organizational resources and the means for effective mobilization are required. Fortunately for evangelicals, the very nature of religious bodies provided them with a significant competitive advantage not often afforded to secular organizations.

Media and the Unification of American Evangelicals

When it comes to mobilizing their supporters, religious organizations enjoy key advantages over their secular counter-parts. This is so as three characteristics that favor mobilization efforts are regularly found among religious groups, namely: leadership, collective identity, and the availability of resources. In addition to having recognized charismatic leaders capable of leveraging their holy status to further political ends, religious movements also enjoy powerful collective identities and shared theological beliefs, all of which contribute to high levels of commitment on the behalf of believers. Finally, as religious movements can rely on

²⁰² Mark D. Regnerus, David Sikkink and Christian Smith, “Voting with the Christian Right: Contextual and Individual Patterns of Electoral Influence,” *Social Forces* 77, no. 4 (1999): 1392 of 1375-1401; see also, Mark D. Regnerus and Christian Smith, “Selective Deprivation among American Religious Traditions: The Reversal of the Great Reversal,” *Social Forces* 76, no. 4 (1998): 1347-72.

tithes, offerings and other charitable giving, they are often spared the financial hurdles of other incipient social movements.²⁰³ With specific reference to conservative evangelical mobilization,

Margaret Ann Latus notes:

Religious motivation provides a value framework for everything [Evangelicals] do in life, and this is true of politics no less than of anything else. Related to this religious zeal is the fact that other incentives for participation...are less necessary for individuals driven by the conviction of their faith. Leaders have merely to ask and it shall be given unto them.²⁰⁴

As Who??? Latus?, points out, the “deep-seated passion of conservative evangelicals” is an attribute that is rarely shared by those opposing their efforts.²⁰⁵

By the 1960s and 1970s the evangelical community had many religious leaders, was rich in resources, and had a budding and motivated religious base. As Tona Hangen notes, “over the decade of the fifties, membership in American churches rose from 64.5 million to 114.5 million, to include 60 percent of the national population.”²⁰⁶ However, the dramatic increase in church attendance was not equal across denominations. For instance, many mainline protestant denominations, such as northern Presbyterian and Episcopalians, witnessed overall net losses during this same period.²⁰⁷ Furthermore, it was also during this time that the evangelical

²⁰³ Matthew Marostica, “Religion and Global Affairs: Religious Activation and Democracy in Latin America,” *SAIS Review* 18, no. 2 (1998): 45-51.

²⁰⁴ As quoted by Vernon L. Bates, “Lobbying For the Lord: The New Christian Right Home-Schooling Movement and Grassroots Lobbying,” *Review of Religious Research* 33, no. 1 (1991): 4 of 3-17.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁶ Tona J. Hangen, *Reclaiming the Dial: Radio, Religion & Popular Culture in America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 147.

²⁰⁷ Joel A. Carpenter, “Fundamentalist Institutions and the Rise of Evangelical Protestantism, 1929-1942,” *Church History* 49, no. 1 (1980): 62-75.

Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) supplanted the mainline Methodist Church as the largest protestant denomination in America, a title the SBC retains to this day. Yet despite the rapid rise of evangelical Christianity, a common and unifying identity was not something that came naturally to many denominations. It was instead something which had to be fostered, and had it not been for the self-imposed cultural isolation fundamentalists undertook in the aftermath of the Scopes trial, it is questionable such an identity would have ever emerged.

As it happened, in the wake of the Scopes trial, “fundamentalists retreated from the wider culture and built up their own separatist networks of schools, churches, Bible colleges, and, of course, radio stations.”²⁰⁸ In doing so, they “laid the foundation for the emergence of neo-evangelism in the 1950s, a movement of intellectually and culturally engaged Christians.”²⁰⁹ These religious institutions served as an invaluable cog in the formation of unified collective cultural identity, and as the American population grew throughout the first half of the twentieth century, so too did the demand for protestant ministers and trained laity.²¹⁰ Meeting this demand were the growing number of Bible institutes, which in addition to their educational activities, often ran publishing houses and organized week-long summer Bible conferences, which “supplied staff evangelists for revival meetings and provided churches with guest preachers.”²¹¹ Similarly, advertisements for denominational colleges, which had previously appealed largely to adherents of the advertising college’s affiliate denomination, were soon appearing in the periodicals of other denominations. As enrolment to these institutions rose, the various branches of evangelical Christianity increasingly came into contact with one another and forged both

²⁰⁸ Heather Hendershot, “God’s Angriest Man: Carl McIntire, Cold War Fundamentalism, and Right Wing Broadcasting,” *The American Studies Association* 59, no. 2 (2007): 385 of 373-396.

²⁰⁹ Ibid.

²¹⁰ Matthew C. Moen, “The Evolving Politics of the Christian Right,” *Political Science and Politics* 29, no. 3 (1996): 461-464.

²¹¹ Carpenter, “Fundamentalist Institutions,” 66.

shared identities and a dense network of social and religious support.²¹² Additionally, Bible colleges were also readily organizing massive revivals that attracted swarms of enthusiastic Christians. These activities helped to overcome long standing denominational divides and brought ever more people to the cause of evangelical ministry.

While attending one of these revivals, a reporter was struck by the unity which he witnessed and commented “a Methodist Bishop, a Baptist evangelist, a Presbyterian professor, a Lutheran pastor, a Christian layman and a Rescue Mission superintendent could stand on the same platform and preach the common tenets of the Christian faith while multitudes of believers wept and rejoiced together as if some glorious news had for the first time bust upon their ears.”²¹³ As time progressed, these Bible institutes began to focus their considerable attention and resources on another medium through which the masses could be reached: radio broadcast. By 1942, for instance, a single religious organization, the Moody Bible Institute, was “releasing transcribed [radio] programs to 187 different stations,” and had a radio staff of nearly 300 who busied themselves by visiting churches to raise awareness of Moody’s religious broadcasts.²¹⁴

Yet despite the eagerness by which evangelicals greeted the advent of the age of radio, it proved, nonetheless, a difficult medium to tap. Many of the problems evangelicals ran into were largely self-made. For instance, by 1943 all of the major national radio broadcasters had pulled commercial evangelism from the air.²¹⁵ This action was the direct result of numerous inflammatory remarks made religious commentators while broadcasting. Arguably the most notorious offender was Father Charles E. Coughlin. Although a Roman Catholic Priest, and thus unaffiliated with the evangelical community, it was Coughlin who most scared major radio

²¹² Ibid.

²¹³ As quoted by Carpenter, “Fundamentalist Institutions,” 70.

²¹⁴ Ibid., 67.

²¹⁵ Hangen, *Reclaiming the Dial*.

broadcasters away from paid religious programming. “His bellicose attacks on communists, socialists, international bankers, Jews, labor union leaders, and finally, President Franklin Roosevelt led many to fear Coughlin more than Germany’s Hitler.”²¹⁶ And so it was that when it came time to renew his contract, most broadcasters chose not to, citing a newly established National Association of Broadcasters’ code of ethics that barred “controversial” speakers.

As a result, national radio broadcasters increasingly chose to air the more benign sermons of the National Council of Churches (NCC), an umbrella group that included most mainline protestant denominations and had ties to the Catholic Church and Judaism. Broadcasters provided this “sustaining time” free of charge to earn credit that could be used as evidence that their stations were providing invaluable public service, thus assuring them the renewal of their public broadcast license. By contrast, most evangelical preachers found themselves unable to secure even paid radio time on any of the major networks. Forced to turn to smaller and cheaper markets, evangelists quickly found a home among the local stations of America’s more rural populations. Soon thereafter, many evangelical ministries busied themselves with setting up their own radio stations or buying existing ones. Consequently, throughout the 1940s and 1950s, radio evangelists grew quite adept at running and maintaining their own radio stations, while the NCC and other mainline protestant groups increasingly grew dependent upon the charity of the country’s major radio broadcasters. In 1960, the Federal Communication Commission (FCC) changed course and decided to permit radio and television stations the right to claim paid religious broadcasting as part of their public service, thus negating any incentive broadcasters once had to give away air time for free. Evangelical ministries, flush with cash, quickly

²¹⁶ Hadden, “Rise and Fall,” 125.

swooped in and bid the NCC out of the market. Today, 1960 is often regarded as a cultural milestone marking the “‘virtual silencing’ of mainline churches in mass media.”²¹⁷

Aided by this new FCC regulation, evangelicals were able to cultivate their ties with America’s many protestant traditions in another venue, as the rapid expansion of religiously oriented broadcasting gradually pushed the movement towards greater ecumenical ministries. Providing a further catalyst was the advent of televangelism, which saw its audience grow from some 5 million in the late 1960s to nearly 25 million by the mid 1980s.²¹⁸ Leading this charge was Pat Robertson who founded the Christian Broadcasting Network (CBN) in 1961, which was quickly followed by Paul Crouch’s Trinity Broadcasting Network (TBN) and Jim Bakker’s Praise The Lord network, also known as PTL. Together, these three networks stood as giants in an industry soon saturated with smaller, more regionally based programming. Collectively, such religious broadcasts proved vital to the cultural and political unification of American evangelicals.

One key reason why television was so adept at bridging many long held denominational divides is due to its *mainstreaming effect*. As George Gerbner discovered in the 1970’s, television creates a confluence of attitudes.²¹⁹ When viewed heavily by initially disparate and divergent groups, what results is the homogenization or mainstreaming of political views and the cultivation of common perspectives. When audiences are repeatedly exposed to the same or similar message, that message begins to shape their opinions of the world around them. To this end, the conservative theology of early televangelists helped move many viewers towards the

²¹⁷ Hendershot, “God’s Angriest Man,” 378.

²¹⁸ Hadden, “Rise and Fall.”

²¹⁹ James Watson, *Media Communication: An Introduction to Theory and Process* (London: MacMillan Press LTD, 1996).

conservative end of the political and religious spectrum.²²⁰ Adding to Gerbner's insights, Leon Festinger further notes that individuals make a habit of seeking information with which they already agree.²²¹ This effect works to reinforce pre-existing biases and may help to explain Gerbner's mainstreaming effect. By appealing to individuals who already felt threatened by significant social upheaval, televangelists helped to foster a community of conservative Christians whose numbers grew as viewers increasingly gained access to cable T.V., and whose message gradually moved away from the center in order to meet market demands.²²²

In the wake of the many financial and sexual scandals that rocked televangelists in the 1980s, it has become the norm to dismiss them and their ministries. Yet throughout the 1980s, televangelists were among some of the most influential leaders in the nation. In 1980, for instance, Pat Robertson helped to mobilize a half-million participants to a rally called "Washington for Jesus" through the use of his radio and television broadcasts.²²³ Similarly, Tamney and Johnson have shown that significant support for the Moral Majority came from individuals who were already watching religious programming.²²⁴ This success can likely be attributed to the fact that religious broadcasts work to reinforce an individual's existing social and political values, as an individual, having become interested in religion in a formal setting, transfers "this interest to other forms of religious experience."²²⁵ The basic premise here is that

²²⁰ Sandra J. Ball-Rokeach and Melvyn DeFleur, "A Dependency Model of Mass-media Effects," in *Inter-Media: Interpersonal Communication in the Media*, eds. George Gumpert and Robert Cathcart (New York, New York: Oxford University Press, 1979).

²²¹ Watson, *Media Communication*.

²²² Ibid.

²²³ Hadden, "Rise and Fall."

²²⁴ Joseph B. Tamney and Stephen D. Johnson, "Religious Television in Middletown," *Review of Religious Research* 25, no. 4 (1984): 303-313.

²²⁵ Barry R. Litman and Elizabeth Bain, "The Viewership of Religious Television Programming: A Multidisciplinary Analysis of Televangelism," *Review of Religious Research* 30, no. 4 (1989): 330 of 329-343.

“traditional church participation stimulates an interest in religion and causes those affected people to watch religious programming.”²²⁶

Today, many Americans assume that the golden days of televangelism are behind them, and in an increasingly saturated and fragmented media environment they may be right. However, it would be wrong to presume that Christian media is in decline. Since the 1980s Christian media has grown significantly in both size and scope. In addition to broadcasting Bible studies and worship services, networks such as CBN and TBN are now producing their own syndicated television programs and wide-release movies. Joining them is an increasingly diversified array of Christian media, which includes a growing Christian book and e-book market,²²⁷ and as already noted, a budding Christian video games market. Indeed, while many Americans might assume the most common way of experiencing the Christian faith is by attending church service, they would in fact be wrong. A 2002 poll conducted by the Barna Research Group found that, “a greater number of adults experience the Christian faith through Christian media, such as radio, television or books, than attend Christian churches.”²²⁸ This poll found, for instance, that while 63% of American adults had attended a church service in the last month, some 67% had turned to Christian radio, television or books as a part of their religious devotion.

²²⁶ Ibid. It is worth noting that in the results of this study, Litman and Bain found no direct link between church attendance and the viewing of religious programming, a point that contradicts Hadden and Swann, and Tamney and Johnson. Litman and Bain did, however, find a correlation between the intensity of one’s religious beliefs and the viewing of religious programming. See Tamney and Johnson, “Religious Television.”

²²⁷ Christian Retailing Staff Writer, “Religious Book Sales Up,” *Christian Retailing*, May 23, 2011. Found online at: <<http://www.christianretailing.com/index.php/newsletter/latest-etailing/23146-religious-book-sales-up>> (Accessed June 6, 2011).

²²⁸ Barna Group Staff Writer, “Christian Mass Media Reach More Adults With the Christian Message Than Do Churches,” *The Barna Research Group* (2002). Found online at: <<http://www.barna.org/barna-update/article/5-barna-update/77-christian-mass-media-reach-more-adults-with-the-christian-message-than-do-churches>> (Accessed June 6, 2011).

The Fall of the Religious Left

So far, this chapter has looked at how key historical developments, from theological shifts, to the rise of contentious social issues, to the growth of inter-denominational networks and the utilization of evolving communication technologies have helped propel evangelical Christians towards greater political power. Equally important to this story, however, is the collapse of the “Religious Left,” which allowed evangelicals to monopolize the protestant marketplace. While much of the left’s decline can be attributed to the assassination of key leaders, such as the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and Robert Kennedy—tragedies that robbed the left of iconic figures—perhaps more important to the fall of the left, was the loss of a collective identity and the disappearance of shared values. For instance, despite prevailing romantic beliefs, Martin Luther King Jr. was not always a unifying force within the broader progressive political movement. And at no time was he more divisive than when he focused his energies away from racism to other social issues. As Diane Winston notes, “when King turned to the issues of poverty, labor unrest, and the Vietnam War, he was criticized by fellow civil rights workers, savaged by politicians, and excoriated in the media.”²²⁹ It was also during this particularly volatile time that “religious progressives who had made common cause with King splintered into antiwar organizing, feminism, black nationalism, La Raza and gay liberation.”²³⁰ With the assassination of Dr. King, and later Robert Kennedy, American liberalism was left adrift. Their message, though by no means lost, was nonetheless overwhelmed by an increasing number of groups and special interests, each of whom could claim to be leaders in their own right. For their part, the media was quick to report the deconstruction of the left. And with each

²²⁹ Diane Winston, “Back to the Future: Religion, Politics and the Media,” *The American Studies Association* 59, no. 3 (2007): 974 of 969-989.

²³⁰ *Ibid.*

emerging movement and new interest group came the added glare of media attention and public scrutiny. As the religious left continued to deteriorate, its message increasingly became vulnerable to lampooning attacks and marginalization.²³¹

Capitalizing on this division was an all too eager group of evangelicals who not only sought increased political influence, but who were also alarmed by the growing trend of “loose” biblical interpretations. By the late 1970s, for instance, a small group of Baptist leaders made public their intentions to take over the SBC and rid it of what they perceived to be a liberal drift in their seminaries, Sunday schools, and mission boards. Over time, the once moderately conservative SBC moved radically to the right. Today, the SBC is arguably one of the most conservative protestant denominations in the United States. Its official church doctrine declares that women are not to be ordained, abortion is a sin in all cases, and that God does not hear the prayers of Jews.²³² Yet as startling as this takeover was, in the long run it proved to be an example for many others to follow. For instance, once success in the SBC was secure, conservative Christians sought to extend their influence over other denominations as well. Some of these efforts proved fruitful; others futile. Among the fruitful efforts was the Christian Right’s attempts to fracture the congregations of resistant denominations through the exploitation of wedge issues.

Among the more audacious tactics deployed by these groups were claims made both on *60 Minutes* and in *Readers Digest* (at the time America’s most watched news program and most read magazine) that the National Council of Churches (NCC), the largest gathering of mainline protestant denominations, was not only sympathetic to Marxist guerrillas in Latin America, but

²³¹ Ibid.

²³² Ibid.

in some cases, was funding them directly.²³³ Grounds for these assertions came by way of liberation theology, a theological movement that enjoyed marginal support within some protestant circles, and which emphasized Christ's role as a liberator of the oppressed more than his status as a savior. Yet as potent as these allegations were, their impact remained small when compared to the Christian Right's exploitation of the internal division many mainline churches were experiencing on the issues of gay marriage and gay clergy ordination. On this front, the late Diane Knippers, a leader within the evangelical community, admitted that her goal in raising these internal divisions was "to diminish and discredit the religious left's influence."²³⁴ Today, efforts such as Knippers have largely succeeded, as "the old mainline churches have been culturally and institutionally displaced by a new plurality; yesterday's supposed fringes are taking over American Protestantism's main square."²³⁵ Taking its place has been the "individual pursuit of salvation through spiritual rebirth, often in circumstances of sect-driven millenarian countdowns to the so-called end times and an awaited return of Christ."²³⁶ As an increasing number of evangelicals began calling for broader political engagement, America's religious left could offer little meaningful resistance. Thus the fall of the left drastically changed the nature of American politics and moved the country in a noticeably different, and altogether more conservative, political direction.

²³³ Ibid.

²³⁴ As quoted by Winston, "Back to the Future," 979.

²³⁵ Kevin Philips, *American Theocracy: The Peril and Politics of Radical Religion, Oil, and Barrowed Money in the 21st Century* (New York: Viking, 2006), 101.

²³⁶ Ibid., 100.

Evangelicals and the Reagan Presidency

With mainline protestant denominations under considerable duress, the 1980 presidential election proved noteworthy in that it was the first election in which the evangelical vote proved a decisive electoral factor.²³⁷ It also serves as an important cultural benchmark as Reagan's victory helped to "push millions of newly energized evangelical voters into the eager arms of the Republican Party." That Reagan came to be the darling of the Christian Right was itself the result of an intensive political courtship.²³⁸

Believing Carter held weak support among his supposed base of white evangelicals, Reagan's campaign made a concerted effort to win over these voters. As Amy Sullivan, a contributing editor at Time Magazine and former aide to the now retired Senate Majority Leader Tom Daschle notes:

The Great Communicator knew how to speak the evangelicals' language, even if it wasn't his native tongue, and he used it to good effect. Addressing a gathering of TV preachers and other religious right leaders in Dallas a few months before the election, Reagan hit all the right notes. He complained that the Supreme Court's school-prayer decision had "expelled God from the classroom." He reiterated his oft-made observation that everybody in favor of abortion had already been born. He spoke admiringly of the Bible, explaining that "all the complex questions facing us at home and abroad have their answer in that single book." And if there were any holdouts left among the assembled clergy, he

²³⁷ Esther Kaplan, *With God On Their Side: How Christian Fundamentalists Trampled Science, Policy, and Democracy in George W. Bush's White House* (London: The New Press, 2004).

²³⁸ Sullivan, *Party Faithful*, 16.

melted their hearts by declaring, “I know you can’t endorse me...but I want you to know that I endorse you.”²³⁹

Determined to defeat President Carter, Jerry Falwell called on some 20 religious leaders and political operatives to his Thomas Road Baptist Church. At this meeting, Falwell talked openly about the religious importance of electing Ronald Reagan.²⁴⁰ Following this, “Falwell and his associates started going from state to state, meeting Catholics, old-line Protestants, and evangelicals, putting together (Moral Majority) chapters everywhere.”²⁴¹ When these efforts proved successful and Reagan was in the White House, evangelical hopes were riding high. However, with the Democrats controlling the House, Reagan was limited in what he could do. Even so, when Reagan did first have a real opportunity to give back to evangelicals—in July of 1981 with the retirement of Associate Justice Potter Stewart—he disappointed. Rather than nominate a conservative who would have pleased many in the evangelical camp, Reagan instead went with the more moderate, and pro-choice, Sandra Day O’Conner. Reagan’s next nominee, Antonin Scalia, was viewed by many as a reliable conservative, yet when he appointed for the third and last time in his presidency, he once more chose a moderate: Anthony M. Kennedy.

Far from being the exception, disappointments such as the O’Conner and Kennedy appointments emerged as a regular theme throughout Reagan’s presidency. For instance, in 1982, Reagan “halfheartedly honored his promise to support a constitutional amendment allowing school prayer, [by] refraining from putting enough political muscle behind it to bulldoze it through the Senate.”²⁴² Worse still, in the mid 1980s Surgeon General C. Everett

²³⁹ Ibid., 43.

²⁴⁰ Unger, *Fall*.

²⁴¹ Ibid., 73.

²⁴² Ibid., 76.

Koop issued an early warning about the AIDS epidemic. In a special report Dr. Koop “advocated sex education, including teaching about homosexual behavior, as an essential tool in stopping the spread of the disease, and even promoted the use of condoms for sex outside of marriage as a means of protection.”²⁴³ With these actions before them, evangelicals learned the painful political lesson that, “having a sympathetic president like Ronald Reagan did not guarantee that their political expectations would be satisfied. When push came to shove, Reagan abandoned conservative Christians.”²⁴⁴

In an acknowledgment of their limited political powers, “conservative Christians at the end of the 1980s refocused their energies on forming a strong grassroots political movement.”²⁴⁵ By the end of Reagan’s presidency, evangelical organizations dotted the American landscape. One of these newly minted organizations was Pat Robertson’s Christian Coalition. From the beginning the Christian Coalition was “supposed to fill the vacuum left by the demise a few years earlier of the Moral Majority.”²⁴⁶ To help in this effort, Robertson tapped 28-year-old Ralph Reed to lead the coalition. Together, these men began programs that trained “conservative Christians to run for office and to manage other people’s campaigns. [In turn] these trainees became active in state and local Republican parties throughout the nation. They ran for municipal offices and school boards.”²⁴⁷ And so it was that at unprecedented rates, evangelicals were mobilized and soon able to take over the Republican Party. Fast forwarding: in 2002, *Campaign and Elections* published a report in which it found “that in forty-four states, Christian conservatives controlled at least a quarter of the GOP’s state committees, up from thirty-one

²⁴³ Ibid.

²⁴⁴ Haberman, “Into the Wilderness,” 239.

²⁴⁵ Ibid.

²⁴⁶ Charles Oliver, “Coalition Politics,” *Reason*, Day Month?, 1996. Found Online at: <<http://www.reason.com/news/show/30009.html>> (Accessed February 2, 2009).

²⁴⁷ Ibid.

states just six years earlier.”²⁴⁸ And in eighteen of these states, Christian conservatives completely dominated the state committees altogether.

Why Democrats Lost the Catholic Vote and How It Further Empowered Evangelicals

By 1984 it had become apparent that evangelicals were voting in large numbers for Republican candidates. In examining the political behavior of the Christian Right, Clyde Wilcox found that contributions from Christian Right PACs flowed almost exclusively to “Republicans challenging vulnerable Democratic incumbents, or to Republican incumbents facing strong challengers,”²⁴⁹ a practice few other PACs follow. Yet despite the growing numbers of evangelicals and their clear preference for Republican candidates, Democrats could have maintained a politically advantageous position had other religious political affiliations remained unchanged. This is because as a region, the south (where evangelicals are strongest) is far from having enough electoral votes to elect a president by itself. It represents only a fraction of the total American population, which leaves ample margins for Democrats to establish and maintain a working congressional majority. And while the evangelical movement remains strong in most other parts of the country, its political influence could otherwise be offset by other religious groups or with establishment religious coalitions. Thus, the problem Democrats have been running into over the past three decades has not been the loss of evangelicals by themselves, but rather the combined loss of this group and sizable numbers of northern working class Catholics. When these two groups vote together, Democrats lose.

²⁴⁸ Kaplan, *With God*, 73; see also Kimberly H. Conger and John C. Green, “Spreading Out and Digging In: Christian Conservatives and State Republican Parties,” *Campaign and Election* 23, no. 1 (2002): 58-65.

²⁴⁹ Clyde Wilcox, “Political Action Committees of the New Christian Right: A Longitudinal Analysis,” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 27, no. 1 (1988): 68 of 60-71.

Exactly how it is that Democrats lost favor among many Catholic voters has as much to do with religious doctrine as it does with the party's own failure to fully appreciate the magnitude by which changing social circumstances can affect political preferences. For instance, shortly after his election to the papacy in 1958, Pope John XXIII announced that he would be summoning Church Bishops to Rome for a Second Vatican Council. Their task was to determine how the Church should respond, "and if need be, adapt...to the rapidly changing world around them."²⁵⁰ What flowed from this Council was truly monumental. Not only was nearly two millennia worth of religious practice altered—most notably the fact that Mass would now be conducted in the local vernacular—but also that the Church came to the firm conclusion that it should have "true freedom...to pass moral judgment even in matters relating to politics."²⁵¹ The result of this decision represents a fundamental shift in the thinking and practices of the Catholic Church. In using this language, the Church chose to take a more active role in the moral judgment of society and freed itself from the near exclusive practices of charity work and the salvation of souls. Following the Second Vatican Council, the Catholic Church viewed itself as being in the business of saving humanity.

In America, as in other countries around the world, the Catholic Church continued its work with the poor, but it increasingly took a more critical stance on what it viewed to be the moral decay of society. Its first significant venture into politics took place with the Griswold decision, in which the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that women were constitutionally afforded a right to birth control. On this decision the Church came out in strong opposition, a position most Americans did not share. A decade later when the Roe decision was made, the Church again

²⁵⁰ Sullivan, *Party Faithful*, 55.

²⁵¹ As quoted by Sullivan, *Party Faithful*, 55.

came out in opposition.²⁵² This time, however, Democrats made a severe miscalculation in both the response of the public and the Church. For the public, abortion was a messy issue and far more complicated than birth control. Unlike in the Griswold case, which concerned something largely viewed as a simple and rational family-planning barrier that merely prevented the beginning of life, with *Roe vs. Wade* the public, by contrast, was confronted with the possibility that society had effectively legalized the killing of innocent life. For the Church, its opposition to abortion was a simple and long-standing matter and the unanimity with which Catholics opposed abortion in the 1970s was more solid than on any other social matter.²⁵³ As major Democratic officials came out in support of abortion rights, they attracted considerable heat from the Church. Not only did the Catholic Church mobilize its adherents, but it also adopted one of the most comprehensive plans to combat abortion and its political supporters, calling on Catholics everywhere to oppose pro-choice candidates and politicians.²⁵⁴ Further still, a number of pro-choice Catholic politicians were publicly prevented from receiving Holy Communion (as John Kerry was in 2004) and in some extreme cases, were even excommunicated from the Church.

Complicating matters even further for Democrats was the fact that a number of pro-choice Catholic politicians spoke very little about their own faith, especially when compared to their evangelical colleagues. Their silence is arguably a part of the culture of the American Catholic Church, in which Catholics are brought up to see their faith as a private matter. It is also likely that this silence is an attempt by many pro-choice Catholic politicians to remain under

²⁵² *Roe v. Wade*, 410 U.S. 113 (1973) was a decision by the United States Supreme Court that extended privacy rights under the 14th Amendment to include a woman's right to have an abortion.

²⁵³ Sullivan, *Party Faithful*.

²⁵⁴ U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops Staff Writer, "Pastoral Plan for Pro-life America," *United States Conference of Catholic Bishops*, 1975. Found online at: <<http://www.usccb.org/prolife/pastoralplan.shtml>> (Accessed April 28, 2008).

the radar, thereby escaping the wrath of the Church. Yet this silence has only added to public perceptions that the Democratic Party is a party without religion. By default, the failure of Democrats to talk openly and candidly about their own faith has allowed Republicans to cast themselves as the party of the faithful.

At the launch of his 1992 presidential bid Bill Clinton understood more than most Democratic politicians the political dilemma his party faced and the deep misgivings many Americans have about abortion. Having been raised an evangelical Baptist and educated at a Catholic University, Clinton had been surrounded by religion throughout his early life. Unlike Michael Dukakis before him, Clinton took numerous opportunities to speak before religious bodies and made a habit of addressing Catholic Americans. Yet, for all his work, many voters remained troubled by Clinton's support of abortion rights. This said, Clinton was hardly the first Democrat to take heat on this issue, and like all smart campaigners, Clinton learned from others. In 1989, for instance, "a San Diego bishop barred Lucy Killea, a California state assemblywoman, from taking Communion because she supported abortion rights."²⁵⁵ As Killea's position on abortion rights increasingly became the focus of her re-election campaign, Sam Popkin, a professor from the University of California, San Diego, advised Killea that rather than continue to insist that abortion be kept "legal and safe," she might try saying "legal, safe, and rare." The addition of that single word seemingly worked as Killea won re-election. When Clinton, in the early days of his presidential campaign ran into similar troubles, Popkin sent a note to Hillary Clinton, advising that her husband make a similar change to his language. In response, Clinton did adopt the "legal, safe, and rare" mantra, though with one slight alteration: Clinton wanted to keep abortion "safe, legal, and rare."²⁵⁶

²⁵⁵ Sullivan, *Party Faithful*, 91.

²⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

Throughout the remainder of the presidential campaign, Clinton kept up this rhetoric. In accepting his party's nomination for President he declared before the crowd and the millions watching on television that he was not pro-abortion but was instead pro-choice. By modifying the way in which Clinton spoke about abortion, he managed to crystallize the feelings of many Catholics, and for that matter, many Americans. Far from wanting abortion illegal, Clinton simply wanted to make abortions rare. By comparison, both Gore and Kerry failed to articulate this point with the public, and ultimately failed to connect with Catholic voters in the same way Clinton had.

Evangelical Voters and the Election of George W. Bush

After eight years of Ronald Reagan, and with the ultimate failure of Pat Robertson's presidential bid, evangelical voters faced an unhappy reality in 1988. Despite their growing influence and the early success of Robertson's bid for president, vice-president George Bush had won the Republican nomination. Acknowledging his own inability to appeal directly to evangelicals, and recognizing the growing importance this group now exercised within the American electorate, George Bush saw little choice but to rely on his eldest son to act as a surrogate on his behalf. To assist in this task, the younger Bush came to work closely with Doug Wead, a close advisor to the vice-president. Together, these men understood how the marketing of moral values, which by the end of the 1980s was a common feature on religious broadcasts, was helping to recast Christian identities. Furthermore, Bush and Wead were amply aware that a new Christian Right was coming to the fore, and that this group had its own subculture "with its own myths, its own language, its own heroes and villains and its own nonnegotiable political

issues.”²⁵⁷ To succeed in their task, the two men decided it was better not to have the elder Bush make overt gestures of his own religious faith, as they feared it might be seen as insincere and unauthentic. Instead they chose to focus their attention on amplifying Dukakis’s religious shortcomings. With Dukakis being secular, this job proved easy enough. In 1992, however, the Democrats nominated an evangelical of their own, and Bush was defeated when some 19 % of evangelical votes shifted from the Republican column to the Democratic.²⁵⁸

Seven years later, while attending Sunday service at Park Methodist Church in Dallas with his mother Barbara, George W. Bush heard Pastor Mark Craig preach a “rather pointed sermon about Moses’ reluctance to lead his people.”²⁵⁹ Following the sermon, Bush reportedly called James Robinson, a conservative Southern Baptist televangelist and said, “I’ve heard the call....I believe God wants me to run for president.”²⁶⁰ From there, Bush began to assemble an experienced team of political strategists and pollsters, led by Karl Rove. To ensure the nomination went smoothly, Rove busied himself securing endorsements from key Republican officials and orchestrating “a campaign to woo powerhouse pastors and Christian Right leaders,”²⁶¹ a constituency Rove correctly surmised held the success of his candidate in the balance. Yet courting evangelicals posed sizable risks for the then Texas governor. In making too concerted a push for this group, the Bush campaign ran the risk of alienating moderate Americans, who, while largely church goers themselves, were nonetheless made uneasy by some of the more extreme positions of the Christian Right. This became a central dilemma of the campaign as they struggled to navigate the political waters between Christian conservatives and more moderate and secular voters. To address this problem, the campaign relied heavily on

²⁵⁷ Unger, *Fall*, 88.

²⁵⁸ Sullivan, *Party Faithful*, 223.

²⁵⁹ Unger, *Fall*, 160.

²⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁶¹ Kaplan, *With God*, 70.

the art of narrowcasting, whereby political messages are tweaked depending upon the audience one is addressing. In putting theory to practice, Bush, while continuing to speak openly about his faith, nevertheless toned down his remarks at nearly every major campaign event. To casual observers, Bush's rather benign religious statements were seen as political ploys aimed to remind the electorate of the ethical shortcoming of President Bill Clinton. And while these remarks certainly served this end, they had deeper meanings that were accessible only to those who knew what to listen for. When the time came for Bush to focus more ardently on religious voters, he purposely chose more narrowly targeted press outlets such as *Christianity Today* and the *World* magazine. These outlets were not only widely read by evangelical Christians but were also largely ignored by the mainstream press.

In addition to these efforts, the Bush campaign, with help from the Republican National Committee (RNC), was also busy courting Catholic voters. In 1998, for instance, the RNC launched a Catholic Task Force to drum-up support for the party in the upcoming presidential election. Concentrating initially on Rust Belt states, the RNC hoped this task force would lure back those Reagan Democrats whom the party believed had soft support for the current Democrats. Their technique was to deploy staff members on the ground with the job to make contact with Catholic congregations and compile a list of Catholic voters. By 2000, the party's Catholic outreach "expanded into such states as Florida, New Jersey, and Louisiana."²⁶² By the end of the 2000 election cycle, the RNC "had a list of 3 million church-attending Catholics who were the targets of a \$2.5 million direct-mail and out-reach effort."²⁶³ In addition to these mailings, Catholics on the Task Force's list similarly received a minimum of two campaign phone calls and were often asked to identify other voters on behalf of the Bush campaign.

²⁶² Sullivan, *Party Faithful*, 146.

²⁶³ *Ibid.*

Yet despite these outreach efforts and the aura of inevitability which the Bush campaign worked tirelessly to construct, the Arizona Senator John McCain managed an insurgent candidacy that caught many in the Bush camp by surprise. When McCain scored an impressive victory in the New Hampshire Republican Primary, “Rove immediately dispatched his candidate to speak at Bob Jones University, a fundamentalist Christian college based in South Carolina.”²⁶⁴ For moderates, this act, while questionable, was largely dismissed as necessary courting for an electoral base Bush desperately needed in that state’s conservative primary. By moving to the right, a tactic Bush often used whenever he found himself in political trouble, his campaign managed to score a decisive victory in South Carolina. McCain rallied with an unexpected win in Michigan (an open Republican primary in which more non-Republicans voted than Republicans) and in his home state of Arizona. But these victories proved short lived after McCain attacked evangelical leaders as “agents of intolerance.”²⁶⁵ Following these remarks, McCain found himself lacking the necessary support to further challenge Bush as several closed primaries loomed near.²⁶⁶ By the end of the night on Super Tuesday, Bush emerged the clear frontrunner and party favorite to challenge sitting vice-president Albert Gore.²⁶⁷ As history would have it, the 2000 presidential race would be one of the closest ever. While Bush ultimately emerged the victor, he did so lacking a clear mandate. To help heal the divisions of a bitterly divided country, Bush gave numerous assurances that he would govern from the middle. Yet while the press made much over Bush’s sliver thin margin of victory—a mere five electoral

²⁶⁴ Kaplan, *With God*, 71.

²⁶⁵ Brian Knowlton, “Republican Says Bush Panders to ‘Agents of Intolerance’: McCain Takes Aim at Religious Right,” *The New York Times*, February 29, 2000. Found online at: <http://www.nytimes.com/2000/02/29/news/29iht-bush.2.t_9.html> (Accessed June 5, 2011).

²⁶⁶ Closed Primaries are primaries open only to members of a particular political party.

²⁶⁷ “Super Tuesday” generally refers to the Tuesday in February or March when the greatest number of states hold primary elections in the lead up to the party conventions.

votes and the loss of the popular vote by more than half a million—another more troublesome story had developed for Democrats.

While Democrats had long acknowledged that the party had lost sizable ground with religious voters, many were surprised to learn just how deep those losses actually were. Among weekly churchgoers, Bush had beat Gore by 30 points and had won two-thirds of those voters who “described the nation’s moral climate as off on the wrong direction.”²⁶⁸ In addition, Bush bested even Reagan amongst white evangelical voters, capturing 75% of that voting bloc.²⁶⁹ Furthermore, in what has become a testament to the power of Christian Right organizations to mobilize this base, one poll showed that 79% of evangelicals who voted for Bush did so after being contacted “at least once by a religious right organization.”²⁷⁰ Problematic for Gore was his net capture of just 50% of Catholic voters, down four points from the previous election cycle.²⁷¹ Yet as startling as these numbers were, the so-called ‘God Gap’ would only worsen. Democrats were again reminded in 2004 of just how important faith is to the American people.

The 2004 Presidential Race

For a brief flash on November 2nd 2004, it appeared Massachusetts Senator John Kerry would be elected the nation’s 44th president. Nearly every poll prior to the election showed a very tight race, and early exit polling data on the morning of the election indicated a Democratic victory. Had Kerry won, few would have been surprised by the result as Bush was contending both with a sagging economy and what was daily becoming a more and more unpopular war in

²⁶⁸ Kaplan, *With God*, 75.

²⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁷¹ Sullivan, *Party Faithful*, 221.

Iraq. When Kerry lost, however, many were stunned to learn that cultural values had been the single most important issue for the electorate.²⁷² Yet this result was precisely what Rove had been aiming for. Following the tightly contested 2000 presidential election, Rove estimated that some “four million evangelical Christians had stayed at home”²⁷³ rather than vote on election-day. Rove recognized that the key to Bush’s re-election was in to mobilize these voters to the polls the next time around. To achieve this task, the president and his team undertook one of the most extensive religious courtships in American history. That courtship began in Bush’s first full week in office; more particularly on January 22nd 2001, the 28th anniversary of *Roe V. Wade*.

By executive order, Bush reinstated Ronald Reagan’s global gag rule, effectively forbidding any foreign health agency receiving American aid to provide abortion services or even abortion information. Months later, and after several meetings with religious groups, Bush announced that he would also forbid the use of federal dollars to fund future research into embryonic stem cells. This decision further solidified the support of America’s most listened to evangelical, the Rev. James Dobson of Focus on the Family, who noted, “needless to say, I was elated to learn, that contrary to our fears, Mr. Bush was planning to act on behalf of unborn life.”²⁷⁴ Yet as important as these actions were to the base, Bush made his largest religious gains on another two issues. One of these, Bush’s Faith-Based Initiatives, had been long in development and even served as the centerpiece of the previous campaign. The other, gay marriage, came courtesy of the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court, and caught many by surprise.

²⁷² Paul Harris, “How Bush Tapped into a Well of Faith,” *The Guardian*, November 7, 2004. Found online at: <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2004/nov/07/uselections2004.usa/print>> (Accessed March 12, 2008).

²⁷³ Ibid.

²⁷⁴ As quoted by Kaplan, *With God*, 125.

The reinstatement of the global gag order and the prohibition of federal funding for the research of new embryonic stem cell lines made Bush considerable friends among evangelicals. Once instated, these executive orders were then paraded before the Christian Right in hopes of luring those four million evangelicals Rove so often talked about to the polls. Yet in energizing his own religious base, Bush also managed to mobilize substantial opposition among many in the medical profession and in the ranks of various women's groups. In addition to angering these constituencies, Bush's pandering to the right also succeeded in raising serious suspicions among America's more moderate electorate, a group who had largely voted for him on the presumption that, like them, Bush too was a moderate at heart. In an effort to counter growing questions and sagging approval ratings, the Bush White House sought to make inroads where few Republicans dared, namely among Black and Hispanic Americans.

Going into the 2004 election, the Bush camp knew that winning the support of racial minorities was no easy task, particularly the support of black voters. Bush had, after all, spent considerable time and resources campaigning to this constituency in the 2000 general election, only to be rewarded with less than 10 % national support. The key to improving these numbers was to show that Bush cared about black people, and so it was that Bush, through his Faith-Based and Community Initiatives program lavished conservative black preachers and their churches with sizable sums of federal money. This was possible because the Faith-Based and Community Initiatives program serves as a federal partnership between government (i.e. government money) and those providers most capable of meeting the needs of the poor, namely churches in local communities.²⁷⁵

²⁷⁵ White House Staff Writer, "White House Office on Faith Based and Community Initiative," 2008. Found online at: <<http://www.whitehouse.gov/government/fbci/president-initiative.html>> (Accessed June 3, 2008).

Tracking the exact sum of federal grant money distributed through Bush's faith-based program has proved notoriously difficult, as this money was divided up between various federal departments and agencies, as well as each state being provided a lump sum. In March of 2005, however, "Bush proudly told a conference of religious leaders that the federal government gave \$2 billion in grants to faith-based groups the year before."²⁷⁶ By 2004, some \$300 million dollars went to promoting healthy marriages and another \$75 million for responsible fatherhood, two issues that disproportionately affect the black community.²⁷⁷ To further assist/court the black community, the White House regularly organized a series of seminars throughout black neighborhoods that taught community and religious leaders how to apply for and receive federal faith-based money.

Although government grants to religious charities are by no means new, President Bush took this practice in unparalleled directions. As the self-avowed evangelical Amy Sullivan noted in a 2004 *Washington Monthly* article, "[t]he policy of funding the work of faith-based organization has, in the face of slashed social service budgets, devolved into a small pork-barrel program that offers token grants to the religious constituencies in Karl Rove's electoral plan for 2004 while making almost no effort to monitor their effectiveness."²⁷⁸ John DiIulio, a former head of Bush's faith-based programs agrees, noting, "[t]here is no precedent in the modern White House for what is going on in this one: a complete lack of a policy apparatus....What you've got is everything—and I mean everything—being run by the political arm. It's the reign of the Mayberry Machiavellis."²⁷⁹ From a governing perspective, what has taken place in the White House's faith-based program can be considered abhorrent, yet from a political perspective, one

²⁷⁶ Michelle Goldberg, *Kingdom Coming: The Rise of Christian Nationalism* (New York, New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2006), 108.

²⁷⁷ Kaplan, *With God*.

²⁷⁸ As quoted by Goldberg, *Kingdom Coming*, 109.

²⁷⁹ As quoted by Goldberg, *Kingdom Coming*, 121.

would have to say Bush's faith-based program was a resounding success. It may well have made the difference between victory and defeat.

In courting black voters, Bush knew he would never win the demographic outright, but in tight elections you do not need to win every demographic, sometimes you just need to improve. And so it was that through his faith-based grants Bush succeeded in wooing "black leaders, many of them evangelical clergy who lead large congregations."²⁸⁰ When on election night it became evident that Kerry's bid for the White House hinged on his ability to carry the state of Ohio, where the election itself was decided by the slimmest of margins, Bush's improved showing among black voters, a jump of 7 percentage points, proved too steep a hill for Kerry to climb. Ultimately, it appears Bush's gamble on winning over just enough black voters paid off, as in Ohio, this group proved to be a determining factor between a second Bush presidency and a Kerry victory.²⁸¹

In American politics there are arguably few things more important than a well-prepared plan. When it came to religious voters, that is exactly what Bush had, and exactly what Kerry lacked. By expanding his courtship to conservative black churchgoers, and by building upon the already impressive religious support generated four years earlier, Bush left nothing to chance. To further assist in its religious outreach efforts, the campaign hired a darling of the Christian Right, former executive director of the Christian Coalition, and adept political operative, Ralph Reed to oversee its efforts. "One of the first things Reed did was to appoint chairpersons in each of the eighteen battleground states. In Florida alone, the campaign employed a state chairwoman

²⁸⁰ Paul Wallsten, "Latino and Black Voters Reassessing Ties to GOP," *Religion and Social Policy*, October 24, 2006. Found online at: <http://www.religionandsocialpolicy.org/news/article_print.cfm?id=5336> (March 12, 2008).

²⁸¹ Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies Staff Writer, "The Black Vote in 2004," *Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies*, January 1, 2005. Found online at: <<http://iamsaam.org/userimages/BlackVote.pdf>> (Accessed June 3, 2008).

for evangelical outreach who brought on board outreach chairs in each of Florida's sixty-seven counties. Every country chair, in turn, recruited between thirty and fifty volunteers to contact and register their evangelical neighbors."²⁸²

By contrast, John Kerry had but one staff member responsible for religious outreach, Mara Vanderslice, and she received scant party assistance and had no pre-existing database of reliable religious allies from which to work. Yet as bad as all this was for Vanderslice, things got significantly worse when Archbishop Raymond Burke declared that John Kerry should be denied the Eucharist because of his support for abortion rights.

Whipped into a frenzy the media launched into what became known as "Wafer Watch" and the public quickly began debating the use of Holy Eucharist as a political tool. Immediately, Vanderslice developed a strategy to combat this controversy, which included "talking points that went on the offensive" and the promotion of "Kerry's commitment to his Catholic faith."²⁸³ In addition, Vanderslice sought out high-level pro-choice Catholic politicians who were ready to make the media rounds. Surprisingly, for the most part senior Kerry advisors chose to ignore the issue believing that it would simply die down. When questions concerning Kerry's Catholic credentials did not go away, however, the campaign decided to make one of its few religious appeals. The idea was to organize a national community service day with people of faith just weeks before the general election. The event was called "People of Faith for Kerry," and it was supposed to be covered by the major news outlets in hopes of generating positive press coverage for the candidate. But the press never got the memo and subsequently "not a single reporter or photographer showed up to cover the (campaigns) endeavours."²⁸⁴ This media failure was a direct result of the Kerry communications office, which insisted on controlling all press outreach

²⁸² Sullivan, *Party Faithful*, 116-117.

²⁸³ *Ibid.*, 125.

²⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 136.

and refused to allow the volunteers, “many of whom had relationships with local publications,”²⁸⁵ from contacting the press whatsoever. When the communications office forgot about the event, the public was left in the dark.

Ultimately, there was little the Kerry campaign could do to prevent the Senator’s faith from emerging as a political issue. Yet the failure of the campaign to effectively control this story is an example of poor managerial judgment and a badly executed plan. Campaigns need to expect the unexpected and be ready to roll with unforeseen developments. Kerry was unsuccessful in doing just this, whereas Bush proved exceptionally adept. For the Bush team, their moment of political genius came in their response to an issue few saw coming.

In the early days of the 2004 presidential campaign, few political observers foresaw gay marriage playing any significant role. In fact, it was not until the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court on February 3rd of that year ruled in a split decision to expand the state’s definition of marriage to include homosexual couples that the issue even began to register as an election year topic. Yet as viable as gay marriage would ultimately prove to be for Bush, his team of senior advisors was initially hesitant to take this issue head-on, as “60% of voters said that they supported same-sex marriage or civil unions.”²⁸⁶ The problem, the Bush camp knew, lay with differentiating support for civil unions and that of same-sex marriage. By coming out too strong against the court’s decision, Bush ran the risk of offending a substantial portion of the American electorate, who when now faced with the topic as never before, might ultimately decide to side in support of gay couples. By remaining quiet, however, Bush would come off as insincere and unsupportive of the efforts of the Christian Right, an act that could undermine all

²⁸⁵ Ibid., 137.

²⁸⁶ Kenneth Sherrill, “Same-Sex Marriage, Civil Unions, and The 2004 Presidential Election,” *The Task Force Action Fund*, 2005. Found online at: <http://www.thetaskforceactionfund.org/studies_analyses/2004electionandmarriage.pdf> (Accessed March 2, 2008).

the work his campaign had done to lure ever more Christian conservatives to his cause. For these reasons, it was not at all surprising that “Bush was slow to endorse a constitutional amendment to define marriage as between a man and a woman.”²⁸⁷ Yet as calls from Christian leaders came pouring in, and as gay couples began lining up outside city hall in San Francisco and Portland, Oregon, Bush publicly declared his support for a federal amendment banning same-sex marriages. On July 14th, the United States Senate rejected such an amendment, thereby leaving little recourse for opponents of same-sex marriage outside the states.

Although Hawaii and Vermont had already recognized civil unions some years before, and a handful of other states already had amendments or laws banning same-sex marriage, most states had yet to address the issue of gay marriage in any meaningful way. Michigan was one of the few states that had and how things played out there is telling. In 2003 State Senator Alan Cropsy introduced a bill banning same-sex marriage. Anticipating a bitter and emotionally charged fight, Cropsy, counted on strong support from his state party. To his surprise, however, it was not the Michigan Republican Party that came to his aide, but rather the Roman Catholic Church, which spent nearly a million dollars in an effort that secured the passage of his bill.²⁸⁸ One year later, a similar story played out, though this time across 13 different states (11 on election-day). In these contests the untold story of the 2004 election “is that evangelical Christian groups were often more aggressive and sometimes better organized on the ground than the Bush campaign....[I]n many respects, Christian activists led the charge that GOP operatives followed and capitalized upon.”²⁸⁹ In many instances, scores of clergy members went as far as to

²⁸⁷ Alan Copperman and Thomas B. Edsall, “Evangelicals Say They Led Charge for the GOP,” *The Washington Post*, November 8, 2004. Found online at: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/ac2/wp-dyn/A32793-2004Nov7?language=printer> (Accessed March 12, 2008).

²⁸⁸ Ibid.

²⁸⁹ Ibid.

attend “legal sessions explaining how they could talk about the election from the pulpit.”²⁹⁰ Similarly, countless churches launched voter registration drives and issued countless voter guides instructing congregants on how to vote, with the Christian Coalition alone mailing some “30 million voter guides in 2004.”²⁹¹ As such, states with gay marriage ballot propositions provided Bush with just the issue needed to drive evangelicals to the polls. Furthermore, evidence seems to suggest that while gay marriage mobilized Christian conservatives behind Bush, it had an opposite, demobilizing effect on secular voters, a demographic with which Democrats enjoy sizable support, thus damping secular turnout and Kerry support.²⁹²

On this single issue more than any other, evangelicals mobilized in ways never before seen in the whole of American history. While Kerry supporters were busy phone banking and knocking on doors, Bush increasingly came to rely on the strength of the Christian Right. As would be the case, Bush’s re-election efforts were not particularly stealthy, as some Democrats have surmised. His efforts were simply taking place where most secular Americans never dared venture: churches and mega-churches around the country.²⁹³

Is There a Changing Evangelical Landscape?

When elections are decided by the narrowest of margins, any shift of support often proves consequential. In both the 2000 and 2004 presidential cycles, religious support for the Democratic nominee steadily ebbed when compared to Bill Clinton’s re-election of 1996. In 1996, Clinton enjoyed the support of 54% of all voting Catholics and 32% of evangelical voters.

²⁹⁰ Ibid.

²⁹¹ Sullivan, *Party Faithful*, 145.

²⁹² David E. Campbell and J. Quinn Monson, “The Religion Card Gay Marriage and the 2004 Presidential Election,” *Public Opinion Quarterly* 72, no. 3 (2008): 399-419.

²⁹³ Goldberg, *Kingdom Coming*.

In 2000, by contrast, Gore's share of religious support had slipped to 50% among Catholics and 28% among evangelicals. By 2004 those figures were down even further, when Kerry received a mere 46% of the Catholic vote and an anemic 22% of evangelicals.²⁹⁴ Following these losses, many Democrats began to take seriously the party's ineffectiveness in wooing religious voters and once again made religious outreach a top priority.

Leading this charge has been Common Good Strategies (now the Eleison Group), which is to date the only Democratic consultancy firm specializing in religious outreach. With their help, Democrats have begun to amass an impressive string of electoral victories as an increasing number of religious voters in key districts and swing states are once again pulling the lever for Democratic candidates. Most notable among recent victories was the 2006 re-election of Michigan governor, Jennifer Granholm, who, despite presiding over an ailing economy in her first-term, was able to run and win on a pro-choice, pro-gay rights platform while capturing 47% of the evangelical vote. The secrets to Granholm's success lay with her willingness to speak openly about her faith and to personally engage evangelicals on their own turf. Similar stories have likewise played out for other Democrats willing to follow comparable campaign strategies. In Ohio, Governor Ted Strickland frequently visited churches, engaged congregants and spoke of abortion reduction, rather than simply labeling himself as pro-choice. In addition to these efforts, Strickland also harnessed the power of Christian radio and did so early.²⁹⁵

In learning important lessons since 2004, Democrats have increased willingness to engage the religious voter and gradually opened up about their faith. Campaign stops at churches and synagogues are an important aspect of this outreach, as they not only place the candidates among actual voters, but they also provide excellent photo ops and are often covered

²⁹⁴ Sullivan, *Party Faithful*.

²⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

by both conventional and religious press. In addition, Democratic candidates are increasingly spending money advertising on Christian media outlets, while the national party now promotes the use of Christian radio as effective venue for candidates to reach voters.²⁹⁶ Furthermore, there are fresh signs that the religious left is ending its long-time silence and beginning to mobilize. For instance, an organization called Jim Wallis's Sojourners has for the past several years busied itself organizing rallies and conferences around the country, raising funds and running ads in hundreds of local newspapers, as well as having launched an extensive voter registration drive in time for the 2008 presidential election. Similarly, a group of three Catholic friends angered by the willingness of some Catholic priests to use communion as a weapon subsequently launched the Catholic Voting Project website, which allows "visitors to take an online quiz to see how their positions [match] up with those of the Church."²⁹⁷ From there, site visitors are then able to see how their positions compare against political candidates.

During the 2008 presidential campaign, Barack Obama launched an all out offensive to bring religious voters back to the Democratic Party. For instance, when he first introduced himself to the nation at the 2004 Democratic National Convention, Obama inserted several religious references, such as "I am my brother's keeper" into his speech, and at one point even drew from the lyrics of a famous church camp song when he declared he worshiped "an awesome God."²⁹⁸ The use of such rhetoric, as well as a willingness by Obama to cast several political issues in a religious context (as he has so often done with the environment), strikes an important chord among evangelical voters, particularly younger ones, who unlike their parent are

²⁹⁶ Leslie Brown, "50 State Strategy Puts Faith in Action in Oregon," *Faithful Democrats* (2006). Found online at: <<http://faithfuldemocrats.com/content/view/443/108/>> (Accessed June 16, 2008).

²⁹⁷ Sullivan, *Party Faithful*, 148.

²⁹⁸ Maureen Callahan, "Obama Preaches to the Choir: Courts Votes From 'The Joshua Generation,'" *The New York Post*, June 15, 2008. Found Online at: <http://www.nypost.com/seven/06152008/postopinion/opedcolumnists/obama_preaches_to_the_choir_115595.htm> (Accessed June 18, 2008).

more likely to be working towards the eradication of poverty or the preservation of the natural environment, rather than picketing abortion clinics. To this end Obama launched his religious outreach offensive, once called the “The Joshua Generation Project,” which aimed to specifically “solicit, engage, and win the votes of young evangelicals, young Catholics, and ‘people of faith,’”²⁹⁹ through a series of house parties, blogs, concerts, and more.³⁰⁰ Speaking directly of this endeavor, Obama stressed:

I'm here because somebody marched. I'm here because you all sacrificed for me. I stand on the shoulders of giants. I thank the Moses generation; but we've got to remember, now, that Joshua still had a job to do. As great as Moses was, despite all that he did, leading a people out of bondage, he didn't cross over the river to see the Promised Land. God told him your job is done. You'll see it. You'll be at the mountaintop and you can see what I've promised. What I've promised to Abraham and Isaac and Jacob. You will see that I've fulfilled that promise but you won't go there. We're going to leave it to the Joshua generation to make sure it happens. There are still battles that need to be fought; some rivers that need to be crossed. Like Moses, the task was passed on to those who might not have been as deserving, might not have been as courageous, find themselves in front of the risks that their parents and grandparents and great grandparents had taken. That doesn't mean that they don't still have a burden to shoulder, that they don't have some responsibilities. The previous generation, the Moses generation, pointed the way. They took us 90% of the way there. We still got that 10% in order to cross

²⁹⁹ Ibid.

³⁰⁰ David Brody, “Obama Campaign Will Launch ‘Joshua Generation Project,’” *CBN News*, June 6, 2008. Found Online at: <<http://www.cbn.com/cbnnews/388366.aspx>> (Accessed June 15, 2008).

over to the other side. So the question, I guess, that I have today is what's called of us in this Joshua generation? What do we do in order to fulfill that legacy; to fulfill the obligations and the debt that we owe to those who allowed us to be here today?³⁰¹

Overall, Obama's effort to tap the religious vote seems to have paid off. Although he has yet to reach the marks set by Clinton, he has nonetheless made substantial inroads and improved upon Kerry's 2004 showing. Moreover, given Obama's willingness to engage religious voters, coupled with the new social and political concerns of the so-called Joshua Generation, new political calculations are indeed needed.

Conclusion

As this chapter has shown, communication technologies played a crucial role in both the rise and homogenization of American evangelical Christianity. At the same time, these developments did not occur in a social vacuum, but were rather a part of a broader historical narrative. Collectively, this information provides a more accurate picture regarding the means by which the Christian Right was able to assert such tremendous influence over the American political process. However, as this chapter has also shown, society is anything but static and as our story continues to unfold, we must occasionally pause to reexamine previously held truths. For instance, with the advent of the Internet, elite control over the flow of communication has been disrupted, giving voice to previously voiceless people. One result of this development has

³⁰¹ Barack Obama, Speech before Brown AMC, Selma, Alabama, March 4, 2007. Found Online at: <http://www.barackobama.com/2007/03/04/selma_voting_rights_march_comm.php> (Accessed June 16, 2008).

been the rise of new religious movements such as creation care and the emerging church, both of which are increasingly challenging the cultural supremacy of the Christian Right by placing significant new emphasis on issues previously ignored by the established evangelical vanguard. Much of this has occurred because “rather than promoting consensus and the resolution of conflict in accordance with shared values, the Internet provides a site where virtual individualism exists in primacy over the reality of geographical and political boundaries. It is through these virtual meeting places that opinion may be formed, and become collective without reference to traditional actors.”³⁰² As evangelicals come to increasingly rely on the Internet as a means of communication and organization, the influence of the Christian Right will continue to be diminished.

If history is to serve as any barometer, the effects of the new media environment on religious communities will be no less revolutionary than those brought about by previous media regimes. By applying prevailing theories of how the Internet is affecting aggregate levels of social capital, civic engagement and mobilization to on-the-ground developments of the evangelical tradition, this thesis can better explore how changing communication technologies are affecting the interplay between religion and politics in the United States. It simultaneously tests crucial hypotheses, such as whether Bimber’s theory of accelerated pluralism can account for recent fragmentation within the evangelical community, as well as the extent to which face-to-face interactions remain an important feature in expanding religious movements.

Whatever the results of this investigations may be, there are two truths that seem to logically imply a third. First, America has long been a nation of religious adherents. The American political processes and its governing bodies are largely characterized by prevailing

³⁰² Heather Savigny, “Public Opinion, Political Communication and the Internet,” *Politics* 22, no. 1 (2002): 7 of 1-8.

religious views. Politicians who tread on faith, or who fail to tap America's ground swell of religious support, do so at their own political peril. Second, Internet technologies are not only revolutionizing the way in which politics is conducted, but are also changing the way we live our lives and interact with those around us. These facts are not mutually exclusive, but rather occur simultaneously in contested social settings. In identifying the importance of past social forces and/or historical patterns, scholars are able to provide critical insight into the structures governing contemporary society and better evaluate how changes to these structures might affect society more broadly. Thus the implied third truth is that political parties and politicians would be wise to understand how the new media environment is affecting the religious views and practices of Americans, as such knowledge would greatly benefit policy makers and activists alike. The chapters that follow navigate this winding path, and will examine previously unexplored consequences of the changing media landscape on the interplay between religion and politics.

CHAPTER FOUR

FROM MONOLOGUE TO DIALOGUE PART I:

HOW THE INTERNET IS EMPOWERING THE EVANGELICAL PERIPHERY

By its nature, civil society is a forum through which competing interests vie for broader public support. As the public is itself ever fluid and evolving, this fact renders the cultural dimensions of a given society as anything but static. In the United States, evangelical Christians have long enjoyed considerable political influence and evangelical Christianity serves as an important source of identity for millions of Americans. To presume, however, that all evangelicals are theologically and doctrinally similar would be a fallacy of grave proportions. As the previous two chapters have already highlighted, evangelical Christianity, as a whole, is a diverse group of religious adherents, some belonging to established denominations, others not; yet each member brings with them a unique history, tradition and set of beliefs. In spite of these many differences, over the past 30 years evangelicals have coalesced behind conservative political causes and have emerged as a crucial electoral base for the Republican Party. Much of this political unification is the result of deliberate efforts by evangelical leaders to strengthen the bonds of kinship and to increase trust and social capital among American evangelicals, and was achieved in part through the heavy use of broadcast media. To help illustrate the extent to which these efforts have been successful, it is worth considering this simple fact: In 2004 some 26.5 million self-described evangelicals cast their ballot to re-elect George W. Bush. As a percentage of the overall voting electorate, those 26.5 million votes accounted for slightly more than one-fifth of all votes cast in the 2004 general election, and 43% of Bush's vote total. As a voting bloc, evangelicals supported Bush over Kerry 78% to 21%.³⁰³

Kerry's anemic support among evangelical voters was but a continuation of a larger electoral trend that saw Democrats lose ground among this constituency in every presidential election since 1992. To address this political disadvantage, Democrats in both the 2006 and

³⁰³ John C. Green, "Religion and the Presidential Vote: A Tale of Two Gaps," *The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life*, August 21, 2007. Found online at: <<http://pewforum.org/docs/?DocID1/4240>> (Accessed February 17, 2010).

2008 elections undertook an extensive faith-based voter outreach initiative, the likes of which had never before been attempted by the party. As was demonstrated in the previous chapter, evidence from the 2008 general election suggests these efforts may be starting to close the God Gap. However, the fact that evangelicals remain a reliable pillar of Republican support suggests the evangelical voting bloc may have an impenetrable Republican foundation. Yet as this and other chapters will demonstrate, the Republican ground occupied by the American evangelical community may not be as solid as once thought. This is so because in contrast to the likes of Pat Robertson, James Dobson and Jerry Falwell, three men who worked tirelessly to cultivate a conservative religious movement in the United States, many of today's emerging evangelical leaders are calling conservative evangelical Christianity to task. While leaders such as Brian McLaren and Richard Cizik, and groups such as Emergent Village and the Evangelical Environmental Network, serve niche theological interests, they are also creating considerable internal evangelical division and deepening theological disputes. In this regard, these groups and their leadership pose a far more serious threat to the unity of the Christian Right than do outside forces. Furthermore, if history serves as any barometer it is unlikely that recent advances in communication technologies will leave the evangelical community unchanged. While past technologies, such as broadcast media, helped to establish the political and cultural dominance of the Christian Right, these technologies have since been surpassed by newer communication technologies. As a result, the monologue that for so long served to silence cultural dissent has since given way to a more organic and authentic dialogue.

This chapter proceeds by continuing the exploration of how broadcast media encourages the homogenization of political views and social values. It then contrasts this effect with that of new media, which provide consumers with an abundance of choice, as well as an effective

platform from which dissident cultural elements can organize their efforts, mobilize supporters and expand their base. Specifically, this chapter explores the role the Internet has played in the rise of the creation care and emerging church movements, by providing first-hand accounts from on-the-ground activists. From there, this chapter looks into the possible cognitive effects of electronic media and presents arguments suggesting that the evangelical community has been greatly affected by a societal shift from a predominantly typographic print-based culture to that of an electronic image based culture. It then places these arguments within the broader discussion of how the Internet is affecting relative trust levels and evangelical social capital, while simultaneously changing evangelical cultural attitudes, thus disrupting the monologue of the Christian Right.

Broadcast Media, Mobilization and the Faithful

For purposes of mobilization, religion often serves as an important motivating factor due to the value framework it provides its adherents. In this respect, religious zeal often negates the necessity for the incentives that might otherwise be needed to compel an individual to action. Yet religious zeal is not the only advantage favoring religious mobilization. As discussed in Chapter 3, Marostica argues that religious organizations have inherent advantages that their secular counter-parts often lack.³⁰⁴ For starters, religious organizations have leaders capable of using their holy status to further various ends. Assisting the causes of these leaders is a strong sense of collective identity, well-developed ideologies and a passionate fellowship base. Moreover, many of the monetary needs of religious movements can be readily addressed through

³⁰⁴ Marostica, "Religion."

pre-existing mechanisms such tithes and offerings. Moreover, the public nature by which such tithes and offerings are collected creates considerable onus on individual members to give, which in-turn increases one's sense of belonging to the group and greatly mitigates the so-called 'free-rider' effect. Collectively, these advantages, when coupled with the deeply held worldviews of religious people, inevitably make mobilization less challenging.

However, while the mobilization of a single faith community, such as a house of worship or even an entire denomination, may be comparatively easy in contrast to secular mobilization efforts, uniting multiple religious organizations or denominations is no simple task, particularly when each group is confident of its own righteousness. The fact that evangelicals have emerged as both a sizable and reliable coalition for conservative candidates and political causes is perhaps the single most important development in American politics since Roosevelt solidified union support for Democrats in the 1930s. As the previous chapters have already noted, broadcast media, such as radio, television and print, played a crucial role in bringing together the divergent factions of the evangelical tradition. While this much is largely taken for granted today, when radio preachers and later televangelists first appeared on the religious horizon, there existed considerable concerns that these newer forms of electronic ministry would serve to privatize faith and greatly erode the significance of the local church. For instance, in 1967 Thomas Luckmann characterized American faith as an increasingly "privatized" act.³⁰⁵ The crux behind Luckmann's assertion is that as cities grow and as geographic mobility increases, small neighborhoods and communities are replaced with larger, less personal hubs of social interactions, such as shopping malls, movie theaters and sports complexes; and all this at a time when modern economic life demands the frequent displacement of individuals as jobs change

³⁰⁵ Thomas Luckman, *The Invisible Religion*, (New York: McMillan, 1967).

localities and people change careers. As Americans are uprooted more-and-more from their local communities, the ability to form lasting relationships becomes increasingly strained, thus testing the ability of religious groups to provide the kind of intimate fellowship that was once common place. All these themes are reminiscent of popular social capital literature, and like many of those authors, they too greatly concerned Luckmann. Confronted with these realities, Luckmann concluded that rather than looking outward for spiritual fulfillment, Americans were instead being forced to turning inward.

Of course by the time Luckmann published his thesis in 1967, radio preachers were quite prevalent on America's radio dials, and the number of televangelist and religious oriented television programming was quickly growing. This fact only added to Luckmann's belief in the privatization of religious faith. In addressing Luckmann's observation, renowned religious scholar Robert Wuthnow notes that one of the key attractions of religious broadcasting is the perceived ease by which ties can be severed. As Wuthnow writes, "switching television channels is a good bit easier than switching churches."³⁰⁶ Indeed, the very fact that broadcast media provides religious consumers an array of religious options (albeit vastly fewer than those available online) lends itself to Luckmann's privatization thesis. As Wuthnow notes in greater detail, televangelism allows individuals to:

‘Shop around’ until one find just the television preacher who suits one’s own personal tastes without ever leaving the comforts of home. In addition, the opportunity to watch dozens of different programs enhances the likelihood of developing a purely idiosyncratic version of faith—a little self-help doctrine from Rober Schuller, some political views from Jerry Falwell, and a sense of liturgy

³⁰⁶ Robert Wuthnow, "The Social Significance of Religious Television," *Review of Religious Research*, 29 no. 2 (1987): 127 of 125-134.

from the local parish's broadcast. Furthermore, the lack of feedback and interaction that characterizes mass media communication may reinforce eclecticism: lacking opportunity to ask questions, not having to confront others' views in open discussion, and not having to accept any doctrines or creeds for 'membership,' the religious television viewer is essentially free to derive his or her own interpretations.³⁰⁷

Yet despite this privatization effect, it has been shown that religious broadcasting does not promote the withdrawal of religion into the private sphere; indeed quite the opposite. In the years following the publication of Luckmann's thesis, a number of studies have demonstrated a positive correlation between increased viewing of religious programming and an increase in both bridging and bonding social capital, which has benefited churches and believers alike. As Wuthnow explains further, "religious television has been used to raise funds and to develop mailing lists for political campaign; it has also played a major role in aggregating the resources needed to build alternative educational institutions, such as Liberty Baptist College, CBN University, and Oral Roberts University."³⁰⁸ Moreover, while "televangelism may siphon some support away from local churches...its viewers, supporters and contributors maintain an above average level of activity in and contributions to those churches."³⁰⁹

As previously demonstrated, broadcast technologies are uniquely suited to bridge denominational divides, which in-turn enhances bridging social capital by mediating shared religious experiences, while the religious fervor its audience walks away with after viewing such religious programming increases the likelihood that they will further embed themselves in a

³⁰⁷ Ibid.

³⁰⁸ Ibid.

³⁰⁹ Michael F. Korpi and Kyong Liang Kim, "The uses and Effects of Televangelism: A Factorial Model of Support and Contribution," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 25, no. 4 (1986): 422 of 410-423.

house of worship, thus strengthening bonding social capital with local parishioners. Moreover, the mainstreaming effect caused by regular television viewing creates a confluence of ideas and “a coming-together of attitudes.”³¹⁰ These attitudes help shape values and worldviews, which in turn inform topics of conversation and direct future civic engagement and aid in mobilization efforts. When these programs are viewed “heavily” and by “divergent” groups, what results is the homogenization or “mainstreaming” of political values. With time, and if left unchecked by competing views or claims to truth, these values tend to slide towards the extreme ends of the political spectrum.³¹¹ For instance, when an individual is caught up in the mainstreaming effect, they make a habit of seeking information with which they already agree. The effects of this are not unlike an echo-chamber, in that repeated exposure to the same idea or set of ideas, works to reinforce and further polarize pre-existing biases.³¹² By appealing to individuals who felt under threat by the social upheavals of the 60s and 70s, televangelists in the 80s and 90s helped to foster a community of conservative Christians whose numbers grew as viewers increasingly gained access to cable television. All the while, the message of these religious programs gradually crept toward the right end of the political spectrum, and was mutually reinforced as it got caught up in a feedback loop.³¹³ As such, the consolidation of evangelical political capital following the rapid growth of televangelism serves as a prime example of how broadcast media can positively impact both bonding and bridging social capital. The bonding aspect comes into play by bringing new religious converts to the evangelical community, and similarly mediates shared religious experiences, all while deepening the religious passions of existing adherents.

³¹⁰ James Watson, *Media Communication: An Introduction to Theory and Process* (London: Macmillan, 1996), 67.

³¹¹ Ibid. See also, Sandra J. Ball-Rokeach and Melvyn DeFleur, “A Dependency Model of Mass Media Effects,” in *Inter-Media: Interpersonal Communication in the Media*, eds. G. Gumpert and R. Cathcart (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979).

³¹² Leon Festinger, *A Theory of Dissonance* (U.S.A.: Row Pearson, 1957).

³¹³ Ibid.; see also Watson, *Media Communication*.

Conversely, the advent of televangelism helped in no small part to bridge denominational and theological divides, and further unified a broad swath of conservative religious believers.

A more recent development in the world of televangelism, and one which further aides the mainstreaming effect, has been the growing sophistication of electronic Christian broadcasts. In an effort to better meet the entertainment demands of the evangelical community, a growing number of Christian Networks have been producing scripted shows and full-length feature films, while an increasing number of traditional ministries have been taking their cues from the likes of the CBN and TBN and have begun experimenting with broadcast media in their own right. For instance, 2008 saw the cinematic wide-release of *Fireproof*, a film starring Kirk Cameron who plays a fire fighter whose marriage is on the brink of divorce. When *Fireproof* was released, it opened at number four in the nation, beating out Spike Lee's *Miracle of Saint Anna*. By the end of the year, *Fireproof's* box office take totaled more than \$33 million, a hefty profit for a film that cost only \$500,000 to produce. What is perhaps even more astonishing than the profitability of *Fireproof*, is the fact that it was not made by any Hollywood studio, but rather by the Sherwood Baptist Church of Albany, Georgia.³¹⁴

Steve Morales, executive director of the Franklin Springs Family Media Fund, attributes much of the success of *Fireproof* to its positive Christ centered focus, arguing that when it comes to such films, there is simply a lack in the market.³¹⁵ Yet by merely producing a film that appeals to evangelical values, movie studios are not guaranteeing the films success. What undoubtedly aided *Fireproof's* box office success was a deliberate promotional strategy similar to the one used by Mel Gibson in the promotion of *The Passion of the Christ*. Instead of

³¹⁴ Barbara Bradley Hagerty, "Christian Filmmakers Creating An Industry of Faith," *NPR's Weekend Edition*, February 25, 2009. Found online at: <<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=100927647>> (Accessed March 10, 2010).

³¹⁵ *Ibid.*

spending limited resources on a more traditional glitzy ad campaign, as most studios do, the makers of *Fireproof* held hundreds of advance screenings for various church leaders. In turn, these religious leaders spread the word to their own congregations, and encouraged them to see the movie for themselves.³¹⁶ This sort of promotional advertising relies on a theory known as “significant others.” As Watson states, “[i]t is useful to remind ourselves that audiences have their own *lived experience* to connect with the *mediated experience*...and an important part of that lived experience is other people who make up a context of influences equal to and often more powerful than those of the media themselves.”³¹⁷ As such, individuals are more likely to be persuaded by the opinions of others whom they hold in high regard. Thus, when a respected church elder encourages their congregation to go and see a film, theories of social capital suggest that the members of that congregation will do just that. The empirical evidence concurs.

How Media are Changing the Church

In 2003, the Anglican Communion was ablaze in controversy after the New Hampshire Diocese of the United States Episcopal Church elected Gene Robinson, an openly gay and practicing clergyman, to be the diocese’s next bishop. For many conservative church leaders and adherents, the election of Robinson was nothing short of blasphemous and served as further evidence that the Episcopal Church was straying too far from biblical principles.

In an effort to maintain peace within the church, Archbishop Rowan Williams, head of the global Anglican Communion, “persuaded Anglicans to observe three temporary bans on

³¹⁶ Ibid.

³¹⁷ Watson, *Media Communication*, 71. Italics are authors.

emotive issues such as sending clergy to another country without its agreement, electing openly homosexual priests, or blessing same-sex unions while a more permanent structure to resolve disagreements is put in place.”³¹⁸ Yet these moratoriums were largely ignored, and as a partial consequence a number of church parishes absolved their ties with the American Episcopal Church. Among them was a group of Virginia parishes that in 2007 voted to join the Convocation of Anglicans in North America (CANA), a group placing themselves under the leadership of the Nigerian Anglican Church and its bishop Peter Akinola, a vocal opponent of gay rights. In choosing to join CANA, however, these Virginia parishes were doing much more than simply voicing their dissatisfaction with the American Episcopal Church, they were also challenging the very notion that geographical space ought to be a central principle for church organization. As Clay Shirky aptly notes:

In a world where group action means gathering face-to-face, people who need to act as a group should, ideally be physically near one another. Now that we have ridiculously easy group-forming, however, that stricture is relaxed, and the result is that organizations that assume geography as a core organizing principle, even ones that have been operating that way for centuries, are now facing challenges to that previously bedrock principle.³¹⁹

³¹⁸ Riazat Butt, “Gay Bishop Gene Robinson Announces Plan to Retire Early,” *The Guardian*, November 7, 2010. Found online at: <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2010/nov/07/gay-bishop-gene-robinson-retires>> (Accessed December 20, 2010).

³¹⁹ Clay Shirky, *Here Comes Everybody: The Power of Organizing Without Organizations* (London: Penguin Books, 2008), 155.

Since the 2007 vote, the premise that geographic space ought to serve as the organizational premise of the Anglican Communion has come under further assault with the formation of the Anglican Church in North America (ACNA), a proposed alternative to the U.S. Episcopal Province, which if recognized, would mark the first time a province has been defined by theological persuasion rather than geographic location.

To be certain, theological disputes have a long history of dividing religious bodies and the Anglican Communion serves as a prime example. But what is unique about the current struggles of the American Episcopal Church is the extent to which the dissident cultural element refuses to walk away. Historically, when such disputes arise, particularly within protestant Christianity, the dissident theological group breaks free of the mother church and forms its own denomination. Yet ACNA has not done this. Instead it fights to be a recognized religious alternative within the Anglican Communion. At the same time, officially sanctioned provinces such as Nigeria and Uganda not only maintain full communion with ACNA, but in the case of Nigeria, further impugn the authority of American Episcopal province by serving as the nominal head of several parishes within the American domain.

Rather than an anomaly, the recent struggles of the Anglican Communion could be a sign of things to come. In a world where recent innovations have dramatically compressed both space and time, which by itself challenges the importance of geographic borders, the Internet, as Cass Sunstein notes, affords individuals the opportunity to connect with other people with shared interests, “no matter how specialized, no matter how weird, no matter how big or how small.”³²⁰ To be certain, there is no shortage of Christians opposed to gay sacramental rights, particularly in Virginia, but as Marshal Van Alstyne and Erik Brynjolfsson also note, because the Internet

³²⁰ Cass Sunstein, *Republic.com 2.0* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 49-50.

makes it easier to find like-minded individuals, “it can facilitate the creation and strength of fringe communities that have a common ideology but are dispersed geographically.”³²¹ Thus in connecting dissident religious elements, as well as providing the means to contest religious authority and accepted cultural orthodoxy, the Internet, as we have just seen, is capable of dramatically reshaping both religion and society. A driving point of this thesis is that given the disproportional influence of the evangelical tradition over the American public it is prudent for political scientists and strategist alike to address in detail ways in which the new media environment is rapidly reshaping this particular faith tradition. To illustrate this point further, the following section discusses two dissident faith groups whose emergence has been facilitated by the Internet.

Evangelical Environmentalism and the Internet

Arguably, the most notable and widely discussed emerging cultural trend among evangelicals is the “care of creation” or “creation care” movement. For groups affiliated with this cause, environmental activism is not simply a civic activity, but rather a biblical mandate. One of the largest evangelical organizations to take up environmental protection is the Evangelical Environmental Network. Founded by the Rev. Jim Ball in 1993 as an extension of ESA, the EEN is a “non-profit organization that seeks to educate, inspire, and mobilize Christians in their effort to care for God's creation, to be faithful stewards of God's provision,

³²¹ Marshall Van Alstyne and Erik Brynjolfsson, “Global Village or Cyber-Balkans? Modeling and Measuring the Integration of Electronic Communities,” *Management Science* 51, no. 6 (2005): 852 of 851-868.

and to advocate for actions and policies that honor God and protect the environment.”³²² An early manifestation of EEN environmental advocacy appeared in 1996 when congressional Republicans tried to overhaul the Endangered Species Act. The overhaul would have made it more difficult to grant federal protection to species threatened with extinction. Enraged by what many evangelicals saw as the attempted trashing of humanity’s modern day Noah’s Ark, the EEN jumped into action, launching what at the time was an unprecedented environmental lobbying effort for evangelicals. This mobilization of environmental Christians largely stunned the GOP, which by 1996 was already considering evangelical support as given.

In 2002 the EEN rolled out the ‘What Would Jesus Drive?’ educational campaign, “which states that ‘obeying Jesus in our transportation choices is one of the great Christian obligations and opportunities of the 21st century.’”³²³ Armed with fact sheets, bumper stickers and a host of other church resources, the EEN published books, held conferences and traveled the country in an effort to educate congregations about the Bible’s mandated stewardship of God’s creation. One result of these efforts, however, was that evangelicals closely aligned with the traditional advocacy of the Christian Right began attacking the EEN. Pat Robertson, for instance, stated that, “the concept of linking Jesus to an anti-SUV campaign borders on blasphemy,”³²⁴ while Terry Watkins of Dial-the-Truth-Ministries, also insisted that, “to degrade the Lord Jesus into a[n] environmental-wacko ‘car salesman’ is beyond simple ignorance – it’s irreverent and it’s blasphemous.”³²⁵

More recently, the EEN has teamed up with the National Association of Evangelicals

³²² EEN Staff Writer, *EEN Home Page*, 2011. Found online at: <<http://creationcare.org/>> (Accessed July 8, 2011).

³²³ Dean Reynolds, “Would Jesus Drive an SUV? Commercials Say Jesus Wouldn’t Drive an SUV,” *Good Morning America*, November 21, 2002. Found online at: <<http://abcnews.go.com/GMA/story?id=125583&page=1>> (Assessed January 16, 2010).

³²⁴ *Ibid.*

³²⁵ John McCaslin, “Driving with Jesus,” *Townhall.com*, May 28, 2007. Found online at: <http://townhall.com/columnists/JohnMcCaslin/2007/05/28/driving_with_Jesus> (Accessed January 16, 2010).

(NAE), the largest representative evangelical body in the country, whose membership includes 60 different denominations. In 2006 the NAE, led in large part by Richard Cizik, the NAE's vice-president of governmental affairs, along with student leaders of the Evangelical Youth Climate Initiative, wrote to President Bush and members of Congress urging them to take greater action on climate change, stating, "our allegiance to Jesus Christ demands that the threat of climate change no longer be ignored."³²⁶ Responding to this call, Focus on the Family Chairman James Dobson and two-dozen other evangelical leaders called upon the NAE to oust Cizik, as his emphasis on climate change was moving support away from the "great moral issues of our time."³²⁷ However, the NAE did not cave to the demands of the powerful Dobson, and instead rebuked Christian Right leaders when it reaffirmed their support for Cizik and his ministries.

Today, an increasing number of voices are joining Cizik in calling for greater environmental protection. As these voices grow in strength and garner ever more support among evangelicals, the embedded nature of its broader community is disrupted, while its stock of social capital diminishes. Evangelical environmentalism represents a cultural chasm between a largely younger, more modern evangelical cohort, and that of the older, more established evangelical vanguard. However, while creation care remains a largely divisive issue, it has picked up the support of some very important and influential evangelical leaders. For his part, Pat Robertson has since changed his stance on climate change and now speaks regularly about matters of the environment on his television show, *The 700 Club*. In doing so, Robertson has joined the ranks of Billy Graham and Rick Warren, the best-selling author of *The Purpose-Driven Life*. Sharing

³²⁶ The Leaders of the Evangelical Youth Climate Initiative, "Global Warming Letter to National Leaders," *Evangelical Youth Climate Initiative*, November 16, 2006. Found online at: <<http://restoringeden.org/getinvolved/protect/GlobalWarming/EYCILetter>> (Accessed March 21, 2011).

³²⁷ Jim Wallis, "Jim Wallis: Dr. Dobbson, Let's Have a Real Debate," March 6, 2007. Found online at: <<http://blog.beliefnet.com/godspolitics/2007/03/jim-wallis-dr-dobson-lets-have-real.html>> (Accessed March 21, 2011).

the stage with these men is Restoring Eden founder Peter Illyn.

At over six feet tall, with a dark scrubby beard and a snakeskin eye patch worn over his left eye, Peter Illyn has a presence that is hard to miss. It is not, however, Illyn's physical appearance that has garnered him considerable public attention, but rather his activism as an evangelical environmentalist. As Executive Director of Restoring Eden, one of the nation's most politically active creation care groups, Illyn is at the forefront of one of the most divisive issues confronting the American evangelical tradition. Like most evangelicals, however, Illyn was not raised an environmentalist. Instead, he came to the creation care movement in 1994 after embarking upon a four month, 1000 mile llama excursion through the Cascade Mountains; a trek he claims left his soul rejuvenated and embedded in him the passion to protect God's creation.

Illyn's first taste of political activism came a year later, after Republicans won control of Congress and took aim at the Endangered Species Act. Angered by this action, Illyn, who by then had already established some media contacts through his position as a spokesman for the International Llama Association, held a press conference in which he declared, "My Bible said God blessed, protected and made a covenant with all the different species....What right do I have to drive them to extinction?"³²⁸ And this, Illyn says, was the inspiration for his first bumper sticker: a salmon inside a Jesus fish, with the words "Extinction Isn't Stewardship." The aim, Illyn contends, was to be "unapologetic, yet winsome."³²⁹ As Illyn further elaborates, Restoring Eden has never wanted to sound, "shrill," "strident" or "self-righteous," nor does it want to be

³²⁸ According to Peter Illyn in a personal interview on Restoring Eden and the creation care movement, May 27, 2009.

³²⁹ Illyn interview.

“the hippie chick crying because somebody is having a barbeque.” At the same time, however, Restoring Eden is “unapologetic that it is wise to take care of the earth.”³³⁰

Buoyed by a background in marketing as well as nine years as a Pentecostal pastor, Illyn was confident he could help grow what was in the mid-nineties an evangelical environmental movement still in its infancy. Yet those early years proved especially difficult. As Illyn recalls, many early activists believed that the creation care movement needed to capitulate to the theology of the broader evangelical tradition, a theology that included dominionism. But Illyn has long rejected dominionism, which “commands the believer to take dominion over God’s creation.”³³¹ Instead, Illyn is of the opinion that, “[m]ovements are never born because nobody disagrees with them. They’re born because you’ve got a compelling case and a growing group of people who share that compelling case.”³³² The difficult part, as Illyn notes, has “been consolidating that compelling case.” This, Illyn believes, is where the Internet comes in. Prior to “email newsletters and the free Internet search engines...you had to stay in touch using postage.”³³³ For an organization with limited resources, this was a pricy endeavor: “you’re looking at fifty cents to a dollar just to send a piece of mail to someone, so if you had 5000 names, you’re looking at thousands of dollars, ten thousand dollars just to send them something twice a year.”³³⁴ And for a lot of years, “ten thousand dollars was,” as Illyn points out, “the majority of our budget.”³³⁵

³³⁰ Ibid.

³³¹ Sarah Posner, “The FundamentaList (No. 82),” *The American Prospect*, May 27, 2009. Found online at: <http://www.prospect.org/cs/articles?article=the_fundamentalist_052709> (Accessed December 20, 2010).

³³² Illyn interview.

³³³ Ibid.

³³⁴ Ibid.

³³⁵ Ibid.

Thus for Illyn, the Internet has proven a boon for creation care groups, as it has provided the movement an affordable means both to consolidate and grow what was for a long time a “very scattered audience.”³³⁶ This development is in keeping with Bimber’s contention that:

Communication and information flow *will* lower the obstacles to grass-roots mobilization and organization faced by political entrepreneurs, activists, and others, and will speed the flow of politics. Lower costs of organizing collective action offered by the Net will be particularly beneficial for one type of group: those outside the boundaries of traditional private and public institutions, those not rooted in businesses, professional or occupational membership or the constituencies of existing government agencies and programs.³³⁷

Throughout much of its infancy, creation care occupied space on the evangelical periphery, and many of the earliest creation care groups had roots outside of the evangelical tradition.³³⁸

However, due to its ability to connect geographically dispersed individuals, the Internet has effectively enabled the creation care movement to consolidate. In an interview with Jason Swodoba, a Foursquare pastor and creation care activist, he noted that the Internet has allowed him and others like him to connect with the broader evangelical environmental movement in ways that would otherwise be impossible. In this regard, Swodoba, like Illyn, sees the Internet as

³³⁶ Ibid.

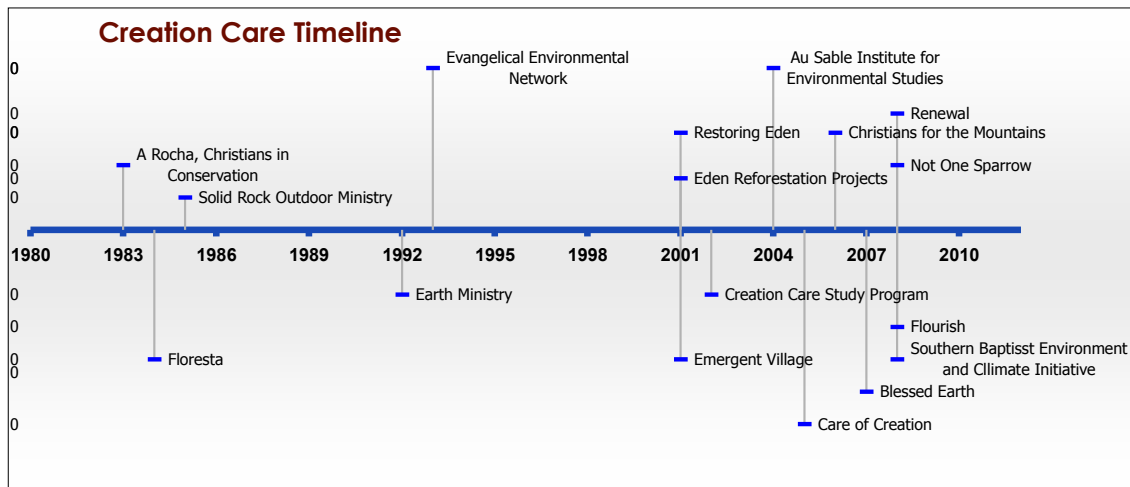
³³⁷ Bimber, “Internet, Political Transformation.”

³³⁸ Although A Rocha, Floresta and Earth Ministry were founded before the EEN, A Rocha and Earth Ministry are rooted in the Anglican Church (with A Rocha having originally formed in Portugal), while Floresta is multi-denominational. Similarly, while Solid Rock Outdoor Ministry predates the EEN, it primarily serves as a vacation retreat for outdoor evangelical enthusiasts (though environmental ethics are taught alongside several outdoor activities). The EEN is the first major creation care group founded explicitly by American evangelicals.

having played “a crucial role” in his “eco-theological” work, while at the same time, connecting “the Diaspora of creation care folks.”³³⁹

Figure 4.1

Dates Various Creation Care Groups Were Founded



* The above timeline illustrates the rapid acceleration of creation care groups following the widespread public penetration of Internet access. Please note that Emergent Village is in this timeline because although it is not specifically a creation care group, its many supporters remain sympathetic to evangelical environmentalism.

As the coming chapters will demonstrate in much greater depth, while evangelical environmentalism is a large, diverse and growing movement, it is not without its critics, and these critics are often fierce in their opposition. In this regard, it is important to view creation care not as a unifying religious movement, but one that for the time being is exacerbating tensions within the evangelical tradition.

³³⁹ Personal interview with A. J. Swodoba on Restoring Eden and the creation care movement, May 15, 2009.

The Emerging Church Movement and the Internet

While many emerging Christians would describe themselves as evangelical or post-evangelical, followers of this movement, or “conversation” as some prefer, tend to be Christians in their 20s and 30s who were raised in the evangelical tradition and who have since become “dissatisfied with the dominant expression of ‘contemporary’ church.”³⁴⁰ As a result of this dissatisfaction, emerging Christians are calling for a radical re-conceptualization of the evangelical tradition, one that focuses specific attention on mission work, particularly as it applies to the “post-modern” world. As Amy Green explains, emerging Christians are:

Drawing less from traditional sources such as Sunday services and turning instead to friends, online social sites, celebrity pop culture, and podcasts for their spirituality. Often they are cynical of today’s church leaders but eager to probe, discuss, and learn from their teachings. Politically, they are less motivated by issues such as abortion and homosexuality and moved instead by environmentalism, genocide in Africa, and poverty.³⁴¹

In placing significant emphasis on issues of poverty, social justice, and the environment, issues that have largely been neglected within the evangelical tradition or outright opposed by the Christian Right, emerging Christians are working to fundamentally reshape religion in America

³⁴⁰ Scott Bader-Saye, “The Emergent Matrix: A New Kind of Church?,” *The Christian Century* 121, no. 24 (2004): 20.

³⁴¹ Amy Green, “Finding My Religion,” *Sojourners Magazine* 37, no. 6 (2008). Found Online at: <<http://www.sojo.net/index.cfm?action=magazine.article&issue=soj0806&article=080610>> (Accessed March 12, 2009).

by removing the “sterile polarities that have defined the church in the modern era: liberal vs. conservative, traditional vs. contemporary, reason vs. experience, faith vs. science, mega church vs. maintenance church.”³⁴²

Like many on the creation care front, emerging Christians view the Internet and its networking abilities as a vital tool in organizing their movement and for proselytizing new supporters.³⁴³ Yet far from merely serving as a vehicle by which geographically dispersed supporters are connected and new interest groups within the evangelical community grow, the Internet also disrupts existing power relations by amplifying voices at the fringe. Callad Keefe-Perry is an Emergent Village cohort leader in Rochester, New York. In an interview he had this to say:

So previously if you’ve got theological questions, you went to the pastor, and if you go back hundreds of years, the preacher was the authority on religious matter, and up until recently and in certain places that is still the case. But now what you are seeing is these minor voices, [and] some of these people who are speaking at the margins are just as acceptable as the monologue. You can go online and find all sorts of things, and there in is the beauty and danger. You can find whatever you want. So if you’re not really wanting accountability and you’re looking like you’re not wanting community, you can find whatever it is you already believe and say, “Wow, I’m done.” But if you’re responsible with your faith life and you want to be engaged in dialogue with...Christian folks, and you want to be

³⁴² Scott Bader-Saye, “Emergent Matrix,” 20.

³⁴³ See Phyllis Tickle, *The Great Emergence: How Christianity Is Changing and Why* (Grand Rapids MI: Baker Books, 2008).

challenged by a community of accountability, support and love, then you can find some things that might be true and bring it back to a body of folks who are flesh and blood and say, “Here are some things I’m really grappling with.” So it’s made minor voices...that speak from the margins more audible.³⁴⁴

Noted emergent author Phyllis Tickle is in agreement with this broader point. As she put it in an interview:

As the Internet becomes the place for theological conversation, and as those conversation are formed not by seminary trained; and I would say from an emergent point of view...we are getting people who realize that they have strong opinions or strong questions about theological issues, and that they can ask them and decide for themselves on the basis of the conversation which may or may not be informed by the academically or theologically trained.³⁴⁵

Jim Wallis, another voice of note within the emergent church movement, has similarly taken notice of the transformative impact of the new media environment both for people of faith and the broader American public. As Wallis states, “the Religious Right has been able to win when they have been able to maintain and control a monologue on the relationship between faith and politics.” But this monologue, Wallis contends has eroded with the rise of new evangelical

³⁴⁴ Personal interview with Callad Keefe-Perry on Emergent Village, July 27, 2009.

³⁴⁵ Personal interview with Phyllis Tickle on Emergent Village, August 21, 2009.

interest groups and interest blocs. With their arrival, “the monologue of the Religious Right is over, and a new dialogue has begun.”³⁴⁶

Not everyone, however, views the Internet as such as the primary driving force of the emerging church movement. Shane Hipps, for instance, views the emerging church as a product of a societal shift from a print-based culture to an image-based culture. As Hipps explains:

What you’re seeing in the debate between what you might call the modern conservative evangelical movement and whatever the emerging church is, what you’re seeing there is actually a debate happening between the right and left hemisphere of the brain. So what the modern evangelical movement, born of a very left hemisphere mindset and mentality, which is driven by a left hemisphere medium of the printed word, created an understanding of the faith that was primarily abstract, individual, doctrinaire, about beliefs and so it perfectly mirrored the left hemisphere of the brain which is logical, abstract, rational, sequential. What happened with the rise of television is that it started to activate the right hemisphere of the brain in people in our culture. And the right half of our brain is more classically associated with more feminine values, it is more relational, it is more intuitive, it is more emotive, it is more experiential, it is non-linear, it is all those things. So when a culture shifts from a very dominant left hemisphere approach to the brain to a very dominant right hemisphere approach to the brain, what we’ll see are a rise of more feminine values. And what’s

³⁴⁶ Jim Wallis, “An Evangelical Climate Change,” *Sojourners Magazine* 35, no. 5 (2006).

Found Online at:

<<http://www.sojo.net/index.cfm?action=magazine.article&issue=soj0605&Article=060551>> (Accessed March 14, 2009).

interesting about the rise of the emerging church is all of their language, all of their patterns; all of the things they talk about are directly correlated with feminine values. So there's this collapse of hierarchies, an appreciation for egalitarianism, a preference for community over individualism, which is a very feminine value, a longing for experience, which is a feminine connectedness, often it's in the body, it's a bodily connection, which is a feminine value, versus something that takes place primarily in the mind, in the intellect, through reason, through cognitive decent, which is classically associated with masculine values. And so from my perspective, what I think is interesting, is so many people are tying what's happening now with the Internet, when in reality what's happening now is merely a consequence of something that happened decades before.³⁴⁷

Yet Hipps has not dismissed the role of the Internet in reshaping the religious experience. Instead, he cautions that many of the changes that we might otherwise attribute to the Internet are instead the result of processes that have long been in play. For Hipps, the Internet's true impact is in its ability to blend the cultural preferences of the right and left-brain.

So one of the things that's interesting about the Internet is that it's retrieving textuality that was lost for a period of twenty or thirty years. Literacy rates were plummeting for a reason and now they are rising again but in a totally different way. It's like a reinvented kind of textuality. In some ways it's almost paradoxically a right hemisphere approach to writing and textuality. It is non-

³⁴⁷ Personal Interview Shane Hipps on the effects of media on the evangelical church, September 17, 2009.

linear; it is sort of all about interconnectedness rather than non-sequential successive paragraphs and pages, which the left hemisphere feasts on, which the left hemisphere loves. So a lot of my interest and approach is exploring what was in the modern era a tyranny of the left-brain, and what is emerging now, which is the potential for a tyranny of the right-brain. And what's fascinating is the human brain has found a natural ecology between these two totally opposing hemispheres, but for some reason the human cultures we experience have not found a way to have a natural ecology.³⁴⁸

And this inability to merge the cultural preferences of the right or left-brain has left a profound mark on religion. As Hipps concludes, “a very left hemisphere approach to faith is deeply suspicious and terrified of a right hemisphere approach to faith and the right hemisphere approach to faith is deeply angered by and feels oppressed by the left hemisphere approach to faith.”³⁴⁹

Hipps is hardly alone in discussing how the relationship between media and the right and left hemispheres of the brain impact on society and religion. In *The Medium is the Message*, author Marshall McLuhan notes that cultures that do not utilize reading and writing have vastly different perceptions of the world than those cultures which do.³⁵⁰ With the advent of radio, television and the computer, McLuhan argues that humanity has entered the age of the “global village” in which humans are once again communicating face-to-face rather than through the

³⁴⁸ Ibid.

³⁴⁹ Ibid.

³⁵⁰ Marshall McLuhan and Quentin Fiore, *The Medium is the Message: An Inventory of Effects* (New York: Bantam Books, 1967).

printed word,³⁵¹ and these face-to-face communications alter considerably one's response to a given message. For instance, before the Vietnam War, wars were reported through the print media with still photos and written stories. This sort of reporting was processed in the logical left hemisphere of the brain. By contrast, advances in electronic media meant that the Vietnam War was broadcast into the homes of Americans. This sort of broadcasting appealed to the more visual oriented right brain hemisphere, which is more apt to illicit an emotional, less rational response.³⁵² As McLuhan points out, the electronic age has brought the human mind back into balance and awareness in that it encourages both logic and intuition. From a religious perspective, Campbell argues that this newly actualized balance, or what he refers to as "whole brain" thinking, better enables the devout to appreciate both the visions and doctrines of religious life. "It may be no accident," Campbell contends, "that along with the new age of electronics we are witnessing the new age of meditative prayer, exploring the spiritual dimensions of existence, and teaching that silence may be even more important than verbalization."³⁵³

As our online practices would suggest, consumers are increasingly turning to the World Wide Web, not only to "participate in networks and interest communities that would [otherwise] be unavailable,"³⁵⁴ but also to get our daily fix of audio and visual broadcasts. For instance, up until this last decade, living rooms often served as a place where families would gather to watch the latest network offerings. Today, however, this is less the case. For instance, while living rooms may continue to serve as a point of communal gathering, many American families are not sharing the same mediated experience, as Internet related technologies increasingly serve to tailor content to the interests of the individual. Thus in today's living room, it is not unlikely to

³⁵¹ Gabe L. Campbell, "Right Brain/Left Brain Religion," TAT Journal 12, no. 1 (1981). Found online at: <http://www.searchwithin.org/journal/tat_journal-12.html#10> (Accessed June 9, 2011).

³⁵² Ibid.

³⁵³ Ibid.

³⁵⁴ Pierce and Lovrich, Jr., "Internet Technology."

see dad live streaming *Monday Night Football* to his laptop, while mom reads the latest thriller downloaded to her *Kindle* or *iPad*, while their son dons his *World of Warcraft* avatar and their daughter chats with her friends via *Facebook*. In this regard, the Internet has evolved to be a one-stop destination for both textual and visual media. It is also a medium that serves as an important anchor for communities and interest groups on society's periphery. As will be further explored, the ability of the Internet to overcome obstacles such as geographic space and social acceptability has played a crucial role in the rise of the creation care and emerging church movements. This is in itself a profoundly important point, for while the electronic age encourages more right brain thinking, broadcast media remained a medium that could easily be controlled by a handful of religious elites.

Conclusion

For three decades, evangelical Christians have been a crucial pillar of Republican electoral support. More recently, Democrats have sought to capitalize on changing theological attitudes within the evangelical community as a means of closing the now infamous God Gap. Whether or not Democrats succeed in this endeavor is likely out of their control, as Democratic faith outreach is not the source of recent evangelical fragmentation, but rather a recognition of it. Indeed, much of this fragmentation has been facilitated by a changing media environment in which the Internet and other ICTs emerge alongside broadcast media as the dominant forms of electronic media.

As this chapter has shown, some of the effects of the broadcast age were the strengthening of social ties within the evangelical community, the broadening of its social

capital, and its political unification behind conservative causes and candidates. These effects can in part be attributed to the mainstreaming effect, in which audiences gradually adopt the opinions of broadcasters, particular when opposing viewpoints are unavailable. By contrast, however, the Internet affords media consumers an abundance of choice. In doing so, the Internet serves as a conduit through which dissident religious voices are both empowered and amplified, a fact that is lessening the influence of the old guard evangelicals, by bringing to the fore new and previously neglected theological agendas such as evangelical environmentalism and the social gospel. In this regard, the Internet works to both destroy and create bonding and bridging forms of social capital. It helps destroy such capital by eroding the stranglehold the Christian Right once had in shaping the cultural values views of evangelicals, particularly on matters of the environment and social justice, while at the same time creating new communities of like-minded believers who are now better able to transcend geographical and organizational limitations. Moreover, as we shall see in the coming chapters, the rise of the creation care and emerging church movement has created new opportunities for engaging with and working alongside those outside the evangelical tradition.

Similarly, this chapter has also explored the cognitive impacts of electronic media. Specifically, it has presented arguments suggesting that society's shift from a predominantly print-based culture to an image-based culture has had significant impact on the nature of church. For instance, the historical tendency of the evangelical tradition to view faith as primarily abstract, individual and doctrinaire is the result of a print-culture, upon which the left-hemisphere of the brain thrives. However, with the advent of electronic visual imaging, the right-hemisphere of the brain, which is more emotive and intuitive, has found a welcoming environment. This change in culture has led Shane Hipps to argue that many of the impacts

typically associated with Internet usage are instead the products of the older broadcast age, such as new expressions of faith and worship. Hipps further argues that by negotiating visual imagery and textuality, the Internet is bringing much needed balance between left and right hemisphere thinking, a balance that is evident in the emerging church movement.

In serving as a medium through which like-minded individuals can cluster into homogenous groups, thus amplifying the concerns of religious dissidents and those on the margins, the Internet is opening up the impact of the electronic media by breaking the communicative monopoly of broadcasters. As a result, not only is the Internet fostering new communities among otherwise far flung individuals with shared or similar interests, but it is similarly disassembling previously established communities as well. This is because smaller niche groups are often formed at the expense of larger communities. For instance, while countless Christians have been drawn to the emerging church and its supportive and generative community, this movement has largely rejected many of the political and theological values of the broader evangelical community, and more specifically, that of the Christian Right. In doing so, the Internet has shown itself to be a powerful tool aiding in the rise of dissident religious elements, as shown through the two case studies above. However, to better understand the role of the Internet in the fragmentation of the American evangelical community, an exploration into how these technologies are practically used is required. This will be done in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE

FROM MONOLOGUE TO DIALOGUE PART II:

**THE ONLINE EVANGELISM OF THE CREATION CARE AND EMERGING
CHURCH MOVEMENTS**

As the previous chapter has shown, the Internet is helping to transform the nature of the evangelical community by serving as an effective medium through which the religious monologue of elite evangelical leaders and broadcasters can be displaced by a more organic dialogue of religious adherents. The toppling of this religious hierarchy is an important development that, as we shall see in future chapters, is profoundly impacting the course of American politics. This thesis has thus far discussed various theoretical ideas pertaining to the relationship between the internet and the fragmentation of the evangelical community, but has yet to explore the practical ways in which the Internet is being used by the creation care and emerging church movements. In order to develop a structural framework through which this can be achieved, this chapter makes ready use of the work of Kristen Foot and Steven Schneider. Specifically, this chapter utilizes Foot and Schneider's conceptualization of the web sphere to delineate the online practices of the selected case studies and their applicable affiliate organizations.

Foot and Schneider define the web sphere as “a hyperlinked set of dynamically defined digital resources spanning multiple Web sites relevant to a central theme or object.”³⁵⁵ They maintain the boundaries of a web sphere “are delineated by a shared object-orientation and a temporal framework.”³⁵⁶ Thus, while a web sphere is “looser than a community or organization,” it is nonetheless “tighter than a population or a onetime gathering around a topic or event.”³⁵⁷ Under this definition, it is best to view the evangelical community as a distinct population, and the creation care and emergent church movements as central themes and objects around which web activity occurs.

³⁵⁵ Kirsten A. Foot and Steven M. Schneider, “Online Action in Campaign 2000: an Exploratory Analysis of the U.S. Political Web Sphere,” *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media* 46, no. 2 (2002): 222-244.

³⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁵⁷ Foot and Schneider, *Web Campaigning* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2006), 7-8.

Within web spheres, Foot and Schneider identify four practices of web campaigning (or what might be more accurately referred to as “web proselytizing” in the context of this thesis). These four practices include: *Informing*, *Involving*, *Connecting* and *Mobilizing*. Important to each of these practices are various web techniques, some of which are specific to a single practice, while others are shared across multiple practices. For instance, the use of documenting as a web technique is regularly used for the purposes of informing, “whereas the technique of *convergence* (unifying off-line materials and actions with on-line content) is often used for the purposes of informing, involving, connecting and mobilizing.”³⁵⁸ In highlighting the practical application of each web practice as it relates to creation care and the emergent church, this chapter sheds additional light on the interplay between the social forces of the new media environment and existing religious organizational structures and web habits. Similarly, by comparing the differences of the online campaign practices of secular organizations against those of the selected case studies, this thesis can provide insight into how matters of trust, communal relations and aggregate levels of social capital impact the activities of religious organizations.

Informing

The distribution of knowledge is foundational to the World Wide Web. Campaigns regularly engage in the practice of web informing by providing online content to visitors of their websites. At its simplest, web informing “invokes the classic transmission models of communication, in which a communicator or producer transmits a message to a receiver or

³⁵⁸ Lydia Perovic, “Review: Web Campaigning,” *Resource Center for Cyberculture Studies*, 2007. Found online at: <<http://rccs.usfca.edu/bookinfo.asp?BookID=373&ReviewID=509>> (Accessed February 3, 2010).

recipient.”³⁵⁹ On the web, this is achieved when campaigns post organizational histories or candidate biographies, issue statements, texts of speeches, press releases and/or other related news. Under these conditions, web producers are in essence merely replicating the models of broadcast media in which information is produced by a handful of individuals, and then disseminated to audiences for broader public consumption. However, when the practice of web informing includes more dynamic and complex means of information dissemination, such as hyper-linking and co-production, then a more sophisticated communication model is required.

Despite the fact that the new media environment affords web users communicative abundance, the broadcasting model continues to play an important role online. Evidence of this can be found by examining the websites of the selected evangelical organizations. As the figure below shows, the Internet is used by each of these groups to broadcast simple, yet important information about who they are and what their organizations stand for:

³⁵⁹ Foot and Schneider, *Web Campaigning*, 22; See also, Harold Lasswell, “The Structure and Function of Communication in Society,” in *The Communication of Ideas*, ed. Lyman Bryson (New York: Harper and Row, 1948); see also Claude E. Shannon and Warren Weaver, *The Mathematical Theory of Communication* (Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1949).

Figure 5.1

Organizational Information Available Online

	Organization History	Mission Statement	Issue Statements	News/Press Releases	Contact Information
EEN		X	X	X	X
ESA	X	X	X	X	X
Emergent Village		X		X	X
Flourish	X	X			X
Renewal	X	X	X		X
Restoring Eden		X	X	X	X

* Data collected 1/09/2009. Scores arrived at by coding affiliate websites for information pertaining to organizational history, mission statements, position taking (issue statements), news and press updates, and contact information. Affiliate organizations can be found online at: www.creationcare.org for EEN, www.evangelicalsforsocialaction.org for ESA, www.emergentvillage.com for Emergent Village, www.fourishonline.org for Flourish, www.renewingcreation.org for Renewal, and www.restoringeden.org for Restoring Eden.

As the above diagram shows, although ESA is the only organization to use online information broadcasting in each of the listed five categories, each group utilizes the broadcast model to provide mission statements and contact information.

Informing: Documentation and Position Taking

One of the earliest hurdles that the evangelical environmental movement had to overcome was convincing people that the Bible mandates that humans care for the earth. As we shall see in later chapters, one main reason for this obstacle was a widely held theological tenet within the evangelical community known as dominion theology (sometimes referred to as “wise-use”

theology). Briefly, dominion theology is a commonly held belief that the people of God are commanded by God to subject the entire world to the Word of God. As Genesis 1:26 reads:

And God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.”³⁶⁰

However, the Bible is often contradictory and open to interpretation, a point that has served the creation care movement well. In an effort to combat the damning effects of dominion theology, evangelical environmentalists have undertaken a massive public educational campaign, aimed at highlighting biblical passages that compel believers to care for God’s creation; what Peter Illyn has dubbed the “acceptability debate.”³⁶¹

Over the course of the last two decades, the creation care movement has undertaken a variety of efforts to raise environmental awareness among evangelicals. One of the most widely used means of convincing skeptical evangelicals about the importance of caring for God’s earth is by appealing directly to the highest authoritative source: Holy Scripture. Those who are non-religious might laugh at the idea of winning an environmental debate by quoting Christian scripture, but evangelicals form an epistemic community that by definition holds scripture as the final arbiter of truth. As such, evangelicals view the use of scripture as no laughing matter. Instead, for evangelicals, scripture is the best way to legitimize worldviews and moral claims,

³⁶⁰ Genesis 1:26, New International Version.

³⁶¹ Illyn interview.

and quoting scripture is routinely done by evangelicals in order to advance a given theological position:

Figure 5.2

Frequency of Online Scriptural Citations

EEN	ESA	Emergent Village	Flourish	Renewal	Restoring Eden
76	1	0	2	23	102

* Data collected 1/09/2009. Website coded for frequency of scriptural citations. Count inclusive of all citations, including biblical verses appearing more than once per website.

It will be noted from figure 5.2 that while some of the selected organizations routinely quote biblical scriptures, others, such as Flourish do not. This development is particularly interesting, especially when one considers the fact that among the listed organizations, Flourish stands out in their skepticism regarding the future of their own cause. For instance, Jim Jewel, formerly of EEN and a founding member of Flourish had this to say during a recent interview:

In the Christian community there's a lot of misunderstanding, there's not deep acceptance in some quarters of how environmental stewardship is a part of the discipleship challenge for the believing Christian, there's a lot of ignorance among evangelicals about even practical steps you can take because they haven't been a part of the discussion at churches. And when I talk a lot with non-church

folks, or people in the mainline those who have been involved with the environmental challenge for a long time, they are amazed at how far behind the evangelicals are. They almost can't believe it. And it's not that evangelicals are just inherently stupid or something it's just that that particular issue (environmental protection) has not been on our radar screens.³⁶²

Rusty Pritchard, also of Flourish, expressed a similar view:

I think a lot of younger evangelicals are of two minds about it. They grow up in a culture in which environmentalism is kind of a part of a political correctness that they get from early on and so they have on the one hand a set of cultural mores that tell them that recycling is good and they know that mantra “reduce, reuse, recycle,” they think a little bit about pollution. They don't really get from that cultural melee anything that tells them that they should be actively engaged in the outdoors, that they should be trying to connect to the land in real physical ways or drawing spiritual lessons from it. That's more than the kind of talk that most environmentalists can digest. But you do get a certain sense that to be green is good. But at the same time, I think folks are a bit schizophrenic. They take classes of the biblical worldviews that they learn from their parents, whose theology says that you shouldn't invest in this world, all of this is going to burn, and that you must be laying out treasures out in heaven rather than here on earth,

³⁶² Phone Interview with Jim Jewel on Flourish and the creation care movement, August 11, 2009.

and it's this really strict dualistic contrast between where your social investments are made.³⁶³

Given this pessimism about the strength of environmentalism among evangelicals, it is odd that Flourish would leave scripture off their website, particularly when other organizations so readily quote it. When asked why they do not make greater use of scripture, Jonathan Merritt, another Flourish manager responded by saying, "put simply, we just haven't gotten around to it."³⁶⁴

By contrast, however, Peter Illyn of Restoring Eden, which was the group most likely to quote scripture online, stated:

We've won the acceptability debate, but now we're dealing with the where does it fit in, and that's the evoke set. We're acceptable, we're not considered non-Christian like we used to be. People used to try to frame us, like the Helen Chenoweth's would try to frame us as the non-Christians, but the problem was that the Bible was on our side, logic was on our side, science was on our side, most people's personal experiences were on our side.³⁶⁵

It would be nice to say that Illyn is correct, and that environmental protection is a religious value that enjoys near universal acceptance within the evangelical community. But as we shall see in the coming chapters, creation care remains a deeply divisive issue in evangelical

³⁶³ Phone Interview with Rusty Pritchard on Flourish and the creation care movement, August 6, 2009.

³⁶⁴ Phone Interview with Jonathan Merritt on Flourish and the creation care movement, September 4, 2009.

³⁶⁵ Illyn interview.

circles. For instance, in January of 2011, the Cornwall Alliance, a collection of evangelical leaders deeply suspicious of evangelical environmentalism launched the Resisting the Green Dragon campaign, which has labeled the creation care movement anti-Christian, and which accuses its leadership of perpetrating a “spiritual deception” against the faithful.³⁶⁶ The fact that the Cornwall Alliance felt the need to viciously attack the creation care movement speaks not only to the growing strength of the movement, but its divisive nature as well. In this regard, one could easily argue that while acceptance of evangelical environmentalism is growing, Illyn’s claim that the acceptability debate has been won seems premature.

Informing: Linking

Over a relatively short period of time, the use of Internet links has evolved substantially. As Joseph Turow notes in the introduction of *The Hyperlinked Society*:

Links have morphed beyond their initial look to function as hot areas (where a picture or graphic are turned into a link), in-line links (where thumbnail photos or other elements are connected from one site to another automatically), tags (that allow people to categorize links), API (applications programming interface) mapping ‘mashups’ (where people use data from open-source cartography programs to make maps with links that suit their purposes), and RSS data (that

³⁶⁶ For more information regarding the Resisting the Green Dragon campaign, refer to its website, found online at: <<http://www.resistingthegreendragon.com/>>

enable users to connect to changing information from sites without going to them directly).³⁶⁷

Most websites make heavy use of linking, and commonly through a feature known as interlinking, which allows sites to “structure the information architecture of their site, thus defining the range of possible user experiences.”³⁶⁸ At the same time, outlinking, the practice of linking to the websites of outside parties is a practice most campaign websites look to avoid as it negates the possibility of structuring user experience. It similarly exposes the campaign to unnecessary risk as the content of third-party websites can change at any time, and remains beyond the effective control of the organization.

While many electoral campaigns have shown a reluctance to outlink, the same cannot be said for the religious organizations featuring in this thesis. While the EEN outlinks only sparingly and usually only to provide scientific evidence that climate change is indeed real, the Flourish website provides numerous links and even encourages visitors to visit the websites of other creation care groups. This is the case with Floresta, about which Flourish had the following to say:

Floresta is the coolest organization you’ve never heard of and their program Plant with Purpose may be the coolest creation care initiative around today. Through Plant with Purpose, Floresta works to reverse poverty and deforestation by

³⁶⁷ Joseph Turow, “Introduction: On Not Taking the Hyperlink for Granted,” in *The Hyperlinked Society: Questioning Connections in the Digital Age*, eds. Joseph Turow and Lokman Tsui (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 2008).

³⁶⁸ Foot and Schneider, *Web Campaigning*, 57.

planting trees. They currently work in Mexico, Tanzania, Haiti, and the Dominican Republic.³⁶⁹

Similar examples are readily found throughout the creation care web sphere. For instance, in addition to providing links to various third-party news stories about Restoring Eden and other publications highlighting the plight of environmental degradation, Restoring Eden also has links to no fewer than 15 other creation care ministries or environmental causes under their “connect” menu option. Likewise, Renewal has a menu section entitled, “Partners and Friends,” which similarly provides links to outside organizations.

Research exploring the impact of web-links on aggregate levels of social capital has found them to be important in both the formation and maintenance of weak social ties. Such links, as Ellison et. al, argue “serve as the foundation of bridging social capital[,]” as the practices of web-linking and web-connecting, “support loose social ties, allowing users to create and maintain larger, diffuse networks of relationships from which they could potentially draw resources.”³⁷⁰ Moreover, the use of web-links is also well suited for facilitating relationships between like-minded individuals and organizations as such ties can be made cheaply and easily. Given this, it should come as little surprise that the reason so many of the studied organizations readily outlink is due to a feeling of shared mission, a trait not at all uncommon among religious organizations. For instance, when Jonathan Merritt, creation care stalwart and Flourish Church Programs Manager, was asked about Flourish’s partnership organizations, which include Renewal and Restoring Eden, Merritt responded by saying, “the partnership there is more a

³⁶⁹ Flourish Staff Writer, “Floresta: Plant with Purpose,” Flourish Website, 2009. Found online at: <<http://flourishonline.org/2009/05/731/>> (Accessed March 21, 2011).

³⁷⁰ Nicole B. Ellison, Charles Steinfield and Cliff Lampe, “The Benefits of Facebook ‘Friends:’ Social Capital and College Students’ Use of Online Social Network Sites,” *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication* 12, no. 4 (2007): 1143-1168.

moniker of perception and fraternity than it is of any type of official partnership.”³⁷¹ To further stress this point, Merritt noted that “Flourish doesn’t share information [with these “partners”] and we don’t ask for information.”³⁷² Still Flourish does provide direct links to these websites and on its own website they state, “Flourish is not a standalone organization. Our valuable partners and related ministries provide many ways for you and your church to get connected to God’s creation, and to care for the people that depend on it. Here are some folks you should check out.”³⁷³ The fact that there is no material upside to these links (and if anything only a downside as providing such links could draw support away from Flourish towards a different organization) speaks volumes of the sheer trust, comradely and close relationship creation care groups have for one another.

Informing: Co-production

The co-production of web material is where multiple areas of web campaigning practice overlap. The joint production of web objects, such as texts, features and links, are at their most basic level a practice of informing. For instance, the wall on the EEN’s Facebook group page is a great example of co-production. On this web space, members of the EEN Facebook group regularly provide information on a wide range of topics. For example, one member shared with the group how getting a good interest rate from a bank can also be beneficial to the environment, while another member sought to better inform the group about the environmental impacts of

³⁷¹ Merritt interview.

³⁷² Ibid.

³⁷³ Flourish Staff Writer, “Partners and Friends,” Flourish Website, 2009. Found online at: <<http://flourishonline.org/about/partners/>> (Accessed June 9, 2011).

animal farming. In each of these instances, links were provided that took the user to third party websites.

Figure 5.3

Screen Shot of EEN Facebook Group Page



* Screen Shot of EEN Facebook Group Page. Above: EEN Senior Director of Communications, Alexei N. Laushkin encourages Facebook group member Barbara Monroe to seek assistance from fellow creation care organization Restoring Eden. Below: Facebook group member Launie Boykin promotes a recent update to the EEN website. All information on the EEN Facebook Group Page is viewable by the public

Although the use of links is a common practice in web co-production and further demonstrates how web-campaigning techniques overlap, web co-production, such as enabling site visitors to comment on posted material, was not a feature available on any websites studied besides Emergent Village until 2010. It was then that the EEN, ESA and Restoring Eden all dramatically overhauled their existing websites, while Renewal and Flourish added additional

features, such as the ability to comment on blog posts. Needless to say, co-production on these websites (that of Emergent Village notwithstanding) remains limited. In many ways, this online practice of limiting co-production is reflective of a religious tradition of hierarchy; a tradition that while undergoing considerable change remains deeply entrenched. The fact that the main Emergent Village website reads like an electronic announcement board, where visitors can post blogs, respond to blogs, as well as upload podcasts, find local cohorts and more, is again reflective of the largely decentralized nature of this organization.

Involving

From a social capital perspective, involving is arguable the most important dynamic of any of the four web campaign practices as it requires participants to make an investment of either time and/or money into the success of an organization, which in turn strengthens the relationship between the organization and the individual. One of the most common ways organizations seek to involve participants is through the use of email lists, which often plead for financial support or the contribution of one's time.

Generally speaking, the practice of web-involving is relatively new to the virtual landscape and is reflective of the growing sophistication of the World Wide Web. For instance, with the introduction of web browsers in the early 1990s, the Internet became a domain more easily navigated and thus more accessible to the less computer literate. Many of the early web purveyors were unaware of the social potential of the Internet, and simply mistook the medium as another screen at which individuals stared. As such, producers of online content in the early

days of web browsers “relied on a ‘push’ or transmission model of communication,”³⁷⁴ which treated Internet users as readers rather than participants. In a short time, however, the broader social potential of the World Wide Web was recognized, and web producers soon sought ways to better engage their audience.

One of the earliest and simplest forms of web involving came via “text-based interactivity.”³⁷⁵ So-called “text-based interactivity” is a textual message disseminated to a mass audience which also facilitates user reaction. In this regard, text-based interactivity is “a departure from the idea that media must emulate face-to-face conversation in order to be considered ‘interactive.’”³⁷⁶ Interestingly, however, text-based interactivity often directs readers to real world social gatherings and political meet-ups.

Throughout its virtual life, each of the selected organizations has used text-based interactivity as a campaign tool. In the case of Renewal, participants have been encouraged to partake in numerous activities across a wide variety of Internet platforms, ranging from their own hosted websites to social networking sites such as Facebook and MySpace. The following call for involvement from the Renewal website helps to illustrate the features of text-based interactivity while blending other web-involving practices. Take for instance this example:

On October 29th 2008, join Christians around North America as we stand together and pray for the renewal of God’s creation!

³⁷⁴ Foot and Schneider, *Web Campaigning*, 71-72.

³⁷⁵ See Danielle Enders and Barbara Warnick, “Text-based Interactivity in Candidate Campaign Web Sites: A Case Study from the 2002 Election,” *Western Journal of Communication* 68, no. 3 (2004): 322-342.

³⁷⁶ Barbara Warnick, Michael Xenos, Danielle Endres, and John Gastil, “Effects of Campaign-to-User and Text-Based Interactivity in Political Candidate Campaign Web Sites,” *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication* 10, no. 3 (2005). Found online at: <<http://jcmc.indiana.edu/vol10/issue3/warnick.html>> (Accessed August 24, 2009).

Whether you pray in the morning by yourself or organize a campus chapel to focus on creation care – you're part of Renewal and the growing movement of Christians caring for creation.

And whether you gather with friends mid-day at the center of campus to pray or your church has a small group meeting that studies the Bible and prays - you're part of Renewal and the growing movement of Christians caring for God's creation.

Need help organizing your Day of Prayer for Creation Care event? [Click here](#) for ideas to organize your day of prayer event.

We do have three requests for you – you knew it was coming!

First, please let us know about your event before it happens. As a community, it is wonderful to have a sense of the fullness of these days. Especially, let us know if it is an event that others can participate in. If so, we will post it on Renewal's web page so that those interested can join you.

Second, if you would like to share your prayer requests or prayer petitions with others, please let us know so that we can post them on the Renewal website. For sample prayers to use during your prayer event, please [click here](#).

Lastly, tell us about your event after it happens. Share stories with us, share a photo or two. Share a poem or share the prayer itself. By sharing your stories you'll provide examples, inspiration and hope to many other Christians engaged in creation care.

For questions or more information email Renewal Coordinator, Anna Jane Joyner at ajjoyner@renewingcreation.org.³⁷⁷

The above statements incorporate several aspects of the previously mentioned campaign web practices. For example, by directing readers to partake in a day of prayer using little more than text, Renewal is demonstrating how online calls to action can easily converge with offline activity. Furthermore, by encouraging readers to invite friends to join them in this day of prayer, Renewal is insuring that their call to action is heard by many more than just the readers of their website. By the fourth paragraph Renewal is incorporating links that move us beyond text-based interactivity. And each one of these features is but another example of the growing sophistication and inter-activity of the online environment.

Involving: Transaction

³⁷⁷ Renewal Staff Writer, "2008 Day of Prayer," *Renewal: Students Caring for Creation*, 2009. Found online at: <http://www.renewingcreation.org/get-involved/pray/2008-day-of-prayer> (Accessed August 18, 2009)."

Information is an invaluable commodity for any campaign. Without reliable information, such as contact details, the obstacles an organization faces in building an efficient campaign are nearly insurmountable. This is why user contact details are so heavily sought by campaigns, as such details build lists of sympathetic supporters willing to commit valuable resources such as time and money. In the online environment, where web-based structures have been designed to better manage this data, organizations know full well that the acquisition of contact and bank details effectively creates a transactional relationship between the organization and site visitors. However, establishing and fostering transactional relationships exclusively online often proves a daunting task. This is because transactional relationships differ from real-world relationships in significant ways. For starters, individuals tend to be more sensitive to and have more concerns about transactional relationships forged online than those relationships that are not.³⁷⁸ In an effort to address this online trust deficit, many campaign organizations “have taken explicit steps to articulate boundaries and establish terms to govern that relationship, most commonly by posting privacy policies on their web sites.”³⁷⁹ By taking these actions, online campaigns seek to assure potential supporters that they are indeed trustworthy entities.

In comparison to many secular operations, religious organizations are often viewed by their supporters as more trustworthy, an important lubricant in the formation and maintenance of social capital.³⁸⁰ It is perhaps for this reason that among the selected organizations, EEN and Flourish were the only organizations to have a privacy statement available on their website. Since Flourish uses Safe Subscribe for managing their email list, a generic private policy statement is available by clicking on the Safe Subscribe icon, which among other things, assures

³⁷⁸ Foot and Schneider, *Web Campaigning*.

³⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 81.

³⁸⁰ Richard Sosis, “Does Religion Promote Trust? The Role of Signaling, Reputation, and Punishment,” *Interdisciplinary Journal of Research on Religion* 1, no. 1 (2005). Found online at: <http://www.religjournal.com/articles/article_view.php?id=7> (Accessed March 18, 2011).

individuals that they may opt out of the mailing list anytime they like. The EEN's private policy statement appears only after a site visitor decides to give money and has clicked on the "donate" button. Aside from this instance, at no other time did a privacy statement appear; neither before nor after the online transaction occurred.

In an interview with the Reverend Stephanie Spellers, an Episcopal minister active with Emergent Village, she spoke about the issue of trust, the nature of the Christian character and the Christian community more broadly:

I think people generally assume that churches are less tech savvy and perhaps less commercially savvy, that we're not going to have partner organizations, because that's usually when you get into the trouble of, "you're going to sell my information," or "you have a whole partnership of other organizations and you're going to give my email to them and they're going to just bombard me." So I think people just assume that churches are what we say we are, and that we are representing what they see, and what they see is what they get. That may not be true, but I think we're banking on that presumption of trust.³⁸¹

Yet while the average parishioner may simply presume their privacy is being protected by such para-ministries, the managers of these organizations know differently. As Jonathan Merritt notes:

³⁸¹ Personal Interview with the Reverend Stephanie Spellers on Emergent Village, August 20, 2009.

I can tell you that some of the creation care organizations in the past have had some tensions, some disagreements around lists, names, donor bases, et cetera, so my gut tells me that more than likely this might be the case, that people are either sharing with some individuals and not others, or because so many individuals in the creation care organizations are in bed with, or are funded by other individuals, that rather than reveal that financial partnership, which they would have to do through a privacy statement, they simply leave that off. That would be my inclination.³⁸²

Peter Illyn spoke more candidly about the debate surrounding the sharing of email lists and other personal online data:

One of the debates is, like with the Renewal crowd, Do they invite Renewal people to potentially join the Restoring Eden email list? I'm countering, no. I want your [entire] list every year and in every newsletter we give people the right to opt out. If you're going to make them take an action, you make them to take the action to opt out, not opt in. One of the reactions is that they don't want their members to get mad, but that's not big, no one is going to get mad in this world of email getting newsletters they don't need. They're just going to either unsubscribe or pay no attention to it. So we're not going to burn any bridges by doing this.³⁸³

³⁸² Merritt interview.

³⁸³ Illyn interview.

And while Illyn may be correct that few individuals are going to be bothered by the addition of their name to yet another online newsletter, there are more problematic issues surrounding online data sharing which may very well threaten the integrity of online relationships. For instance, Merritt speculates that the EEN, which was born from ESA, may purposely downplay that relationship as ESA “has the perception of being more liberal.”³⁸⁴ Thus, by disclosing its historical connection with ESA, the EEN could potentially turn off supporters who otherwise view ESA with suspicion.

Involving: Convergence

Convergence is defined as “the integration of the offline and online realms.”³⁸⁵ For purposes of involving a participant in the activities of a campaign, websites will employ a variety of methods. One of the simplest ways in which an individual can engage a political campaign is by making a financial contribution online. Yet soliciting online monetary contributions is only one way in which campaigns use the Internet in their efforts to elicit greater involvement from their activists.

For instance, some campaign websites encourage supporters to download and print flyers and posters. There are of course several reasons why a campaign might want to encourage supporters to print such materials themselves, as it not only requires supporters to make a further investment in the campaign, but it also saves the campaign time and money. Increasingly

³⁸⁴ Merritt interview.

³⁸⁵ Foot and Schneider, *Web Campaigning*, 85.

though, electoral campaigns are shying away from this practice. Even at the local level, the distribution of online material such as printable flyers and posters is a practice some politicians have significant misgivings about, as Michael Valanzola, an elected Republican in Massachusetts does:

I'm not sure I see a lot of value in allowing supporters to print off campaign material. It certainly would save money, but would it have the same effect?³⁸⁶

He adds:

A lot of my constituents represent the senior population; they don't have access to some of the same technology that you and I use every day. Therefore I could potentially isolate them from the campaign, and make them disenfranchised with the process. I would rather spend a little more money and make sure my message and information gets to them. There is also something to be said for holding a card that came in the mail. It adds a personal touch.³⁸⁷

In contrast to electoral campaigns, however, where there seems to be some reluctance to the practice of online document distribution, several of the studied organizations eagerly embraced this technique in their overall campaign strategies, as Renewal did with their “creation day of prayer” effort. In this instance, Renewal provided printable sample prayers that Christian campus leaders and other ministers could use during the event. Similarly, Restoring Eden, which engages in public lobbying, provides a downloadable PDF file of The Evangelical Youth Climate

³⁸⁶ Email Interview with Michael J. Valanzola on public campaigning, August 24, 2009.

³⁸⁷ Ibid.

Initiative petition. Signatories of this petition are asked to provide their names, e-mail addresses, physical location, the college or church to which they belong, as well as date of birth. At the bottom of this petition sheet is the address for Restoring Eden's P.O. Box. Once completed, these forms are of considerable value for Restoring Eden. Not only are additional names added to the email list, but potential points of contact are provided at universities where contacts may have been either previously lacking or where a "back door" needs closing.³⁸⁸ Further still, these signed petition sheets also provide a useful visual when Restoring Eden conducts its routine lobbying efforts on Capitol Hill.

Another form of convergence occurs when an events calendar is provided. In these instances, campaigns "enable interested site visitors to learn more about and make plans to attend in-person gatherings which may increase their involvement."³⁸⁹ Prior to the 2010 website rebuilds of the six studied organizations, only half made use of an online calendar. Those groups included Emergent Village, ESA, and Renewal. Yet among these three groups, the usefulness of each online calendar varied significantly. Unquestionably, ESA's online calendar proved the least effective. As you can see from the image below, the only events to be publicized on ESA's calendar were the speaking engagements of Ron Sider, this despite the fact that a number of other scholars regularly participate in the Sider Center/ESA speaking circuit. Furthermore, while the topic of each of Sider's events is given, as is the date and city location, the time and physical address of these events are missing.

³⁸⁸ Social movement organizations where college students account for a significant portion of the membership base are presented with the added obstacle of maintaining contact with those students once they graduate and subsequently move to new locations and change email addresses. Maintaining this contact is sometimes referred to as "closing the back door."

³⁸⁹ Foot and Schneider, *Web Campaigning*, 86.

Figure 5.4

ESA Events Calendar

Public Speaking Schedule for Sider Center Staff

Ron Sider

Founder/President of Evangelicals for Social Action:

Date	Location	Purpose
September 11	Lancaster, PA	Speaking on "Global Poverty" at Church World Service Banquet
September 13 - 14	Chicago, IL	Facilitating discussion on "Poverty and Prosperity" for the Faith & Law's "Great Objects" gathering for young evangelical leaders
September 15 - 16	Campbellsville, KY	Speaking at Campbellsville University at the Roundtable on Christian Public Policy Perspectives, sponsored by the Kentucky Heartland Institute on Public Policy
September 17	Scottsdale, AZ	Co-leading panel on "Dealing with Violence and Anti-Religious Intimidation in a Christian Way" at a Gathering Briefing on Marriage
October 18	Harleysville, PA	Preaching on the theme of poverty at Salford Mennonite Church
October 22	Tipp City, OH	Speaking on the theme of providing a compassionate call to "serve the least of these" at the 2009 Conference of Ginghamburg United Methodist Church
December 11	St. Davids, PA	Speaking at 25th Anniversary Celebration of the Economic Development Program of Eastern University

* Figure 4.3 copied from ESA website. Data Collected 1/9/2009. Information available online at: <http://www.esa-online.org/Display.asp?Page=SpeakingSchedule> (Accessed ?).

Since their 2010 website rebuild, ESA has made their online calendar more user friendly. Users are now able to export events directly to their personal calendars at the click of a button, though ESA continues its practice of not providing street addresses for upcoming events, and instead only notes in which city the event is taking place.

In contrast to ESA, both Renewal and Emergent Village use Google Calendar to publicize upcoming events. The format of Google Calendar is one that many people are familiar with and which allows users to click dates for additional information such as local contacts, maps of venues, as well as direction. For purposes of their largely college age audience, Renewal lists their events on Google Calendar by university location, while Emergent Village will also regularly post blogs alongside their online calendar to better advertise upcoming events on their website.

Popularized by Howard Dean's 2004 Presidential campaign, so-called "meet-ups" are another means of convergence, as they allow interested parties to find face-to-face gatherings of individuals with shared interests online. While each of the studied organizations places a premium on face-to-face communities, Emergent Village stands alone in its use of the online environment to facilitate these meetings. Jeff Gentry of Emergent Village commented during an interview on the rise and importance of Emergent cohorts:

The conversation really got started with Web blogs and early portals. I think those were provocations. The blog really encouraged people to think differently about Christianity and it pointed people towards gatherings like the Young Leaders Network. It encouraged people to meet up. The development of the cohorts was a really strong move by the emergent conversation because it brings the conversation to a local level. So for our cohort, for instance, people are reading blogs and conversing all over the place, but our primary connection with the emergent conversation is our relationship with one another and they grow out of our cohort and our interaction there. But I think it started on the Internet and it's fostered by it, but I think the conversation is at its strongest when it's at the primary level, face-to-face gatherings.³⁹⁰

Moreover, while each Emergent Village cohort has its own autonomous online presence, the larger collective gathering found online at www.emergentvillage.com, directs interested parties to the sites of local cohorts.

³⁹⁰ Personal Interview with Jeff Gentry on Emergent Village, July 20, 2009.

Connecting and Mobilizing

Web connecting provides bridges between two or more actors and occurs when a website facilitates said connections, commonly through the use of links, though other means such as document distribution, text-based interactivity and dialoguing can also achieve this end. Foot and Schneider hold that the cultivation of online relationships between site visitors and campaigns belongs not to the practice of web connecting, but rather as a practice of web involving.³⁹¹ Such a position, however, depends largely upon one's view of what it means to be connecting. For instance, while Foot and Schneider seem content in their belief that a political campaign is a solitary entity, others, such as Williams Dutton and Wan Yin-Lang would more likely view political campaigns as many parts working towards a shared goal; namely the mobilization of individuals behind a particular cause or candidate. In this conceptualization, web connecting is much more than a website that facilitates links to outside actors, but rather it is the process through which connectivity takes place and relationships formed. As such, web connecting need not necessarily be viewed as a separate practice from that of web involving, but rather the practice of web involving ought to be viewed as coming from the practice of web connecting.³⁹²

Internet Connecting, Web Mobilization and the Importance of Peer-to-Peer Influence

³⁹¹ Foot and Schneider, *Web Campaigning*.

³⁹² William H. Dutton and Wan-Yin Lang, "Using the Web in the Democratic Process. The Web-orchestrated 'Stop the Overlay' Cyber-campaign," *European Review. Journal of the Academia Europaea* 9, no. 2 (2001): 185-99.

As we have seen, the Internet “enhances the potential for its users to interact with each other, transcending the time-space barrier at an unprecedented scope and scale.”³⁹³ When provided with sufficient time and energy, the Internet can turn weak social ties into more meaningful relationships, often resulting in face-to-face meet-ups.³⁹⁴ Such relationships, campaigns know, are key to voter mobilization efforts. As Granovetter states, “one’s decision to vote for a particular candidate may depend heavily on how many others have already decided to do so.”³⁹⁵ In expanding Granovetter’s thesis, Sunstein demonstrates how the peer groups that an individual belongs to can affect one’s overall attitudes and set of beliefs:

Social networks can operate as polarization machines because they help to confirm and thus amplify people’s antecedent views. Those who are inclined to support a cause or candidate may become quite excited if support is widespread on their social network. In 2008, President Barack Obama greatly benefited from this process, in a way that created extreme enthusiasm for his candidacy. Some of this was planned; his campaign self-consciously promoted social networks that spread favorable information. But some of this was spontaneous. Obama supporters, especially young people worked hard on their own to take advantage

³⁹³ Hangwoo Lee, “Implosion, Virtuality, and Interaction in an Internet Discussion Group,” *Information, Communication & Society* 8, no. 1 (2005), 51.

³⁹⁴ Nancy K. Baym, “The New Shape of Online Communities: The Example of Swedish Independent Fandom,” *First Monday: Peer-Reviewed Journal of the Internet* 12, no. 8 (2007). Found online at: <<http://firstmonday.org/htbin/cgiwrap/bin/ojs/index.php/fm/article/view/1978/1853>> (Accessed February 8, 2010); see also, A. Kavanaugh, J. M. Carroll, M. B. Rosson, T. T. Zin, and D. D. Reese, “Community Networks: Where Offline Communities Meet Online,” *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication* 10, no. 4 (2005). Found online at: <<http://jcmc.indiana.edu/vol10/issue4/kavanaugh.html>> (Accessed October 11, 2009).

³⁹⁵ Granovetter, “Threshold Models,” 1423.

of existing networks and create new ones that would turn curiosity and tentative support into intense enthusiasm and active involvement.³⁹⁶

For many people today, particularly younger people, the online environment serves as an extension of offline realities. Our friends, through work and school, even past acquaintances and long neglected relationships, find an additional place in our lives through sites such as Facebook and MySpace. Although it could be argued that such activity is leading to the flattening of human relationships, online relationships which lack familiarity or which are not regularly supplemented with offline engagement are more easily negotiated and may be quickly ignored.³⁹⁷ Thus, while a Facebook “friend” may express favorable views towards one political candidate over another, the impact of those views will largely be determined by a broad range of existing social relationships. For instance, should I repeatedly and enthusiastically engage my non-political brother about the importance of electing a certain candidate, it becomes all the more likely that my brother, presuming the two of us are on good terms, will adopt a similar view, or at the very least vote for that candidate. Within religious circles, peer influence plays a similarly important role. Take for instance the Loughead’s.

In many ways, the Loughead’s are a typical evangelical family. Patrick is in his late thirties and works as an auto mechanic while his wife, Cheryl, has gone back to school for her nursing degree. Together, Patrick and Cheryl have one child, a small boy named Aaron, and raise three others, two boys from Patrick’s previous marriage, and a daughter from Cheryl’s previous marriage. These children are home-schooled, as Cheryl is troubled by what she sees as

³⁹⁶ Cass Sunstein, *Going to Extremes: How Like Minds Unite and Divide* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 24-25.

³⁹⁷ See Kaveri Subrahmanyam and Patricia M. Greenfield, “Virtual World in Development: Implications of Social Networking Sites,” *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology* 29, no. 6 (2008): 417-419.

the secularization of public schools. Each week, the family attends any number of social functions at the nearby Church of God church. These functions vary each week, but typically include worship service, Bible study, Sunday school, youth group, and occasionally a more relaxed social function, such as a potluck or spaghetti feed dinner. In true evangelical fashion the Loughhead's have recently begun taking the daughter of one of their neighbors to church with them and speak proudly of their evangelism efforts.

While interviewing Cheryl, we discussed several topics that included her use of the Internet and other media sources for information collection, as well as the importance of peers in the formation of her values and beliefs. Our exchange is provided at some length as it touches upon several important themes:

Cheryl: I guess that's the first one I've ever been to, even though I don't go to Christian web sites.

Interviewer: But we're talking about the Laminin Cell.

Cheryl: It's a cell [and] it's the glue that holds the body together... You can go on the website and I'm sure it's out there, but if you look at this cell that's in our body, underneath a microscope, and in this cell is the shape of the cross. And it's proof that 'He' does exist and a lot of people don't see this. A lot of your scientists won't speak of it. It's the make-up of our body and it has the cross.

Interviewer: I'll have to look for this.

Cheryl: And I think in my conversation about people trying to go out and find out if "He" existed, its right here in front of us and we keep wanting to make excuses

and nit picking at it. But it's amazing—you can just go under “Laminin Cell,” if you just Google it, and it will show how the makeup forms the shape of this cross.

Interviewer: And you heard this from a Christian speaker?

Cheryl: It's on a CD. I don't know his name. My mom would know it, but I wanted to get it so I can show it to the kids.

Interviewer: And the CDs you get, do you get mostly from the Christian bookstore in Eugene?

Cheryl: Oh yeah.

Interviewer: And do you swap with family and friends?

Cheryl: Oh yeah, with family and friends from the church. If somebody from the church has something like this, or music, than it gets passed.

Interviewer: Then if the minister says this is something that is really good, would you go out and purchase it, see if someone has it, listen to it because he said you should?

Cheryl: I'd be open to it. Because I believe the things he says, and we all have our own opinions, but oh yeah, it's a starting point. I think that's how anybody starts anywhere, somebody they have faith and trust in, and then they investigate it. Don't just leave it as, “oh this person said this.” Look. Find out.³⁹⁸

³⁹⁸ Personal Interview with Cheryl Loughead on information sharing and the evangelical church, June 20, 2009.

Whether or not one finds truth in Cheryl's claims about the Laminin Cell is a matter of personal faith. There are, however, many individuals, both religious and not, who would look at Cheryl's assertion with much skepticism, if not utter bemusement, as to how any rational human could possibly believe such a thing. However, as Cheryl notes, it was her mother who first introduced her to the CDs discussing the Laminin Cell. The fact that Cheryl seems to have a strong relationship with her mother helps explain why she might be more inclined to accept the Laminin Cell as proof of Christ's existence, but this by itself is not a satisfactory answer. To this end, James Surowiecki's work on the wisdom of crowds provides further insight. As Surowiecki notes, groups that encompass many different viewpoints tend to make better decisions than those that do not.³⁹⁹ This is because monolithic groups promote information feedback and similarly trigger a convergence of how facts are evaluated. Thus, when crowds lack a diversity of viewpoints, false facts can quickly become accepted truths. Given the extent to which Cheryl is embedded within her religious community, coupled by the rigid theological nature of the Church of Christ, it is unsurprising to find that the opinions of her peers, including recommendations regarding which media and informational sources to use, should carry considerable weight. As this exchange amply demonstrates, peer-to-peer interactions often play a crucial role in the transmission of information and the formation of values, particularly among religious groups.

The organizations studied here have sought to capitalize on in-person religious meet-ups to expand their membership base and to spread their word. For instance, visitors to the EEN's website are encouraged to start small creation care groups within their own churches. To help site visitors to do just this, the EEN's website provides accessible information online as well as startup packets for download. Similarly, Christian music festivals, like Sunday worship services,

³⁹⁹ James Surowiecki, *The Wisdom of Crowds* (New York: Random House, 2005).

are another common evangelical meet-up, and it is at these events that Restoring Eden finds considerable success. As Illyn explains:

The power of Christian Rock festivals is that it may be a Christian organization, but it's a for-profit Christian organization and its some guy they've hired trying to sell vendor booths, and he's got a whiteboard and goals for the week, and I call up and say, "hey, we're a Christian environmental group and we're working at these festivals and we'd like to have a booth at your event. How much is it?"

"It's \$600."

"Great."

So we in a sense we buy access. And we might be next door to this Christian Radio station, and here's this very conservative Christian college right over there, but the rock n' roll band comes [to us] and says, "Dude, we love what you're all about," and we get a shout out from the stage. And that's why we've always included the culture [venues], because for us, our revenue has always come through these cultural venues, which have different barriers of entry than church. We haven't even tried to do Sunday morning pulpit stuff. We haven't expected pastors to be political because we see it as a bottom-up approach. We want Christians to be political in the name of their Christianity, who then invite and engage their pastors.⁴⁰⁰

⁴⁰⁰ Illyn interview.

What is unique about the approach taken by both Restoring Eden and the EEN, as opposed to that of secular organizations, is that thanks to the community oriented nature of religious bodies, they are able to take advantage of real world hubs that already exist. Theological outsiders can use these existing hubs as a means of establishing a foothold within the broader religious community. Thus, unlike many secular mass mobilization efforts, which rely almost exclusively on media to drive their message, religious groups can take a more organic relational approach, with relationships often beginning at in-person gatherings, and later nurtured online. By utilizing online tools, such as organizational websites, and perhaps more importantly, social networking sites, individuals are able to more efficiently interact with a larger network of acquaintances than they otherwise could. Moreover, “the social features of networking websites foster an environment that is ideal for virtual communities to expand and social capital to develop.”⁴⁰¹ The table below illustrates this point by highlighting the means by which respondents to the *Internet and Evangelical* survey became involved with their respective organization:

⁴⁰¹ Josh Pasek, Eian More, and Daniel Romer, “Realizing the Social Internet? Online Social Networking Meets Offline Social Capital,” *Journal of Information Technology and Politics* 6, no. 3/4 (2009): 201 of 197-215.

Figure 5.4

How Members Become Active in the Studied Organizations

Through a Church Related Function	72
Through a Friend	285
Online	277
Through Print	71
Through T.V. and Radio	3
Through College	38
Did Not Answer	104

* Data is based on responses from the *Internet and Evangelical* survey. Table has coded write-in responses into appropriate categories. Data collected from 12/9/2008 – 2/27/2010.

What is perhaps most surprising about this data is that the Internet did not play a more direct role in introducing supporters to the studied organizations. Admittedly, the “Online” selection was a close second to the “From a Friend” option, however, when the 104 respondents who did not answer this question are excluded, the total percentage of individuals who learned about one of the studied organizations online stood at only 37%. However, such a finding does not negate the importance of the Internet in growing the creation care and emerging church movements, but rather speaks to the communal strength of religious organization. Thus the Internet may be playing more of a “second-order” role in bringing supporters to the studied

groups. For instance, as we know, the EEN encourages supporters to download material online which is then used to spread the tenants of evangelical environmentalism at their local church. In this regard, it is entirely likely that those who learn of these groups online are subsequently telling their friends and spreading the word at church and other offline venues. This approach seems to have significant value for the studied organizations. For instance while discussing the importance of offline proselytizing, author and ESA speaker Al Tizon noted that, “there’s no substitute for face-to-face,” adding that face-to-face interactions “often result in, ‘Hey how can I join ESA, how can I be a part of this? How can I help spread the word?’”⁴⁰² At which point ESA refers individuals to their website. Tizon similarly notes that ESA members who came to the groups via this face-to-face route are the ones most likely to “endure.”⁴⁰³

Conclusion

At its basic level, the Internet is used to broadcast simple, yet important information, such as contact information, historical and biographical information, as well as providing additional insight into where a campaign stands on the issues. In their attempt to persuade others of the biblical mandate for environmental protection, several creation care groups use the Internet to highlight scriptural passages supporting their cause. Creation care organizations most heavily into virtual bible thumping are those most optimistic about the future of the creation care movement. Another way in which information is shared online is through the use of linking. Linking allows users to quickly and easily navigate the online environment, but as this chapter

⁴⁰² Personal Interview with Al Tizon on ESA and the Social Gospel, September 17, 2009.

⁴⁰³ Ibid.

has shown, web architects can greatly affect the linking experience through determining which links are made available. Many secular campaigns avoid using links that navigate the user away from the campaign website. However, this has not been the case with the studied organizations. In particular, creation care groups routinely link to outside groups with shared or similar interests. In doing so, the evangelical organizations under review are fostering new ties to like-minded groups, thus expanding the institutional resources available to these groups, while simultaneously growing the social networks of participating group members. As a result both strong and weak social ties are strengthened, while requisite pools of social capital are both expanded and deepened.

Like the practice of web informing, web involving is another common feature of online campaigns. One of the earliest forms of web involving was through so-called text-based interactivity. While some may view text-based interactivity as a crude and dated method of web involving, it remains a practice common among campaigns of all types. In many instances, text-based interactivity directs users to face-to-face meet-ups, as is the case with Renewal's Day of Prayer, which is also a prime example of the web technique known as convergence. Convergence, as we have seen, is a unique and powerful tool that allows users and site managers the ability to transverse both the online and offline worlds. Many of the websites of groups affiliated with the selected case studies regularly ask their online supporters to encourage their friends, family and neighbors to take action in the offline world.

Another technique for web involving is that of transactions. Transactions occur when a web user makes a commitment of either time or money. From a monetary perspective, while many campaigns often solicit financial support online through an easy-to-use donation interface, this is not always the case with the studied organizations. Emergent Village, for example, has no

online donation interface to speak of, nor do they ask for monetary contributions. Renewal is a similarly story, in that while they encourage supporters to give, their website lacks an online donation feature. Instead, Renewal asks individuals to send their contributions via traditional post to a third party collector, Green Vineyard, with whom Renewal has a strong relationship.

Finally, the practice of web connecting takes place when the Internet is used to cultivate meaningful relationships (the creation of social capital). As we have seen, the Internet is an ideal medium through which dissident religious voices are both empowered and amplified. In this regard, the Internet has played a decisive role in lessening the influence of the old guard evangelicals, by bringing to the fore new and previously neglected theological agendas such as evangelical environmentalism and the social gospel. The very fact that the creation and emerging church movements have garnered such widespread support serves as an impressive testament to the Internet's ability to overcome various obstacles, such as geographic space and the seemingly monolithic cultural values of a given people. As once isolated values and groups of people gather strength and increasingly challenge the hegemony of established orders, inevitably new tensions arise. As they do, old hierarchies are weakened as the cultural values that once defined a certain group of people change. Within the evangelical community, this process is taking place, often in a brutal and public manner. Like all value shifts, these changes are impacting society, and given the relative size and strength of the American evangelical community, these changes are similarly impacting the political process. However, before we can began to access the depth of this impact, it is first important to better understand the nature of this fragmentation, as well as the issues around which the various factions are dividing. For that we turn to the following chapter.

CHAPTER SIX

THE CHANGING BIBLICAL POLITICS OF THE MODERN

AMERICAN EVANGELICAL TRADITION

Whoever is not for us is against us—Mark 9:40

While it is widely known that religious communities play a significant role in the American political processes, many observers are acutely unaware of recent changes within the evangelical tradition, and have naively continued to operate under the assumption that all, or at least the overwhelming majority of, evangelical voters are dependably Republican. This chapter contests this notion by highlighting recent theological and political developments within the evangelical community. It argues that recent changes in the communication landscape have helped shift evangelical concerns towards environmental protection and social justice, two causes that favor the Democratic Party. A consequence of this change is that the evangelical tradition is politically less unified than it once was. This is so as while the broadcast media of television and radio have had a largely unifying effect on the political and social values of evangelicals, the new media environment appears to be having the opposite effect. Given the Internet's ability to facilitate dialogue and enable scattered groups of people with shared concerns the means to more readily communicate, the Internet is in effect serving as a sort of arena where issue-based politics are contesting the preeminence of interest-based group politics. As a result, evangelical Christianity is both polarizing on key issues, while simultaneously becoming more politically moderate as a whole. To illustrate this point, this chapter provides data comparing the value preferences of the broader evangelical community against that of the selected case studies and their affiliate organizations.

The Mechanical Forces that Shape Our Preferences

In 1969, economist Thomas Schelling was sure of two things: most Americans were not racists and too many American neighborhoods continued to be plagued by persistent racial

segregation. Perplexed by these inconsistencies, Schelling set out to perform a simple experiment that he hoped would explain “the relationship between collective results and individual intents.”⁴⁰⁴ What Schelling did next was to create virtual communities consisting of 9 black households, represented by the symbol “+” and 10 white households which were represented by the symbol “0.” Schelling then arranged these homes randomly into virtual neighborhoods, so that these communities looked something like this:

00+++000+00++0++00+
 +00++000+0+++000++0

Schelling then postulated that in a fully integrated community, such as those shown above, residents would have a natural tendency to want to live near neighbors of their own race. Working from this, Schilling began rearranging these neighborhoods along the premise that if fewer than half of any resident’s nearest four neighbors were of the same race, then that resident would move to the nearest location consistent with those preferences. Schelling soon discovered that his once racially integrated neighborhoods quickly broke-down and in their place racially segregated neighborhoods appeared:

00000+++++++00000

⁴⁰⁴ Henry Wasserman and Gary Yohe, “Segregation and the Provision of Spatially Defined Local Public Goods,” *American Economist* 45, no. 2 (2001): 13-24.

This simple experiment led Schelling to conclude that, “the interplay of individual choices, where unorganized segregation is concerned, is a complex system with collective results that bear no close relation to individual intent.”⁴⁰⁵

Years later, Mark Buchanan built upon Schelling’s discovery using what is known as “small-worlds” theory, which stipulates that unseen social and mechanical patterns often prove pivotal in understanding how information is exchanged within a given network. Thus, Buchanan writes, “social realities are fashioned not only by the desires of people but also by the action of blind and more or less mechanical forces...forces that can amplify slight and seemingly harmless personal preferences into dramatic and troubling consequences.”⁴⁰⁶ As Buchanan notes, the networks to which an individual belongs are “are perpetually on the very edge of instability and tumultuous upheaval.”⁴⁰⁷ These very networks exist among the clusters of everyday life, such as shared geographic proximity and professional communities. Thus, in our ever fluid and globalized world, individuals will often move, change jobs, and make new acquaintances. When communal life is disrupted, as in the case of a move, we often seek communities of familiarity and like-minded individuals. This is not to say, however, that relationships once made are forgotten. Indeed, in the age of Facebook and LinkedIn, it is easier than to stay in touch with old friends, acquaintances and professional colleagues. Moreover, such repositories of social capital can similarly be called upon in rough times, for future financial opportunities, or simply when life’s circumstances change. While Buchanan’s work on small-worlds theory illustrates the interconnectedness of the entire planet, or what Bachman’s describes as ‘degrees of separation,’ he continually returns to the point that in order for communities to function, there must be

⁴⁰⁵ Thomas Schelling, “Models of Segregation,” *American Economic Review, Papers and Proceedings* 59, no. 2 (1969): 488 of 488-493.

⁴⁰⁶ Mark Buchanan, *Nexus: Small Worlds and the Groundbreaking Science of Networks* (New York: Norton, 2002), 186.

⁴⁰⁷ Buchanan, 20.

sufficient levels of trust and understanding, which to Bachman is the foundation of social capital. Drastic differences in values, world-views, ideologies and the like, work to undermine mutual trust and understanding. This is not to say that such differences need necessarily be an impediment to a thriving community (as many would argue that the most dynamic and vibrant communities are also those rich in diversity and multiculturalism). But when considered along with the literature analyzing the social effects of Internet technologies on communal stocks of social capital and other public goods, Buchanan's small-worlds theory runs counter to the utopian assertions of many early technological populists, such as Michael and Ronda Hauben, who write:

We are seeing a revitalization of society. The frameworks are being redesigned from the bottom up. A new more democratic world is becoming possible...The Net seems to open a new lease on life for people, social connections that were never before possible, or relatively hard to achieve, are now facilitated by the Net.⁴⁰⁸

Or for that matter, past U.S. Presidents, such as Ronald Reagan, who in 1989 famously declared that "the Goliath of totalitarianism will be brought down by the David of the microchip."⁴⁰⁹ Or

⁴⁰⁸ Michael Hauben and Ronda Hauben, *Netizens: On the History and Impact of Usenet and the Internet* (Los Alamitos, CA: IEEE Computer Society Press, 1997), 3.

⁴⁰⁹ Sheila Rule, "Reagan Gets A Red Carpet From British," *The New York Times*, June 14, 1989. Found online at: <<http://www.nytimes.com/1989/06/14/world/reagan-gets-a-red-carpet-from-british.html>> (Accessed July 10, 2011).

George W. Bush, who later pondered, “Imagine if the Internet took hold in China. Imagine how freedom would spread.”⁴¹⁰

Although populist claims such as those above may in part be true,⁴¹¹ Internet technology, as we know, is not without its social dark side. For instance, with the abundance of choice afforded by the new media environment, like-minded individuals and groups have quickly coalesced into small niche clusters. This recent social development is the result of a technological progression which Nicholas Carr describes as the “electrification” of America’s mass culture, whereby the Internet, with its near endless and ever-expanding content, is steadily displacing the unifying effects of popular television shows, radio programs, movies, books, newspapers and magazines by affording its audience highly specialized markets which suit deep personal desires.⁴¹² As net users cluster around narrowly focused topics and interests, these clusters, if insulated and unexposed to outside views and opinions, have a tendency to create an echo-chamber effect, in which agreeable views are reinforced and amplified, the results of which can prove disastrous for deliberative democracy.⁴¹³

As Paul Starr observes, prior to cable television and the Internet, American presidents relied on broadcast networks and newsprint to reach the national public. This dependency gave networks and major newspapers considerable power as they controlled access to the channels of public persuasion. This power was, however, balanced by a White House that could “exercise plenty of leverage in its media relations by selectively leaking news and granting exclusive

⁴¹⁰ Evgeny Morozov, “Texting Toward Utopia: Does the Internet Spread Democracy?,” *Boston Review*, March/April, 2009. Found online at: <<http://bostonreview.net/BR34.2/morozov.php>> (Accessed February 27, 2010).

⁴¹¹ For instance, Yongnian Zheng argues that the Internet is in fact leading to the democratization of China. Yongnian Zheng, *Technological Empowerment: The Internet, State and Society in China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008).

⁴¹² Nicholas Carr, *The Big Switch: Rewiring the World, From Edison to Google* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 2008).

⁴¹³ Cass Sunstein, *Republic.com* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002).

interviews,” and a press core that “operated more or less according to standards of professional journalism.”⁴¹⁴ Today, however, traditional media is facing new challenges and a changed landscape in which “neither the broadcast networks nor the newspapers have the reach they once did.”⁴¹⁵ As a result, the unified public once assembled by traditional media is rapidly fading. And in this new Internet age, a basic rule of communication seems confirmed: abundance brings scarcity. As we have seen, news outlets are increasingly abandoning past standards of professional journalism in favor of a new business model, one that helps breed social polarization and audience fragmentation.⁴¹⁶

Much like political authority, religious authority depends upon a unified audience. As has been previously discussed, broadcast media proved instrumental in unifying a diverse evangelical tradition behind core cultural and political values. This in turn led to a consolidation of power and the ability to focus evangelical energies on a narrow set of social priorities. However, as media has grown to include abundant communicative platforms, new theological movements have taken root within the evangelical community that fray their collective energies while challenging traditional power structures.

⁴¹⁴ Paul Starr, “Governing in the Age of Fox News,” *The Atlantic*, January/February (2010). Found online at: <<http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2010/01/governing-in-the-age-of-fox-news/7838/>> (Accessed December 16, 2010).

⁴¹⁵ Ibid.

⁴¹⁶ Ibid.

Group Polarization

As we have seen, televangelism, like radio before it, helped bridge long held denominational divides, the result of which was the homogenization of American evangelicals. This result has been dubbed the mainstreaming effect, whereby regular television viewing works to create a confluence of ideas and “a coming-together of attitudes.”⁴¹⁷ When viewed regularly and by divergent groups, what often results is the adoption of more extreme political ideas and social values by audience members. In the case of televangelism, mainstreaming effectively brought the values of its viewers into closer political proximity with those of televangelists themselves, thereby moving viewers to the more conservative end of the political spectrum.⁴¹⁸ Moreover, once an individual is caught up in the mainstreaming effect, there is a natural tendency to seek out viewpoints with which they already agree. This works to further reinforce pre-existing biases and often moves both the viewer and broadcaster to ever-greater extremes.⁴¹⁹ Thus, by appealing to individuals who felt unnerved by the social upheavals of the 1960s, televangelists worked to foster a community of conservative Christians whose numbers grew as the public increasingly gained access to cable television. Meanwhile, as evangelical Christianity found itself caught in the mainstreaming effect, both the message of televangelists and the viewers themselves gradually crept towards the conservative right.⁴²⁰

⁴¹⁷ Watson, *Media Communication*, 67.

⁴¹⁸ Ibid; see also, Cass Sunstein, *Going to Extremes: How Like Minds Unite and Divide* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

⁴¹⁹ Leon Festinger, *A Theory of Dissonance*. (US: Row Pearson, 1957).

⁴²⁰ See Festinger, *Theory*; see also Watson, *Media Communication*.

The Internet does not necessarily negate this mainstreaming effect. In fact, it could be argued that the Internet exacerbates the problem, for when individuals are afforded an abundance of choice they often visit sites that appeal to selected interests and which reinforce pre-existing bias. Similarly, the newly actualized transcendence of local space that ICTs afford requires us to reconsider political engagement as “a series of places embodying reconstructed models of citizenship and new forms of political activism.”⁴²¹ Embedded within this new realm of civic activity are networks of wired activists who are rapidly re-writing the rules of civic engagement and political activity to include such things as online petitions, virtual boycotts, the development of public awareness websites, and to mobilize vast numbers through simple tweets and wall posts, to name but a few.⁴²² Activities such as these have not only changed the nature of political participation, but also demonstrate why a new conceptualization of civic engagement is needed.

As a growing number of individuals find their way online, and as regular daily habits change because of it,⁴²³ challenging new questions arise concerning the complexities of contemporary social relations, civic engagement and contested political activity. For instance, the widely adopted practice of conscience-driven consumption, such as the purchasing of “fair-trade” goods, certified “organic” produce and “conflict-free” diamonds, illustrates the difficulties in measuring contemporary civic engagement, as this sort of activity is nearly impossible to quantify. The Internet aids in this practice by empowering citizens to quickly and easily find information that would otherwise require a significant investment of time. As a result, thresholds for civic engagement are lowered and political power is exercised in new and novel ways.⁴²⁴ In

⁴²¹ Richard Kahn and Douglas Kellner, “New Media and Internet Activism: From the ‘Battle of Seattle’ to Blogging,” *New Media and Society* 6, no. 1 (2004): 91 of 87-95.

⁴²² See McCaughey and Ayers, *Cyberactivism*.

⁴²³ Refer to Bimber, “Internet and Political Transformation;” and *Information*.

⁴²⁴ Bimber, “Internet and Political Transformation.”

addition to this, the Internet is similarly fostering new networks and repertoires for citizenship by enabling connections between far flung individuals and groups with shared and similar interests. Serving as a vehicle through which bottom-up grassroots activity is more easily achieved, the Internet has evolved into an effective medium through which the power of individuals is greatly enhanced and better positioned to serve larger collective goods.

As already discussed, Bimber has taken these social implications one step further to assert that the Internet has led America down the path of accelerated pluralism,⁴²⁵ where interest-based group politics are shifting towards more fluid issue-based group politics, consequently resulting in declining institutional coherence.⁴²⁶ In many cases, “access to the Internet provides the opportunity to participate in networks and interest-communities that would be unavailable otherwise.”⁴²⁷ For older, more established regimes such as trade unions, political parties, and even religious coalitions, the shift from interest-based group politics in favor of issue-based group politics poses serious challenges to consolidated positions of power.

Group Polarization and Creation Care

Although Chapter 8 will explore the political implications of the evangelical environmental movement in much greater depth, let us take a moment to consider the polarizing force of the creation care movement itself. The Facebook group, “Christians and the Environment: Stop the Creation Care Agenda!” states:

⁴²⁵ Ibid.

⁴²⁶ See Uslaner, “Trust.”

⁴²⁷ Pierce and Lovrich Jr., “Internet Technology Transfer,” 53.

Creation Care is a radical new liberal political agenda sweeping through America....More importantly, the movement encourages Christians to start voting for Democrats who generally favor radical environmental agendas. It also supports radical environmental legislation like “Cap and Trade,” which would do nothing more than impose a huge carbon tax on Americans in order to redistribute wealth to Africa and the United Nations. Imagine the cost of a gallon of gas after being taxed an additional 60 cents per gallon because someone wants to send American money to the United Nations!

They got popular Ameri[c]an pastors to buy into the Creation Care. These are pastors like Rob Bell and Rick Warren who have gone along with this agenda without fully knowing the implications. Remember no one wants unclean water, but the “Creation Care” movement has nothing to do with helping the environment.

In the end, Creation Care is a movement that tries to trick well-intentioned Christians into voting for liberal Democrats and their anti-family agendas that attack Christianity.⁴²⁸

⁴²⁸ *Christians and the Environment: Stop the Creation Care Movement!*, Facebook group page. Found online at: <<http://www.facebook.com/home.php?#!/group.php?v=info&ref=ts&gid=167873995384>> (Accessed March 8, 2010).

By viewing creation care as a political battle waged by subversive cultural outsiders, rather than as a legitimate theological discussion occurring within a larger religious body, important communal connections that unify large and diverse communities, such as the American evangelical tradition, are lost. The result of this lost connectivity negatively impacts evangelical social capital as it inevitably leads to feelings of distrust, increased animosity and, at an extreme, even enmity.

Yet tensions between conservative evangelicals and the growing creation care movement are not limited to a few Facebook groups. For instance, Barrett Duke, Vice-President of the Ethics and Religious Liberty Council, which serves as the political arm of the Southern Baptist Convention, offered this comment during an interview:

I don't think it's the creation care movement that many evangelicals have a concern with per-se. The Bible instructs us to care for the environment and so it isn't that many evangelicals have objections to the creation care movement. I think many evangelicals are deeply concerned about the ideology that drives some of the creation care interests, pantheistic ideologies, and naturalistic ideologies that tend to equate all life on the planet, are of great concern to us. It's not the creation care movement that concern[s] many evangelicals, it's the ideology of particular individuals or particular groups, possibly promoting their ideology through [the] creation care message.⁴²⁹

⁴²⁹ Personal Interview with Barrett Duke on creation care, Emergent Village and the future of the evangelical community, May 17, 2009.

To be clear, there is no evidence suggesting that evangelical environmentalism is anything but a growing religious movement of devoted Christians. At the same time, however, Duke, like the Facebook group Christians and the Environment, is correct in noting that evangelical environmentalism is well positioned to siphon support away from the GOP. This concern reflects important new realities for the Christian Right, namely that the social and political priorities of a new generation of American evangelicals are dramatically different from those of previous generations, and that the growth of the creation care movement (as well as the emerging church), stands as a testament to the Christian Right's shattered religious monologue.

Today, the vanguard of the Christian Right finds its historic religious supremacy challenged, and predictably, there has been considerable conservative backlash against many of these newer evangelical movements. "Resisting the Green Dragon," a product of the Cornwall Alliance, a Christian think-tank whose members include evangelical heavyweights such as James Dobson, Tony Perkins, Charles Colson, Michael Farris and D. James Kennedy, is one such example. "Billed as a 'Biblical response to one of the greatest deceptions of our day,'"⁴³⁰ "Resisting the Green Dragon" is a twelve week video series that claims "[t]he entire climate change movement is a 'false religion,' a nefarious conspiracy to empower eugenicists and create a 'global government.'"⁴³¹ Individuals interested in learning more about "Resisting the Green Dragon," can order this "one-of-a-kind DVD series" online, complete with a discussion guide and a book "presenting a Christian response to radical environmentalism."⁴³² Online visitors can

⁴³⁰ Lee Fang, "Exclusive: The Oily Operators Behind The Religious Climate Change Denial Front Group, Cornwall Alliance," *The Wonk Room*, June 25, 2010. Found online at: <<http://wonkroom.thinkprogress.org/2010/06/15/cornwall-alliance-frontgroup/>> (Accessed January 13, 2010).

⁴³¹ Ibid.

⁴³² Cornwall Alliance, *Resisting the Green Dragon Video Trailer*, 2010. Found online at: <<http://www.resistingthegreendragon.com/>> (Accessed June 14, 2011).

also view the documentary trailer, which begins amidst the backdrop of ominous music and Orwellian imagery, while a narrator speaks:

In what has become one of the greatest deceptions of our day, radical environmentalism is striving to put America and the world under its constructive control. This so-called green dragon is seducing your children in our classrooms and popular culture. It's lust for political power now extends to the highest global levels, and its twisted view of the world elevates nature above the needs of people, even the poorest and most helpless. With millions falling prey to its spiritual deception, the time is now to stand and resist.

Around the world, environmentalism has become a radical movement, something we call 'the green dragon,' and it is deadly. Deadly to human prosperity, deadly to human life, deadly to human freedom, and deadly to the gospel of Jesus Christ. Make no mistake about it, environmentalism is no longer your friend, it is your enemy.⁴³³

At a price of \$71.90, the entire Green Dragon DVD series and related printed material is prohibitively expensive for many evangelicals. The Cornwall Alliance likely knows this, and if they were so inclined, they could potentially provide this series at a steeply discounted price,

⁴³³ Ibid.

having so many financial backers.⁴³⁴ Yet the Cornwall Alliance most assuredly knows that the “Resisting the Green Dragon” series is likely to be seen by many more people than just the individuals who buy it. As we shall see in the following chapter, religious material such as printed books, audio books and DVDs are often shared among family and friends, and are commonly shown in adult Sunday School classrooms and as part of worship services, a feat which could not be achieved absent high levels of social capital.

In addition to being shown in churches, the Resisting the Green Dragon campaign also enjoys considerable buzz on several Christian broadcast outlets, such as talk radio, a medium still largely dominated by the Christian Right, and one to which many evangelicals continue to listen. For instance, evangelist Jan Markell devoted two days of airtime exclusively to promoting the Cornwall Alliance agenda on her radio program, *Understanding the Times*. As she notes, “the environmental movement has an agenda...and Christians are playing into it and Christians are spreading it.”⁴³⁵ She goes on to say, “the place I like to turn to for the truth is the Cornwall Alliance.”⁴³⁶ Even Glenn Beck has gotten in on the act. In an interview of E. Calvin Beisner, founder of the Cornwall Alliance, and David Barton of Wall Builders, an Alliance supporter, on his Fox News television show he makes it quite clear where he stands. In one exchange during a discussion of ‘Let There Be Stuff,’ an environmental publication by the Tides Foundation aimed at religious teens, Beisner reads a sentence from his book. “When we drink,” Beisner reads, “we owe a debt.” “What, to God?” Beisner asks. “To the earth’s great water?” he concludes. To

⁴³⁴ Lee, “Oily Operators.”

⁴³⁵ Jan Markell, “Resisting the Green Dragon: Part 1,” *Understanding the Times*, August 18, 2010. Found online at: <<http://www.oneplace.com/ministries/understanding-the-times/listen/resisting-the-green-dragon-part-1-127170.html>> (Accessed January 13, 2011).

⁴³⁶ Ibid.

which Beck replies, “That’s American Native—I guess you could go there. It’s paganism!”⁴³⁷

And statements such as these are increasingly common rhetorical tools used by the Christian Right to depict emerging theological movements, such as evangelical environmentalism, as enemies of God.

Beyond the Sterile Polarities of the Christian Right?

In January of 2004, the now late Jerry Falwell authored a much talked about editorial entitled “God is pro-war.”⁴³⁸ In this provocative piece, Falwell declares that while Christians are called to “be people of peace,”⁴³⁹ there are a number of biblical scriptures that he claims justify war. Extrapolating from these selected passages, Falwell then makes the argument that America’s 2003 invasion of Iraq was not only warranted, but also sanctioned by God. Falwell writes:

Today, America continues to face the horrible realities of our fallen world.

Suicide bombings and terrorist actions are beamed live into our homes daily. This serves as a constant reminder of the frailty of our flesh.

It is apparent that our God-authored freedoms must be defended.

⁴³⁷ Glenn Beck and E. Calvin Beisner, “Glenn Beck,” *Fox News*, October 16, 2010. Found online at: <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hvctF7qfB8>> (Accessed January 13, 2011).

⁴³⁸ Jerry Falwell, “God is pro-war,” *WorldNetDaily*, January 31, 2004. Found online at: <http://www.wnd.com/news/article.asp?ARTICLE_ID=36859> (Accessed January 4, 2011).

⁴³⁹ *Ibid.*

Throughout the book of Judges, God calls the Israelites to go to war against the Midianites and Philistines. Why? Because these nations were trying to conquer Israel, and God's people were called to defend themselves.

President Bush declared war in Iraq to defend innocent people. This is a worthy pursuit. In fact, Proverbs 21:15 tells us: “It is joy to the just to do judgment: but destruction shall be to the workers of iniquity.”

One of the primary purposes of the church is to stop the spread of evil, even at the cost of human lives. If we do not stop the spread of evil, many innocent lives will be lost and the kingdom of God suffers.⁴⁴⁰

For many readers, both secular and religious alike, Falwell’s piece typifies much of what is wrong with religion, namely that it leads believers down the path of violence and vengeance. And while many were quick to condemn Falwell’s editorial, among the Christian Right Falwell was hardly alone in his vocal support for the invasion of Iraq. For instance, former Nixon aide and founder of the Prison Fellowship, Charles Colson, argued that the “Just War Theory” ought to be “stretched” to include pre-emptive strikes against suspected terrorist organizations and countries that harbor terrorists.⁴⁴¹ Similarly, Richard Land, former President of the Southern Baptist Convention, came to Bush’s defense arguing that Saddam Hussein was developing weapons of mass destruction at “breakneck speed” which he planned on using against “America

⁴⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁴¹ Doug Bandow, “Who Would Jesus Kill?,” *Anti-War.com*, May 18, 2007. Found online at: <<http://original.antiwar.com/doug-bandow/2007/05/18/who-would-jesus-kill/>> (Accessed January 6, 2011).

and her allies.”⁴⁴² Land would go on to incorrectly argue that Iraq was directly involved with the attacks of September 11, 2001. Meanwhile, James Dobson asserted that Saddam Hussein was but “another brutal tyrant” who, in his words, “must be stopped.”⁴⁴³ For his part, Charles Stanley of the First Baptist Church of Atlanta, whose televised sermons are seen by millions of viewers each week, preached, “[w]e should offer to serve the war effort in any way possible.”⁴⁴⁴ Adding, “God battles with people who oppose him, who fight against him and his followers.”⁴⁴⁵ Tim LaHaye similarly welcomed the Iraq war as “a focal point of end-time events.”⁴⁴⁶ Unsurprisingly, statements such as these proved pivotal in drumming up evangelical support for the Iraq war. As Charles Marsh reported, “[w]ar sermons rallied evangelical congregations behind the invasion of Iraq,” and as a result, “an astonishing 87 percent of white evangelical Christians in the United States supported the President’s decision in April 2003.”⁴⁴⁷ However, in the years that have followed, public support for the Iraq war has fallen considerably and to a large extent evangelical support has mirrored this trend, though the war remains more popular among evangelicals than with the general American populous.⁴⁴⁸ Jim Rice and Jeannie Choi note one reason for this declining support is that many evangelicals, and in particular younger evangelicals, are discovering a “deeper understanding of what it means to be pro-life.”⁴⁴⁹ This

⁴⁴² Ibid.

⁴⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁴ Charles Marsh, “Wayward Christian Soldiers,” *The New York Times*, January 20, 2006. Found online at: <<http://www.nytimes.com/2006/01/20/opinion/20marsh.html>> (Accessed January 6, 2011).

⁴⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁸ Tony Carnes, “Disappointed but Holding,” *Christianity Today*, February 1, 2006. Found Online at: <<http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2006/february/22.78.html>> (Accessed January 6, 2011).

⁴⁴⁹ Jim Rice and Jeannie Choi, “The Meaning of ‘Life,’” *Sojourners*, 2008. Found online at: <<http://www.sojo.net/index.cfm?action=magazine.article&issue=soj0811&article=the-meaning-of-life>> (Accessed February 3, 2011).

new understanding extends the simple abortion debate to include issues of environmental protection, poverty relief and even American military engagements.⁴⁵⁰

As conditions on the ground deteriorated and support for the Iraq war waned, many evangelical leaders found themselves in a precarious situation. As Ed Stoddard noted just days before the 2006 mid-term elections, many of these leaders had little choice but to support an unpopular war, an unpopular president and an unpopular political party as they had so “demonized” the Democrats that they had “nowhere else to go.”⁴⁵¹ This sort of politicization within the evangelical tradition is nothing new, though increasingly it appears to be driving a wedge within the evangelical community. Take for instance, Justin McMurdie. McMurdie is a self-described conservative evangelical pastor in his mid-thirties who oversees a thriving Church of God congregation in rural Oregon. For McMurdie, “[t]here are whole segments of the evangelical world that have become almost completely politicized. A good example,” McMurdie contends, “is Jerry Falwell and the Religious Right—or Ralph Reed,” two whom he calls the “starlets of the Religious Right.” As McMurdie sees it, “Most evangelicals have been taught, ‘Republican is right, Democrat is evil.’” McMurdie confessed during his interview that

[f]rom my own personal perspective, I was caught up in that. I go back to the 2000 election with Gore and Bush, and the recount and all that mess. I remember listening to talk radio and being very angry. And you hear all the vehemence on the part of the religious right. After 2004, after Bush won and to see where he went with his presidency, I just lost hope in the political process. I felt that right

⁴⁵⁰ Amy Sullivan, “Are Evangelicals Really Sold on Palin?,” *Time Magazine*, September 6, 2008. Found online at: <<http://www.time.com/time/politics/article/0,8599,1839190,00.html>> (Accessed February 3, 2011).

⁴⁵¹ Ed Stoddard, “U.S. Evangelical Support for Iraq War Slipping,” *Information Liberation*, October 28, 2006. Found online at: <<http://www.informationliberation.com/?id=17403>> (Accessed February 3, 2011).

or left, there's a lot of corruption and I don't know if, right or left, we are accomplishing anything.⁴⁵²

Yet despite these feelings, McMurdie believes it is important for evangelicals to remain engaged politically, though today he is unwilling to call himself either a Republican or a Democrat. He also admits that in the past, “evangelicals have gone way too far [in] identifying with the Republican Party,” an identification McMurdie feels needs to end.⁴⁵³ Fortunately for McMurdie and others who share his opinion, the next generation of evangelical leaders is charting a vastly different political course than that of the Christian Right. One such leader is Shane Claiborne.

Ordinary Radicals

With his long dreadlocked hair and his hemp-fibered clothing, Shane Claiborne appears to be more of a Berkley hippie than a leader in the evangelical community, yet that is precisely what Claiborne is: an evangelical leader, albeit one who in many ways is the antithesis of the old Christian Right. For instance, Claiborne contests the idea that there can be such a thing as a just war. To illustrate his point he draws upon on a popular Gospel account:

Peter had the best case for “just war” there ever was. As the soldiers are coming to get Jesus, and here he is very innocently—just picks up his sword and cuts off

⁴⁵² Personal Interview with Rev. Justin McMurdie on the current state of the evangelical church, May 18, 2009.

⁴⁵³ Ibid.

one of their ears—first of all, not a great shot—but Jesus looks at him and he scolds him and says, “he who picks up the sword, dies by the sword. I could have called down legions of angels, [but] that’s not how my revolution happens.” And after that, he [Jesus] picks up the ear and heals the wounded persecutor. Right—and there’s so much power in that. And the early Christians said, “when Jesus disarmed Peter, he disarmed every Christian.”⁴⁵⁴

And it is a message Claiborne is taking to the people. In a popular Youtube video clip for the award-winning documentary *The Ordinary Radicals*, Claiborne performs the following liturgy in front of thousands of gathered worshipers:

Shane Claiborne: With governments that kill...

Congregational Response: We will not comply.

Shane Claiborne: With the theology of empire...

Congregation Response: We will not comply.

Shane Claiborne: With the business of militarism...

Congregation Response: We will not comply.

Shane Claiborne: With the hoarding of riches...

Congregation Response: We will not comply.

Shane Claiborne: With the dissemination of fear...

⁴⁵⁴ Shane Claiborne, “Such a Thing as ‘Just War?’ Shane Claiborne,” YouTube Video Interview, 2009. Found online at: <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WjFoNIOpJec>> (Accessed January 6, 2011).

Congregation Response: We will not comply.⁴⁵⁵

And it is this message of nonviolence and social justice that Claiborne and so many other emerging Christians are passionately preaching. This is also the message that is working to redefine evangelical Christianity. As Jerry Maneker writes on his website, *Radical Christianity*:

Jesus was a radical and, hence, countercultural and, as Christians, we are to be radical and countercultural as well! We are never to be satisfied with a status quo that allows assorted social ills such as poverty, corruption in institutions, discrimination of any kind, or the creation of out-groups that are then demonized and discriminated against “in the name of God,” to go unchallenged.⁴⁵⁶

Increasingly, many evangelicals are heeding such messages and are attempting to live their faith through action and deeds.

Often called “radical Christianity,” or “new-monasticism,” the belief that Christians are called to rise above patrician squabbles and instead live in service to one another is quickly catching on among many younger evangelicals. Claiborne could be the poster-child of these self-described “ordinary radicals.” He states, “Young evangelicals have done something really dangerous. We picked up our Bibles and we read them. It put us at odds with the evangelical establishment,” adding, “when we looked at the Moral Majority [and other groups], we saw the

⁴⁵⁵ Jamie Moffett, “Movie Trailer for The Ordinary Radicals,” *Jamie Moffett Media Design and Production*, 2008. Found online at: <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gNYgwNYf6Ok>> (Accessed June 14, 2011).

⁴⁵⁶ Jerry Maneker, “Radical Christianity,” *Radical Christianity*, 2010. Found online at: <<http://www.radicalchristianity.net/>> (Accessed January 6, 2011).

inconsistency of the church.”⁴⁵⁷ As Claiborne sees it, past political dichotomies of “left” and “right” are not all that important to younger evangelicals. According to Claiborne, for younger evangelicals, the distinctions that matters the most are between “nice” and “mean.” Unsurprisingly, Claiborne sees himself and others like him as “political misfits,” a label he eagerly embraces as he continues preaching a message of inclusion and love.⁴⁵⁸

Ben Corey is another self-described “misfit.” Born and raised a Baptist, Corey found a new home among the emergent Christian community in Boston after being “pushed out” of his previous church for having expressed favorable views towards the work of Rob Bell, another emergent Christian and author of the popular book, *Velvet Elvis*.⁴⁵⁹ As Corey recounts, “my wife and I really became devastated in a way that a whole social network had kind of collapsed because people thought I was a messenger of Satan because I like Rob Bell. The whole thing was absurd, but we lost a lot of friends.”⁴⁶⁰ Still, Corey and his wife were determined to make the best of a bad situation. Without ties to hold them back, they moved to Boston and began graduate school. That first week in Boston Corey bumped into some fellow evangelicals who, like him, were “disgruntled about the evangelical movement” and “felt like outcasts.”⁴⁶¹ One of these individuals told Corey about Emergent Village. As Corey recalls:

When they described things to me, I was like, ‘Holy shit, I’m Emergent,’ and so I called Jeff [Gentry], the founder of the Emergent Village cohort, and I had coffee

⁴⁵⁷ Pam Chamberlain, “Younger Evangelicals: Where will they take the Christian Right?” *The Public Eye Magazine* 24, no. 1 (2009). Found online at: <<http://www.publiceye.org/magazine/v24n1/younger-evangelicals-where-wil-whey.html>> (Accessed September 2, 2010).

⁴⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁹ Personal Interview with Ben Corey on Emergent Village, July 7, 2009.

⁴⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁶¹ Ibid.

with him and we just started talking and I realized that I wasn't an outcast but that there was actually a whole movement for people just like me. And I finally found a place where I could be accepted and be myself and not worry about people not being your friend because you might have a different theological perspective than them. It was really life changing for me.⁴⁶²

For Corey, Emergent Village is much more than a theological home where he can find other religious "misfits" like himself.⁴⁶³ Crucially, with its recognition that issues of social and economic justice are the core of the Gospel message, it enables him to do the good work he sees as defining him as a Christian. As Corey sees it, the best way to address these issues is by "putting your words into action in the here and now, and not just talking about it at church on Sunday."⁴⁶⁴ As Corey further states, "A lot of people I've talked to in the Emergent conversation, just didn't think evangelicals were doing enough good, and they found other people who were far more involved."⁴⁶⁵

In many ways Corey Beals shares Ben Corey's passion for doing more. Yet Beals is not a member of Emergent Village, nor does he describe himself as an emerging Christian. Instead, Beals is a respected advocate for creation care and a board member with Restoring Eden. As we shall see in later chapters, Beals views the creation care movement as much more than environmental protection. It is instead a part of the larger pro-life movement that rests on the belief that Christians are called to be in service to one another. Knowing this helps explain Beals's passion in tackling issues such as social justice and poverty, a passion he shares with his

⁴⁶² Ibid.

⁴⁶³ Ibid.

⁴⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁶⁵ Ibid.

many students at George Fox University, a prestigious evangelical university located in the Pacific Northwest. As Beals noted one day over coffee:

And I say to my students, the Bible doesn't tell us to love everyone, that's easy to do, 'cause loving everyone means that I don't really have to love anyone. But the Bible tells us to love anyone. You know, I think the root of the Good Samaritan isn't "who is my neighbor;" the point is not "Do I love the whole world?" Every beauty pageant person loves the whole world and wants world peace, right? We all want that. But it's easy for me to love the whole world; it's just particular persons I can't stand. So what we're trying to do [is love] particular persons. That's where it becomes hard. Whether it's your roommate, or the person down the street who's being ignored—it's not some glorious poverty like in India, but its poverty, and its real needs. So some of these people we can't ignore. We can't choose who our neighbors are.⁴⁶⁶

And it seems Beals's message of committing oneself to the less fortunate is having a real impact on his students. As Beals further notes:

I had one student who chose to intentionally live in the poorest part of Newburg, [with] neighbors who were fatherless, and just sort of had reached out to them. Through their living, they just rented this house in the poorest part of Newburg

⁴⁶⁶ Personal Interview with Corey Beals on Creation Care, May 21, 2009.

and were able to love their neighbor. Part of it is putting yourself in your neighbor's way, putting yourself with people who have needs. I get really discouraged when I look at a lot of things in this world. It gets really easy to think, "man, you know, where are we going and why are we in this kind of basket?" I'll look at these students, and they take them and they'll go and run ahead of me, and in their very doing that, they challenge me with the very things I've taught them to go further. It's very inspiring and it's in those kinds of people where we're going to find hope, because they're deeply committed, they get it and they're not caught up in the dichotomous politics.⁴⁶⁷

And Christian believers such as Beals, whether professed Emergents or not, will come to play an ever larger role within the emerging conversation, as Emergent Village has decided to further decentralize its operation. The most evident example of this decentralization was a vote by the board of directors to drop its organizational leader. This move came amid fears that the organization of Emergent Village was beginning to too closely resemble an institutional hierarchy, and was straying too far from its egalitarian and social networking roots. Thus, with Emergent Village firmly committed to a decentralized, grass roots operation, the need for many strong individuals such as Corey to reach out and shape the lives of future generations will become all the more important.

⁴⁶⁷ Ibid.

Changing Political Attitudes

As previous chapters already show, evangelical Christians have been one of the most dependable Republican voting blocs in the United States, and among the most socially conservative of all Americans. For instance, when asked to describe their political ideology, more than half of all evangelicals (52%) identified as “conservative,” while another 30% described themselves as “moderate.” Only 11% of all evangelicals viewed themselves as “liberal.” On the issue of abortion, some 61% of evangelicals believe abortion should be illegal in all or almost all instances, whereas only 33% of evangelicals believe it should be legal in all or almost all instances. Finally on the issue of homosexuality, some 64% of evangelicals hold that homosexuality is a way of life that should be discouraged by society, while only 26% hold that homosexuality should be accepted by society. Yet when we examine the political attitudes of younger evangelicals, we find a remarkably different story. As Penning and Corwin note, while younger evangelicals are just as theologically conservative as their elders, unlike their parents and grandparents, this theological conservatism does not always carry over into the political arena.⁴⁶⁸ Gay rights are a prime example.

While younger evangelicals largely believe homosexuality to be a sin, “a majority of young evangelicals support some legal recognition of gay partnerships.”⁴⁶⁹ For instance, 24% of younger evangelicals believe homosexuals should have the legal right to marry (as opposed to

⁴⁶⁸ James M. Penning and Corwin E. Smidt, *Evangelicalism the Next Generation* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2002).

⁴⁶⁹ Chamberlain, “Younger Evangelicals.”

10% of older evangelicals) while an additional 32% are supportive of civil unions.⁴⁷⁰ As former Vice-president of the National Evangelical Association Richard Cizik notes, younger evangelicals “disagree quite strongly with their elders”⁴⁷¹ on gay rights. Cizik further contends that, “the influence of their [younger evangelicals] generational peers is clear. Four in ten young evangelicals say they have a close friend or family member who is gay or lesbian. Unsurprisingly, more than half of all younger evangelicals are supportive of either same sex marriage and/or civil unions.”⁴⁷²

Like many of his peers, Shane Claiborne’s views on homosexuality have been shaped by having a gay friend. As Claiborne recalls:

I had some strong views on abortion, homosexuality, all these things that were completely formed by—that conversation for me was completely formed by the political culture and what I saw in the news and all that. And I ripped some liberals apart in debates, and I had some serious stuff to say about abortion, but I didn’t know anybody who had had an abortion. I had some serious stuff to say about homosexuality, but I didn’t know any gay folks. And it was really in college where I got to know someone who was attracted to the same gender, and [he] thought God made a mistake in creating him, and he wanted to kill himself. And I thought to myself, this is more complicated than anything I’ve ever thought

⁴⁷⁰ Public Religion Research Staff Writer, “The Faith and American Politics Survey: The Young and the Faithful,” *Faith in Public Life*, October 8, 2008. Found online at: <<http://www.faithinpubliclife.org/tools/polls/faps/>> (Accessed July 10, 2011).

⁴⁷¹ Terry Gross, “Rev. Richard Cizik on God and Global Warming,” *Fresh Air with Terry Gross*, December 2, 2008. Found online at: <<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=97690760>> (Accessed July 10, 2011).

⁴⁷² *Ibid.*

and all the words I've used. And I thought, "if this guy cannot find a safe place in the church, then who have we become?"⁴⁷³

Among emergent Christians, who seek to live out the social gospel, the issue of gay rights ranks as a top priority. As Ben Corey notes, "There are certainly a growing number of emergents who are theologically open to homosexuality."⁴⁷⁴ Yet this openness has Corey concerned. His worry is that the issue of gay rights may soon serve as a sort of litmus test for who is emergent and who is not; something which, should it occur, would turn the emerging church into the "opposite extreme."⁴⁷⁵

For many younger evangelicals, the issue of gay rights is but one of many important social and theological issues. As Dan Harris reports, "A younger generation of evangelical Christians is coming of age—and as they head to the polls, they are breaking from their parents and focusing on a broader range of issues than just abortion and gay marriage."⁴⁷⁶ Pam Chamberlain has similarly found that younger evangelicals are "more inclined than their parents to support social justice efforts such as environmental stewardship, anti-poverty programs, or HIV/AIDS treatment."⁴⁷⁷ Indeed, when ABC news polled a gathering of young evangelicals assembled in New York City for a weekend rally and concert, they found that the issues most important to these evangelicals were "Internet pornography, media glamorization of sex and drugs, and children orphaned by AIDS. Abortion and gay marriage were not at the top of their

⁴⁷³ Claiborne, "Just War?"

⁴⁷⁴ Corey interview .

⁴⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁶ Dan Harris, "Are Younger Evangelicals Skewing More Liberal?," *World News with Diane Sawyer*, February 10, 2008. Found online at: <<http://abcnews.go.com/Politics/Vote2008/story?id=4269824&page=1>> (accessed January 10, 2011).

⁴⁷⁷ Chamberlain, "Younger Evangelicals."

list.”⁴⁷⁸ And this political departure from past generations has caught many non-evangelicals by surprise.

Sue Aguiar is no emergent Christian. Nor is she an evangelical, or, for that matter, even a Protestant. Sue is a practicing Catholic of Portuguese ancestry. While attending graduate school in the nation’s capital, Sue came across emergent Christianity via her roommate, who was active in a local church plant project. Intrigued by her roommate’s more liberal and tolerant religious views, and determined to expand her religious horizons, Sue began attending weekly services with her and became active in the church’s many community service activities. Through this exposure, Sue’s opinions of evangelical Christianity began to change. As Sue notes, “I had always equated evangelicals with those on the Christian Right, [but] since I’ve found the group I was working with more on the left side of the political spectrum, I found it interesting that they also described themselves as evangelicals.”⁴⁷⁹ And with regards to hot-button culture war issues, Sue adds:

From what I’ve seen, abortion and gay marriage aren’t brought up a lot. People kind of have their own—I’ve seen people at church read pro-choice, pro-life stuff, but it’s not an issues that’s really talked about because there isn’t a general consensus on it like there is on homelessness, which is bad so let’s all do something about it. I’m not sure what their reasoning is, but there are some issues that don’t get brought up a lot.⁴⁸⁰

⁴⁷⁸ Harris, “Younger Evangelicals.”

⁴⁷⁹ Personal Interview with Susan Aguiar on Emergent Village, June 12, 2009.

⁴⁸⁰ Ibid.

Sue speculates that part of the reason these issues are not mentioned as often as poverty, is because emerging Christians are focused on problems they see more frequently. As Sue explains, “living in the Washington D.C. area, you can see homelessness and poverty and lack of access of resources by immigrants as opposed to the gay marriage debate, which isn’t as lively in D.C.”⁴⁸¹ As we shall see in coming chapters, such a shift in focus can markedly alter the American political landscape.

How the Loss of Bridging Capital Affects the Political Attitudes of Evangelicals

In the aftermath of the tragic Tucson shootings, which left six people dead, including U.S. District Judge John Roll and 9-year-old Christina Taylor Green, and left 13 others wounded, among them Congresswoman Gabby Giffords, who was herself shot in the head, the nation paused to reflect on the rancor of its country’s political discourse. In writing about this tragedy, the online web journal *Multimedia Politics* observed, “[w]hile certainly not the only cause, it is difficult to deny the impact the Internet, Web, and social media has had on the increase of extreme rhetoric in politics.”⁴⁸² On this point, former Google CEO, Eric Schmidt was recently quoted by the *New York Times* as saying that in addition to making mindful people more thoughtful, the Internet also causes them to become more polarized and extreme, adding that the web enables people to “miscommunicate even louder and feel they’re correct.”⁴⁸³ Similarly,

⁴⁸¹ Ibid.

⁴⁸² Multimedia Staff Writer, “Political Polarization and Social Media,” *Multimedia Politics*, January 16, 2011. Found online at: <<http://multimediapolitics.net/2011/01/13/political-polarization-and-social-media/>> (Accessed February 8, 2011).

⁴⁸³ As quoted by Claire Cain Miller, “Google’s Chief on the Web and Political Polarization,” *The New York Times*, July 10, 2010. Found online at: <<http://bits.blogs.nytimes.com/2010/09/17/googles-chief-on-the-web-and-political-polarization/>> (Accessed February 8, 2011).

NPR's John McWhorter writes, "the actual cause of this new national temper is technology and its intersection with how language is used." He adds, "[i]t is no accident that the shrillness of political conversation has increased just as broadband and YouTube have become a staple of American life."⁴⁸⁴

Admittedly, extreme political rhetoric is nothing new in American public life. But what makes today different from past years is our saturated media environment with its endless 24/7 instant news coverage. In this environment, where audiences are increasingly fragmented and attentions spans shortened, often those who espouse the most extreme views get the lion's share of attention. Think, for instance, of the media firestorm created when a small Florida church with a membership of around 20 announced plans to hold a Qur'an burning.⁴⁸⁵

As we have already seen, the American evangelical community finds itself divided by new theological movements and cultural values. Increasingly, this divide is taking on a more contentious tone, as evidenced by the Resisting the Green Dragon campaign and, as we shall see later, the contempt many within the Christian Right hold for the emerging church movement. Yet, given that these conflicts are religious in nature, the potential for even more extreme stratification of polarities increases because opposing sides are convinced as to the righteousness and orthodoxy of their given theological position.

One evangelical group that was a source of considerable tension within the tradition for a long time is ESA. As Al Tizon notes, while many evangelicals have historically treated his organization with suspicion, this suspicion has gradually given way, thanks in no small part to

⁴⁸⁴ John McWhorter, "The New Republic: Angry Speech In A Digital Age," *NPR*, January 11, 2011. Found online at: <<http://www.npr.org/2011/01/11/132833850/the-new-republic-angry-speech-in-a-digital-age>> (Accessed February 8, 2011).

⁴⁸⁵ Damien Cave and Anne Barnard, "Minister Wavers on Plan to Burn Koran," *The New York Times*, September 9, 2010. Found online at: <<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/09/10/us/10obama.html>> (Accessed June 14, 2011).

ESA's outreach efforts. He says that in the beginning, ESA was branded as a Marxist front "disguised in a biblical base."⁴⁸⁶ But with time, ESA has been able to show the evangelical community (and perhaps more importantly, its leadership) that on core social issues such as abortion, ESA remains firmly in the evangelical camp.

ESA has succeeded in persuading many suspicious evangelicals as to its bona fide credentials in large part because it has remained a part of the broader evangelical tradition. Its leadership, for instance, remains active on many evangelical fronts and maintains friendly ties with other non-ESA affiliated evangelical organizations and leaders. As a result of this continued engagement, ESA has succeeded in becoming a part of the dense social network that is the evangelical community. Dwight Friesen argues that engagement such as this is important, because "the multiplicity of links bridging beyond an immediate community is what knits the members of a local church into the larger fabric of God's connective kingdom. When faith communities live into the links beyond their immediate community, they find a type of intrinsic accountability stemming from an infinitely larger network."⁴⁸⁷ Given this, Friesen believes that it is important for upstart religious organizations and movements to remain in a relationship with the dominant religious body if their ultimate goal is mainstream acceptance. Doing so has two important effects. First, through continued dialogue and ongoing relations, religious upstarts can weaken resistance by gradually showing others the validity of their own ideas. In this, perhaps what is more important than making new ideas and beliefs known and understood is that through this the larger religious body gets to know and trust those who hold these beliefs. Second, connections with a larger religious body can similarly help moderate fringe elements within upstart religious groups. This is because, "without connections beyond itself, the rogue faith

⁴⁸⁶ Tizon interview.

⁴⁸⁷ Dwight Friesen, *The Kingdom Connected: What the Church Can Learn from Facebook, the Internet, and Other Networks* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 2009), 85.

community could assume a type of totalitarian, heretical, cultish tone, or any manner of other idiosyncrasies, further reinforcing its isolation from the rest of the network.”⁴⁸⁸ Tizon warns that this is a danger of which emergent leaders need to be aware. As Tizon notes, some of the newer stuff coming out of the emerging church movement is “sounding more and more relativist and old liberal as opposed to being biblical.”⁴⁸⁹ Thus, while Tizon sees a genuine and passionate commitment to the tenets of the social gospel within the emerging church, he cautions that groups such as Emergent Village run the risk of becoming “bleeding hearts” not “rooted in biblical faith anymore.”⁴⁹⁰ Whether or not one considers Emergent Village a liberal organization is largely dependent on one’s personal views. However, the more Emergent Village is perceived as a liberal organization by more conservative evangelical Christians, the weaker the bonds between these two communities become, thus jeopardizing aggregate levels of social capital among evangelicals.

As ESA demonstrates, it is entirely possible for religious organizations once viewed as fringe to establish and maintain a valued and trusted kinship with a larger religious body. The result can be a relationship in which more extreme religious views are tempered, thanks to the connection with the larger, more dominate religious body, while at the same time, the values of the smaller religious upstart are incorporated within that larger faith community. This appears to be the case with the creation care movement, as despite considerable resistance from several nationally recognized leaders, polling data shows growing environmental support among

⁴⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁸⁹ Tizon interview.

⁴⁹⁰ Ibid.

American evangelicals.⁴⁹¹ This attitude, as we shall see in Chapter 8, is a major departure from the recent evangelical past, and looks to radically transform environmental politics.

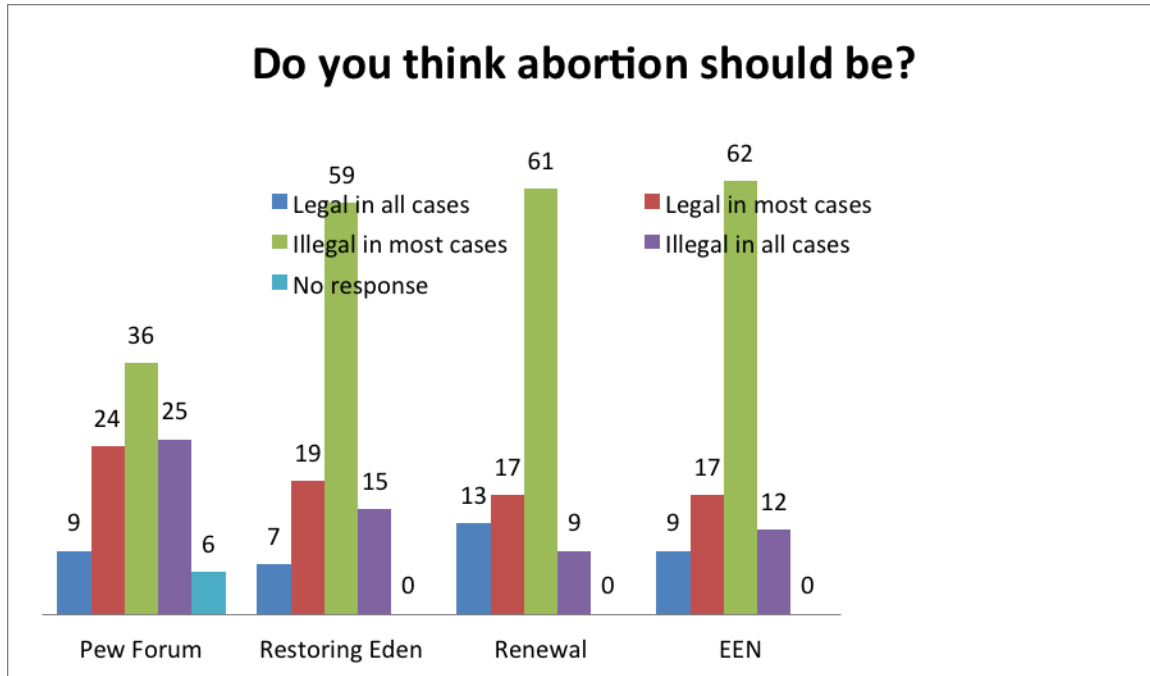
As we have seen, the issue of environmental protection remains controversial within the evangelical community, even while acceptance of the movement continues to grow. This growth will likely continue, as many of the activities of the creation care movement occur within the existing evangelical matrix, a point which following chapters will cover in more depth. Moreover, on many important cultural fronts, such as the issue of abortion, those affiliated with evangelical environmentalism remain largely committed to what Tizon calls “core” evangelical values.

For instance, when we compare the responses from this thesis’s own *Internet and Evangelical Survey* against that of the Pew Forum, we find that on many issues, respondents identifying with creation care organizations are essentially in harmony with the cultural values of the broader evangelical church. On the issue of abortion, for instance, respondents were generally unsupportive of reproductive rights, though they are less absolute than the broader evangelical community that abortion should be illegal in all instances.

⁴⁹¹ For polling data, please see Chapter 8.

Figure 6.1

A Comparison of Abortion Views



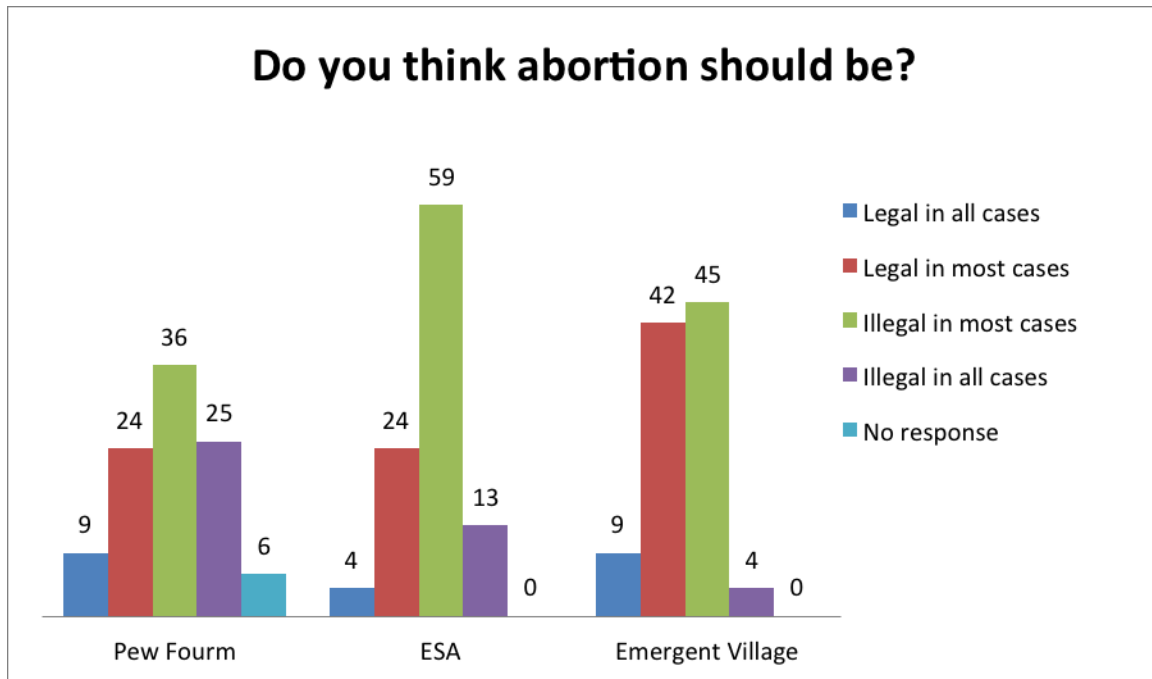
* Graph compares abortion views of studied organizations per the *Internet and Evangelicals* survey (N=850) against that of the Pew Forum's *2008 Religious Landscape Survey*, online at: <http://religions.pewforum.org/>. Data collected from January 21, 2009 - February 27, 2010.

As the above graph shows, while respondents from the creation care organizations are less willing to support an outright ban on all abortion, they are less supportive of the right to an abortion in all or most cases than the broader evangelical community. Thus, 33% of evangelicals polled by Pew believed abortion should be legal in all or most cases, while only 30% of Renewal Members and 26% of Restoring Eden and EEN members do. Moreover, as the organizational membership of the selected creation care organizations are younger evangelicals, it is unsurprising to find that these individuals are arguably more pro-life than their older evangelical counterparts, as many recent polls have shown this to be the case. However, when we look at

this same question with Emergent Village and ESA in the mix, we find a considerably different story.

Figure 6.2

A Further Comparison of Abortion Views



* Graph compares abortion views of studied organizations per this thesis’s own *Internet and Evangelicals* survey (N=850) against that of the Pew Forum’s *2008 Religious Landscape Survey*, online at: <http://religions.pewforum.org/>. Data collected from January 21, 2009 - February 27, 2010.

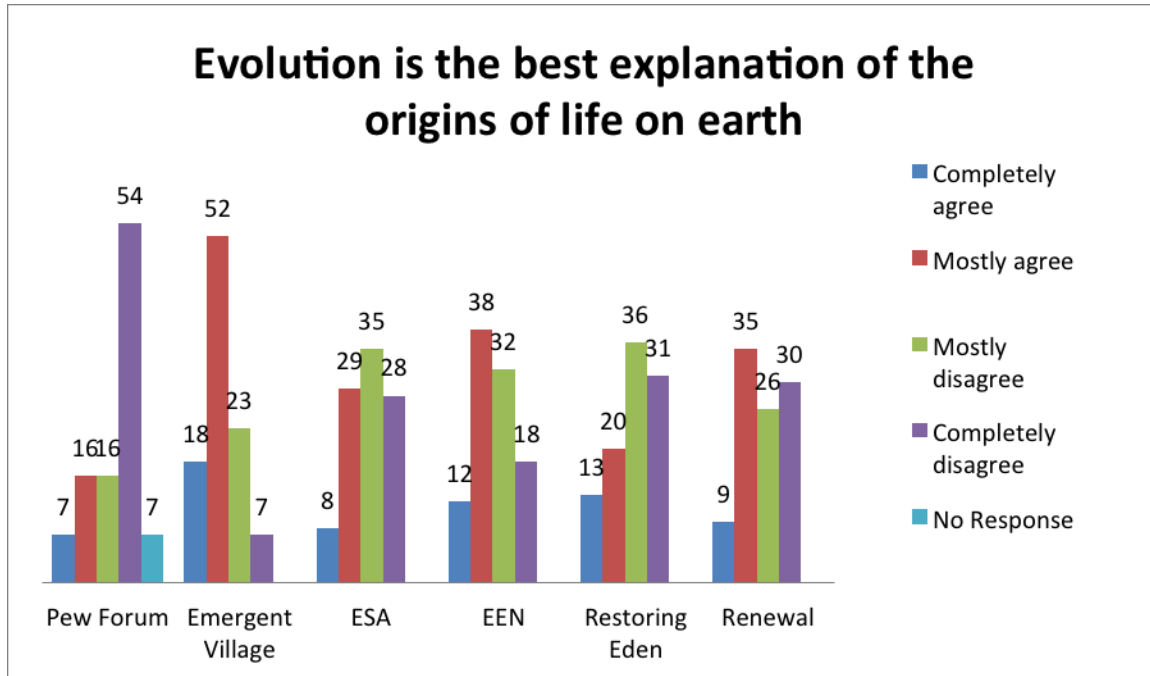
Here again, we see the same pattern emerging with regards to ESA as with the creation care organizations; namely a reluctance to embrace abortion rights. By contrast, however, those identifying with Emergent Village are, by a slim majority, supportive of abortion rights, while only 4% favor an outright ban. Such views diverge significantly from the evangelical mainstream, and given these statistical differences, it is worth asking why members of Emergent Village should hold such drastically different views. As the next chapter will argue, it is likely

that the increased separation of the emerging Church movement from that of the broader evangelical community and a commitment on behalf of emergents to offer an alternative religious experience has allowed more radical cultural elements to flourish within its ranks. Indeed, when multiple issues are examined, we regularly find Emergent Village to be the statistical outlier.

For instance, when asked about their views on evolution, we find that the creation care organizations and ESA have no clear opinions. This however is not the case with Emergent Village and the broader evangelical community. In Pew's findings, some 70% either disagree entirely that evolution best explains the origins of life on earth, or mostly disagree. By contrast, some 70% of those identifying with Emergent Village either agree entirely or mostly agree.

Figure 6.3

A Comparison of Views on Evolution

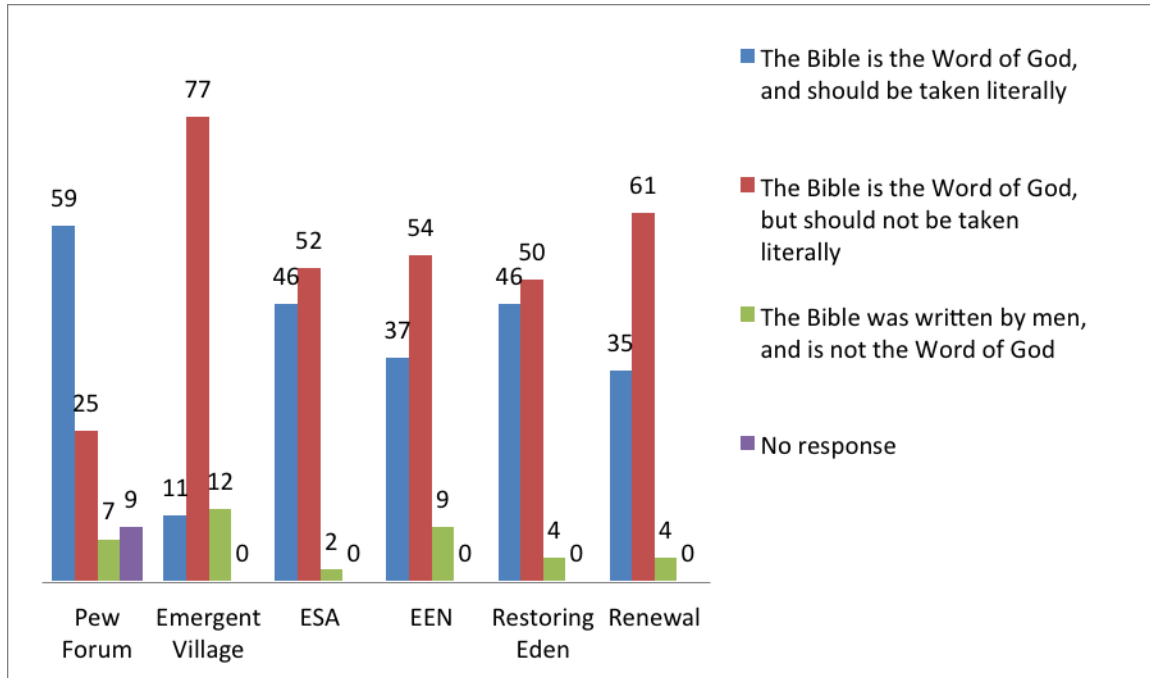


* Graph compares evolution views of studied organizations per the *Internet and Evangelicals* survey (N=850) against that of the Pew Forum's *2008 Religious Landscape Survey*, online at: <http://religions.pewforum.org/>. Data collected from January 21, 2009 - February 27, 2010.

The same can also be said with regards to one's understanding of the Bible. In this instance, while each of the selected organizations were considerably more liberal than the evangelical population as a whole, once again Emergent Village stands apart. When asked if the Bible should be taken literally, more than three quarters of those taking the *Internet and Evangelical* survey, or 77 %, answered 'no,' while another 12% believed the Bible was not even the Word of God. By contrast, fully 59% of evangelicals polled by Pew believed the Bible to be the Word of God and that it should be taken literally. Once again, ESA and the creation groups were more mixed with their opinions.

Figure 6.4

A Comparison of Views on Biblical Literalism

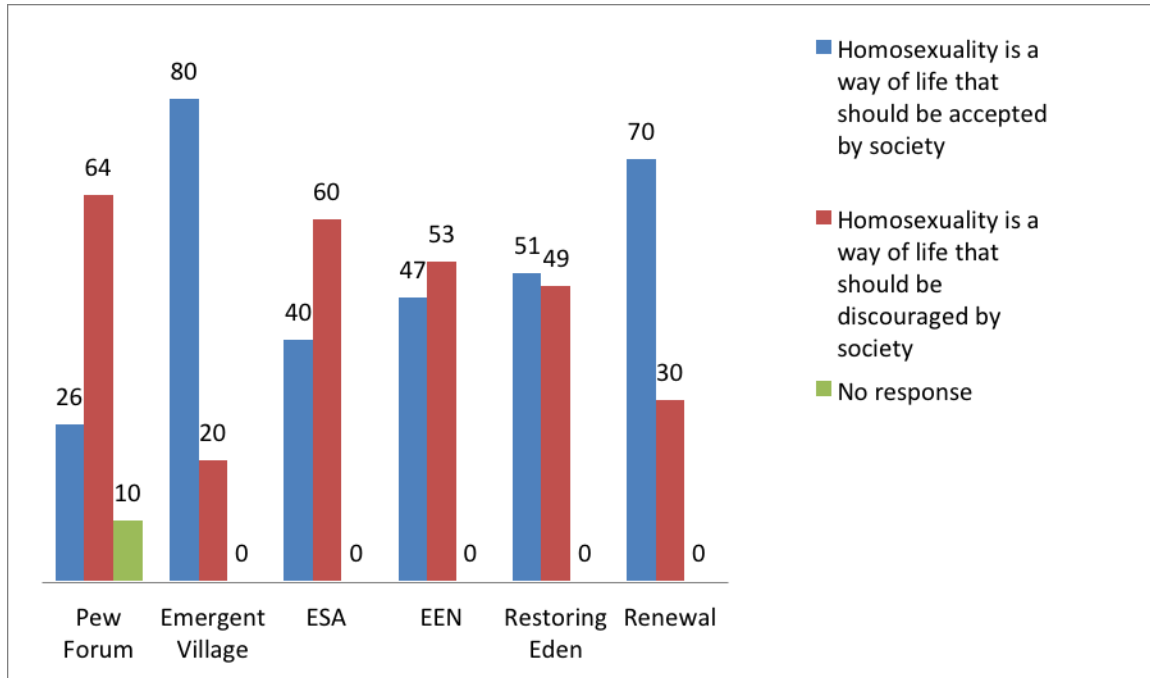


* Graph compares the biblical literalism of studied organizations per the *Internet and Evangelicals* survey (N=850) against that of the Pew Forum's *2008 Religious Landscape Survey*, online at: <http://religions.pewforum.org/>. Data collected from January 21, 2009 - February 27, 2010.

Finally, on the issue of homosexuality, once again Emergent Village proves itself to be considerably more liberal than the rest of the groups; though again, ESA and in particular, the creation care groups, show themselves to be more tolerant than the larger evangelical community.

Figure 6.5

A Comparison of Views on Homosexuality

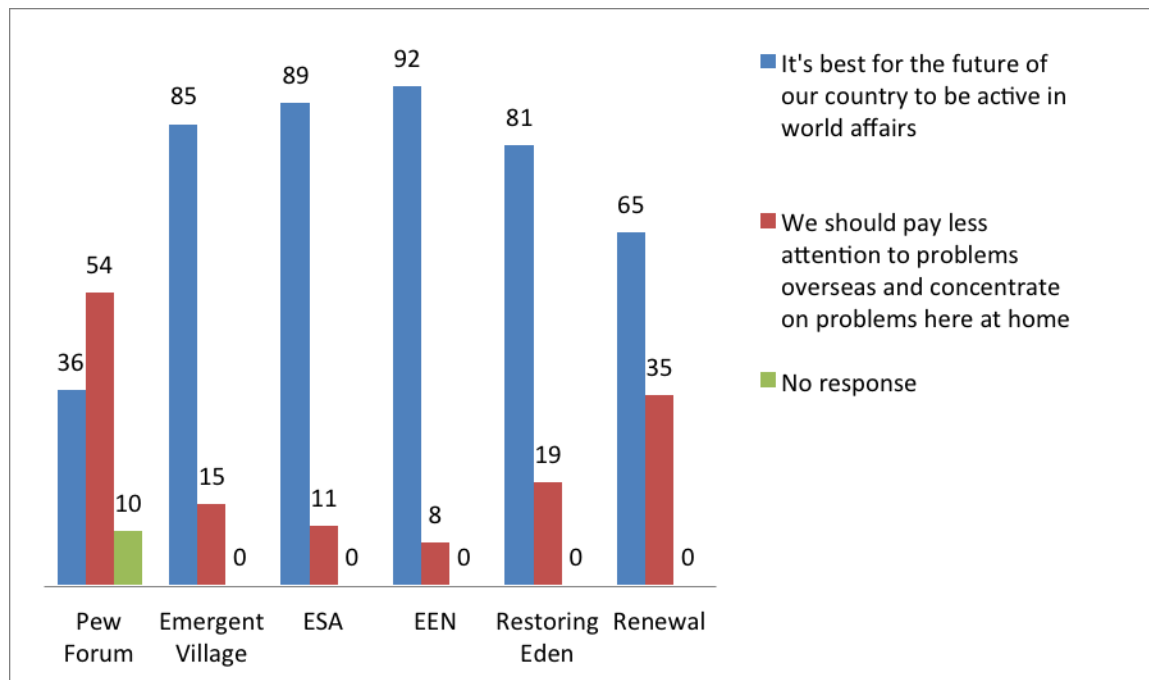


* Graph compares views on homosexuality of studied organizations per the *Internet and Evangelicals* survey (N=850) against that of the Pew Forum's *2008 Religious Landscape Survey*, online at: <http://religions.pewforum.org/>. Data collected from January 21, 2009 - February 27, 2010.

Yet on many cultural and political issues, we find striking convergence with Emergent Village and the other selected organizations. When asked if it was best for America to remain engaged in world affairs, each of the selected case studies was broadly in agreement that further engagement was in the country's best interest, while the majority of evangelicals disagreed.

Figure 6.6

A Comparison of Views on American Foreign Engagement

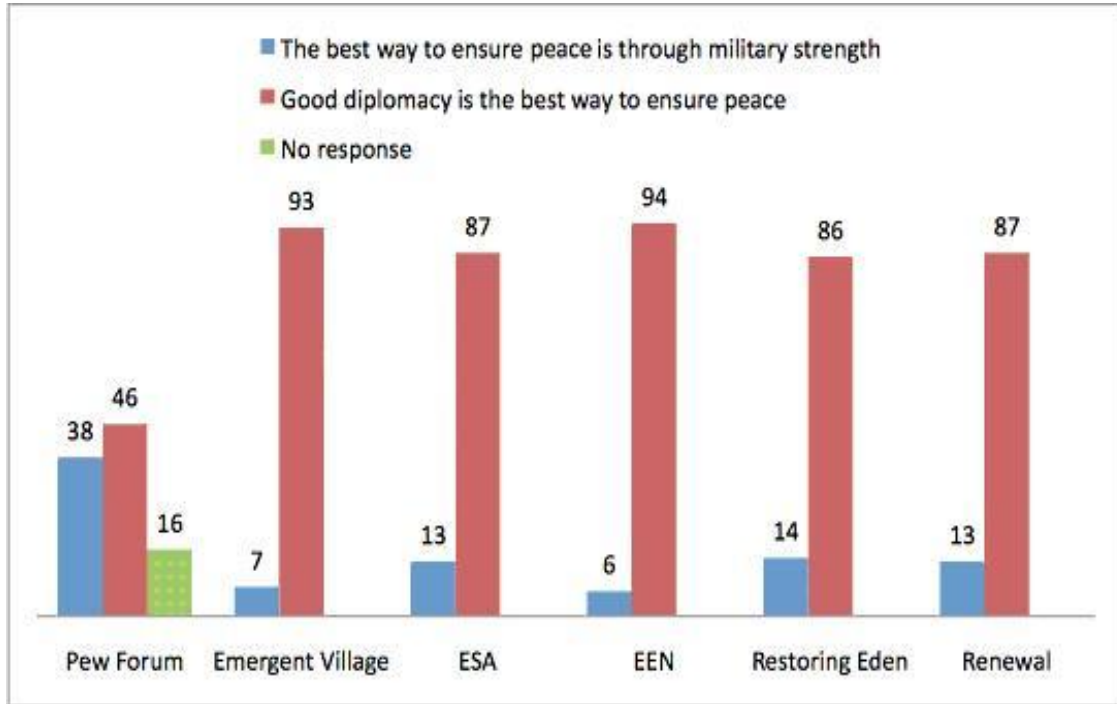


* Graph compares American foreign policy views of studied organizations per the *Internet and Evangelicals* survey (N=850) against that of the Pew Forum's *2008 Religious Landscape Survey*, online at: <http://religions.pewforum.org/>. Data collected from January 21, 2009 - February 27, 2010.

At the same time, each of the selected organizations was overwhelmingly supportive of diplomacy as a means to ensure peace, as opposed to military force. A plurality of evangelicals similarly adopts this position, though the undecideds keep this plurality from becoming a majority.

Figure 6.7

A Comparison of Views on American Militarism and Diplomacy

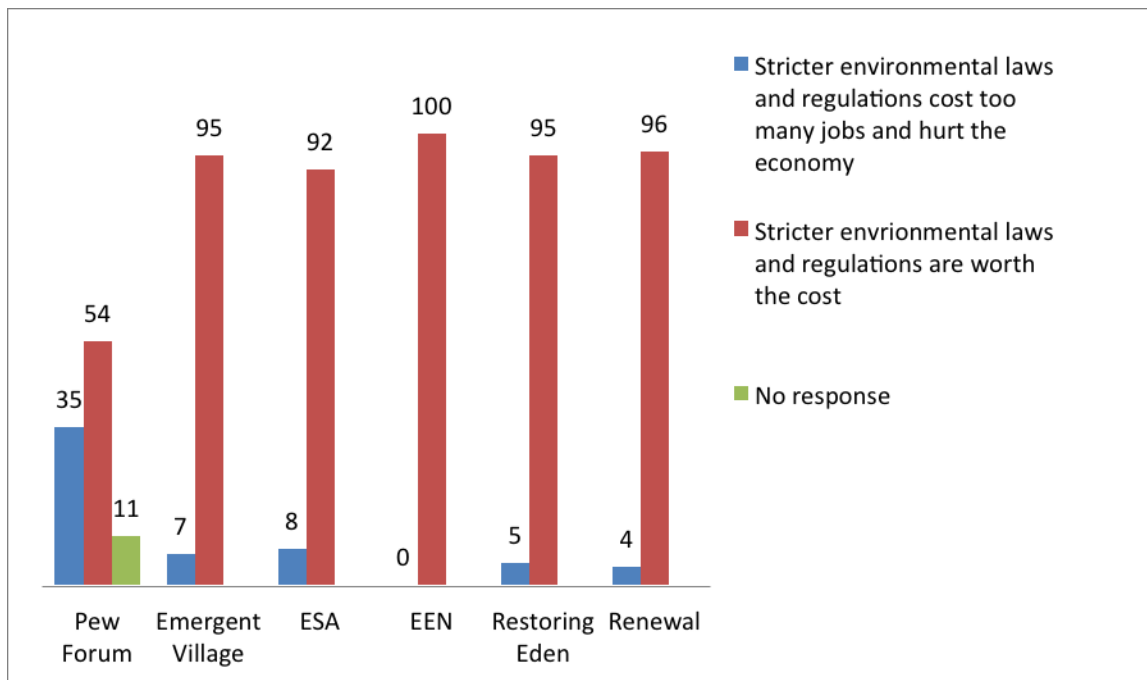


* Graph compares militarism and diplomacy views of studied organizations per the *Internet and Evangelicals* survey (N=850) against that of the Pew Forum's *2008 Religious Landscape Survey*, online at: <http://religions.pewforum.org/>. Data collected from January 21, 2009 through February 27, 2010.

One area where each of the selected organizations is in general agreement with the majority of evangelicals is on the issue of the environment, as most agree that environmental laws and regulations are worth the cost. However, a far greater number in the selected organizations agree than the evangelicals in the Pew Study.

Figure 6.8

A Comparison of Views on Environmental Protection

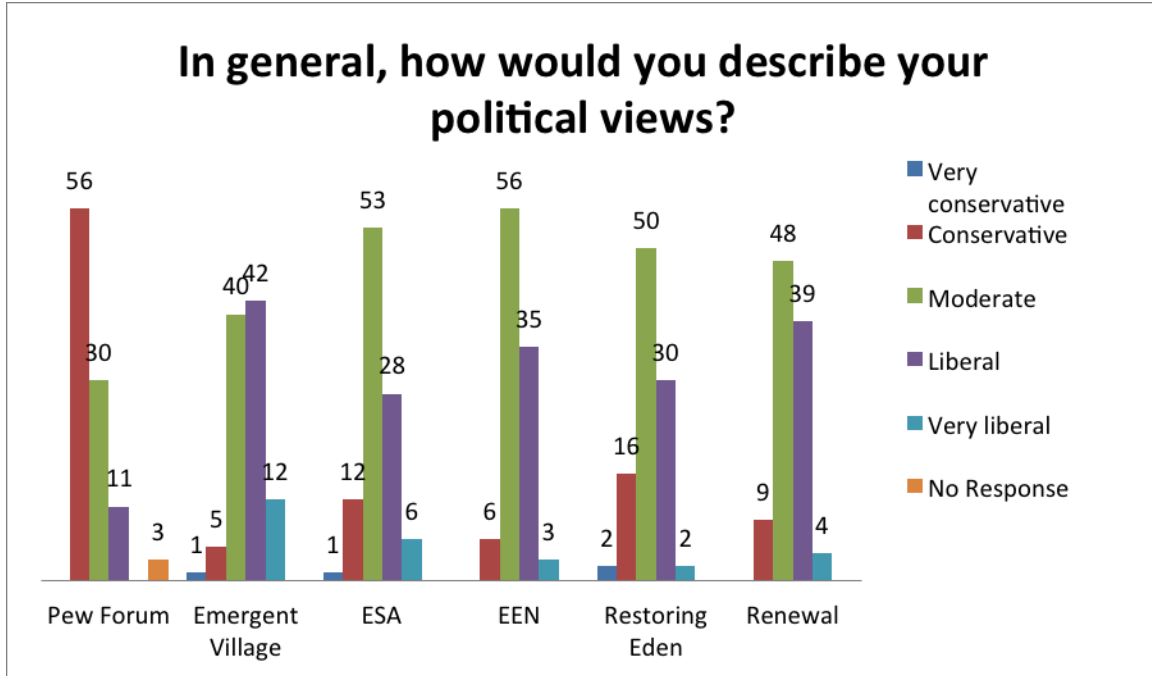


* Graph compares environmental views of studied organizations per the *Internet and Evangelicals* survey (N=850) against that of the Pew Forum’s *2008 Religious Landscape Survey*, online at: <http://religions.pewforum.org/>. Data collected from January 21, 2009 - February 27, 2010.

When asked to describe their political views, some 56% of all evangelicals told Pew that they were “conservative,” 30% identified as “moderate” and a scant 11% claim to be “liberal.” By contrast, respondents from the selected organizations were least likely to identify as being conservative. Among these groups, the moderate political affiliation proved quite popular, though again, Emergent Village proved to be a slight exception, as 54% of those respondents identified as being “liberal” or “very liberal.”

Figure 6.9

A Comparison of Political Identification

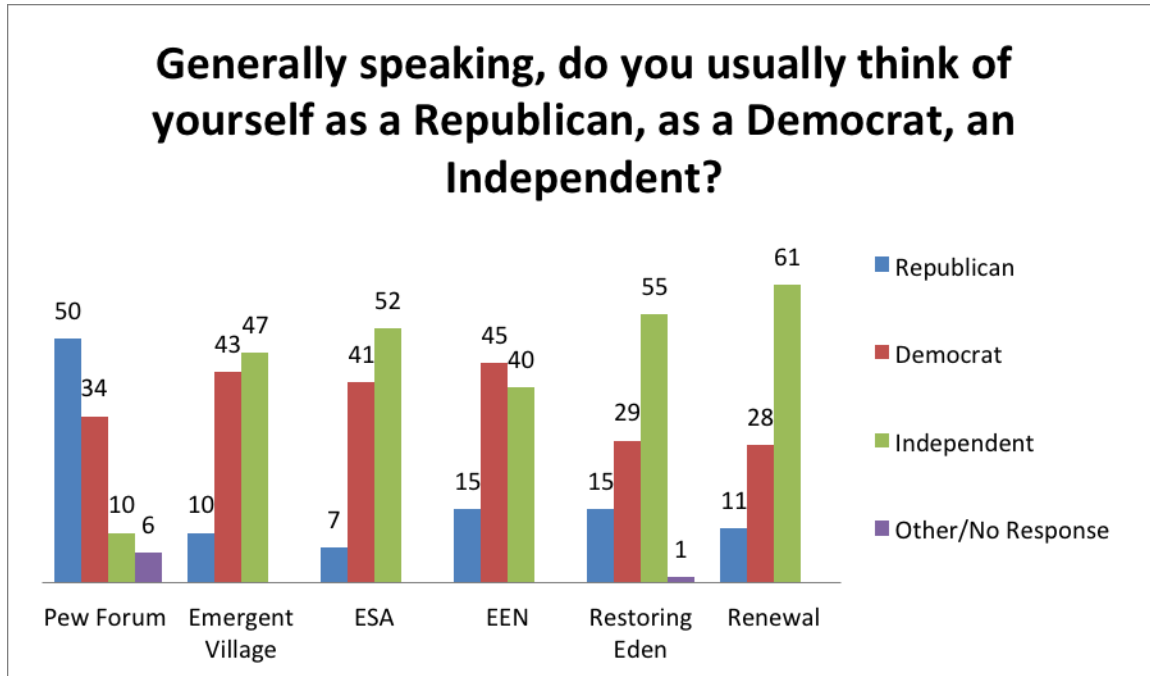


* Graph compares political identifications of studied organizations per the *Internet and Evangelicals* survey (N=850) against that of the Pew Forum's *2008 Religious Landscape Survey*, online at: <http://religions.pewforum.org/>. Data collected from January 21, 2009 - February 27, 2010.

Party identification diverged slightly from this trend, as while half of all evangelicals identified as “Republican,” the GOP fared much worse among the selected organizations, where most identified as politically independent, the only exception being the EEN.

Figure 6.10

A Comparison of Political Party Identification



* Graph compares political party identification of studied organizations per the *Internet and Evangelicals* survey (N=850) against that of the Pew Forum's *2008 Religious Landscape Survey*, online at: <http://religions.pewforum.org/>. Data collected from January 21, 2009 through February 27, 2010.

As the above graphs demonstrate, on most issues, Emergent Village is the group most out of sync with the broader evangelical community. What arguably accounts for this development is the extent to which the creation care movement and ESA have purposely sought to embed themselves within the larger evangelical community. For instance, when the EEN looks to expand its base, it does so not by starting new eco-friendly churches, but rather by working within the existing evangelical matrix. As a result, it is not at all uncommon to find small EEN groups and other related environmental groups meeting in church basements or in Sunday school classrooms. In this regard, creation care organizations are making the most of the social capital already in existence within evangelical congregations, thus constructing bridges between

traditional evangelical theological interests and newer environmental ministries. Similarly, Restoring Eden connects with its core demographic by hosting events at evangelical colleges and attending evangelical rock concerts and youth festivals, an approach that has been subsequently mimicked by Renewal and other Creation Care organizations.

In contrast to these “insider” operations, Emergent Village and the larger emerging church movement clearly operate outside the establishment. In fact, in many instances the established evangelical infrastructure has shown itself to be hostile to the aspirations of the emerging church. As Tony Jones explains, “So here’s the rub: the Emergents practice their faith like liberals (they’re activists), but they believe like evangelicals (they’re biblically orthodox). Mainliners become uncomfortable with all of the Jesus talk around the emergent movement, and conservatives don’t like the politics. If both sides are frustrated, then the Emergents are happy.”⁴⁹² Yet in frustrating both mainline and evangelical communities, emerging Christians often find themselves without a church in which to meet. As a result, many emergent groups have been forced to get creative with their meet-ups, congregating in coffee shops, bars, or as is so often the case, the homes of fellow emergents. And this literally outside position further isolates the emerging church from the broader evangelical community.

Conclusion

In 1969, economist Thomas Schelling demonstrated that despite the fact that Americans were largely supportive of the civil rights movement, most would prefer to live in neighborhoods

⁴⁹² Tony Jones, “The Emergent Church: Christianity in America Is Changing,” *Tikkun* 23, no. 3 (2008): 10 of 10-11. Found online at: <<http://www.tikkun.org/article.php/TonyJones-Theemergentchurch>> (Accessed April 20, 2010).

where racial integration was limited. In analyzing his findings, Schelling concluded that unorganized segregation often bears no close relation to individual intent, but is rather the result of a complex system of collective activity. In later years, Mark Buchanan, building upon Thomas Schelling's thesis on systems of collective activity, argued that social realities are often fashioned not by individual desire, but rather by blind and mechanical forces. Like other forms of media, it is important to view the Internet as one of these forces and that despite early claims from technological utopists, it has help to lead many like-minded individuals and organizations to converge into increasingly specialized niche clusters. As the Internet continues to reorient society away from large collective gatherings, it is, as Nicholas Carr notes, steadily displacing the unifying effects of broadcast media by offering audiences specially tailored markets that often appeal to deep personal desires.

Evangelical Christianity has shown little immunity to the social effects of the new media environment. Indeed, over the past few years, the creation care movement, which has flourished in the Internet age, has incurred considerable scorn from several evangelical leaders and organizations, many of whom view evangelical environmentalism as a subversive liberal plot aimed to undermine the cultural values and political hegemony of the Christian Right, a fact which erodes trust and social capital. As attacks on creation care groups and individuals have intensified, the evangelical community has witnessed a deterioration of important collective bonds, which allows internal feelings distrust and animosity to fester.

A similarly story has unfolded on the emerging church front. However unlike the creation care movement, which continues to enjoy considerable support within the evangelical mainstream, the emerging church movement increasingly finds itself operating outside the broader evangelical apparatus. Not only do many emergent gatherings take place in non-

traditional places of worship, such as cafes, bars and even private residence, but the cultural orientation of the emerging church places it in direct conflict with the values of the Christian Right. This is because many emerging Christians view past political conflicts which pitted liberal against conservative, left versus right, as overly simplistic and missing the bigger biblical message; namely that Christians are called to be in service to one another. In another respect, emerging Christianity has little choice but to serve as the religious refuge for disgruntled and/or excommunicated evangelicals. Ben Corey's statements attesting to his own excommunication experience stands as a testament to the appeal an organization such as Emergent Village holds, particularly to individuals whose probing of deep theological and philosophical questions can be unwelcome by more conservative churches. In such situations, the rejection from one religious community opens the door to acceptance with another, albeit one that seemingly has fewer and fewer reasons to remain connected to the old evangelical order.

The loss of this connectivity, coupled with a reorientation of social and cultural values, is dramatically reshaping the evangelical political agenda. Undoubtedly, much of this cultural reorientation can be attributed to changing times and demographics. For instance, many younger evangelicals are significantly more likely to have an openly gay friend than their parents or grandparents and this makes them more likely to be empathetic to the struggles of the gay rights movement. At the same time, a growing awareness of environmental concerns among respected evangelical organizations and church leaders, as well as the influence of dissident religious elements stressing the social gospel message of economic justice and opposition to war and militarism, is working to moderate many evangelical political views. *The Internet and Evangelicals* survey has shown in particular that individuals aligned with the affiliate

organizations of the selected case studies are more politically moderate than that of the broader evangelical community.

Already, the acceptance of the creation care and emerging church movement by many evangelicals has had profound repercussions for America's religious and political landscape. Among these repercussions is a change in cultural attitudes, which is significantly expanding the political and social concerns of American evangelicals. By embracing such issues as environmental protection, economic justice, and human trafficking, coupled with a growing propensity to vote for Democratic candidates, recent changes in the evangelical community demand a recalculation of the American political landscape. The chapter that follows begins this exploration by continuing the theme of a broken evangelical monologue, with specific regard to the rejuvenation of America's religious market place, as well as its political impact.

CHAPTER SEVEN
THE DEATH AND RESURRECTION
OF THE
AMERICAN RELIGIOUS MARKETPLACE

While some might consider the recent breakdown of the religious monologue in the American evangelical community to be a negative development for the health of religion in America, this chapter argues the opposite. Specifically, this chapter explores the impact of a fragmented evangelical body from a religious market perspective. It asserts that recent declines in evangelical church membership are largely due to the over-generality of its message, which in and of itself is a byproduct of the broadcast age. Predictably, this over-generality has failed to cater to the diverse theological and spiritual needs of American churchgoers. However, with the rapid proliferation of Internet technologies, new religious frontiers and expressions of faith are being explored. This process further reinforces the fragmentation of the evangelical body. This chapter considers how with the growth of new and divergent religious movements, such as creation care and the emerging church, new religious leaders are finding their voice and preaching a message that diverges significantly from the old evangelical vanguard. While some might be tempted to view these developments in purely theological terms, the cultural fragmentation of the American evangelical community is not just a religious issue. A vibrant religious marketplace threatens the religious monopoly of the Christian Right, and by extension, the articulation of social conservatism and Republican politics. As new religious movements grow, so too do new conceptualizations and understandings of what it means to be a Christian and to hold Christian values. In facilitating the breakdown of the religious monologue of the Christian Right, the Internet is working to unsettle long established political coalitions and helping to give rise to new political realities. To support these claims, this chapter relies on the combination of previous academic works, the reporting of recent religious and political developments, as well as personal interviews. The aim of this chapter is to provide a rich textual

account of the state of evangelical Christianity as it is lived and experienced in a new media saturated environment.

Evangelism in Decline

In the spring of 2009, Michael Spencer, also known as the ‘Internet Monk,’ sparked considerable public debate when he wrote for *The Christian Science Monitor*, “We are on the verge – within 10 years – of a major collapse of evangelical Christianity. This breakdown will follow the deterioration of the mainline Protestant world and it will fundamentally alter the religious and cultural environment in the West.”⁴⁹³ Spencer continued by asserting that “within two generations, evangelicalism will be a house deserted of half its occupants”⁴⁹⁴ and that while evangelicals flourished in what Spencer dubbed the “Protestant” twentieth century, they would soon be “living in a very secular and religiously antagonistic 21st Century.”⁴⁹⁵

These claims are bold, particularly when one considers the historical significance many Americans have placed (and continue to place) on the importance of religion in their personal lives: a fact that has long distinguished Americans from citizens of other post-industrial nations. And yet, the Internet Monk is rarely one to sensationalize unfounded claims for publicity. Indeed, Spencer’s claims echo those of a growing number of academics, social observers and religious leaders, all of whom have arrived at a similar conclusion. For example, Christine Wicker makes this pronouncement:

⁴⁹³ Michael Spencer, “The Coming Evangelical Collapse,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, March 10, 2009. Found online at: <<http://www.csmonitor.com/Commentary/Opinion/2009/0310/p09s01-coop.html>> (Accessed October 1, 2010).

⁴⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁹⁵ Ibid.

Evangelical Christianity in America is dying. The great evangelical movements of today are not a vanguard. They are a remnant, unraveling at every edge. Look at it any way you like: Conversions. Baptisms. Membership. Retention. Participation. Giving. Attendance. Religious literacy. Effect on the culture. All are down and dropping. It's not secret. Even as evangelical forces trumpet their purported political and social victories, insiders are anguishing about their great losses, fearing what the future holds.⁴⁹⁶

Ed Stetzer, President of LifeWay Research, the leading think-tank for the SBC bluntly admits, “[w]e (the SBC) are a denomination in decline.”⁴⁹⁷ And there is empirical evidence supporting the premise that evangelical Christianity is on the wane in America. When for instance Bill Leonard, a Baptist historian at Wake Forest University examined comparative rates of SBC Sunday school attendance among children ages 6-11, he discovered that in 1971 there were 1,434,892 children in Southern Baptist Sunday schools. However, by 2007, this number had dropped by almost half a million, to 979,429, while at the same time the U.S. population grew by more than 46%. Moreover, in 1978, the SBC was baptizing one new member for every 36 members on the rolls. By 2007, this ratio has dropped to one baptism for every 47 members.⁴⁹⁸ Further still, in 2007, “more than 9,000 congregations, or almost a quarter of all

⁴⁹⁶ Christine Wicker, *The Fall of the Evangelical Nation: The Surprising Crisis Inside the Church* (New York: Harper One, 2008), IX.

⁴⁹⁷ Quoted in David Waters, “More Sin and Salvation at the Southern Baptist Convention,” *The Washington Post*, June 24, 2010. Found online at: <http://onfaith.washingtonpost.com/onfaith/undergod/2010/06/sin_and_salvation_at_the_southern_baptist_convention.html> (Accessed October 1, 2010).

⁴⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

Southern Baptist churches, reported no baptisms” at all.⁴⁹⁹ Compounding matters even further are declining membership rates at SBC churches. For instance, in the *2009 Yearbook of American and Canadian Churches*, U.S. membership in the SBC reportedly fell by nearly 40,000 individuals, to 16,266,920, down from 16,306,246 the year before. Indeed, when membership trends are compared across the board, we find that few evangelical denominations have enjoyed positive growth over the last few years, and those that have are typically smaller Pentecostal denominations representing only a tiny fraction of the American religious body. Moreover, these small pockets of growth have been too insignificant to counter recent waves of religious disengagement and abandonment.⁵⁰⁰

While it is easy to bog oneself down in examining the minutiae of baptism and denominational membership rates, arguably the most telling statistics come from the American Religious Identification Survey (ARIS), which found a significant decline in the number of Americans identifying as Christians over the course of the last two decades. In 1990, for instance, 86.2% of the American population identified as some sort of “Christian.” By 2008, however, this number had fallen more than ten points, to 76%, and the bulk of these losses came among Protestant traditions. At the same time, the number of Americans who identify as having no religion has nearly doubled; from 8.2% in 1990, to 15% in 2008.⁵⁰¹ Armed with this evidence, there is but one conclusion to draw; namely that America is today a less religious nation than it was just one generation ago.

⁴⁹⁹ Bob Smietana, “Southern Baptist Fight Decline,” *The Tennessean*, January 29, 2009. Found online at: <<http://www.bealembc.org/blog/latest/why-southern-baptist-churches-are-declining.html>> (Accessed October 1, 2010).

⁵⁰⁰ National Council of Churches Staff Writer, “NCC’s 2009 Yearbook of American and Canadian Churches Reports Decline in Catholic, Southern Baptist Membership,” *National Council of Churches*, January 30, 2009. Found online at: <<http://www.nccusa.org/news/090130yearbook1.html>> (Accessed October 4, 2010).

⁵⁰¹ Barry A. Kosmin and Ariela Keysar, *American Religious Identification Survey*, 2009. Found Online at: <http://b27.cc.trincoll.edu/weblogs/AmericanReligionSurvey-ARIS/reports/ARIS_Report_2008.pdf> (Accessed October 21, 2010).

Accounting for the Decline of American Evangelical Christianity

One of the more popular explanations for why mainline protestant churches experienced precipitous membership losses throughout the second half of the last century points to a perceived theological and politically liberal drift within this body. As Thomas Reeves argues, “[mainline] Churches today are all too often, very predictable, very liberal, very permissive, and without any sort of demands being made on the people. And for millions of Americans there seems to be, simply, no reason to go.”⁵⁰² Reeves’s argument follows that of Dean Kelley, whose 1972 book, *Why Conservative Churches Are Growing*, argued that mainline denominations were losing members because on the whole these churches had become what he calls a “weak” religion.⁵⁰³ According to Kelley, weak religions fail to provide simple and easily accessible answers to questions of profound theological and philosophical meaning. At the same time, weak religions are also more accommodating of diverse theological viewpoints. However, such diversity, Kelley believes, regularly creates tensions within religious communities, which dampens religious commitment and impedes the ability of religious bodies to repel outside influences and recruitment efforts from so-called “strong” religions, where tradition and orthodoxy are more rigorously followed.

As we have seen, however, recent data demonstrates that American evangelical Christianity—“strong” religion within this framework—appears to be following its mainline

⁵⁰² Chris Mitchell, “The Liberal Church: Part of the Decline?,” *CBN News*, February 25, 1997. Found online at: <<http://ucmpage.org/articles/libchurch.html>> (Accessed October 20, 2010).

⁵⁰³ Dean M. Kelley, *Why Conservative Churches are Growing* (New York: HarperCollins, 1972).

brethren down the path of declining church membership. This development could well prove disastrous for the overall health of these faith communities. The prospect of regaining lost ground (i.e. winning new religious converts, which theoretically would simply replace those who have already left the faith) becomes all the more challenging as shrinking membership rolls affect overall offertory giving, which in turn negatively impacts upon church budgets and more importantly, outreach ministries and evangelism. Numerous individuals have offered their own explanations as to why this once prosperous religious body has begun losing members. For instance, Curt Watke, who serves as the executive director of the Intercultural Institute for Contextual Ministry, identifies four benchmarks that he believes accounts for the recent decline of American evangelicals. These benchmarks include an increase in immigration rates (which disproportionately favours growth in the Catholic Church), a decline in Anglo growth (fewer evangelical babies), the “graying” of current believers, and the failures of evangelical churches to replace “grayers” with fresh blood (new converts).⁵⁰⁴ Like Watke, Wicker similarly contends that no one answer can adequately account for the recent troubles facing the American evangelical church. For Wicker, declining memberships can be attributed to multiple factors, included sizable institutional debt, the retirement/death of charismatic megachurch leaders and builders, aging suburbs, a shift in the broader American culture towards more open and tolerant values, and further erosion of biblical literalism: caused in large part by continued advances in science.⁵⁰⁵ Yet as thoughtful as these and other accounts are in explaining the decline of American evangelical Christianity, the role of religious market forces is one aspect that remains underdeveloped.

⁵⁰⁴ Joe Westbury, “Have Southern Baptists Joined the Evangelical Decline?,” *The Christian Index*, 2008. Found online at: <<http://www.christianindex.org/4421.article>> (Accessed October 21, 2010).

⁵⁰⁵ Wicker, *Fall*.

For those unfamiliar with the term, the “religious marketplace,” or “religious economics” as it is sometimes called, refers to a sociological perspective that contends that religious bodies are similar to commercial actors. In a religious economy, religious groups must compete against rivals as they seek to expand their share of the market (congregants). As we shall see, many scholars believe that religion flourishes best when competition is strong, though such a view is far from universal. For instance, Emile Durkheim strongly condemned urban pluralism, which he saw as “both the cause and breakdown of moral integration.”⁵⁰⁶ For Durkheim, included in this urban pluralism was the segmentation of religious bodies, which he believed posed significant social dangers. As he stated, “where multiple religious groups compete, each discredits the other and encourages the view that religion per se is open to question, dispute, and doubt.”⁵⁰⁷ Such doubts, in Durkheim’s view, serve only to fragment society while robbing it of an important rallying point. Seventy years later, Peter Berger argued that religious pluralism destroyed what he called “the sacred canopy,” which ensures social order and stability by bringing nearly all individuals under the proxy of ‘One True God.’⁵⁰⁸ In 1979, Berger expanded upon his sacred canopy thesis with the publication of *The Heretical Imperative*, in which he states, “modernity has plunged religion into a very specific crisis, characterized by secularity, to be sure, but characterized more importantly by plurality.”⁵⁰⁹ Under pluralistic conditions, Berger continues, “the authority of all religious traditions tend to be undermined.”⁵¹⁰ And like Durkheim before him, Berger strongly subscribed to the notion that society needs grand institutions and/or beliefs with which to identify.

⁵⁰⁶ Roger Finke and Rodney Stark, “Religious Economies and Sacred Canopies: Religious Mobilization in American Cities, 1906,” *American Sociological Review* 53, no. 1 (1988): 40 of 41-49.

⁵⁰⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁰⁸ Peter Berger, *The Sacred Canopy* (New York: Doubleday, 1967).

⁵⁰⁹ Peter Berger, *The Heretical Imperative: Contemporary Possibilities of Religious Affirmation* (New York: Doubleday, 1979).

⁵¹⁰ Ibid.

In contrast to the opinions of Durkheim and Berger are those of Rodney Stark, Roger Finke, Laurence Iannoccone and others like them. For these later scholars, religious competition, far from undermining the plausibility of the Divine—and by extension the Church—instead creates a competitive marketplace, where society’s many religious and spiritual needs can be efficiently met in an environment flush with religious options. This is so, as in more religiously heterogeneous societies, new religious movements, denominations and organizations will inevitably take advantage of the marketplace, identify potential areas for growth, and will, as Kent Miller asserts, “fill market niches abandoned by older religious organizations.”⁵¹¹ To the degree religious markets remain unregulated and competitive, Finke and Starke maintain that, “overall levels of religious commitment will be higher.”⁵¹² As competition fosters an environment where diverse theological and spiritual needs are more capable of finding a home greater innovation among church bodies and religious organizations is required. When religious competition is lacking overall, or is absent altogether, religious commitment tends to wane as a single, homogenous belief system is unable to meet the plethora of society’s religious needs.

In the United States, evangelicals have emerged as the loudest and most visible articulation of Protestant Christianity. Until recently, evangelicals have seemed immune from the marked declines and waning social influence mainline Protestant denominations have suffered for much of the last half century. Moreover, in recognizing the political significance of a consolidated evangelical voting bloc, Republicans aggressively courted these voters by amending policy positions and political platforms. This action has in effect established

⁵¹¹ Kent D. Miller, “Competitive Strategies of Religious Organizations,” *Strategic Management Journal* 23, no. 5 (2002): 439 of 435-456.

⁵¹² Rodger Finke and Rodney Stark, “Religious Choice and Competition,” *American Sociological Review* 63, no. 5 (1998): 762 of 761-766.

conservative Christianity as the proxy faith of the GOP, and by extension, the proxy faith of the American government when Republicans are in power. As will be discussed in what follows, in the absence of a strong Christian alternative, this articulation of the Christian faith becomes representative as Christendom more generally, a development that does more harm than good. But before this point is explored, it is important to bear in mind that evangelical Christianity, as the name suggests, is a faith based on growth. In an effort to spread the Good News, many evangelical leaders have adopted a business-like model aimed at appealing to as broad an audience as possible. The effects of this endeavour are discussed more thoroughly below.

Christianity-Lite

Sitting atop 40 acres of carefully manicured land in California's affluent Orange County is Crystal Cathedral, named after the 10,664 large rectangular windows that largely comprise the edifice. Considered to be America's first modern megachurch,⁵¹³ its sanctuary is capable of seating some 2,736 worshipers;⁵¹⁴ though in recent years many of these seats have sat empty as average weekly worship service attendance has dipped to below 1,000.⁵¹⁵ Despite the decline in church membership, as well as a rating slump for its famed *Hour of Power* television broadcast, Crystal Cathedral has undertaken a number of large construction projects throughout the past decade, which have left the church \$55 million dollars in debt. In October of 2010, Crystal

⁵¹³ Laurie Goodstein, "Dispute Over Succession Clouds Megachurch," *The New York Times*, October 23, 2010. Found online at: <<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/10/24/us/24cathedral.html>> (accessed November 24, 2010).

⁵¹⁴ Crystal Cathedral Staff Writer, "Architecture," *Crystal Cathedral Website*, 2010. Found online at: <<http://www.crystalcathedral.org/about/architecture.php>> (Accessed November 24, 2010).

⁵¹⁵ See Goodstein, "Dispute Clouds Megachurch."

Cathedral admitted that it would be unable to pay its creditors and filed for bankruptcy protection.⁵¹⁶

News of the bankruptcy took the evangelical community by storm as many pondered how such troubles could befall what was once viewed as the iconic example of successful church growth. Indeed, Crystal Cathedral's founding pastor, Robert Schuller, helped make popular the controversial "church growth movement," a movement which aims to maximize church attendance by "using proven business marketing strategies."⁵¹⁷ Indeed, many churches, inspired by the early success of Crystal Cathedral, took the church growth movement and adopted it for their own ministries. For instance, when Bill Hybels started his own church, he wanted to be sure that his ministries would be geared to the desires of the worshipping public. To ensure this, Hybels "went door-to-door asking residents what they disliked about church and what they would want in a church." Armed with the data from his neighbourhood surveys, Hybels then "constructed a 'user friendly' worship service with sermons oriented to practical life and devoid of appeals for money, religious jargon and 'heavy guilt trips.'"⁵¹⁸ Today, Hybels's Willow Creek Community Church, with its laid-back worship style, its conservative Christian message, along with its bookstore, food court and coffee shop, is one America's largest churches.

Over the years, other religious leaders and church congregations have joined the church growth movement, and many have seen rising church attendance as a result. Yet as successful as

⁵¹⁶ Cathcart, Rebecca, "California's Crystal Cathedral Files for Bankruptcy," *The New York Times*, October 18, 2010. Found online at: <<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/10/19/us/19crystal.html>> (Accessed November 24, 2010).

⁵¹⁷ Ken Silva, "Redefining the Church: The Church Growth Movement's Unbiblical Definition of the Church," *Apprising Ministries*, October 3, 2010. Found online at: <<http://apprising.org/2010/10/03/redefining-the-church-the-church-growth-movements-unbiblical-definition-of-the-church/>> (Accessed November 24, 2010).

⁵¹⁸ Scott Thumma, "Exploring the Megachurch Phenomena: Their Characteristics and Cultural Context," *Hartford Institute for Religious Research*, 2007. Found online at: <http://hrr.hartsem.edu/bookshelf/thumma_article2.html> (Accessed November 24, 2010); see also, Scott Thumma and Dave Travis, *Beyond Megachurch Myths: What We Can Learn From America's Largest Churches* (San Francisco: Wiley Imprint, 2007).

the church growth movement has proven to be, it is not without considerable detractors. Some, such as Columbia University's Randall Balmer liken megachurches to large retail chains such as Walmart and Target, complete with the effect of putting smaller churches out of business.⁵¹⁹ At the same time, significant criticism, from both the evangelical left and right, holds that in its attempt to reach the masses, megachurch Christianity has in effect lost its very soul. As The Sometimes Preacher blogs:

We Christians are, in large part, intellectually and artistically vacuous because we have followed popular culture down the spiralling whirlpool of *eros*-replacing-*agape*, emotional sentimentalism, self-defining reality, and the victory of style over substance. We have elevated product over process and justified the means by the ends, which we have devastatingly misinterpreted. Though we set out to transform popular culture, we have been transformed by it. We have turned our pastors into celebrities, elevating them to god-like status while they produce to our liking, but then discarding them with the Paris Hiltons and Brittany Spearses of the popular culture machine when we are done with them. We have exchanged discipleship for consumerism, true community for celebrity-association, and transformation for trendsetting. We have turned the deep and vibrant faith of

⁵¹⁹ Cheryl Burton, "The Mega Church Movement," *ABC News*, November 8, 2005. Found online at: <<http://abclocal.go.com/wls/story?section=news/local&id=3597263>> (Accessed November 24, 2010).

Augustine and Aquinas and Luther and Lewis into mindless, soulless, spiritually delusional entertainment.⁵²⁰

Yet one need not troll the blogs of devout religious practitioners to find concern over the watering-down of the Christian gospel. All one really has to do is step into any evangelical church and odds are someone in the congregation will have an opinion on the matter. The Sellwood Baptist Church, on the corner of 11th and Spokane, in Portland's quiet Westmoreland neighbourhood, is such a church.

As a conservative evangelical church, Sellwood Baptist is in many ways an oddity in one of Portland's most liberal boroughs. The congregation, which has been meeting for almost a century, does so in an unremarkable building across the street from the popular New Seasons grocery market. The building itself is a large complex that could easily accommodate, as it once did, many hundreds of worshipers. Today though, weekly attendance hovers around 40 regular attendees. Like many evangelical churches, the worship hall of Sellwood Baptist looks to make good use of multimedia, though as the church's pastor (Pastor Mike as he is known to his congregation) admits, incorporating new technologies, such as a video projector and projection screen, can often be difficult in churches built before such technology existed. Still, at the front of the sanctuary, suspended high from the rafters, is a projection screen larger than most living room walls.

⁵²⁰ The Sometimes Preacher, "Christianity-Lite," *The Sometimes Preacher*, 2010. Found online at: <<http://thesometimespreacher.blogspot.com/2010/11/christianity-lite.html>> (Accessed November 23, 2010); see also, Dick Staub, *The Culturally Savvy Christian* (San Francisco: Wiley Imprint, 2007).

When visitors arrive, the church usher, a middle-aged man who speaks with a thick eastern European accent, greets them. Indeed, many of the congregants at Sellwood Baptist are recent immigrants. After an exchange of pleasantries, visitors are led to the sanctuary where they inevitably have choice seating among the churches many empty pews. Before the service, and occasionally during it, the projection screen is used. Images of the English countryside and other nature scenes can often be seen flashing across it, while a narrator recites familiar scripture accompanied by soothing hymns. In the front of the sanctuary is an American flag, displayed almost as prominently as the cross itself.

In the weeks leading up to the 2010 midterm elections, the back page of the Sellwood church bulletin, where one usually finds weekly announcements for events such as bake-sales and potlucks, had a large section with the headline, “Are You Registered to Vote?” in bold lettering. Below it, the text read:

As Christian citizens it is our privilege and duty to vote—to vote wisely, prayerfully, and biblically. Today is your opportunity to register, or to re-register if you have recently moved or changed your name. The election is just around the corner and we need to let our voices and votes be heard. Voter Registration cards are on the Red Carpet table in the foyer and someone will be there to assist you. We will even send it in for you! Please get signed up today. “Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar’s and unto God the things that are God’s.”⁵²¹

⁵²¹ Sellwood Baptist Church Pamphlet, October 3, 2010. Scripture comes from Mark 12:17.

Announcements such as these are commonplace in evangelical churches. They strongly encourage political involvement but fall short of officially endorsing a particular candidate or issue, which by law churches as non-profits are prohibited from doing. By extension, preachers are similarly banned from making political endorsements at the pulpit, unless of course they want to lose their church's tax-exempt status. As private citizens, however, they are free to speak as much politics as they like.

Pastor Mike steers clear of overt political rhetoric while at the pulpit or on official church business, but this does not mean that he is without strong opinions on matters of politics and other pressing issues. Indeed, one of the more important issues for Pastor Mike, and a theme touched upon regularly in his sermons, is the need to rescue Christianity from what he sees as its watering-down. As Pastor Mike sees it, the term "evangelical Christianity" has:

Become a catch-all for a lot of groups that, at one time, did not consider themselves evangelical, but the term has been eroded somewhat so that you can just about be anything and call yourself an evangelical. That's one of the issues, you know, what are we talking about, because this is now a very large arc, and there are a whole lot of weird beasts in it. At one time, the term really meant those who emphasize the message of personal salvation in Christ through faith alone, apart from works. It was a narrower definition. And now, the term seems

to have embraced a lot of things and a lot of movements that I'm not comfortable with personally.⁵²²

Consequently, Pastor Mike admits he rarely if ever identifies with the evangelical label, preferring instead to be known as a “conservative Christian” who happens to come from a Baptist tradition. When asked what he means when he says Christianity has “become a catch-all” umbrella, he responds by asserting that there a lot of evangelicals or born-again Christians, as many of them like to be called, who simply do not follow the literal word of the Bible. As he says:

You can believe virtually anything and call yourself a born-again Christian, but surveys that have been done of the population from one coast to the other, you find people who call themselves born-again evangelical Christians. They don't believe in the existence of Satan, for instance. They say, “Oh no, that's a construct of evil, but there is no personal devil.” They'll say they don't believe in a literal hell...People who call themselves evangelicals have moved toward annihilationism. That, for years, has been considered a heresy in Christianity. That's not orthodox Christianity.⁵²³

⁵²² Personal Interview with Pastor Mike on evangelical Christianity, October 7, 2010.

⁵²³ Ibid.

And when asked what accounts for the broadening of the evangelical label, Pastor Mike responds:

Cause you can be anything, just about, and believe just about anything, and there's a lot of warm fuzzy. What you have are some churches that have grown up—and there's some very large ones—Lakewood church, where Joel Osteen is the pastor, would be a good example of a church where you can believe just about anything, and the music is just killer good.⁵²⁴

But this “warm fuzzy” Christianity is in his opinion little more than “cultural Christianity,” because in America individuals are expected to be Christian. Yet as Pastor Mike argues, it is one thing to claim the faith and quite another to practice it.

Not all, however, are in agreement with Pastor Mike's assessment that evangelical Christianity has been watered down in order to make it less abrasive to the American religious consumer. Janessa for instance, is a young seminarian studying to be an ordained minister at Drew University. She is unabashedly proud of her mainline roots, its progressive theology and its commitment to the social gospel. Yet Janessa contends that far from a watered down theology, evangelicals have simply gotten better at repackaging it. As Janessa admits, “I want to say they're becoming better in doing the same things, so I think they're less obviously evangelical sometimes; they're less obviously conservative, they're less obviously exclusive,

⁵²⁴ Ibid.

they're less obviously racist. But when you're actually in those churches, I think they're saying a lot of the same things." Instead, Janessa asserts that the "propaganda's getting better."⁵²⁵

Whether Janessa is correct in her assessment that the evangelical message remains as intolerant today as it once was is a question of personal opinion. What is less ambivalent, however, is the fact that the consumer driven approach adopted by many evangelical churches and ministries has shown itself to be widely successful. Yet this success has not prevented critics from labeling it as little more than vanilla Christianity. As Russ Breimeier writes:

This brand of faith tastes great but is less filling, and wherever it prevails, it is a source of impoverishment of faith and culture. Christianity, when it takes on these characteristics, is an impostor. People are seeking the way home to God, but pop Christianity cannot provide it. Yet for many today, Christianity-Lite is all they know, and the consequences are serious for both the religious and the irreligious.⁵²⁶

However, many within the evangelical tradition are perfectly content with this type of religious experience. Yet given the recent declines experienced by many evangelical churches, it would appear as if consumer tastes are changing. Perhaps the American religious buyer has simply grown tired of their religious Olive Garden staple and is instead seeking more authentic

⁵²⁵ Personal Interview with Janessa on Evangelical Christianity, the Emergent Church and the Social Gospel, October 21, 2010. Please note that Janessa has asked that her last name not be used.

⁵²⁶ Russ Breimeier, "Light of the World?," *Christianity Today*, May 16, 2007. Found online at: <<http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2007/may/28.66.html?start=1>> (Accessed November 23, 2010).

nourishment. The rise of the emerging church and the renewed emphasis of the social gospel would suggest as much. Yet these movements are only beginning to register with the American mainstream and many in the public remain unaware of their very existence. The evidence suggests that religion as a whole would benefit if such religious alternatives were more widely known and available.

No Faith but the Patriotized Faith

When “Sam” was 18 she left the small rural town where she had spent much of her life to attend college in a large metropolitan city. The fact that Sam even attended college sets her apart from most her peers, as of the 24 students in Sam’s graduating class, only four attended college of any sort, and only two did so at a four year university. Eight years after first coming to attend school, Sam continues to live and work in the same city as her alma mater. About once a month, she makes the three-hour drive home to see her family and to occasionally visit with high school friends. But back in her childhood home, Sam has become a sort of cultural outsider—the small town girl who has swapped her conservative upbringing in favor of cosmopolitan values.

Like many of her childhood peers, Sam grew up as an evangelical. Today, when Sam speaks of her experience in both the Pentecostal and Baptist church, there is a clear disdain in her voice. When asked why she left the evangelical church, Sam responds with a laugh, “Because they’re crazy.”⁵²⁷ When probed more deeply, she begins to open up. “It was church all the time,” Sam claims. “When we were on road trips with my grandparents, my grandmother would

⁵²⁷ Personal Interview with ‘Sam’ on growing up evangelical, November 11, 2010. Please note that ‘Sam’ has asked that her real name not be used.

read the Bible out loud. When we went to bed, she was reading us Bible stories about Moses and Jesus.”⁵²⁸ Yet it was not the religious overkill that eventually led Sam away from the faith of her elders. As she claims, conservative Christianity was “the only thing I ever knew, so I thought that all Christians felt the same way that evangelicals felt.” And this troubled Sam, because for her, evangelicals were “kind of about themselves,” and evangelical Christianity about living your life in accordance with the Bible; which, in Sam’s experience meant, “gays were wrong, and that as a woman you had to listen to your husband—and not just listen to your husband, but obey him.” And as if the theology were not problematic enough for Sam, she admits to being further disturbed by what she sees as an overly politicized evangelical body. As a child, for instance, Sam can recall hearing many sermons where the minister would say, “Hey, this is who I’m voting for because he believes Jesus Christ is their personal saviour, and I want you—God wants you—to vote for him.” And so today, whenever Sam hears a minister saying anything that even approaches a political endorsement, she admits she’s all the more inclined to vote for the other guy, even if, as she says, they like to “bite the heads [off] of bats or worship Satan.” Because as Sam sees it, there are a lot of socially acceptable practices within the evangelical community that are otherwise completely repugnant. To illustrate, Sam ponders, “if it were socially acceptable to kill puppies, would people still be like, ‘oh, he’s a God fearing puppy killer.’” And this really worries Sam, because in her view, “as long you put God behind it, you can do whatever you want.”⁵²⁹

The fact that as a child Sam was unaware of more progressive forms of Christianity should come as little surprise, as conservative evangelical churches dominate many of America’s small rural towns. As detailed in Chapter 3, the theological tensions that engulfed mainline

⁵²⁸ Ibid.

⁵²⁹ Ibid.

Protestantism throughout the 60s, 70s and early 80s were purposely exploited by various evangelical leaders in order to swell the ranks of their own church. By all reasonable measurements these efforts largely succeeded, as during this time many mainline Protestants found their way into evangelical pews; and much of this growth occurred in more conservative communities, such as small rural towns.⁵³⁰ To say, however, that evangelical leaders simply exploited theological tensions within mainline Protestantism and leave it at that neglects some of the more nuanced details that made this development possible. For instance, in framing their agenda for the American people, Christian Right leaders used rhetoric aimed at drawing broad public support, which helped to broaden their religious appeal as well. “Christian values,” “national conscience,” “patriotism,” “morality,” “safe- neighbourhoods,” “strong families,” “tradition,” and “individual responsibility,” were regularly identified as core values. This rhetoric was quickly adopted by community preachers and disseminated to their congregants. It continued to pour out from there. Men spoke at their men’s groups, women at their Bible studies, friends-to-friends, neighbors-to-neighbors, and colleagues-to-colleagues. In reporting on the Christian Right, media outlets and scholars alike similarly picked-up these terms and repeated them in telling their story. Far too few, however, ever contested the meanings behind these terms. In failing to do so, both pundits and scholars alike helped legitimize the Christian Right’s perceived ownership over these important cultural issues.⁵³¹

As Hopson and Smith observe, by the end of the twentieth century it was clear that the Christian Right had “achieved an important degree of authority in the struggle over

⁵³⁰ Oliver Thomas, “Where have all the Protestants Gone?,” *USA Today*, May 10, 2010. Found online at: <http://www.usatoday.com/printedition/news/20100301/column01_st.art.htm> (Accessed November 14, 2010).

⁵³¹ Ronald E. Hopson and Donald R. Smith, “Changing Fortunes: An Analysis of Christian Right Ascendance within American Political Discourse,” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 38, no. 1 (1999): 1-13.

proprietorship of important symbols within American culture.”⁵³² Among these, was ownership of what it meant to be a Christian in America. In claiming ownership over this terrain, Hopson and Smith further note, the Christian Right was then well positioned to advance its own “unambiguous responses”⁵³³ to what were otherwise “highly complex social issues.”⁵³⁴ This in turn led to a “manageable system of explanations, beliefs and actions,”⁵³⁵ where right is right, wrong is wrong, and where ultimately, there is little room for shades of grey. In offering simple, and what often seemed like pragmatic solutions to America’s social ills, the Christian Right, and the narrow interpretation of the Christian gospel that it represents, succeeded in capturing the loyalty of many millions of Americans. At the same time, however, its insistence on legislating morality and other matters of personal conduct similarly succeeded in securing the scorn of many millions of Americans. Among those who have grown to detest much of what the evangelical church represents is Layne.

Like Sam, Layne Berg also grew up attending a conservative evangelical church, though his experience differs in some ways. As Layne recalls:

I started going to that church when I was six, it started as an outreach for that church into my neighborhood.⁵³⁶ Neither of my parents were religious, my mom thought that I should be exposed to religion, so I started going at 6 and went every weekend, or almost every weekend until I was 15. As my brothers came of age

⁵³² Ibid., 10.

⁵³³ Ibid., 7.

⁵³⁴ Ibid.

⁵³⁵ Ibid.

⁵³⁶ The church in question is a prominent Baptist church located in Billings, Montana.

they joined me as well, so three of us were going every week to that church, and that particular church used a system of a bus where they would go around and pick up your kids to attend Sunday school and then drop you off, so it made it very convenient to parents who want to send their children.

Layne admits to really enjoying his experience with church for much of this time. Yet as he grew, and as he moved beyond what he describes as the “superficial” nature of his Sunday school education, he began critically evaluating the message of the church. By the age of fifteen, Layne began to “vilely disagree”⁵³⁷ with many of the church’s messages. These messages, he believed were “very conservative and very centered on a closed-mindedness to what Christianity was.” And this, Layne admits, led him to be “very angry with religion in general and Christianity specifically, just because I felt a sense of betrayal—I don’t know if that’s the right way of framing it—but a sense of being used and not really being able to critically ask questions.” Although Layne cannot recall specific examples today, he does remember asking questions about how certain subjects were taught as well as the framing of various social issues. But these questions did not sit well with church leaders, who, as Layne says, reacted as though “I was betraying their gift of religion to me.” This reaction turned Layne off from religion for many years.

Since leaving the evangelical church Layne has relocated to Washington State. He is married and is the father of a small boy. He admits that he would very much like to expose his son to religion, and has even sampled various churches in his area, but so far he has not found

⁵³⁷ Personal Interview with Layne Berg on growing up evangelical, November 22, 2010.

any Christian tradition he is comfortable enough with. And while Layne is open to trying different religious traditions, he sees American evangelicalism as having become more conservative than it was even when he was a child. For this reason a return to the evangelical church seems unlikely. But just because the conservative drift has turned him off (and Layne suspects, many others like him), he understands how this development is appealing to others. “I think for a certain subset of people this actually has quite a bit of an appeal.” Namely, “for those individuals who want to be a part of a larger group, who want that safety that they feel a big group provides, it works very well for them.” But in order for religion to work, Layne concedes it needs to reach more than just conservative individuals. “I think there is a large portion of the American populous, who, if given the right setting would very much like to have their spirituality represented.” But unlike Sam, who would like to see a complete decoupling of religion and politics, Layne is not of the opinion that religion necessarily needs to exclude any mention of politics; instead, he thinks churches, particularly those on the left, need to get more vocal about their politics:

There’s essentially a lot of folks who have grown up in a Christian institution, but the problem is that all and all, really there are only moderate political groups from a church perspective, and there aren’t really any far left leaning groups and I think that’s a real problem because there’s no ability to merge the political with the religious [for these people]. And I know that a lot of people feel that those are strictly separated, but throughout our history there has always been an intermingling of religion and politics, and evangelicals and the right wing are very

good at drawing from that base; but I don't feel that on the whole folks on the left side of the spectrum are as good at getting that synergy going—they feel that there needs to be a real divide and I think that's exactly the wrong strategy. I think they would actually draw more people in who are more independent and liberal if they could get that message together.⁵³⁸

It is possible, particularly given the success of the Christian Right, that a renewed political focus by mainline Protestants could rejuvenate their otherwise dwindling and aging churches. Indeed, there are few ways by which the public face of Christianity could be better altered than with the emergence of strong religious left.

A Return to Innovation and Niche-Oriented Religious Marketing

Lou is a successful small business owner from Yuba City, California. On most Sundays Lou can be found faithfully attending service at a local evangelical megachurch, something he has done for most of his adult life. Recently, however, Lou came to the conclusion that while his attendance at the megachurch met many of his spiritual needs, it did not wholly satisfy them. As Lou notes, “sometimes the words that you get at the service are right out of the Bible,”⁵³⁹ but the problem with this format is that in preaching to the congregation, the preacher is often “not

⁵³⁸ Ibid.

⁵³⁹ Personal Interview with Lou on religious supplementation, October 26, 2010. Please note that ‘Lou’ has asked that his last name not be used.

feeding you...to where you can open up a discussion about what you just read in the Bible.” This, Lou claims, is one of the reasons why he has recently begun supplementing his religious experience with additional forms of devotion. “[S]ometimes,” as Lou says, “if your church is not feeding you and you’re still hungry for spiritual learning, and you’re getting just milk from one, then possibly there’s is another church that you find that is close by, that gives you a little bit of feeding at other times.” One of the ways Lou obtains this additional feeding is by travelling more than an hour out of town to worship at a church where the message is slightly different, though Lou admits this is done only on occasion. Instead, much of Lou’s supplemental religious experience comes by way of the house church, a growing religious movement where worship is confined to a small group, usually no more of eight to ten couples, who typically meet in the privacy of an adherent’s home. At the moment, Lou belongs to two house churches, one that operates out of his own home and another that meets at a friend’s. According to Lou, one of the primary purposes for these house churches is to foster a deeper relationship “with the people that you want to be within Christianity,” as well as to have more intimate discussions and a “better learning of the Bible.”⁵⁴⁰

Though Lou remains active in two megachurches and two home churches, his commitment to these faith communities means that his energies are divided. This suggests a particular problem facing the evangelical community, because as Wicker explains:

A new, fast-growing group of committed evangelicals, exactly that core group of 20 percent that mega-churches rely so much on, wants deeper commitment to a

⁵⁴⁰ Ibid.

faith that transcends church walls. They want to live their faith in everything they do. They're bringing it into business and recreation. They're seeking the best books on faith and following the most exciting leaders. With the ease of travel and the speed of the Internet, they have greater access to more and more resources and to people like themselves. With so many options for spiritual growth, they could soon be leaving the institutional church behind. Some are forming house churches or participating in Internet churches. But others have a new option, weaving together their own churches of the individual. They do that by attending independent Bible studies, joining groups that sponsor short-term missions trips, participating in Christian business groups, gathering with workshop leaders for intense weekend experiences, and participating in Internet groups of like-minded people. Sometimes they stay in these groups for a long time; sometimes they participate for a short time and move on. Their spiritual lives are developed through a highly fluid mixture of activities and relationships that may penetrate their everyday lives. They get their primary spiritual experience through activities, through relationships, and through media. They may not attend church and feel no need for it.⁵⁴¹

Moreover, the rate at which evangelicals will follow Lou's footsteps is likely to hasten. George Barna estimates that by 2025, only 30% to 35% of all Christians in the United States will attend a traditional house of worship. The other 65% to 70% will likely worship in high-commitment,

⁵⁴¹ Wicker, *Fall*, 117.

close-friendship networks of believers, a group Barna calls “Revolutionaries.”⁵⁴² Barna believes this will strengthen Christianity, as these revolutionaries will help move church venues towards more intimate settings and will provide Christians with a more meaningful worship experience.⁵⁴³ Already, the house church movement enjoys considerable popularity in the United States, with roughly 10% of the adult population attending a house church in a recent pole.⁵⁴⁴ And many of those who have found a home in a house church come from the burgeoning emerging church.

As we know, emerging Christians are not easily defined. While many in the movement would describe themselves as evangelical or post-evangelical, emergents tend to be younger evangelicals who find themselves “dissatisfied with the dominant expression of ‘contemporary’ church.”⁵⁴⁵ As such, these Christians are not seeking a simple change in worship style, such as the addition of electric guitars to the church band, or pastors with soul patches. They are instead calling for a radical re-conceptualization of the evangelical project, one that focuses specific attention on mission work, particularly as it applies to the “post-modern world.” As religious scholar Amy Green explains, emerging Christians are:

Drawing less from traditional sources such as Sunday services and turning instead to friends, online social sites, celebrity pop culture, and podcasts for their

⁵⁴² George Barna, *Revolution* (Carol Stream, Illinois: Tyndale House Publishing, 2005).

⁵⁴³ Ibid.

⁵⁴⁴ Barna Group Staff Writer, “How Many People Really Attend a House Church?,” *The Barna Group*, 2009. Found online at: <<http://www.barna.org/barna-update/article/19-organic-church/291-how-many-people-really-attend-a-house-church-barna-study-finds-it-depends-on-the-definition>> (Accessed November 21, 2010).

⁵⁴⁵ Christopher Boerl and Chris Perkins, “The Political Pluralisation of American Evangelicals: How Old Media Built a Movement and Why the Internet is Poised to Change It,” *International Journal for the Study of the Christian Church* 11, no. 1 (2001): 66-78.

spirituality. Often they are cynical of today's church leaders but eager to probe, discuss, and learn from their teachings. Politically, they are less motivated by issues such as abortion and homosexuality and moved instead by environmentalism, genocide in Africa, and poverty.⁵⁴⁶

Thus, in placing significant new emphasis on causes such as poverty, social justice, and the environment—areas more traditionally aligned with mainline Protestantism, and areas that have either been largely neglected by the established evangelical leadership or outright opposed by them—emergents are working to fundamentally reshape the church. In this, they seek to remove the “sterile polarities that have defined the church in the modern era: liberal vs. conservative, traditional vs. contemporary, reason vs. experience, faith vs. science, mega church vs. maintenance church.”⁵⁴⁷

Predictably, Pastor Mike is unhappy by what he sees in the emerging church, yet he admits emergents represent an outlet for many frustrated evangelicals. But as he sees it, emerging Christianity is little more than a “manipulation of emotions,” “smoke and mirrors” which in attempting to reclaim lost symbolism and sacraments succeeds in feeding one emotionally, but ultimately does little to nourish the soul. Like Pastor Mike, emerging Christianity also troubles Janessa, though her concerns differ considerably. “I think a lot of the people that are prominent in the emerging church are coming from conservative backgrounds, but do, very much, preach the social gospel.” Indeed, Janessa admits many conservative religious leaders unaffiliated with the emerging church have found renewed interest in the social

⁵⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁴⁷ Ibid.

gospel. The concern, for Janessa, however, is that with the emerging church adopting the social gospel, the social gospel runs the risk of becoming more conservative. In this, issues such as gay rights and women's rights will take a backseat to issues of poverty relief; which Janessa admits is also of extreme importance. To help illustrate her concern, Janessa spoke of a recent encounter she had with Adam Hamilton, a prominent emerging church leader who had been invited to speak at an Annual Conference for the United Methodist Church. As Janessa recalls, Hamilton was talking about a program in his own church where youth who show strong leadership and an aptitude for the ministry are invited to join an internship-like program. The program teaches them everything from how to plan an effective worship service, to how to meet the needs of the sick and dying. The program has been quite successful, and a number of its graduates have gone on to seminary themselves.

After his talk, Janessa approached Hamilton to ask what happens to those kids who in the course of discovering their own sexual identity realize that they are gay and thus cannot be ordained in the United Methodist Church. Janessa says Hamilton's run-around answer compelled her to read some of his books. While reading, Janessa realized that Hamilton was "very much of the belief that homosexuality is a choice and that those kids can just be changed if they pray for it."⁵⁴⁸ This revelation greatly shocked Janessa since just by listening to Hamilton's talk, she would have never guessed he held such conservative views. "[H]e talked so much about the need to be authentic and really reach the community and the needs of the community, and to really reach out to the impoverished and the downtrodden."⁵⁴⁹ This experience has taught Janessa that mainline Protestantism needs to be careful with how it engages the emerging church, as while much of the language sounds great, the openness is sometimes simply not there.

⁵⁴⁸ Janessa interview.

⁵⁴⁹ Ibid.

Conclusion: Religion and Politics in America's Near Future

When the Reverend James Dobson stepped down as the head of Focus on the Family in the spring of 2009, he took the occasion to evaluate the social and political successes of the evangelical movement. He began by asserting that although evangelicals enjoyed many political victories throughout the 1980s, he now sees those victories as little more than a “holding action.” Dobson noted, “[w]e made a lot of progress through the eighties, but then we turned into the nineties and then the Internet came along and a new president came along and all of that went away and now we are absolutely awash in evil.”⁵⁵⁰ He continued by saying, “we are right now in the most discouraging period of that long conflict and humanly speaking, we can say that we have lost all those battles.”⁵⁵¹ The battles to which Dobson was referring concerned the culture war issues that greatly defined the American political landscape in the 80s, 90s, as well as the early part of this last decade.

It is of course Dobson's profound hope that America will one day reject secularism and political liberalism and instead embrace the virtues of conservative evangelicalism. But as we have already seen, fewer Americans are identifying as evangelical, or for that matter, Christian at all. And while it is likely that no single factor can sufficiently explain this downward trend, this chapter has proposed that a lack of religious competition, which helped propel evangelical Christianity to emerge as the single most important religious force in the United States, as well

⁵⁵⁰ Greg Hengler, “Dobson on the Culture War: We Have Lost All Those Battles,” *Townhall.com*, April 12, 2009. Found online at: <http://townhall.com/tipsheet/GregHengler/2009/04/12/dobson_on_the_culture_war_we_have_lost_all_those_battles> (Accessed November 1, 2010).

⁵⁵¹ *Ibid.*

as overt political activity on the part of many evangelical Christians and Christian Right leaders, are both contributing factors.

From a political perspective, more recent social developments have similarly placed considerable strain on the political aspirations of the evangelical project. Timothy Shah places the scope of the crisis into greater relief:

Evangelical Christians in the United States now find themselves in the political wilderness after one of their own—George W. Bush—left the White House with one of the lowest presidential approval ratings in U.S. history. Many of the most politically powerful evangelical leaders of the last two generations, such as Jerry Falwell, James Dobson, and D. James Kennedy, have either died or retired, passing their organizations on to younger and less influential successors. Obama, the man almost all evangelical leaders vociferously opposed during the 2008 campaign, was elected president. And the trends they have fought, such as the rising acceptance of same-sex marriage and abortion, are increasingly entrenched in the country's laws and social mores.⁵⁵²

Admittedly, it is tempting to look at the 2010 midterm elections as evidence of a resurgent evangelical comeback. Yet drawing such conclusions would be simplistic as it overlooks

⁵⁵² Timothy Samuel Shah, "Born Again in the U.S.A.: The Enduring Power of American Evangelism," *Foreign Affairs*, September/October (2009). Found online at: <<http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/65231/timothy-samuel-shah/born-again-in-the-usa?page=show>> (Accessed November 1, 2010).

important electoral developments, particularly the growing strength of libertarianism within the Republican Party.

To be certain, evangelicals and the evangelical community continue to hold immense sway in the American political landscape. This influence, while waning, will remain a key feature in American politics for at least another generation, as social change is often a long and laborious endeavour. Increasingly, however, evangelicals are finding themselves flanked within the Republican Party by a growing TEA Party movement,⁵⁵³ some of which is deeply religious, and some of which is not. As Ben Smith writes, “[t]he rise of a new conservative grass roots fuelled by a secular revulsion at government spending is stirring fears among leaders of the old conservative grass roots, the evangelical Christian right.”⁵⁵⁴ For evidence of this tension, Smith offers the TEA Party’s “Contract from America” in which supporters were invited to vote for 10 agenda items from a possible list of 21. As expected, congressional Republicans adopted this list with little modification and used it as an electoral platform upon which the party ran and won. Curiously absent from either of these lists was any mention of gay marriage or abortion. This fact has not sat well with many evangelical leaders, but Republicans know that the demographics of the American public are changing and that as younger generations increase their share of the electoral pie, past strategies to galvanize voters on divisive social issues are likely to prove ineffective and counterproductive.

From a religious perspective, changing demographics coupled with a shift in social attitudes may similarly push American Christianity into an altogether different direction. For instance, as Oliver Thomas notes, going forward, the more liberal protestant churches may have

⁵⁵³ TEA Party stands for Taxed Enough Already.

⁵⁵⁴ Ben Smith, “Tea partiers Stir Evangelical Fears,” *Politico*, March 12, 2010. Found online at: <<http://www.politico.com/news/stories/0310/34291.html>> (Accessed November 4, 2010).

an important advantage that is not shared by most of their evangelical brethren. This advantage, Thomas contends, comes from their identity, which “jibes with what matters to young people.”

Take for instance the issue of gay rights. Thomas notes:

Lutherans, Episcopalians and the United Church of Christ have broken down the barriers for openly gay and lesbian clergy. Presbyterians and Methodists are likely to follow suit. This willingness to reject the authority of biblical passages condemning homosexuality—as Protestant churches did with similar passages on slavery and the role of women—will appeal to a younger generation who see gay marriage as a non-issue and accept their gay and lesbian classmates for who they are—not what some Christians want them to be.⁵⁵⁵

As this and other chapters have already demonstrated, the new media environment has plunged evangelical Christianity into uncharted waters by aiding the growth of new religious movements and by providing a forum through which important theological debates can be had. As a result of the Internet, the evangelical community today is a less cohesive and monolithic body than it once was. This newly actualized religious pluralism should serve as an effective check against the less innovative and more indolent religious manifestations created during periods of religious monopolization. The Internet is similarly providing new political opportunities and forcing important political reconsiderations. Take for instance the rise of evangelical environmentalism, which due to the severity of the ecological crisis is arguably the

⁵⁵⁵ Thomas, “Where.”

most important social development brought on by the religious fragmentation of the American evangelicals. This is so, as in order for meaningful environmental legislation to pass in the United States Republican political support will inevitably be needed. For their part, Republicans have shown themselves to be quite hostile to the aspirations of the environmental movement. Undoubtedly, much of this past hostility had much to do with the composition of their constituencies and the relative low importance placed on environmental preservation. However, with an increase in the number of evangelical Christians adopting creation care as a biblical mandate, many Republican leaders and elected officials are feeling fresh pressure to take a more assertive stance on the protection of the environment. The chapter that follows explores this issue in greater depth and provides empirical contextualization of the effects of the new media environment on both the evangelical church and society at-large.

CHAPTER EIGHT

EVANGELICAL ENVIRONMENTALISM

AND THE POLITICS OF CLIMATE CHANGE

But ask the animals, and they will teach you; or birds of the air and they will tell you; or speak to the earth and it will teach you; or let the fish of the sea inform you. Which of all these does not know that the hand of the lord has done this. In His hand is the life of every creature and the breath of all mankind. Job 12:7-10

As for you, my flock... Is it not enough for you to feed on good pasture? Must you also trample the rest of your pasture with your feet? Is it not enough for you to drink clear water? Must you also muddy the rest with your feet? Ezekiel 34:17-18

I brought you into a fertile land to eat its fruit and rich produce. But you came and defiled my land and made my inheritance detestable. Jeremiah 2:7

Previous chapters have shown how the Internet is transforming the nature of civic engagement in the United States and helping give rise to new political movements and interest groups. This chapter examines how the shifting cultural values of American evangelicals are impacting society more broadly. It does this from the perspective of environmental politics. It begins by providing a review of the current political landscape with regards to the environmental lobby and argues that continued neglect by Republicans on issues of environmental protection could well be a serious political miscalculation given the growing creation care movement. It similarly argues that recent academic work studying the evangelical environmental movement has been both scant and ill informed. Yet despite these deficiencies, this chapter works from the overall contention of past authors, namely that evangelical environmentalism matters politically and that additional attention ought to be given to it. In doing so, it takes a more constructive approach to the issue by treating evangelical environmentalism as the object of primary importance. It is a fact that the issue of climate change cannot be adequately addressed without the commitment of the United States, and in order for the United States to be able to show such commitment, President Obama needs the support of conservative constituencies—areas of the United States in which traditional forms of environmental activism have failed. It is within these districts and states that evangelicals are uniquely positioned to demand Republican’s support for initiatives aimed at combating climate change, and as such, an examination of this matter is of ample importance. This chapter therefore provides an in-depth account of the American creation care movement. To assess the impact of this movement, it draws on historical narratives, polling data, personal interviews, and also provides an analysis of the activities of relevant interest groups, religious leaders, and politicians.

The Current State of Environmental Politics

The past several years have been tough for environmentalists, and tougher still for a wide range of plant and animal life. In the first decade of the twenty-first century, humanity has been responsible for the extinction of such species as the Baiji Dolphin, the West African Black Rhino, and the Golden Toad. In addition to the loss of these animals, the accumulation of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere has continued at an alarming rate, resulting in increased arctic ice melt, which in 2007 led to the opening of the Northwest Passage for the first time in recorded history.⁵⁵⁶

Given the present state of our planet, the historic election of Barack Obama should have given environmentalists much to cheer about. Indeed, throughout his bid for the White House, President Obama made environmental protection a key priority of his campaign. Since entering office he has championed a number of environmental measures, including a cap-and-trade emissions scheme similar to the one found in Europe, and he has even gone so far as to link environmental protection to the rehabilitation of America's economy, stating: "My presidency will mark a new chapter in America's leadership on climate change that will strengthen our security and create millions of new jobs in the process."⁵⁵⁷

Yet despite such lofty promises, stricter environmental regulations remain an uncertain aspiration for several reasons. Most recently, President Obama suffered a major political set-

⁵⁵⁶ John Roach, "Arctic Melt Opens Northwest Passage," *National Geographic News*, September 17, 2007. Found online at: <<http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2007/09/070917-northwest-passage.html>> (Accessed January 16, 2010).

⁵⁵⁷ Kevin Kelleher, "Can Obama Fight Climate Change and a Recession?," *earth2tech*, November 19, 2008. Found online at: <<http://earth2tech.com/2008/11/19/can-obama-fight-climate-change-and-a-recession>> (Accessed January 16, 2010).

back when Republicans recaptured the United State House of Representatives in fall of 2010. Yet even before these losses, Obama was forced to contend with significant internal division, which came primarily from the so-called “Blue Dog” Democrats. As fiscal conservatives, many “Blue Dog” Democrats hail from the industrial Midwest, a region with a history of electing Republicans, and where the economy remains heavily dependent upon the coal and automotive industries. For workers in these districts and states, the phrase “environmental protection” is often synonymous with job losses. Thus, while the financial meltdown of 2008 cost several incumbent Republicans their jobs, it could only take the environmental lobby so far. Complicating matters even further is the fact that Obama is now responsible for the American economy and the longer the United States remains in a recession, the more vulnerable he becomes at the polls. To counter this obstacle, President Obama is banking on two developments: first, that the American economy will rebound; and second, that so-called “green jobs” will be in large part responsible for this recovery. The problem, however, is that transforming a nation’s economy is a cost-intensive process and one which is best undertaken during good economic times. Thus, to the detriment of “the young and growing renewable energy industry, the timing of the global downturn could not be worse. Bank credit has dried up just as the sector is most in need of money to build expensive wind farms and solar arrays.”⁵⁵⁸ To help offset this effect, the US government has provided some assistance, yet federal financing cannot entirely replace the disappearing private investments.⁵⁵⁹ Furthermore, such government investments, as economist Ben Lieberman argues, are at best a “zero-sum game,” as the federal

⁵⁵⁸ Beth Gardiner, “Global Downturn Sapping Renewable Energy Sector,” *The International Herald Tribune*, February 17, 2009. Accessible online at: <<http://www.highbeam.com/doc/1P1-161051180.html>> (Accessed July 8, 2011).

⁵⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

dollars required to kick-start such an industry must either be borrowed or redirected from other government works, thereby placing in jeopardy jobs and programs unrelated to green energy.⁵⁶⁰

Given these realities, environmentalists know that the passage of meaningful legislation to mitigate climate change remains anything but certain in the United States. Complicating matters even further is a Republican Party that is increasingly driven by the more extreme elements of its political base. These supporters have forced many congressional Republicans to oppose nearly any initiative coming out of the White House or sponsored by their Democratic colleagues. As a result of these actions, Republicans have garnered a reputation for being legislative obstructionists. This may score them points with the TEA Party crowd, but, particularly on matters of environmental protection, it poses significant political dangers for Republicans. As we shall see, opposition to environmental protection threatens to tear the Party in two. This is so as evangelical Christians, who for the better part of the past three decades have served as the most expansive and reliable base of the Republican Party, are adopting the environment as a matter of theological importance. As this base increases its support for greater environmental protection, or as evangelicals like to call it, “creation care,” Republicans will have either to adopt environmental protection as a platform within their own party, or risk giving the Democrats an opening to this all important slice of the American electorate.

For many, the news that American evangelical Christians are embracing environmental protection might come as a surprise. Such a move seems to run counter to the staunchly conservative political and social positions with which this group is associated. Even in the broader academic discourse, where scholarly work is expected to identify such social movements

⁵⁶⁰ Ben Lieberman, “Green Stimulus: Tying Economic Package to Environment Plan is Not Workable,” *The Heritage Foundation*, January 26, 2009. Found online at: <<http://www.heritage.org/research/energyandenvironment/wm2245.cfm>> (Accessed January 16, 2010).

early on, little attention has been paid to evangelical environmentalism. Moreover, the work that does identify this trend tends to treat it as a curious twist in a much larger story, rather than a story in its own right. Matthew Nisbet typifies this approach when he provides only two paragraphs on the rise of evangelical environmentalism in an article on public engagement and communicating climate change.⁵⁶¹ Even those scholars, such as Lawrence Prelli and Terri Winters, who take evangelical environmentalism as their focus tend to view the environmental and evangelical camps as two distinct sides, incapable of working together without significant coaching and mediation. While many of Prelli's and Winters's arguments in "Rhetorical Features of Green Evangelicalism" are true—such as the fact that environmental scholars would do well to attend to the emerging evangelical environmental discourse as it promises to open new possibilities for "building political coalitions and alliances on issues of common concern to environmentalists and Christian evangelicals"⁵⁶²—their treatment of the subject leaves the reader with the feeling that evangelicals and environmentalists are two groups who inherently hold the other in opposition. While such a view might accurately reflect some extreme cases, there is little evidence it does so generally. Moreover, the authors' approach could prove additionally counter-productive if it is adopted by the broader academic discipline, since it plays to outdated stereotypes in which the burden of evangelical ignorance must be shouldered by the more astute secular environmentalist.

⁵⁶¹ Matthew Nisbet, "Communicating Climate Change: Why Frames Matter for Public Engagement," *Environment: Science and Policy for Sustainable Development* 51, no. 2 (2009): 12–23.

⁵⁶² Lawrence Prelli and Terri S. Winters, "Rhetorical Features of Green Evangelicalism," *Environmental Communication: A Journal of Nature and Culture* 3, no. 2 (2009): 225 of 224–43.

Understanding Evangelical Environmental Resistance

Unlike Catholics, whose theology has for centuries been profoundly influenced by environmentalists such as Saint Francis of Assisi (the patron saint of animals and the environment), and mainline Protestants, who for a variety of reasons have been more willing to embrace the discoveries of modern environmental science, evangelicals are relative newcomers to environmental activism. Several factors account for this delay. Part of it has to do with a general mistrust of science engrained in the evangelical psyche following the infamous Scopes Monkey Trial, while other reasons relate more directly to their literal interpretations of scripture and eschatological beliefs themselves.⁵⁶³ For instance, the most dire warnings issued by climatologists often deal with the flooding of coastal cities and regions. For many of us such warnings are perfectly logical, as the water from melting arctic ice has to go somewhere. Yet the evangelical mindset is steeped in foundationalism, according to which the Bible is the ultimate source of authority and truth. Thus, when this perspective is combined with a working knowledge of biblical scripture, it becomes easier to understand why such large parts of the evangelical population would remain skeptical of scientists who claim that flood or drought will soon be upon us. In the eighth chapter of the Book of Genesis, after the flood God promises Noah that humanity will never again know such a terrible fate. The rainbow is to act as a continued reminder of this covenant.

Similarly, many American evangelicals subscribe to “premillennial dispensationalism,” a strand of end-times eschatology that found its way into the evangelical mainstream thanks to the

⁵⁶³ See Hendershot, “God’s Angriest Man;” see also, Moen, “Evolving Politics;” and Carpenter, “Fundamentalist Institutions.”

published works of Hal Lindsey and Tim LaHaye.⁵⁶⁴ For pre-millennial dispensationalists, environmental matters have historically been of little concern, as the effects of ecological destruction are not expected to be felt until after the second coming of Christ. Armed with this understanding, evangelicals have taken Christ's imminent return as a cue to focus on issues more pressing than the environment and have accordingly devoted themselves to the moral and spiritual purification of one's soul and society at large.⁵⁶⁵

The media environment of the 1970s and 1980s, the period in which evangelicals first rose to political prominence, contributed even further to the historic neglect of the environment by evangelicals. In this environment, multi-directional conversation was not easily achieved and, as a result, agendas were often set by those in control of the microphone. Because evangelical leaders such as Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson were busy fighting the culture wars, concern about environmental degradation was either put on the back burner or framed as further troubling evidence of the secularization of American society.

Furthermore, it was only in 1967 that environmentalism even began to register in the evangelical movement, and not in a positive way. Environmentalism was introduced to evangelicals via the publication of Lynn White Jr.'s essay "The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis."⁵⁶⁶ White made a simple yet effective argument, proposing that although it was the industrial revolution of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries that gave humanity the means to destroy nature on a large scale, the mentality which permitted such destruction was set in place centuries before, thanks to Christianity's emphasis on so-called "dominion theology." In short, dominion theology is the belief that God gave humans dominion over all manner of life on

⁵⁶⁴ See Lindsey and Carlson, 1970; see also, LaHaye and Jenkins, 1996.

⁵⁶⁵ See Brian McCammack, "Hot Damed America: Evangelicalism and the Climate Change Policy Debate," *American Quarterly* 59, no. 3 (2007): 645-668.

⁵⁶⁶ Lynn White, Jr., "The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis," *Science* 155, no. 3767 (1067): 1203-7.

earth, and that while “man” may be made of clay (earth), “he” is not simply a part of nature, but rather made in the image of God. Such a belief, White argued, “not only established a dualism of man and nature but also insisted that it is God’s will that man exploit nature for his proper ends.”⁵⁶⁷ White’s analysis, of course, was seen by evangelicals as an attack on the faith, and it therefore served to further increase the distrust of science which many evangelicals already held. For the next three decades, insofar as evangelicals were concerned, environmental matters were largely seen as the prerogative of the political and secular left.

The Historical Roots of Evangelical Environmental Activism

In 1996, however, a remarkable and quite unexpected shift began to occur in the evangelical body, which was evidenced when congressional Republicans opposed the Endangered Species Act. Leading the campaign against the act was Representative Richard Pombo, a California Republican who was also Chair of the House Resource Committee. From the onset he expected a fight from America’s many environmental groups, but did not expect to be “damned by a group of self-styled conservative Christians” who viewed his efforts as an affront to God’s creation.⁵⁶⁸ One group of evangelicals supporting the Endangered Species Act was the Evangelical Environmental Network (EEN). In response, a spokesman from Pombo’s office released a statement asserting that the environmental Christians who were opposing his efforts were in reality “a front group for Clinton/Gore,” and that “[t]he Evangelical

⁵⁶⁷ Ibid., 1205.

⁵⁶⁸ Gayle M. B. Hanson, “To Green Fundamentalists, Earth is a Close Second,” *Insight on the News*, September 2, 1996. Found online at: <http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m1571/is_n33_v12/ai_18625321> (Accessed January 16, 2010).

Environmental Network [was] directly linked to the Environmental Information Center, which is staffed by Democrats and funded by some of the largest left-wing foundations in the country.”⁵⁶⁹

Yet Pombo’s attacks only added to the determination of the EEN and other evangelical environmentalists. As a result, media buys and lobbying efforts by evangelicals were stepped up. In a recent interview, Peter Illyn, formerly of the EEN and now president of Restoring Eden, recalled his own encounter with Pombo:

I went by his office and I told his staff, that I just wanted the congressman to know that I’m one of those Christian environmentalists, and I’m a Four Square pastor, and I certainly hope the congressman doesn’t think the Four Square church is liberal, because we’re not, we’re conservative. And then I left and was out the door and not more than ten feet down the hall when I hear, “Sir. Sir, the congressman would like to meet with you.” And I went in and met with the congressman, and the congressman is sitting there and trying to explain to me why the endangered species list isn’t really working. And I remember looking at him and saying, “but congressman, driving species to extinction is sin.” And I watched him, not blanch, but not know how to respond to this message. And it was very emboldening for me to realize that you could make a difference politically. That sure money was involved; but that at the end of the day, money doesn’t mean a thing if they don’t have the support of the voters.⁵⁷⁰

Faced with a growing and increasingly public dispute with evangelicals, coupled with low public support, congressional Republicans had few options but to abandon their opposition

⁵⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁷⁰ Illyn interview.

to the Endangered Species Act. In doing so, Republicans handed a significant victory to environmentalists and, more importantly, ceded important political ground to an upstart evangelical movement that did not conform to the established contours of America's religious body. In the years that followed, the EEN built on these efforts, which some openly referred to as the saving of humanity's modern day Noah's Ark, and went on to establish creation care as a legitimate concern of the evangelical project.⁵⁷¹

By 2002 the EEN conducted the "What Would Jesus Drive?" campaign for more fuel-efficient cars. Armed with fact sheets, bumper stickers and a pool of eager volunteers, the EEN published books and took the message on the road. While traveling the country, EEN members took full advantage of the dense religious networks of the evangelical community and sought to leverage this social capital to further their religious and political ends. While speaking before their fellow evangelicals, the EEN sought to educate these congregations on what they believed to be the Bible's mandated stewardship of God's creation. In 2006, the EEN was a major supporter of the Evangelical Climate Initiative (ECI), a statement which called for "federal legislation that would require reductions in carbon dioxide emissions."⁵⁷² Among the eighty-six evangelical leaders who signed the ECI, thirty-nine were presidents from evangelical colleges, while several others were pastors at some of the largest churches in the country, including Rick Warren of Saddleback, the author of *The Purpose-Driven Life*, one of America's all-time best-selling books, which to date has sold in excess of 30 million copies. While it is difficult to

⁵⁷¹ Peter Steinfels, "Evangelical Group Defends Laws Protecting Endangered Species as a Modern Noah's Ark," *The New York Times*, January 31, 1996. Found online at: <<http://www.nytimes.com/1996/01/31/us/evangelical-group-defends-laws-protecting-endangered-species-a-modern-noah-s-ark.html>> (Accessed July 8, 2011).

⁵⁷² Laurie Goodstein, "Evangelical Leaders Join Global Warming Initiative," *The New York Times*, February 8, 2006. Found online at: <<http://www.nytimes.com/2006/02/08/national/08warm.html>> (Accessed July 8, 2011).

quantify the effects that of the ECI, it is important to bear in mind that evangelicals have historically been greatly influenced by trusted religious leaders and opinion makers.⁵⁷³

Creation Care and Evangelical Tensions

Yet as a result of these highly publicized campaigns, the EEN found itself under considerable attack from influential evangelical leaders, with both Pat Robertson and Terry Watkins crying “blasphemy.” In a more focused effort to curb what they saw as evangelical environmentalism gone too far, Charles Colson, with the help of Richard Land (president of the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission, which serves as the political arm of America’s largest protestant denomination), James Dobson (founder of Focus on the Family), and the Southern Baptist Convention, launched the Interfaith Stewardship Alliance and the We Get It! campaign. Together, these efforts sought to restrain the creation care movement by portraying it as harmful to those living in the developing world, as well as to the broader ambitions of the evangelical community.

Although the Interfaith Stewardship Alliance and the We Get It! campaign remain actively engaged in the evangelical environmental debate, creation care proponents are, however, skeptical that either effort will find much favor among younger evangelicals. This is because such efforts rely on a dualism which younger evangelicals are quick to reject. As Corey Beals, professor of Philosophy and Religion at evangelical George Fox University, explains:

[The environmental question has] been framed in a very dualistic way in terms of pitting humans versus animals, or humans versus the earth. So evangelicals have

⁵⁷³ Rick Warren, *The Purpose-Driven Life: What on Earth am I Here For?* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002).

answered that question the best they know how: “If I have to choose between a whale and a baby, I’m going to choose a baby.” And so, because the question has been framed that way, evangelicals have been thinking they’ve been choosing life by defending humans over nature. Today’s students reject that dualism; they see it as a false dichotomy. You’ll say “babies or whales?” and they’ll say “yes!”⁵⁷⁴

Thus by reframing the issue as a matter of theological importance, the creation care movement has largely been successful in unloading environmental activism of much of its political baggage. When otherwise conservative leaders such as Rick Warren champion environmental causes, they are tearing down the political dichotomies of the left and right and instead making the matter of protecting the environment an issue of doing God’s will. As a result, the voices of evangelical opposition to creation care are beginning to thin as increasing numbers are joining the ranks of Cizik and Illyn. For instance, just two years after the success of the What Would Jesus Drive? campaign, a poll commissioned for PBS’s “Religion and Ethics Newsweekly” found that 45% of evangelicals believed that combating the effects of climate change was an extremely or very important issue,⁵⁷⁵ while a more recent 2009 poll conducted by Pew Forum found that 58% of white evangelicals believed there to be solid evidence that the earth is indeed warming.⁵⁷⁶

Those who remain skeptical that evangelicals are warming to environmental protection often cite a 2007 poll commissioned by The Barna Group, which found American evangelicals to be the religious group least concerned about the effects of climate change. That poll found:

⁵⁷⁴ Beals interview.

⁵⁷⁵ See McCammack, 2007.

⁵⁷⁶ Pew Forum Staff Writer, “Religious Groups’ Views on Global Warming,” Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, 2009. Found online at: <<http://pewforum.org/docs/?DocID=238>> (Accessed January 16, 2010).

[The] nation's born again population is divided into two groups, evangelical Christians (who represent about 18 million adults) and non-evangelical born again Christians (who are about 77 million adults). Evangelicals perceive global warming very differently than any other slice of the population—and they view the issue with significant skepticism. Among evangelicals, just 33% say that the issue is a major challenge, compared with 55% of non-evangelical born again Christians. That qualifies evangelicals as the least concerned segment among more than 50 population groups studied.⁵⁷⁷

The shortcoming of the Barna poll, however, is that evangelicals are viewed not as a Christian sect in their own right, but as a subset of so-called “born again” Christians. In distinguishing between these groups Barna provides the following definitions:

“Born again Christians” are defined as people who said they have made a personal commitment to Jesus Christ that is still important in their life today and who also indicated they believe that when they die they will go to Heaven because they had confessed their sins and had accepted Jesus Christ as their savior.⁵⁷⁸

Evangelicals by contrast are defined as meeting:

⁵⁷⁷ Barna Staff Writer, “Born Again Christians Remain Skeptical, Divided About Global Warming,” *The Barna Group*, 2007. Found online at: <<http://www.barna.org/barna-update/article/20-donorscause/95-born-again-christians-remain-skeptical-divided-about-global-warming>> (Accessed January 16, 2010).

⁵⁷⁸ Ibid.

[t]he born again criteria, plus seven other conditions. Those include saying their faith is very important in their life today; believing they have a personal responsibility to share their religious beliefs about Christ with non-Christians; believing in Satan; believing that eternal salvation is possible only through grace, not works; believing that Jesus Christ lived a sinless life on earth; asserting that the Bible is accurate in all that it teaches; and describing God as the all-knowing, all-powerful perfect deity who created the universe and still rules it today.⁵⁷⁹

Exactly why Barna decides to use this more complex and narrowed definition of “evangelical” is not known. Nevertheless, the definition runs counter to most scholarly work.⁵⁸⁰ Furthermore, despite the claims of this rather nuanced poll, there remains ample evidence that suggests a thawing of evangelical environmental attitudes. For example, the once hostile Pat Robertson now regularly discusses the importance of environmental stewardship on his Christian Broadcasting Network show *The 700 Club* and has made an appearance in a national environmental advertising campaign with the decidedly liberal Al Sharpton.

Moreover, when one considers the demographics of American evangelicals, as well as on-going shifts in the evangelical body, it should come as little surprise that efforts such as the We Get It! campaign likely pose little threat to the creation care movement. Peter Illyn remarks that such attacks fail “because it [is] the far right yelling things to the far right.”⁵⁸¹ And while admittedly men such as Colson and Dobson have historically garnered tremendous social and

⁵⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁸⁰ Alternative definitions for the term “evangelical” can be found in D. W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989); see also Mark A. Noll, *The Rise of Evangelicalism: The Age of Edwards, Whitefield and the Wesleys* (Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 2004); and John G. Stackhouse Jr., “Defining ‘Evangelical,’” *Church & Faith Trends: A Publication of The Centre for Research on Canadian Evangelicalism* 1, no. 1 (2007): 1–5. Found online at: <<http://files.etc-canada.net/min/rc/CFT-1-1-DefiningEvangelical.pdf>> (Accessed January 16, 2010).

⁵⁸¹ Illyn interview.

political clout, and for that matter continue to do so today, followers of their ministries, like the men themselves, are aging. While more than two thousand stations nationwide carry Dobson's daily radio message, it is difficult to imagine many college-age evangelicals tuning in to hear the thoughts and views of the seventy-three-year-old Dobson. Today's reality is that the evangelical vanguard that came to define the culture wars of the 1980s and 1990s is being culturally displaced by younger, more politically-open evangelical leaders. These new leaders have increasingly taken the reins of the evangelical project and are refocusing evangelical priorities on what many view to be the Bible's social gospel.

The Political Sophistication of Evangelical Environmentalism

In an effort to convert this growing theological support for environmental protection into public policy, some creation care organizations are becoming more assertive in their activism and are showing signs of greater political sophistication. For example, although Restoring Eden has an established history of campaigning against mountain-top mining—whereby the summits of mountains are removed in order to gain access to the deposits inside (usually coal)—they have found past efforts, which typically involved lobbying members of Congress and sending small groups of activists to protest at the mining sites themselves, to be insufficient. Recently, therefore, Restoring Eden has been inviting church leaders and youth groups from influential churches in key congressional districts across the country to join them in “camping expeditions” in the Appalachian region where most US coal deposits are located. While there, these churchgoers witness firsthand the environmental impact of mountain-top mining and are encouraged to spread the word to their own families, congregations, and local communities, as well as to

petition their members of Congress and to contact local media outlets.⁵⁸² In adopting this approach, Restoring Eden is not only helping to ensure that future evangelical generations grow up with strong environmental values, but they are also engaging in more effective and calculated political actions by building important bridges between their organization and members of the evangelical community who might otherwise never be exposed to the creation care message. In this way, Restoring Eden is quite cleverly strengthening the values of their organization by leveraging the social capital of influential church leaders from geographically and politically significant areas.

Similarly, Renewal, arguably the nation's largest gathering of college-age evangelical environmentalists, not so long ago concluded their 2009 "Green Awakening Campus Tour," which took Renewal speakers and activists to forty-six university campuses, where local environmental issues were highlighted and students afforded the opportunity to engage in the political process at the local level. In addition to reaching tens of thousands of college-age evangelicals, Renewal's "Green Awakening Campus Tour" also garnered the attention of several of the most prominent evangelical media outlets, including "Christianity Today," the Christian Broadcasting Network, Crosswalk.com and the "Prime Time America" radio address of the Moody Bible Institute.⁵⁸³

Likewise, secular environmental groups have added a further dynamic to the creation care movement, as some are now reaching out to form important working relationships with their Christian counterparts. Sustain Lane, a popular online environmental community, recognized the importance of having evangelicals on the side of the environment after the election of President

⁵⁸² Ibid.

⁵⁸³ Renewal Staff Writer, "Green Awakening Tour Report," *Caring for Creation*, 2009. Found online at: <<http://www.renewingcreation.org/images/Green%20Awakening%20Tour%20Report.pdf>> (Accessed January 16, 2010).

Obama. Cris Bisch, who manages the creation care forum for sustainlane.com, says the following about the origins of this partnership:

So when James [the Sustainlane.com Managing Director] contacted me, he said, “You know, we’ve got a new [US] president coming in. He’s opening the doors to environmental change in our country. There’s been a lot of division going on in our country, and we want to be a place where the left and the right can come together and be able to dialogue and be able to hear what each has to say and not be fragmented.” He [James] had a vision to see where this new president wanted to take the country and how important the roles of organizations like Sustain Lane are in bringing about this transformation. Because we are in transition in our country and hopefully it’s going to be in the right direction, and when we are dialoguing, we are talking together and we are laying down our differences.⁵⁸⁴

Several recent projects focused on climate change have also looked at strengthening relations between the scientific and evangelical communities. In 2007, for instance, the University of Akron hosted the “Friendship Project,” a gathering of twenty-five scientists and evangelical ministers in an effort to “stop global warming and address other major environmental issues such as massive species losses.”⁵⁸⁵ Dr. Stephen Weeks, a professor of biology at the University’s Integrated Bioscience Program, spoke to the important role that such forums play in bridging social divides, so that scientists and evangelicals can “band together to stem the loss of

⁵⁸⁴ Personal Interview with Cris Bisch on Sustain Lane and the creation care movement, May 16, 2009.

⁵⁸⁵ University of Akron News Staff Writer, “University Hosts Global Warming/Environmental Friendship Group,” *University of Akron News*, August 31, 2007. Found online at: <http://www.uakron.edu/news/articles/uamain_1839.php> (Accessed January 16, 2010).

‘the creation.’”⁵⁸⁶ Similarly, expeditions that take teams of environmental scientists and evangelical leaders to view the effects of climate change, such as melting glaciers, are becoming commonplace. Such joint ventures are likely to go a long way in addressing many of the historical antagonisms separating science and faith. As Richard Cizik has commented, “we are on the verge of an evangelical awakening to the global environmental crisis. But an even more significant accomplishment will occur when the worlds of religion and science come together in a spirit of reconciliation.”⁵⁸⁷ He adds that while evangelicals and scientists may disagree on how the world came into existence, there is “no disagreement about whether that world deserves protection.”⁵⁸⁸

From Evangelical Interest Groups to an Evangelical Interest

To presume that creation care remains a minor theological movement relegated the fringes of the evangelical community is to ignore not only polling data illustrating just the opposite, but a flood of empirical evidence. For instance, across the United States, a number of evangelical congregations have already emerged around themes of “creation stewardship” or are otherwise re-envisioning their mission outreach to include just that. For evidence of this, one need look no further than in the most conservative of conservative states, Idaho, where Boise Vineyard not only enjoys a thriving evangelical congregation of several thousand, but also a position of prominent leadership within community. Similarly, Ann Arbor Michigan’s own Vineyard Church has shown itself equally committed to the cause of evangelical

⁵⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁸⁷ Richard Cizik, “Warming Up to Creation Care,” *Prairie Fire*, February 2008. Found online at: <<http://www.prairiefirenewspaper.com/2008/02/warming-climate>> (Accessed January 16, 2010).

⁵⁸⁸ Ibid.

environmentalism as that of their Boise brethren. Yet of all the numerous examples of the greening of evangelical denominations, few stories speak as powerfully as the tale of students at George Fox University.

The Riverbend Dump Expansion

Nestled in the heart of the Willamette Valley is the bedroom community of Newburg, Oregon, home to the state's first Quaker community and George Fox University, one of the nation's more prominent evangelical colleges. By almost every account, there is little which distinguishes Newburg from the thousands of other exurb communities just like it. In the center of town and under the ever-present banner of the Stars and Stripes, small ma and pa shops continue to dot Main Street, though more recognizable franchises have begun their encroachment. Clustered around these shops is an eclectic collection of student housing and well-to-do craftsmen homes. Further away from town, though still within city limits, one can find the hallmarks of the American suburbs, Taco Bell, McDonalds, Fred Meyers. Beyond this point, Newburg quickly disappears and you instead find yourself in a sparsely populated landscape used predominantly by poultry farmers and others affiliated with the meat industry.

Politically speaking, Newburg is a moderately conservative town. In 2008 the county of Yamhill, of which Newburg is the county seat, favored McCain over Obama 50% to 48%.⁵⁸⁹ Undoubtedly, much of this political conservatism can be directly attributed to the area's large evangelical population, though Newburg's proximity to Portland, one America's more liberal bastions, does bring some balance. Yet given Newburg's conservative leanings, it was

⁵⁸⁹ For complete Oregon County election results see: <<http://www.usatoday.com/news/politics/election2008/or.htm>> (Accessed February 16, 2010).

unsurprising when in late 2009 the Yamhill County Commission voted 2-0 in favor of expanding the Riverbend Landfill, a move which clearly favored industry over the environment. Equally unsurprising was the reaction from a number of environmentalists and other environmental groups, which argued quite correctly that any expansion of the present site, which would subsequently receive the bulk of its waste from neighboring Washington County, risked further damage to the local environment and more specifically the south fork of the Yamhill River, which is already heavily polluted due in part to runoff and seepage from the present Riverbend site.⁵⁹⁰ Moreover, as the Commission's decision to expand the current dump site required the rezoning of land previously designated exclusively for the use of farming, a number of other groups unaffiliated with the environmental movement, such as the Yamhill County Farm Bureau and the Willamette Valley Wineries Association, joined in opposition.⁵⁹¹ Any county commission could have easily seen these political tensions coming. What few in the community saw coming, however, was vocal opposition to the Riverbend expansion from the students of George Fox University. George Fox, after all is an evangelical university with reliably solid conservative leanings.

But for the students at George Fox, environmental protection is not a matter of conservative vs. liberal, left vs. right, Republican vs. Democrat. Instead, environmental protection, or "creation care," is a biblical commandment and thus a matter of theological importance. Their story begins during the 2008/2009 academic school year when George Fox philosophy professor Corey Beals, like many local residents of Newburg, became aware of

⁵⁹⁰ It should be noted that the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality rates water quality in the south fork of the Yamhill River as "poor" in the autumn, winter and spring and as "fair" in summer. Much of this pollution is due to high phosphates counts, commonly found in rivers near areas of heavy animal farming. A full ODEQ report can be found online at: <<http://www.deq.state.or.us/lab/WQM/wqindex/midwill3.htm>> (Accessed February 16, 2010).

⁵⁹¹ Scott Learn, "Riverbend Landfill Opponents Appeal Yamhill County's Expansion Vote," *The Oregonian*, January 5, 2010. Found online at: <http://www.oregonlive.com/environment/index.ssf/2010/01/riverbend_landfill_opponents_a.html> (Accessed February 16, 2010).

Waste Management's desire to expand the existing Riverbend dump site. Stirred into action, Beals invited "Waste Not" a leading opponent of the expansion to speak to his class about the landfill and how "political fights such as this might impact ethics in the context of philosophy."⁵⁹² "Waste Not" sent Ramsey Phillips, a local farmer and self-described "gay, tree-loving greenie" to address the students of George Fox. In all, Phillips spoke to just two classes, but that was more than enough for the Riverbend issue to be taken up at the next meeting of "Quaere Verum" (Latin for "seek the truth"), a student led group at the university. It was at this point that Quaere Verum decided to draft a statement opposing the Riverbend expansion.

Throughout the course of the 13 hour county commission meeting on the Riverbend expansion, tempers flared. Yet when the students of George Fox began addressing the assembled crowd, the atmosphere in the room shifted dramatically. As Beals notes:

The spokesperson for the group (Quaere Verum) went up and read their statement, and it was a really contentious environment, everyone was there from the trash folks, to those who thought this was going to be threatening jobs, [and they] were on one side, and those who were for the environment were on the other, and it was an embattled sort of atmosphere. But they (Quaere Verum) came up and said, "you know, we really think this is a big problem, this trash. And we really need to find some solution to it, but we also realize that we are a part of that problem, because we all make trash, and probably more than we should. And they were the only people to take any blame for the problem, and it sort of changed the whole tone of the discussion and it was beautiful to see it, and

⁵⁹² E-mail Interview with Ramsey McPhillips on The Riverbend Landfill expansion and the students of George Fox University, January 13, 2010.

some of the folks (environmentalists) who were advocating for this, but who weren't Christian emailed me afterwards and told me that "that was the most beautiful thing I've ever heard, what your students said." And it was just so refreshing because they get it. They get it in a deep way and were able to come at it with an attitude of humility. There's a lot of self righteousness in this discussion and I've been guilty of that, but they even challenged me, and challenged others by example, saying "let's step-up here." And the conversation after that, the testimony started saying, "you know, however this turns out we really should be able to come together and figure out a solution to this, whether the commission approves this or not, we need to come up with something better than what's on the table."⁵⁹³

Phillips similarly shared:

I have been devastated by the loss of my family's 150 year old family farm to this unnecessary destruction of our resources by the landfill and yet, the one bright moment that I always return to is that night, with those kids when they finished reading their letter in front of the two Commissioners. You could hear a pin drop. One of our group leaned over to me at this moment and said, "Ramsey, this may very well be your highest accomplishment in this fight." I was very, very proud to be in their company and was for a fleeting moment, "born again."⁵⁹⁴

⁵⁹³ Beals interview.

⁵⁹⁴ McPhillips interview.

For its part, the Quaere Verum statement read:

We are students at George Fox University, committed to growing in word and deed. We meet weekly to educate ourselves about life and the challenges it contains, striving in all things to seek the Truth. When we became aware of the present issue involving the people of Yamhill County, Waste Management, Riverbend Landfill and the Yamhill River, we were compelled to become a part of this constructive dialogue about our community and the place in which we live.

We hold in high regard God's creation, and are held responsible to cultivate life within it, and as young people, we see within ourselves the desire to change our lifestyles for the betterment of our environment and our neighbors. With these convictions in mind, we are greatly concerned with the plan to expand Waste Management's facility. Its encroachment upon the banks of the river would only encourage our unsustainable life practices that promote a "throw-away" society, ignorant of the fundamental connection between the environment and the community.

Because of this, we are lead to question its rightness and its efficacy within our community in Yamhill County. The local environment should be able to be enjoyed for years to come, not used until it loses its intrinsic value. In considering the importance of caring for the environment, we understand that the river, the sky, and the land have no divisions, and that to be responsible for the environment

is also to be responsible for our neighbors who share our resources. To reject this idea both devalues the neighbor and their property.

The call to live in community, making peace with our neighbors is equally valued. Our politics too often stagnate in pools of apathy and hyper-individualism, fostering decisions that are ill-made and further isolating. What excites and draws us to this issue is the energized focus of the community. It would be unfortunate to suspend this energy by coming too promptly to a conclusion without fully engaging the issue and considering all options.

We do not envy the position of Waste Management. Expanding their facility is a sure option for the sustained success of their business. But what of the sustainability of our community? We have become aware that there are alternatives to expanding the Riverbend Landfill, and we can research and support companies that are working on lessening our need for landfills in the first place. As members of the Yamhill community, and as Oregonians, we are willing to share the burden of uncertainty along with Waste Management. We are willing to recognize that we who throw away trash are just as responsible for environmental damage as those who store it. Above all, we desire to continue learning together through dialogue the best way for us to live together.

In keeping with this conviction, we advocate for an alternative solution that allows for mutual creativity in the future, rather than a hasty and singular decision at the present moment.⁵⁹⁵

As has already been argued, creation care is by no means a dissident theological trend any more. Today creation care represents an historic and politically important shift among American evangelical Christians and one which in a relatively short period of time, has seemingly garnered a majority of support within the evangelical community.⁵⁹⁶ For instance, while a number of evangelical environmental groups already exist—groups such as the Evangelical Environmental Network, Restoring Eden and Renewal—by its very nature Quare Verum is not one of them. Instead, the students of Quare Verum are interested in pressing social and religious issues more broadly. The fact that they would see it fit to include creation care as one of these priorities speaks not only to the favored status environmental protection now receives among many evangelicals, and in particular younger evangelicals, but it also bodes well for future environmental efforts.

Increasingly, evangelical Christianity is picking up on this change. At George Fox University, for instance, some 7% of the student body is majoring in engineering, where much attention is given to sustainable engineering, with courses taught on environmental engineering and renewable energy.⁵⁹⁷ Similarly, several seminaries across the United States have likewise adopted courses on the environment. Among these seminaries are Denver Seminary, Mars Hill

⁵⁹⁵ Quare Verum's "Statement Regarding Yamhill County—Riverbend Landfill Expansion," (2009). Provided by Ramsey McPhillips.

⁵⁹⁶ Pew Forum Staff Writer, "Religious Groups' Views on Global Warming," *Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life*, April 16, 2009. Found online at: <<http://pewforum.org/docs/?DocID=238>> (Accessed July 8, 2011).

⁵⁹⁷ E-mail Interview with GFU Staff Member Mande Spotts on George Fox University and student majors, February 25, 2010.

and a glut of mainline seminaries, such as Duke, Emory, and Boston University, where many evangelicals train all the same.

The Political Impacts of Evangelical Environmental Activism

Although there remain Christians who are not at all interested in combating climate change, and even some who label the creation care movement as heretical, evangelical environmentalism continues to leave its mark on Washington. As recent polls show, evangelicals are warming to the idea of environmental ministries, and in the United States, where religion and politics so often go hand-in-hand, theological shifts such as this have important political ramifications. Meanwhile, there is plentiful evidence to suggest that congressional Republicans and even conservative Democrats are waking to this new reality. For instance, one of the most vocal congressional opponents of creation care is the Republican Senator James Inhofe from Oklahoma, former chair of the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee, and himself an evangelical. When Inhofe was once asked what he thought of Cizik's ministry, he replied that it was "something very strange," adding, "you can always find in Scriptures a passage to misquote for almost anything."⁵⁹⁸ Yet more recently Inhofe, who has in the past called global warming a hoax and compared the Environmental Protection Agency to the Gestapo, surprised many on Capitol Hill by joining the likes of Senators John Kerry and Barbara Boxer, two

⁵⁹⁸ Michael Janofsky, "When Cleaner Air Is a Biblical Obligation," *The New York Times*, November 7, 2005. Found online at: <<http://www.nytimes.com/2005/11/07/politics/07air.html>> (Accessed July 8, 2011).

prominent Democrats, to support legislation requiring the Environmental Protection Agency to assess options for cleaning up black carbon emissions.⁵⁹⁹

Certainly such a move is uncharacteristic for Inhofe, yet, as has been pointed out to the Republican Party, “evangelicals make up a hundred million Americans. They are from forty to fifty percent of the conservative base of the GOP” and although evangelicals were apparently willing to give George W. Bush a pass with regards to the environment, “a new generation of evangelicals may desert the Grand Old Party for its lack of facing up to the environmental future.”⁶⁰⁰ It is likely for these reasons that Inhofe and other Republican senators have recently and quite publicly called for greater environmental protection. For instance, the staunchly conservative Senator Sam Brownback of Kansas recently spoke of the role religious leaders are playing in forging a middle ground in the environmental debate. Although Brownback is not fully convinced that humanity is responsible for climate change, he welcomes “‘prudent’ steps recommended by some religious leaders to reduce carbon dioxide emissions.”⁶⁰¹ Senator Lindsey Graham of South Carolina, another favorite among many evangelicals, went one step further when he chose to announce his support for the Senate climate bill he was co-authoring with Senator John Kerry by writing an op-ed piece in the *New York Times*.⁶⁰²

Moreover, Democrats, long concerned by the defection of evangelical voters to the Republican Party, have sought to cultivate relationships within the evangelical community and have done so quite successfully via creation care. This is so as on this issue, Democrats are by-

⁵⁹⁹ Laurie Goodstein, “Evangelical Leaders Swing Influence Behind Effort to Combat Global Warming,” *The New York Times*, March 10, 2005. Found online at: <<http://www.nytimes.com/2005/03/10/national/10evangelical.html>> (Accessed September 6, 2011).

⁶⁰⁰ Cizik, “Warming Up to Creation Care.”

⁶⁰¹ Brian Winter, “Religious Groups Active in Climate Debate,” *USA Today*, December 15, 2009. Found online at: <http://www.usatoday.com/news/religion/2009-12-06-climate_N.htm> (Accessed January 16, 2010).

⁶⁰² John Kerry and Lindsey Graham, “Yes We Can (Pass Climate Change Legislation),” *The New York Times*, October 10, 2009. Found online at: <<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/10/11/opinion/11kerrygraham.html>> (Accessed July 8, 2011).

and-large in much greater agreement with creation care than are their Republican counterparts. It is for this reason that groups such as Restoring Eden and Renewal have found themselves in continuous contact with the Obama White House. And in what appears to be a gesture to their creation care allies, the Obama administration has tackled some of these group's highest environmental priorities, as demonstrated by its recent EPA announcement issuing new guidelines to protect Appalachian communities from the harmful effects of mountaintop removal. Furthermore, the budding relationship between evangelical environmentalist and that of Democratic Party provides both groups with mutual benefits. On the creation care front, leaders such Peter Illyn and Ben Lowe, who in past years have had their agenda ignored by the evangelical community, now find themselves with a seat at the big boys table and, what is more, actually influencing public policy. On the Democrat's side, evangelical support provides Democrats not only political cover to push through various aspects of their environmental agenda, but it also helps to soften conservative opposition to such moves. All the while, actions such as these help illustrate how the political and theological importance that evangelical leaders and worshipers are nowadays placing on the issue of climate change is going on to affect political leaders and policy makers.

Conclusion

The timing of the present worldwide economic recession has drained much needed capital from the pockets of a still budding renewable energy sector, while a number of otherwise moderate and fiscally conservative Democrats have so far succeeded in slowing down many of President Obama's most ambitious environmental projects. Yet a growing choir of evangelical

Christians is rallying behind the creation care movement. As they do, they bring with them added pressure on more conservative members of Congress, many of whom have previously been unaffected by the lobbying efforts of the traditional environmental movement. With this theological shift, the potential for meaningful social and political change looks certain.

If Republicans are to maintain the political allegiance of evangelical voters, simply rehashing old culture war issues is unlikely to yield substantial political rewards, particularly in the years ahead. The reason for this is that, like all social entities, the evangelical community is anything but static. As we have seen, the new media environment has helped usher in an era in which the social and political priorities of evangelicals are rapidly changing while simultaneously giving rise to new church leaders. Many of these leaders are similarly placing new emphasis on political concerns outside those traditionally associated with evangelicals. New emphasis on the social gospel is one example of this and reflects a general trend among younger evangelicals, who in general are more tolerant and open minded than their parents' generation. In this same regard, younger evangelicals have also never known an America where abortion was not legal. This is an important fact, as while many younger evangelicals are uneasy with America's more liberal abortion laws, they are less likely to make abortion the defining issue of their generation. Moreover, having witnessed the culture wars of past decades, younger evangelicals may also be of the opinion that there is little to gain by revisiting them. Instead, the evangelical community is increasingly opting for compromises that seek abortion reductions and defend the legal rights of homosexuals while preserving the religious sanctity of marriage. In taking these issues in new directions, it would appear that younger evangelicals are unloading significant political baggage and are thereby allowing for an expansion of their social and political agenda, in which issues of environmental protection will receive significantly more

attention. Such a reality will likely be key in combating the effects of climate change, as it is difficult to see much meaningful environmental commitment on the part of the United States without the help of evangelicals and the Republicans who need their support to win elections.

In recognizing this changing political landscape, some Democrats have begun courting evangelical voters by reaching out to them on environmental issues. However, despite evidence suggesting that this sort of faith outreach is succeeding in bringing evangelical voters back to the Democratic fold, many party faithful remain conflicted by such a strategy. Such hesitation usually stems from one of two beliefs; chiefly that evangelical voters are either largely out of reach for Democrats, and as a result the party's time and money are better spent elsewhere, or, and perhaps more poignantly, there is general concern among Democrats that any evangelical courtship would force the party to abandon important political principles. To the first point, this thesis has already shown these concerns to be unfounded. As we have seen, faith outreach by Democrats has already succeeded in places like Michigan, Ohio and elsewhere around the country. The second point, however, is perhaps more justifiable as it would seem logical that the more Democrats view evangelical voters as a competitive electoral base, the more likely the party becomes to acquiesce to evangelical values. If true, this could cause considerable strife among Democrats, as committing to ever-greater faith outreach may jeopardize core political values, where for instance the party and evangelicals find themselves at odds. And nowhere is this potential more likely than on the issue of abortion rights.

CHAPTER NINE

WHEN CONSTITUENCIES COLLIDE:

ABORTION, FAITH OUTREACH AND THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY

This thesis has sought a better understanding of how the Internet is affecting the interplay between religion and politics in the United States. It began by reviewing relevant academic literature exploring the impact of the new media environment on society more broadly. It then set out to determine if the theories discussed in this literature were applicable to the American evangelical community. As has been demonstrated, despite relatively high rates of social capital and other defining characteristics, the evangelical tradition has fallen prey to many of the same forces affecting secular organizations and interest groups. In particular, recent years have seen a steady fragmentation and polarization of evangelical cultural values, as the Internet increasingly problematizes the monologue of past evangelical leaders, thus clearing the way for dissident religious elements to reach an ever expanding audience. Among those to take advantage of this changing mediascape are the creation care and emerging church movement. Yet, in bringing to the fore a new found awareness of issues such as environmental protection and social justice, these movements are not only causing considerable strife within the evangelical community, but they are similarly jeopardizing the once monolithic nature of evangelical voting bloc. This fragmentation is creating new political and religious possibilities. For instance, not only does America appear to be on the cusp of greater religious diversity and a renewed and competitive religious marketplace, but an increase in support for evangelical environmentalism is bringing additional new pressures on conservative politicians and lawmakers to take serious the many environmental issues facing our planet today. In noting these changes, some Democrats have begun active courtship of evangelical voters, and are using their environmental and social justice platforms as a means to elicit ever-greater evangelical support. However, this move has some in the party (and their allies) concerned that concerted faith outreach will lead to a compromise on key political issues, in particular on the issue of abortion, where there remains considerable

differences between the party and evangelicals. Determining whether concerns such as these are warranted is an important consideration, as it serves as a continuation of the discussion exploring how the Internet is affecting the interplay between religion and politics. For instance, knowing whether or not recent faith outreach on the part of Democrats, as a means of capitalizing on evangelical fragmentation, is indeed forcing the party to the right on an issues such as abortion is a crucial question requiring greater exploration.

To address the above concerns, this chapter proceeds as follows. First it sets the scene for the discussion by giving a brief overview of the historical alignment of Democrat and liberal pro-choice politics. Next it details the changing dynamics of evangelical politics. It is shown that environmental issues have become more salient within the evangelical community, and that this has resulted in gains for Democrats. However, it is shown that abortion rights remain a political sticking point on both the Republican right and Democratic left. This chapter then addresses predictions that recruiting more socially conservative Democrat candidates will lead to the abandonment of the party's pro-choice stance. Formally, it tests the hypothesis that running politically viable pro-life Democrats will lead to an erosion of legislative support for pro-choice issues. To do so the chapter draws upon statistical data taken from the National Right to Life Committee and assesses the voting records of all congressional Democrats serving in the United States House of Representative from the 105th Congress to the present day. This data shows that despite the fact that the Democratic Party views the running of pro-life candidates as a viable path to political victory, and that a number of these pro-life candidates are now members of the Democratic House caucus, voting records indicate that there has actually been measurable gains in favor of abortion rights. In the final analysis it is argued that counter to fears of a potential conservative turn on abortion issues, Democrats seem to have mitigated this risk, as it is

demonstrated how the selection of attractive candidates is balanced through agenda setting practices that keep divisive votes on abortion at bay.

The Socially Conservative Candidate

In the summer of 2005, the Republican Party, emboldened by impressive political victories the year before, suddenly seemed to lose the trust and confidence of the American people. Much of this erosion in political support can be directly attributed to the federal government's botched handling of the Hurricane Katrina relief effort; but not all. For instance, by 2005 public attitudes had already begun souring over the war in Iraq and the growing fiscal deficit. Hoping to capitalize on this rare political opportunity, House Democrats turned to Illinois Congressman Rahm Emanuel to lead the party to victory in the 2006 midterm elections. Emanuel, who had previously served as a senior aide to former President Bill Clinton, knew that Democrats were likely to gain seats in New England and the rest of the Northeast. Yet he also knew that if the party hoped to wrestle the Speakership away from the GOP, then any path to victory required winning Republican held seats throughout the Mid and Intermountain West. A win there, however, required candidates capable not only of running against the failures of the Republican Party, but who but also able to avoid the party's liberal baggage.⁶⁰³ In essence, what Emmanuel needed were moderate to liberal Republicans willing to put "(D)" in front of their name.

⁶⁰³ James W. Antle, III, "The Brad Ellsworth Test," *The American Spectator*, April 2, 2010. Found online at: <<http://spectator.org/archives/2010/04/02/the-brad-ellsworth-test>> (Accessed September 1, 2010).

Among the candidates handpicked by Emanuel was a little known sheriff from Indiana's Vanderburgh County named Brad Ellsworth. In selecting Ellsworth, Emanuel was taking a calculated risk: Ellsworth was largely a political novice with no prior legislative experience and thus prone to political mistakes and gaffes. What Emanuel was banking on, however, was that Ellsworth's conservative social philosophy (he is a pro-gun, pro-life Catholic) would resonate profitably with the heavily religious voters of Indiana's Eighth Congressional District. It was a gamble that paid off, as not only was Ellsworth the first of 30 Democratic challengers who successfully defeated their Republican opponents on election night, but he did so by the largest margin of any freshmen elected to Congress that year, defeating six-term Republican incumbent John Hostettler 61% to 39%.

In many respects, the Ellsworth victory has become symbolic of the aggressive and largely populist campaigning approach Democrats have adopted following their political losses of 2004. The strategy is not just to run socially conservative candidates in socially conservative districts and states, but also to make real headway among constituencies long supportive of the Republican Party. That is, the objective is not just to win one election, but to win over a constituency. To that end, one of the most ambitious undertakings of the Democratic Party has been its extensive faith outreach effort aimed at closing the so-called 'God Gap.' This effort makes its appeal to more moderate and younger evangelical Christians. As described in the previous chapters, these efforts have been greatly aided by a recent theological shift within the evangelical community, whereby many evangelicals have adopted environmental protection and social justice as a matter of religious and biblical importance. In an attempt to court these evangelical voters, Democrats have shown themselves willing to run candidates whose stance on other core issues—namely abortion and same sex marriage—are in direct conflict with the

party's more liberal political base. This strategy has proven successful in winning elections, but is also the source of growing tension and Democratic Party infighting. Among the fears for many Democrats is that by running socially conservative candidates such as Brad Ellsworth, the party not only angers its base of liberal feminist voters, but also seriously risks its historic support of reproductive rights. To date, however, no evidence has been provided that either refutes or confirms such claims. The sections that follow seek to provide such evidence.

Abortion Politics and the Democratic Base

In May of 1972, a proposal was put before the Democratically controlled Connecticut state legislature that, if passed, would have banned abortions except in cases where the mother's life was endangered. The legislation had significant support within the Democratic party—notably the support of John Bailey, the retired chair of the Democratic National Committee who had returned to Connecticut to run state party politics⁶⁰⁴--but was ultimately defeated in what went down as a political milestone in American politics.⁶⁰⁵ The reason for the bill's defeat, however, had little to do with internal Connecticut state politics, rather, it was the result of the infamous McGovern Commission.

The McGovern Commission, also known as the McGovern-Fraser Commission (as it was actually chaired by Senator George McGovern and Congressman Donald Fraser) was a

⁶⁰⁴ John Bailey served as the chair of the Democratic National Committee from 1961-1968 and was an early backer of John F. Kennedy's presidential bid.

⁶⁰⁵ Mark Stricherz, "Secular Feminism's Path to Power," *First Things*, November 26, 2007. Found online at: <<http://www.firstthings.com/onthesquare/2007/11/secular-feminisms-path-to-powe>> (Accessed September 2, 2010).

committee of 28 members handpicked by former Democratic National Committee Chairman, and Oklahoma Senator, Fred Harris. It was created in response to the violence and chaos of the 1968 Democrat National Convention in Chicago.⁶⁰⁶ Concerned primarily with broadening political participation and representing the views of minorities and other underrepresented constituencies within the Democratic Party, the McGovern Commission made significant changes to the way in which convention delegates were chosen, and ultimately, how candidates were nominated. In this respect, significant political powers were stripped from the likes of Chicago Mayor Robert Daley and other party bosses, such as former party chairman John Bailey. As a result of these changes, feminists were greatly empowered. Their impact was quickly felt and they emerged as a leading political force within the Democratic Party. For instance, by 1976, Women's groups had successfully outmanoeuvred Carter's presidential campaign, when, to the campaign's displeasure, a plank was inserted into the party's political platform opposing a constitutional amendment overturning *Roe v. Wade*.⁶⁰⁷

Since the adoption of this pro-choice stance, women's groups and the abortion rights lobby have continued to grow more influential within the Democratic Party. Among the largest and most recognizable of these organizations are the Planned Parenthood Federation of America,

⁶⁰⁶ 1968 was a tumultuous year for Democrats. Following the assassination of Senator Robert Kennedy, Minnesota Senator Eugene McCarthy emerged as the favored candidate among the left. But at that year's Democratic National Convention in Chicago, party bosses passed over McCarthy and instead nominated sitting Vice-President Hubert Humphrey, who had not run in a single primary. Disgusted by the nominating process, many delegates and other assembled Democrats took to the streets in anger and violence. For further reading on the events of the 1968 Democratic National Convention, see Mark Kurlansky, *1968: The Year that Rocked the World* (New York: Random House, 1968).

⁶⁰⁷ Although Carter was supportive of abortion rights in 1976, he was, like any smart politician, hoping to avoid a protracted public debate on the matter. For this reason, his campaign lobbied against the inclusion of any abortion plank in party's political platform. For further information, see Mark Stricherz, *Why Democrats are Blue: How Secular Liberals Hijacked the People's Party* (New York: Encounter Books, 2007).

which enjoys an operating budget of more than a billion dollars annually;⁶⁰⁸ NARAL Pro-Choice America, which Forbes Magazine ranks as one of the ten most effective advocacy groups in the United States, and which was ranked by the National Journal as the second most successful political organization of 2008;⁶⁰⁹ the National Organization of Women (NOW), which boasts a membership of more than half a million; and Emily's List, which when it began in 1985 was focused was on providing "seed" money to progressive pro-choice women candidates, but whose political operation has, according to author Jamie Pimlott, since "morphed into a multi-pronged influence organization that functions as a PAC, an interest group, a party adjunct, and a campaign organization."⁶¹⁰ As Pimlott concludes, there are today "few political theatres where Emily's List has not become a major player."⁶¹¹ Another indication of the strength of the pro-choice movement within the Democratic Party is that since 2001, the number of registered Democrats self-identifying as "pro-choice" has consistently remained between 58% and 61%, while the number of Democrats identifying as "pro-life" rarely tops more than a third.⁶¹² Given these numbers, it is safe to say that the protection of abortion rights remains a key prerogative within the Democratic Party.

⁶⁰⁸ Planned Parenthood Staff Writer, "Planned Parenthood Federation of America 2006-2007 Annual Report," *Planned Parenthood*, 2007. Found online at: <http://www.plannedparenthood.org/files/AR_2007_vFinal.pdf> (Accessed September 9, 2010).

⁶⁰⁹ NARAL Staff Writer, "Why Give?" *NARAL: Pro-Choice America*, 2010. Found online at: <<http://www.naral.org/donate/>> (Accessed September 9, 2010).

⁶¹⁰ Jamie Pamela Pimlott, *Women and the Democratic Party: The Evolution of Emily's List* (Amherst, New York: Cambria Press, 2010), 3.

⁶¹¹ *Ibid.*

⁶¹² Lydia Saad, "More American's 'Pro-Life' than 'Pro-Choice' for First Time," *Gallup*, May 15, 2009. Found online at: <<http://www.gallup.com/poll/118399/more-americans-pro-life-than-pro-choice-first-time.aspx>> (Accessed September 9, 2010).

The Changing Dynamics of the Evangelical Vote

On May 25, 2010, the Reverend Mitch Hescox, President and CEO of the Evangelical Environmental Network, in partnership with Christians for the Mountains and Renewal: Students Caring for Creation, completed an 18 day spiritual pilgrimage when he arrived in Washington D.C. for the National Creation Care Day of Prayer. Hescox, accompanied by 40 fellow evangelists, successfully navigated his way by foot over more than 300 miles of mountainous Appalachian terrain, stopping daily to spread a message of environmental stewardship at local schools and with church congregations.⁶¹³ A month prior to Hescox's pilgrimage, the Florida based Northland megachurch, home to some 16,000 worshipers, "hosted the first ever global simulcast for a church-based creation care event."⁶¹⁴ This event was itself attended by more than 60,000 individuals from more than 30 countries around the world. According to Joel C. Hunter, the senior pastor at Northland, the primary focus was to "recast the environmental movement into its proper perspective as a biblical issue that Christians should care about."⁶¹⁵ Both of these events illustrate how American evangelical Christians are embracing environmental protection more and more.⁶¹⁶ And it is precisely this stake in environmental stewardship that Democrats are counting on as they continue their faith outreach efforts.

⁶¹³ Blessed Earth Staff Writer, "National Day of Prayer for Creation Care," *Blessed Earth*, (2010). Found online at: <<http://www.blessedearth.org/blogs/news/evangelicalministrieshost300milecreationcarewalk.html>> (Accessed May 28, 2010).

⁶¹⁴ Michelle A. Vu, "U.S. Evangelicals Gather to Pray for Creation," *Christian Post*, May 27, 2010. Found online at: <<http://au.christiantoday.com/article/us-evangelicals-gather-to-pray-for-creation-care/8319.htm>> (Accessed May 28, 2010).

⁶¹⁵ Ibid.

⁶¹⁶ Christopher W. Frazier-Crawford-Boerl, "American Evangelical Christians and the Politics of Climate Change," *St. Anthony's International Review* 5, no. 2 (2010): 147-163.

The fact that American evangelicals have begun registering environmental issues on their social radar has not been missed by political operatives in Washington and elsewhere around the country. Many Democrats have taken a favorable view of this theological shift; ultimately, between the two major political parties Democrats have the most to gain. The emergence of evangelical environmentalism provides Democrats with an important, vote worthy issue on which they and evangelical environmentalists are in considerable agreement. By contrast, Republicans are largely viewed as less friendly towards the environment, and are seen by many as closely aligned with the oil and coal industries as well as other corporate polluters. This image, whether deserved or not, is one which does not sit well for many in the creation care camp and which also appears to be costing Republicans at the ballot box.⁶¹⁷ The hope for Democrats is that by talking with evangelical Christians about matters of environmental protection (as well as other selected issues such as poverty and human trafficking), Democrats can begin to close the “God Gap.”

Amy Sullivan is among those Democrats who see the most potential in dialoging with the evangelical community. As early as 2003, Sullivan was arguing that the reluctance of many Democrats to speak openly about their faith was costing them significantly at the polls. She quite accurately predicted prior to the 2004 election, that if the Democratic presidential nominee should fail to connect with voters on a religious level, then the party would likely lose that contest. As Sullivan notes:

⁶¹⁷ Christopher W. Frazier-Crawford-Boerl and Chris Perkins, “The Political Pluralisation of American Evangelicals: How Old Media Built a Movement and Why the Internet is Poised to Change It,” *International Journal for the Study of the Christian Church* 11, no. 1 (2010): 66-78.

A president who can talk about his personal faith and explain how it connects to his policy initiatives enjoys both the tactical advantage of attracting the "swing faithful" and the moral stature to excite and inspire all those, religious or not, who are already predisposed to support him on the issues. To become America's majority party again, the Democrats will have to get religion.⁶¹⁸

During the 2008 presidential election, both Hilary Clinton and Barack Obama understood this message well and wisely committed considerable time and money to reaching out to religious voters. Once Obama captured his party's nomination, his campaign continued its heavy courtship of religious voters, and as a result Obama succeeded in reversing more than a decade's worth of sliding evangelical support for Democratic presidential nominees. On election night he captured the support of 26% of the evangelical, a 5 point gain over Kerry's anaemic 2004 showing.⁶¹⁹ Moreover, this reversal likely played an important factor in many Democratic congressional campaigns. But to say that Democrats have found a new constituency in evangelical voters may be stretching the facts a bit far. There appears to be much hope and optimism within the party that Democrats can expand upon the success of 2006 and 2008 and continue to make inroads to what has long been a stronghold of Republican support. These hopes however, are anything but certain and remain a point of considerable debate among both parties.

⁶¹⁸ Amy Sullivan, "Do the Democrats Have a Prayer?," *The Washington Monthly*, June 2003. Found online at: <<http://www.washingtonmonthly.com/features/2003/0306.sullivan.html>> (Accessed July 20, 2010).

⁶¹⁹ Pew Forum Staff Writer, "How the Faithful Voted," *The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life*, November 10, 2008. Found online at: <<http://pewforum.org/Politics-and-Elections/How-the-Faithful-Voted.aspx>> (Accessed September 10, 2010).

For Republican operative “Josh Brown,” the creation care movement is one that Republicans should view with some trepidation. He believes creation care has some political pull as the environment is an issue that “a lot of evangelicals can support.”⁶²⁰ Ultimately, however, Brown feels that environmental concerns will fail to “override considerations such as abortion and gay marriage.”⁶²¹ Thus the evangelical camp remains safely in GOP hands. By contrast, however, Idaho Republican, Linda Smith, herself a graduate from the evangelical Wheaton College, views the creation care movement with more alarm. For Smith the knowledge that Democrats are now courting evangelical voters is “troubling,” as she believes that the values of the Democratic Party are fundamentally out of sync with evangelical Christianity. Yet Smith concedes that recent Democratic faith outreach efforts could succeed with even greater effect:

The one weakness with the evangelical movement is their lack of accountability and that is where I see the DNC being successful. What I mean by that is that in the evangelical movement, one may say, “God told me such and such,” [and] as long as the principle is found in scripture, an evangelical friend or congregation would go right along and give an, “Amen.”⁶²²

The Reverend Justin McMurdie has a different take on the matter. As an evangelical preacher, he enters this debate not from professional politics, but rather from the Christian ministry. For McMurdie there is little doubt that today’s younger evangelicals are more moderate on many

⁶²⁰ E-mail Interview with ‘Josh Brown’ on creation care, abortion, and American politics, July 15, 2010. Please note, ‘Josh Brown’ has asked that his real name not be used.

⁶²¹ Ibid.

⁶²² E-mail Interview with “Linda Smith” on creation care, abortion and the evangelical community, July 13, 2010.

social and political issues than their parents and grandparents. This, McMurdie acknowledges, could prove problematic for Republicans in the future (if it has not done so already), yet the real political crisis McMurdie sees facing the Republican Party is not the moderation of political and social values among a newer generation of potential supporters, but rather the loss of evangelical enthusiasm for the party and diminishing sense of political optimism. Sharing his views on the matter, McMurdie notes:

I used to probably think that here was being a Christian and right below that here's being a Republican, and that they went hand-in-hand, but now I wouldn't say that at all. I wouldn't say I shifted to a Democrat or a liberal perspective, I'm just disillusioned with the political process in general. So I'm not aligning myself with the Republicans or the Religious Right, but I'm also not aligning myself with Democrats and the left agenda either.⁶²³

When pressed on what it was about the Democrats that McMurdie found objectionable, abortion and gay rights surfaced. In general, McMurdie remains convinced that most evangelicals are “always going to stand strongly against abortion,” and as long as the Democratic Party remains supportive of abortion rights, then most Democratic candidates are going to have a difficult time appealing to evangelical voters. Yet if evangelicals have grown frustrated by the failures of Republicans in Washington and remain opposed to many of the social and cultural values of the Democratic Party; where does that leave the evangelical vote? For McMurdie, the question is a

⁶²³ Personal Interview with Justin McMurdie on creation care, Emergent Village and the future of the evangelical community, May 23, 2009.

tough one, but ultimately, he feels evangelicals may be entering a phase of political disengagement, inward retreat and political demobilization.⁶²⁴

If correct in his assessments that evangelicals will increasingly steer clear of partisan politics, something that has happened before, then the Republican Party will be harmed. Barrett Duke, Vice-President of the Ethics and Liberty Commission, an organization that serves as the political arm of the Southern Baptist Convention, views such political disengagement as deeply worrisome and anti-biblical. As Duke noted during an interview:

I'm sure that now as always there are Christians who believe that the church should not engage in the political process and there are people today who are raising those concerns. They should feel free to follow the Lord however they choose and they should feel free to express their concerns and voice their message and call an alarm to the broader church if they choose to do that, but it doesn't mean that everyone else who is engaging in the political process is out of God's will. God certainly has called his prophets in the past to engage with Kings, so it would be inappropriate for Christians to say that Christians shouldn't speak to power and engage in the political process. We'd have to eliminate most of the pages out of the Bible in order to actually make that case from the full teaching of scripture.⁶²⁵

⁶²⁴ Ibid.

⁶²⁵ Personal Interview with Barrett Duke on creation care, Emergent Village and the future of the evangelical community, May 17, 2009.

Over the years, many have both speculated and warned that evangelicals might not turn out on election night. To date this phenomenon has not occurred. Should it ever, however, the result would likely be ruinous for the GOP.

As it stands, Democrats are committed to fighting for the evangelical vote. This commitment has been reflected in the party's willingness to run high profile conservative candidates, such as the pro-life Pennsylvania Senator Bob Casey and Ohio Governor Ted Strickland, an ordained United Methodist Minister. To some political spectators, nominating candidates such as Strickland and Casey is a shrewd political move, while others question the underlying logic. Yet for many evangelicals, the electoral viability of the likes of Casey and other conservative Democrats, only help to advance conservative Christian values. Such candidates, as the argument goes, help move the Democrat Party away from the party of "amnesty, abortion and acid."⁶²⁶ In such instances, while Republican candidates might suffer at the hands of socially conservative Democrats, social conservatism as such does not.⁶²⁷

The "Pro-Life" Politics of Evangelical Environmentalism

As the previous sections have shown, the political dynamics of the American evangelical community is experiencing considerable flux. Although Democrats hope to capitalize on what some are arguing is growing moderation on the part of younger evangelicals, the party's ongoing

⁶²⁶ Matthai Chakko Kuruvila, "Some Evangelical Christians Reconsider Their Faith in GOP," *The San Francisco Chronicle*, November 13, 2006. Found online at: <<http://www.commondreams.org/headlines06/1113-02.htm>> (Accessed August 12, 2010).

⁶²⁷ Ibid.

support of abortion rights keeps it at odds with the vast majority of evangelicals, both young and old alike.⁶²⁸ Running pro-life Democrats, particularly candidates with solid environmental credentials, will likely aide the party in appealing to a new generation of evangelical voters, as this more nuanced approach better reflects the emerging values of younger evangelical voter. Such a move, however, is not without its risks.

For pro-choice Democrats who represent districts with a significant evangelical population, the widely accepted strategy of dealing with the abortion issue is to simply pretend it does not exist. Yet attempts to ignore questions of abortion are akin to ignoring the proverbial elephant in the room, as for many evangelicals the issue of valuing life and the issue of valuing the environment are, in effect, one and the same. As Restoring Eden argues on their website:

As political and social conservatives, evangelicals tend to lump protection of the environment together with the lack of protection for children in the womb; we often have the irrational idea that abortion-rights advocacy and the efforts to rescue stranded animals or preserve endangered non-human species are parallel and equal hallmarks of “liberal” thought. Most fail to see how illogical it is to save the babies and then care less about the health and integrity of the

⁶²⁸ In a recent 2010 poll, the Barna Group found that 78% of American evangelicals believe that abortion should be illegal in all or nearly all cases. When respondents were divided by age, this same Barna poll found no discernable difference between younger and older evangelicals. These findings mirror those of the Pew Forum, which also found broad opposition to abortion among white evangelical Christians, though this poll indicated some softening on the importance with which all voters ascribe the issue. For further information refer to: Barna Group Staff Writer, “New Barna Study Explore Current Views on Abortion,” *The Barna Group*, June 14, 2010. Found online at: <<http://www.barna.org/culture-articles/394-new-barna-study-explores-current-views-on-abortion->> (Accessed September 9, 2010); and Pew Forum Staff Writer, “Support for Abortion Slips: Issue Ranks Lower on the Agenda,” *The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life*, October 1, 2009. Found online at: <<http://pewforum.org/Abortion/Support-for-Abortion-Slips%282%29.aspx>> (Accessed September 11, 2010).

environment upon which their survival depends. We typically fail to see that opposing abortion and supporting creation care are both “pro-life” positions.⁶²⁹

For groups such as Restoring Eden, EEN and many others in the creation care camp, the issue of valuing life is more complicated than simply protecting the “unborn.” Instead, being pro-life for many evangelical environmentalists is a matter of spiritual interconnectedness and dutiful servitude for the entirety of life. For the evangelical environmentalist, it makes no sense to promote the values of a pro-life agenda if the life one is fighting to bring into this world is only to be subjected to cancer causing chemicals and other life-threatening pollutants once born. It is for this reason that Pastor Hunter views environmental issues as so important for the pro-life movement. As Hunter notes:

In Genesis 2:15, God gives a simple command to mankind about the earth: “Cultivate it and keep it.” That is to say, we must be concerned not only with production, but also with the protection of God’s creation. Dominion is never given for the purpose of exploitation. Christians, of all people, should be thankful enough for the grace of God and His immeasurable gifts that we would not want to pollute such gifts.⁶³⁰

⁶²⁹ Dean Ohlman, “21 Reasons That Evangelicals ‘Don’t’ Get Creation Care,” *Restoring Eden website*, 2010. Found online at: <<http://restoringeden.org/resources/Ohlman/21Reasons>> (Accessed September 11, 2010).

⁶³⁰ Joel C. Hunter, “Completely Pro-Life,” 2008. Found online at: <<http://completelyprolife.com/>> (Accessed September 11, 2010). See also, Joel C. Hunter, *A New Kind of Conservative* (Ventura, California: Regal Books, 2008).

For Hunter, the important questions evangelicals must bear in mind on Election Day are: “How does this candidate or bill seek to balance production with protection?” and “How can I be a part of preserving the earth for the generations to come?”⁶³¹ For pro-life Democratic candidates, framing environmental protection as pro-life would undoubtedly be welcomed, as it would inevitably attract even larger electoral support. It’s quite another story for the liberal core of the Democratic Party. While pro-life congressional Democrats enjoy a sizable caucus in the United States House of Representatives (or at least did prior to the 2010 midterm election), they remain at odds with many of the party faithful. As the Democratic Party moves forward with the political strategy encouraging pro-life candidates to run in more socially conservative districts, tensions and frustrations have grown among many women’s groups and other liberal Democrats who view the party’s historic support of abortion rights as a sacred political value. It seems that Democrats can either accommodate the complexities of a larger, more diversified political constituency, which should allow them to win more elections, or they can look to purify their party ideologically, which will most certainly reduce their electoral appeal. Some, however, hope to avoid either of these possibilities and are instead seeking a third way.

Can There be an Abortion Compromise?

While recent research and polling data indicates that younger evangelicals are more than twice as likely as their parents to support gay marriage and other forms of gay rights, and are similarly more inclined than their parents to support government sponsored anti-poverty

⁶³¹ Ibid.

programs and other social justice related measures, on the question of abortion younger evangelicals remain as committed to pro-life values as any generation before them.⁶³² This poses significant political challenges for the Democratic Party as they continue to press forward with their evangelical outreach. As Hillary Clinton’s former faith outreach director Burns Strider sees it, “nobody loves or wants abortion,”⁶³³ and it is for this reason that Strider is convinced that Democrats and evangelicals will eventually find “common ground policies” that respect pro-life convictions and work to “reduce the number of abortions in the county.”⁶³⁴ Sex education is one area where Strider sees common ground being established; another is a possible conscience clause that would allow doctors the option of opting out of abortion procedures and would likewise allow pharmacists the right to refuse filling “morning after” prescriptions. Yet it is difficult to see how such compromises will appease everyone. If anything, recent events demonstrate the opposite is often the case. For instance, when Barack Obama asked Rick Warren to give the invocation at his presidential inauguration—a move which was supposed to be seen extending an olive branch to the evangelical community—many on the left were offended that the President would give such an honor to a pro-life, anti-gay rights pastor. At the same time, those on the right were similarly dismayed when Warren accepted such an accolade from a decidedly pro-choice, pro-gay rights president.⁶³⁵ Thus, even on a symbolic level a compromise on abortion is too much for many.

⁶³² Pam Chamberlain, “Younger Evangelicals: Where will they take the Christian Right?,” *The Public Eye Magazine* 24, no. 1 (2009). Found online at: <<http://www.publiceye.org/magazine/v24n1/younger-evangelicals-where-wil-whey.html>> (Accessed September 2, 2010).

⁶³³ Personal Interview with Burns Strider on faith outreach and the Democratic Party, July 23, 2009.

⁶³⁴ Ibid.

⁶³⁵ Frank Schaeffer, “Obama was Right to Pick Warren,” *The Huffington Post*, December 19, 2008. Found Online at: <http://www.huffingtonpost.com/frank-schaeffer/obama-was-right-to-pick-w_b_152330.html> (Accessed August 5, 2010). See also, David Brody, “Pro-Lifers Rip Rick Warren on Obama Invocation,” *CBN News*, December 18, 2008. Found online at: <<http://blogs.cbn.com/thebrodyfile/archive/2008/12/18/pro-lifers-rip-rick-warren-on-obama-invocation.aspx>> (Accessed August 5, 2010).

When abortion compromises deal specifically with policy matters, public anger is even more visceral. For example, in an effort to reach the 60 votes needed to end debate on healthcare reform, the United States Senate considered several measures that would limit insurance coverage for abortion. These measures failed to win broad public support because instead of focusing on what was being protected by these compromises, each side of the debate instead chose to focus on what they were losing. When, for instance, the Senate moved to provide two separate government subsidized insurance schemes, one with an abortion option and the other without it, groups such as Planned Parenthood, the National Organization for Women (NOW) and NARAL come out in strong opposition, arguing that such a compromise would fail to provide abortion coverage to all women in the country. The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops also opposed this proposal, though for decidedly different reasons. The Bishops maintained that, “this bill should not be supported in its current form because it would allow federal money to go to health insurance plans that cover elective abortions.” This sentiment was shared by the National Right to Life Committee.⁶³⁶

Given the entrenched interests surrounding abortion and the current political climate, the probability that either side will easily accept political compromises on this issue seems next to nil. As seen throughout the 2010 midterm elections, politicians that party activists decide are too moderate on any number of political issues (abortion included), run the very real risk of losing their party’s nomination. This fact was famously driven home in the case of Alaska Senator Lisa Murkowski. As National Public Radio’s Ron Elving summarized:

⁶³⁶ Robert Pear, “Negotiating to 60 Votes, Compromise by Compromise,” *The New York Times*, December 19, 2009. Found online at: <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/12/20/health/policy/20care.html?_r=1> (Accessed August 5, 2010).

Which kind of Alaska Republican was most motivated for this primary? The answer appears to be the populist, evangelical, anti-abortion Republicans who are likely to identify with the movement known as the Tea Party.

Murkowski had a vulnerability within her own party because she was a supporter of abortion rights in some cases. While abortion views are divided in Alaska as elsewhere, opposition to abortion is more concentrated in the Republican Party. And this week's ballot featured a voter measure on requiring parental notification prior to an abortion for a minor. Murkowski endorsed the measure, but the anti-abortion activists who came out to vote for it may well have preferred Miller's anti-abortion credentials overall.⁶³⁷

Given losses such as Murkowski and others, it is difficult to see how America's current political and media environment will reward anything but further ideological polarization. Should this indeed occur, political compromises on abortion, while unlikely today, will be nothing short of fanciful in the future.

⁶³⁷ Ron Elving, "Watching Washington," *NPR*, August 26, 2010. Transcript available online at: <<http://www.npr.org/blogs/watchingwashington/2010/08/26/129444803/is-alaska-really-the-anti-universe-of-politics>> (Accessed September 2, 2010).

Faith Outreach and Party Tensions

As discussed above, while Democrats and evangelicals are increasingly finding common ground on a growing list of issues (the environment being one example), there remain considerable differences between the evangelical community and one of the Democrats most reliable constituencies: women's groups. As Jim Wallis notes:

There are literally millions of votes at stake...Virtually everywhere I go, I encounter moderate and progressive Christians who find it painfully difficult to vote Democrat given the party's rigid ideological stance on this critical moral issue, a stance they regard as "pro-abortion." Except for this major and, in some cases, insurmountable obstacle, these voters would be casting Democratic ballots.⁶³⁸

As we have seen, Democrats have shown themselves willing to anger women's groups by running pro-life Democrats in districts and states where a more liberal candidate would likely lose. The risks of such a move, however, are not few. For one thing, success is not assured. A more conservative candidate could dampen turnout among the Democratic base, or fail to drive fundraising. More importantly, by running pro-life candidates the Democratic Party faces the very real prospects of fracturing the party core, while also driving the party to the political right.

⁶³⁸ Jim Wallis, "Pro-Life Democrats?," *Sojourners Magazine* 33, no. 6 (2004): 5.

When asked about the possible political ramifications of Democratic faith outreach efforts pertaining specifically to the creation of tensions between the Democrat Party and women's groups, Burns Strider had this to say:

There's been friction created there, and right now it requires daily work. What I'm learning and what I'm working on is that there are good relationships between some of the women's group leaders and some of the progressive faith group leaders, so there can continue to be dialogue and good conversation there, but abortion is going to force the hand on how the Democratic Party lands on its intensity of outreach to evangelicals. On the one hand, it is very possible to reach into evangelical communities and create working relationships without really having to address abortion. At the same time, if you are going to truly pull evangelicals away from the right and at the very least sit them down in the middle, in the swing universe, then abortion does become something that needs to be addressed.⁶³⁹

Yet among many of the Democratic faithful, abortion is an issue with little to address. For instance, when longtime Democratic activist Ben Calhoun was asked if it was a wise decision for Democrats to court evangelical voters by running pro-life Democrats in socially conservative states, Ben's opinion was decidedly negative. To Ben, this is a strategy framed by the opposition. He argues that conservatives learned long ago that if something is said enough times

⁶³⁹ Strider interview.

then for many people it in effect becomes true. This he believes has led Democrats to accept as true that America is a center-right nation and could never be governed from the left. As Ben notes, “through repetition, the right wingers in this country have used mainstream media outlets, as well as Fox and AM radio to create a narrative that if any politician dares increase social services, introduce a progressive tax code, or increase government regulation, they’ll be hurriedly thrown out of office.” Ultimately, Ben believes America is much more progressive than most realize or want to admit, and it is on this premise that he is against “running the likes of Stupak and his ilk.”⁶⁴⁰

Ben recognizes that some might challenge him on that point, so he offers another reason as to why Democrats should steer clear of running pro-life candidates.

The Democratic Party is supposed to be the party that represents women’s rights, and the right to make the difficult choice to have an abortion. It’s got to be a selling point. If we’re willing to endorse candidates who will compromise that value, then why should the party even take a stance on it at all? We might as well be saying the party has no official stance on the issue or just give in and let the right have what they want! Because if we run pro-life zealots like Stupak, 1) the party betrays itself and its members when those candidates support pro-life legislation, 2) it runs the risk that those members will not be on board with the most important legislative items when it matters most.⁶⁴¹

⁶⁴⁰ E-mail Interview with Ben Calhoun on faith outreach, abortion and the Democratic Party, June 28, 2010.

⁶⁴¹ Ibid.

Ben is quick to point out that not only was the Stupak amendment never adopted, but in bringing the issue to the floor, Stupak not only angered the party's base, but he drew enough attention to the issue to anger the pro-life base, while failing to win any Republican support for health care reform, nearly derailing the pinnacle of the Democratic legislative agenda. The lesson, Ben has concluded, is that:

The Democratic Party will never gain the support of the religious zealots that make up the pro-life crowd no matter how hard we try. That particular sect of the electorate will never settle for a compromise, and will never vote Democratic anyway. We should stop wasting time and money trying to find compromises that will never be found.⁶⁴²

Like Ben, Mike Hartley is also a self-described liberal. When asked how he felt about nominating pro-life Democrats, Mike had this to say:

I feel it is a mistake. Abortion rights [are] a key indicator and insight into an individual's viewpoint on other civil rights issues. I am generally leery of anybody who would force an unwanted child into this already grossly overpopulated world...On an issue this pivotal, there should be no such thing as a pro-life Democrat. There should be no "Blue Dog Democrats," no "moderate

⁶⁴² Ibid.

conservatives" or my personal favorite, "Reagan Democrats." Politicians should not be allowed to hide behind the title of Democrat while behaving like a Republican to get elected in a "red state" or conservative district.⁶⁴³

And far from serving as isolated instances, the concerns raised by both Calhoun and Hearty only echo past unease raised by liberal political activists and observers who similarly argue that by recruiting pro-life candidates, the Democratic Party runs the risk of moving to the right. For instance, former NARAL president Kate Michaelman is on record as saying, "It is a problem when leading Democrats publicly recruit candidates who do not share the core values of the party," adding "I don't think you ever win in the long term by sacrificing core principles. The right wing has never done that."⁶⁴⁴ While Ruth Marcus wrote in the buildup to the 2006 midterm elections:

The risk is that, in the process of maneuvering, Democrats' reframing and rebranding could edge into retreating on core principles.

It's fine for Hillary Clinton to talk about the "tragedy" of abortion, or for Democrats to emphasize the importance of reducing the number of unwanted pregnancies. But I get awfully nervous when Redeem the Vote's Brinson says of abortion, "As long as the national Democratic Party makes that a centerpiece of their platform or something they're advocating, as long as that's front and center

⁶⁴³ E-mail Interview with Mike Hearty on faith outreach, abortion and the Democratic Party, July 12, 2010.

⁶⁴⁴ Steven Ertelt, "Abortion Advocates Still Upset by Pro-Life Senate Candidates, *LifeNews.com*, March 11, 2005. Found online at: <<http://www.lifenews.com/nat1226.html>> (Accessed August 16, 2010).

and they're saying women have a right to do this, it's going to turn off religious voters.”

So, by all means, let Democrats woo evangelicals and cast the message in a way that speaks to religious voters. But in doing so, keep in mind: What does it profit a party to gain a demographic but lose its soul?⁶⁴⁵

In evaluating these concerns, it is worth asking: Has this really been the case? Has the party as a whole really veered to the right on issues of reproductive rights just to gain some headway with evangelical voters? To answer this question, it is helpful to turn to the congressional voting records.

Have Congressional Democrats Moved to the Right on Abortion?

Founded in 1973 as a response to that year’s Supreme Court ruling, *Roe v. Wade*, which legalized abortion in America, the National Right to Life Committee is today the largest pro-life organization in the United States with more than 3,000 chapters in all fifty states and the District of Columbia. Its monthly news letter is read by more than 400,000 activists, and Forbes Magazine has listed the NRLC as the eighth most influential lobbying group in Washington

⁶⁴⁵ Ruth Marcus, “The New Temptation of Democrats,” *The Washington Post*, May 23, 2006. Found online at: <<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/05/22/AR2006052201154.html>> (Accessed June 5, 2010).

D.C.⁶⁴⁶ Every year, the NRLC releases a congressional scorecard, in which members of congress are graded based upon the votes they cast for specific pieces of legislation in which the NRLC has a particular interest. At the end of each Congress a complete congressional scorecard is released.

As the NRLC is opposed to all abortions, including in cases of rape, incest and physical harm to the mother, their congressional scorecards serve as an ideal barometer against which congressional voting patterns can be better evaluated. If for instance progressive critics such as Ruth Marcus are correct, then we should see an increase in the number of Democrats who regularly vote in accordance with the NRLC from the 110th Congress and on.⁶⁴⁷ This chapter draws on every NRLC congressional score card since the 105th Congress (the earliest available score card made available by the NRLC online).⁶⁴⁸ It has reviewed the votes of every Democrat in the United States House of Representatives for the past 14 years and has noted any Democrat receiving an NRLC score of 50% or more. In each Congress, the total number of Democrats receiving a score of 50% or more has been added up and subsequently compared against that of other Congresses. Moreover, as the number of Democrats varies with each Congress, a percentage figure has been similarly provided.

Contrary to the warnings of Marcus and others, evidence at this time seemingly negates the premise that running socially moderate and pro-life Democrats in competitive congressional districts is otherwise forcing the party to the abandon reproductive rights. Indeed, as the graph

⁶⁴⁶ Hrafnkell Haraldsson, "Things the Culture Warriors Don't Want You to Know," *Politicus USA*, September 27, 2010. Found online at: <<http://www.politicususa.com/en/hoosier-dan-coats>> (Accessed July 8, 2011).

⁶⁴⁷ The 110th Congress was seated in 2006 and is the first Congress since the 104th Congress in which Democrats held a majority of the seats. Moreover, the 2006 midterm election is also the first election in which the Democratic National Party (DNC) and the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee (DCCC) invested significant resources in faith outreach, while also running moderate and socially conservative candidates in several targeted elections.

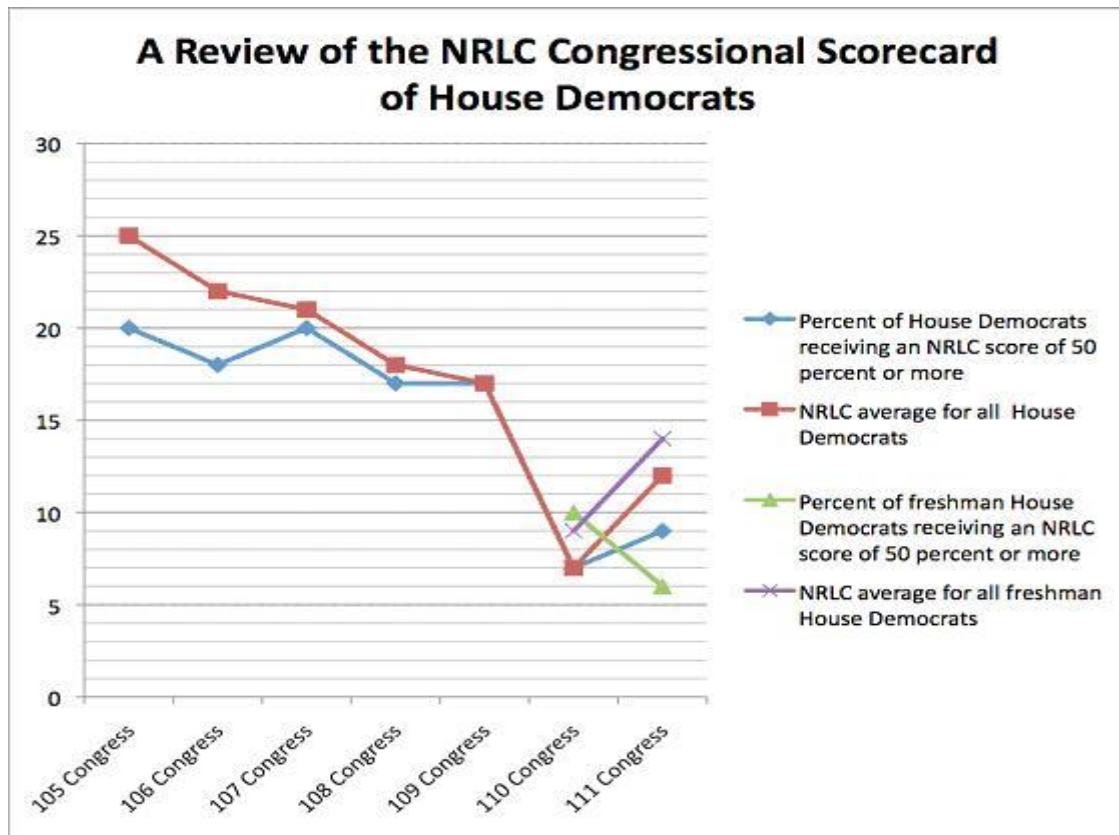
⁶⁴⁸ NRLC Staff Writer, "National Right to Life Federal Legislation," *National Right to Life Committee*, 2010. Found online at: <<http://capwiz.com/nrlc/home/>> (Accessed August 16, 2010).

below demonstrates, the propensity by which House Democrats have cast pro-life votes has consistently fallen since the 105 Congress, with the most dramatic decline coming between the 109th and 110th Congress, the very years in which Democrats sought to broaden their appeal to evangelical voters.

Figure 9.1

A Comparative NRLC Scorecard of House Democrats:

The 105th Congress through the 111th Congress



Another interesting finding is the percentage of House Democrats receiving a score of 50% or more from the NRLC. While this figure usually trends with the overall NRLC House

Democratic average, we see a remarkable break when freshman House Democrats of the 110th and 111th Congresses are singled out. In these instances, while freshman House Democrats did cast more pro-life votes in the 111th Congress than they did in the 110th Congress, the overall percentage of freshman House Democrats who received a NRLC score of 50% or more not only fell when compared against the 110th Congress, but similarly fell below the average for the entire House caucus. This evidence suggests that while it may be accurate to describe many newer House Democrats as more socially moderate, they are far from being solidly pro-life. Instead, these Democrats may be seeking to find some sort of middle ground, whereby they can pacify a more conservative constituency back home while also appeasing the more liberal elements of their political base. In these instances, we often find that many of newer House Democrats, while ultimately supportive of a woman's right to choose in many, if not all cases, offer such support conditionally and are unwilling to provide federal funds to subsidize abortions. Along these lines, we would also presume that many of these newer, more socially conservative Democrats would also be less supportive of abortions occurring later in the pregnancy. However, since Democrats have assumed control of the House in 2006, such a vote has never occurred, which raises another important point, namely the importance of congressional agenda control.

Explanation of Findings: The Importance of Congressional Agenda Control

Congressional agenda control is a major political advantage for any governing party. By controlling which pieces of legislation receive a floor vote and which do not; congressional

leaders have at their disposal a major public relations weapon. As Gary Cox and Matthew McCubbins argue, by controlling floor votes, congressional leaders can exercise their agenda control in either a “positive” or “negative” manner. Negative agenda control is exercised by keeping “issues off the floor agenda that would foreseeably displease significant portions of the party.”⁶⁴⁹ As such, negative agenda control is a common legislative strategy pursued when significant disagreement is had on various policy issues. By contrast, positive agenda control manifests around issues of considerable political agreement, though as Cox and McCubbins also point out, it “varies with the degree to which the party membership agrees on what the party’s collective reputation should be.”⁶⁵⁰ Meaning that the more polarizing an issue is, the less likely it is to receive a floor vote.

On the issue of abortion, while in control of the House leadership, Democrats routinely exercised considerable political discretion, or rather, a “negative” agenda strategy, when it came to pursuing their legislative goals. This was likely due to the fact that abortion laws in America are among the least restrictive in the world and as such, many congressional Democrats may simply be happy with the status quo and thus feel little need to push for any further legal protections. However, such reasoning fails to take into account the United States prohibition banning federal subsidization of abortion procedures, and numerous other state laws, such as parental notification laws and mandatory counseling and waiting periods, all of which groups such as NOW, NARAL and Planned Parenthood would love to see gone. As such, it is much more likely that the reason why Democrats have pursued a negative agenda strategy on this particular issue is because by doing otherwise, they would raise significant public attention to a

⁶⁴⁹ Gary Cox, Chris Den Hartog and Matthew D. McCubbins, “The Motion to Recommit in the United States House of Representatives,” in *Party, Process and Political Change in Congress: New Perspectives on the History of Congress*, eds. David W. Brady and Matthew D. McCubbins (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), 152.

⁶⁵⁰ Cox and McCubbins, “Short Title,” 153.

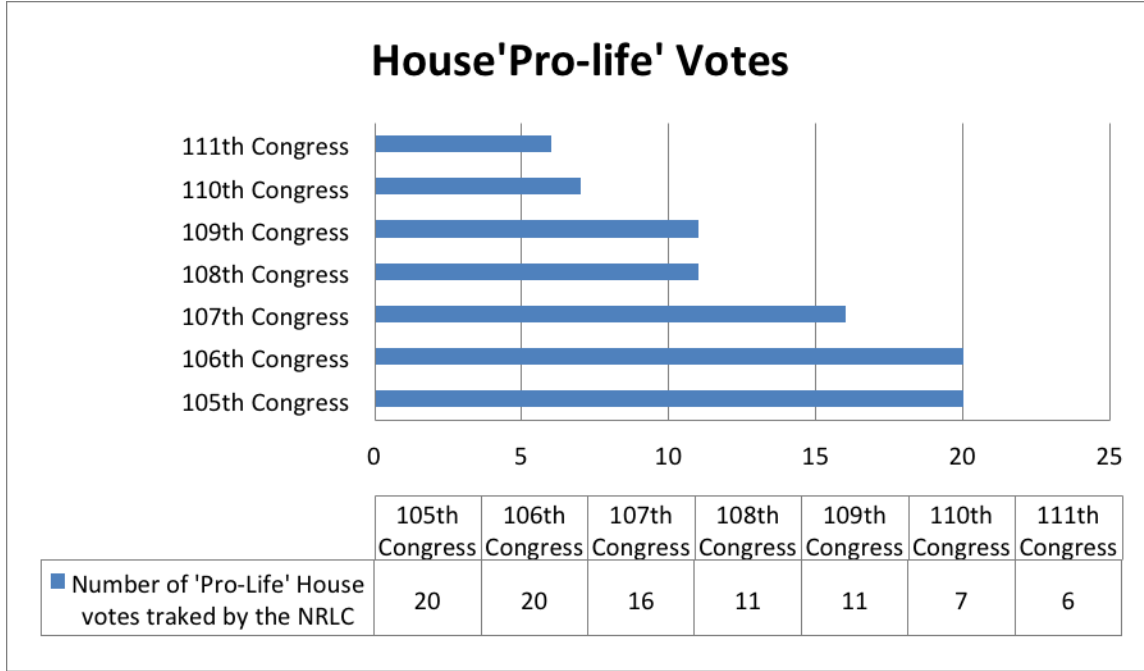
deeply polarizing issue, thereby placing many of their caucus members and political allies in politically precarious positions. As such, in choosing which abortion issues to address, Democrats have chosen a more benign legislative strategy, focusing on issues of stem cell research and the lifting of the global gag rule;⁶⁵¹ issues that not only pleased their base but which received little public outcry.

By contrast, Republicans, when they were in the majority, regularly made use of their legislative agenda control to bring forward issues that not only divide congressional Democrats internally, but which placed their political rivals at odds with the broader America electorate. As the graph below demonstrates, Republican leadership is much more likely to bring abortion legislation to a floor vote than their political counterparts, as shown by the below graph:

⁶⁵¹ The “Global Gag Rule,” also known as the “Mexico City Rule” is an intermittent American policy that prohibits International NGOs receiving federal funds from providing abortion services or discussing abortion options.

Figure 9.2

Number of Abortion Votes by Congress



At first glance these findings suggest that Republicans are a more homogenous body than their Democratic opponents, at least on matters of abortion. Yet figures can be deceiving. When, for instance, we examine the various pieces of legislation that the Republican leadership brought to a floor vote, never do we find a bill banning abortion outright, as this in itself would be greatly controversial within Republican ranks. Instead, abortion votes under the Republican leadership were on issues selected to place Democrats at odds with American public opinion. For example, bills criminalizing third trimester abortions, commonly referred to as “partial birth abortions,” were regularly brought to floor votes, as such legislation was introduced no fewer than nine times throughout the 105th, 106th, 107th and 108th Congresses.⁶⁵² By contrast, when

⁶⁵² These bills included: Roll Call No. 65 (03/20/1997), Roll Call No. 500 (10/08/1997), Roll Call No. 325 (07/23/1998), Roll Call No. 104 (04/05/2000), Roll Call No. 342 (07/24/2002), Roll Call No. 343 (07/24/2002), Roll Call No. 241 (06/04/2003), Roll Call No. 242 (06/04/2003), Roll Call No. 530 (10/02/2003).

Democrats were in power during the 110th and 111th Congresses, Speaker Pelosi never allowed any bill addressing third trimester abortions to have a floor debate. Such a move is perfectly logical when one considers the political realities facing Pelosi. For starters, unrestricted access to third trimester abortions is largely opposed by the majority of the American public and similarly, by many House Democrats. Moreover, as the status quo currently protects a woman's right to have a third trimester abortion regardless of her rationale, there is no political upside in bringing this issue to the floor. Instead, Pelosi, like her Republican counterparts before her, focused on reproductive issues that her party was in considerable agreement on, and which cast Democrats in a more positive light, while at the same time vilifying Republicans.

Conclusion

By enabling dissident religious elements such as creation care and the emerging church movement the means to reach a broader audience, the Internet has ushered in an era of new religious and theological possibilities. In so doing, it has similarly challenged the hegemony of the old evangelical vanguard and the politics of the Christian Right by providing worshipers alternative Christian messages and different religious expressions and experiences. Moreover, in shifting the focus of the evangelical conversation towards issues such as environmental stewardship and the social gospel, these new religious movements have positively demonstrated that many evangelicals have indeed moved beyond the sterile culture war politics of the 1980s and 1990s and are embracing a broader social platform.

Yet far from being a mere theological development, the evolving nature of the evangelical tradition demands political scientists to reconsider long held notions about politics in America. In particular, given the historically entwined nature of the evangelical community and the Republican Party, and given the continued resistance of many Republican legislators on issues such as environmental protection and economic fairness, a growing number of evangelicals have found themselves yearning for a political alternative. More recently, Democrats have attempted to be that alternative and have made significant investments in faith outreach initiatives. Yet despite these initiatives, many evangelicals, even those of a more moderate and liberal political persuasion, remain troubled by the Democrat's support of abortion rights. In an effort to nullify these concerns, Democratic leaders have recently begun recruiting and running pro-life candidates in more socially conservative districts and states. And although this strategy has paid early electoral dividends, it is not without its opponents.

In particular, many liberal supporters and activists fear that the running of pro-life Democrats weakens the party's stance on reproductive rights and compromises core political values. For instance, as the recent congressional healthcare reform debacle has demonstrated, even caucus members of relatively low rank can cause significant legislative headaches, as was the case with the Stupak amendment.⁶⁵³ Still, as unwelcome as the Stupak saga was, such distractions are arguably a small price to pay, especially when one considers the many electoral inroads Democrats have made since their disastrous 2004 general election showing. Moreover, and quite contrary to many of the concerns addressed throughout this chapter, evidence has been presented, demonstrating that despite a sizable pro-life Democratic caucus, the number of pro-

⁶⁵³ The Stupak-Pitts amendment was offered prior to the House passage of the Affordable Healthcare for America Act, which prohibited federal funds from being used to cover any health plan which covered abortion procedures. The amendment nearly sank healthcare reform and helped to solidify its opposition.

life votes cast during the 110th and 111th Congresses was roughly halved. This reduction is in large part to the majority party's ability to control the legislative agenda. And when for instance Republicans yield this power, we see an increase in the number of floor votes on abortion related matters, many of which are highly divisive in nature, such as outright bans on third trimester abortions. By contrast, when Democrats are the majority party, we see far fewer floor votes on abortion related bills, and those that do take place, are generally more benign in nature. Given this, it is safe to presume that so long as the Democratic congressional leadership remains staunchly pro-choice, or at the very least, unwilling to subject their party to unnecessary political risks, then pursuing an electoral strategy in which pro-life Democrats are tapped to run in more socially conservative and heavily evangelical districts and states is a wise political move for anyone interested in defending abortion rights in America. Because at the end of the day, abortion rights proponents need to ask themselves: Would they rather have a pro-life Republican voting for a pro-life congressional leadership, or a pro-life Democrat voting for a pro-choice Democratic congressional leadership?

CHAPTER TEN
THE END IS NEAR

At the dawn of the Protestant Reformation, Martin Luther turned to the printing press and its mass produced print to help spread his message of *sola scriptura*. Luther was a prolific writer and as demand for his work increased so did the momentum of the Reformation throughout Germany and much of northern Europe. Between the years of 1517 and 1520, Luther authored some 30 religious pamphlets, which collectively sold in excess of 300,000 copies.⁶⁵⁴ Up until then, no other European author had ever enjoyed such success. Had it not been for the invention of the Guttenberg Press, it is all but certain that far fewer people would have ever been exposed to Luther's message or for that matter, his religious protest. On this point Luther himself seems to be in agreement. He once famously described "the art of book printing" as "God's highest and extremest act of grace, whereby the business of the Gospel is driven forward."⁶⁵⁵

Thus from the beginning, Protestants have embraced advances in communication technology as nothing short of a gift from God meant for the purpose of spreading His eternal word. The words of Luther are echoed in those of former executive director of the National Religious Broadcasters, Ben Armstrong, when he writes:

Starting in the predawn hours of each Sunday morning, the largest religious gathering in America takes place, drawing almost 130 million people to their radio and television sets. What happens is both exciting and miraculous. It involves a new approach to the problem as old as the Bible: how to introduce struggling, helpless individuals to a loving God who wants them to meet Him and be born again. This amazing event takes place every week, all week, from early Sunday morning through the final midnight stroke on Saturday night. Making

⁶⁵⁴ Ricardo Duchesne, "Asia First?," *The Journal of the Historical Society* 6, no. 1 (2006): 69-91.

⁶⁵⁵ As quoted by Keith L. Sprunger in *Trumpets From the Tower: English Puritan Printing in The Netherlands 1600-1640* (Boston: Brill Academic Publishers, 1994).

this possible is the awesome technology of broadcasting, which many consider to be one of the major miracles of modern times; and making it meaningful is the overwhelming love of a God who cares passionately about each one of the world's four billion people. I believe that God has raised up this powerful technology expressly to reach every man, woman, boy, and girl on earth with the even more powerful message of the gospel.⁶⁵⁶

Walter Wilson offers near identical praise when he argues that the Internet provides Christians the opportunity to reach every man, woman and child on the face of the earth.⁶⁵⁷ And though it is easy to see how broadcast media and the Internet have expanded the reach of Christian missionaries and ultimately the Christian faith, this thesis has shown that the social impact of these technological media has been vastly different. The advent of electronic broadcasts played a crucial role in uniting what at the start of the twentieth century was a divided evangelical body. With the singularity of its message, broadcast media proved to be a crucial tool uniquely suited for the expansion of bridging social capital among evangelicals of all stripes. As this thesis has further shown, broadcast media also helped in mobilization of evangelicals behind narrowly defined social issues, while similarly increasing aggregate levels of bonding social capital as many viewers of religious programs embedded themselves further into the communal life of their local congregations.

Yet at the same time that religious programming was increasing stocks of social capital and aiding in the mobilization and political engagement of evangelicals, disseminating one's message via broadcast media, and television in particular, proved to be an expensive media to

⁶⁵⁶ Ben Armstrong, *The Electric Church* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1979), 7-8.

⁶⁵⁷ See Peter G. Horsfield and Paul Teusner, "Mediated Religion: Historical Perspectives on Christianity and the Internet Studies in World Christianity," in *Studies in World Christianity* 13, no. 3 (2007): 281 of 278-295.

tap, and as a result, very few individuals and only a handful of ministries could afford its costs. As a result, broadcast media also had the effect of consolidating the evangelical message into the hands of a few nationally recognized televangelists and much listened to radio preachers. By contrast the Internet has instead proven itself to be a much more affordable medium in which the many are empowered at the expense of the elite. Moreover, groups such as Restoring Eden, EEN, and Emergent Village have positively shown that when the Internet is weaved into the broader matrix of social life and serves to complement existing forms of worship and community, the consequences of this new medium can have profound impacts not only on theology and cultural attitudes, but upon broader society as well. And this single fact is nearly impossible to overstate given the sheer number of Americans who identify with the evangelical faith, as well as the religious nature of the American public. Because as we have seen, recent changes in the evangelical community are reverberating throughout the halls of congress and forcing political leaders to reconsider long held positions on an array of social, economic and environmental issues. For its part, this thesis has sought a better understanding of how the new media environment is affecting the interplay between religion and politics in the United States.

New Media and the Cultural Fragmentation of the Evangelical Tradition

Although this thesis regularly refers to the “evangelical community,” the use of this term would have been inappropriate during much of first half the twentieth century. During that time no such community really existed. Instead, evangelicals were a collection of dispersed communities that, in addition to the many institutional and theological differences that persist today, had yet to achieve any resemblance of political unity or cultural coherence. It was not

until the dawn of the broadcast age that this began to change. As we have seen, broadcast media was an invaluable tool that helped bring the many branches of the evangelical family together, as it both replicates the pastor/congregant relationship—insomuch as a religious leader preaches a message to an assembled audience—and similarly amplifies the reach of this message to include far more individuals than could otherwise fit into the pews of a single church. As previously discussed, early concerns that broadcast media would weaken local churches ultimately proved unfounded, as the religious programming on radio and television further embedded its audience into religious life and consequently spilled over to the halls of worship, thus increasing levels of bonded social capital in local congregations.⁶⁵⁸ Moreover, religious programming also had the effect of mobilizing evangelicals behind conservative causes, such as the protection of unborn life and the defense of traditional understandings of marriage. Likewise, the sermons preached on these broadcasts provided its audience shared mediated experiences, which its audience in-turn discussed with family and friends, thus turning the somewhat private nature of religious broadcasting into a more public activity, while the vast and at times national audience of these religious programs afforded strangers a shared connection and sense of identity, thus increasing levels of bridging social capital.

The Internet, as we have seen, works quite differently from the mediums of television and radio. Bruce Bimber describes how by providing a platform from which individuals with similar interests can freely engage one another, the Internet is instead propelling society down the path of accelerated pluralism.⁶⁵⁹ In an online environment, not only are individuals better able to find forums and communities of likeminded individuals, but the inherent interactivity of the World

⁶⁵⁸ Wuthnow, “Significance.”

⁶⁵⁹ Bimber, “Information.” See also; Uslaner, “Trust.”

Wide Web allows for deeper and often times more fulfilling forms of engagement.⁶⁶⁰ In this regard, the Internet is quite adept at providing its users networks and communities to which otherwise could not belong.⁶⁶¹ In doing so, those with similar backgrounds, common interests and/or shared values, irrespective of how niche these interests, values or backgrounds may prove to be, can readily congregate and advance the interests of these newly forged groups in ways not easily or cheaply achieved with broadcast media.⁶⁶² .

Indeed, throughout this thesis, numerous examples have been provided illustrating the many ways in which the Internet is daily being used to overcome spaced-based limitations, strengthen fringe interest groups, forge new communities. For instance, A.J. Swodoba informed us that the Internet has allowed him to expand what he calls his “eco-theological” work by placing him in contact with creation care leaders such as Peter Illyn. Similarly, we also have seen how Emergent Village is using the Internet to promote an alternative, and ultimately more tolerant and service-centered, interpretation of the Christian Gospel, through the combination of a number of online practices that facilitate off-line engagement; most notably the promotion of in-person meet-ups, which Emergent Village calls cohorts. At its most basic level, however, the Internet is empowering evangelicals to reconsider their faith and engage in a more authentic national religious dialogue, which many had been denied throughout much of the 80s and 90s. Cris Bisch of Sustain Lane is a prime example of this. Bisch lives in Lorane, Oregon; the nearest town with a stoplight is some 45 minutes away. Needless to say, for individuals such as Bisch, the Internet serves as connection to the outside world that enables users to belong to, engage with, and ultimately change communities beyond their physical location. It expands for Bisch

⁶⁶⁰ Hopkins et al., “Social Capital.”

⁶⁶¹ Pierce and Lovrich Jr., “Internet Technology.”

⁶⁶² Bimber, “Information.”

and people like her, available social networks (bridging social capital), and can similarly serve as the foundation for deeper, more enriching personal relationships (bonding social capital).

As the Internet has come to occupy an ever-larger portion of the media environment, culturally dominate actors and institutions have expanded their presence online in what is undoubtedly an attempt to remain relevant in today's rapidly changing media landscape. Yet the very nature of the Internet is one in which the many are able to converse directly with the many, and its direct appeal to participatory engagement goes against the grain of many institutional organization.⁶⁶³ Underlying the premise of accelerated pluralism is the understanding that society is undergoing a period of significant fragmentation whereby interest-based group politics is shifting towards a more fluid issue-based group politics, consequentially resulting in declining institutional coherence.⁶⁶⁴ Thus the Internet is an ideal platform for dissident and fringe cultural elements as it enables them to amplify their voice and raise their respected concerns. Within the evangelical tradition, those supportive of movements such as creation care and the emerging church have historically been cultural outsiders. As we have seen, however, with the aide of the Internet these movements are not only enjoying broader mainstream support within the evangelical community, but their embrace of divergent cultural values and theological persuasions is slowly, yet steadily, displacing the cultural hegemony of the established Christian Right.

Through its examination of relevant academic and popular literature, on-the-ground interviews of religious leaders, church laity and movement activists, a thorough analysis of historical developments, polling data and surveys, this thesis has explored the role the Internet has played in the fragmentation of the evangelical church, and has done so based primarily on an

⁶⁶³ Boerl and Perkins, 2011.

⁶⁶⁴ Bimber, "Internet and Political Transformation."

analysis of social capital, civic engagement and mobilization. Having conducted this exhaustive review, we can confirm the first hypothesis of this thesis, namely that recent evangelical fragmentation is to some extent the result of the proliferation of the Internet, whereby dissident cultural and theological elements are afforded more efficient means of organization and networking, thus enabling them to better challenge the established orthodoxy of the evangelical tradition.

Similarly, this thesis has also shown that in healthy religious communities where social capital is plentiful, the mobilization of believers can be easily achieved. This is so as such communities enjoy key advantages their secular counter-parts do not, such as recognized and respected religious leaders perceived by their supporters as conducting God's will, a strong collective identity and a shared values framework. From a mobilization and civic engagement perspective, the advantages of these institutional mechanisms are difficult to overstate, as not only do they enhance and strengthen relative stocks of social capital, but they can similarly be leveraged to grow other forms of capital as well, such as human and financial capital, which can be used for both individual and collective gains.⁶⁶⁵ Because of this, many individuals find considerable inter-personal strength as a result of the religious communities to which they belong, while the resulting feelings of trust and comradery to one's kin and fellow believer often reinforces the importance of these communities.⁶⁶⁶ Given this, it should come as little surprise that many of the organizations affiliated with evangelical environmentalism and the emerging church, have sought ways to leverage and/or replicate the strength of existing church communities as a means of growing their respected movements. In particular, Emergent Village has gone to considerable lengths to build strong religious communities both online and in the

⁶⁶⁵ Marostica, "Religion."

⁶⁶⁶ Bruno Frey and Alois Stutzer, "What can Economists Learn from Happiness Research?," *Journal of Economic Literature* 40, no. 2 (2002): 402-435.

physical world, yet they are hardly alone in these actions. As this thesis has shown, many of the affiliate organizations viewed in-person religious gatherings as an ideal venue to grow their base of support. Peter Illyn, for instance, routinely uses Christian rock festivals as a means of growing Restoring Eden and raising new awareness of evangelical environmentalism, while the EEN encourages its supporters to establish creation care groups within their own congregations. Similarly, Al Tizon of ESA has found that membership in the organization is strongest when individuals feel a sense of community and are engaged with one another. Given this, while start-up religious organizations are wise to take full advantage of the many possibilities afforded by the Internet, they would be foolish to ignore the importance of physical communities and in-person interactions. Indeed, one of the key features afforded by the Internet is the ease by which online activities can be used to facilitate and sustain physical communities. Such evidence serves to confirm this thesis's second hypothesis, which asserts that while the Internet has greatly contributed to the success of many newer, theologically divergent evangelical movements and organizations, existing church apparatuses which place a premium on in-person meet-ups and collective gatherings, have similarly played an important role in the success of the creation care and emerging church movements, as such church structures offer an intimate setting more suitable for proselytizing and community development.

New Media and the Cultural Polarization of the Evangelical Tradition

At the same time that new theological movements have begun taking root within the broader evangelical tradition, we are witnessing a growing political moderation on the part of those individuals identifying with the selected case studies, as well as many younger evangelical

Christians. Polling data from both the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life and the Barna Research Group confirm this point, as do a variety of other recent surveys.⁶⁶⁷ Unfortunately, polling data examining the cultural values of evangelical environmentalists and emergent Christians is non-existent. To address this shortcoming, this thesis constructed a 45 question online survey entitled the *Internet and Evangelicals* survey, which was completed by 850 individuals who answered online pleas throughout the creation care and/or emerging church webspheres. This survey, as already noted, has shortcomings of its own and is perhaps best viewed as the collection of 850 structured interviews. Yet despite this, the *Internet and Evangelicals* survey offers considerable qualitative evidence suggesting clear cultural and political divergence on the part of survey takers from that of the broader evangelical community. Given this, I urge scholars to view the *Internet and Evangelicals* survey as reason enough to pursue further statistical exploration into diverging political beliefs of the emergent Christians and evangelical environmentalists.

While it is beyond the scope of this thesis to determine in quantifiable terms the exact extent to which the Internet is responsible for the changing cultural values of American evangelicals, we can, based on a growing body of anecdotal and circumstantial evidence, as well as past historical examples, safely conclude that the Internet is indeed playing some role in both the fragmentation and polarization of American evangelicals. Such a phenomenon, as this thesis has shown, is not only the source of considerable unrest within the evangelical tradition, but is similarly challenging the cultural hegemony of the Christians Right by offering worshippers an alternative Christian narrative and religious experience. In so doing, movements such as creation care and the emerging church are leading many contemporary evangelicals down a more

⁶⁶⁷ Refer to Pew Forum Staff Writer, "How the Faithful Voted," and Barna Staff Writer, 2002; 2009. See also, PBS Staff Writer, "Younger Evangelicals and the 2008 Election," *Religion and Ethics*, September 29, 2008. Found online at: <<http://www.pbs.org/wnet/religionandethics/week1204/survey.html>> (Accessed July 4, 2011).

moderate political and religious path than that of previous generations. The tensions that have arisen because of this ought to be viewed as the destruction of social capital in one form (namely the cultural unification and political mobilization which was carefully fostered and cultivated by the Christian Right), and the creation of new social capital in another (represented by those organizations that have developed in response to issues previously neglected and/or opposed to the Christian Right). The articulation of these cultural values as well as the ways in which they play out in the larger political landscape are important points of inquiry, as the impacts of these developments require scholars to reconsider what were once accepted political truths.

The Pluralization of the Evangelical Tradition and a Return to Religious Competition

With its ability to facilitate the bridging of denominational divides, broadcast media such as radio and television helped solidify the evangelical tradition into an identifiable religious community and aided in the formation of a formidable electoral constituency. But the days in which the radio and television reign supreme are long over. As we have seen, the Internet is better enabling evangelicals to reorient themselves into ever-smaller niche clusters and is similarly aiding in the division this once culturally homogeneous and monolithic voting bloc.⁶⁶⁸ As a result of the fragmentation, new religious expressions and theological persuasions are finding increased acceptability and have helped to break the religious monologue once monopolized by the Christian Right. While many in the Christian Right bemoan this fact, the multiplication of faith expressions comes at a particularly crucial time as over the last decade the

⁶⁶⁸ Boerl and Perkins, 2011.

evangelical tradition, like their mainline brethren before them, has seen a steady decline in church membership.⁶⁶⁹

Arguably, one of the primary reasons for the recent declines in evangelical church attendance is due to the generality of the evangelical message, which in its attempts to reach as broad a swath of the public as possible, has failed to cater to the diverse spiritual needs of the American churchgoer. However, as the Internet helps pave the way for new religious movements and alternative faith experiences to flourish, America is witnessing a return to religious market-place competition, which if nothing else, should slow recent religious exodus. One of the more common manifestations of an alternative religious experience taking root in America is the recent ascent of the so-called house church. Among the selected case studies of the creation care and emerging church movements, house churches have proven particularly popular with the latter group. One reason why emerging Christians have so eagerly embraced the house church is undoubtedly due to the hostilities the emerging church has incurred from within the established evangelical tradition, as well as for the communal nature the house church provides. However, while emergent Christians may have garnered a particular reputation for meeting in house churches, they are far from alone. Indeed, meeting for religious services in private residences has become somewhat of a regular occurrence in the United States. In 2006, for instance, The Barna Group published a survey in which it was found that 1 in 4 Americans who attend church service do so at a house church,⁶⁷⁰ meaning that in any given week, some 20 million American adults can be found attending a house church gathering. Based on their research, the Barna group writes that they:

⁶⁶⁹ Spencer, "Coming Collapse;" see also Wicker, *Fall*.

⁶⁷⁰ Barna Group Staff Writer, "House Church Involvement is Growing," June 19, 2006. Found online at: <<http://www.barna.org/barna-update/article/19-organic-church/151-house-church-involvement-is-growing>> (Accessed April 20, 2010).

Anticipate house church attendance during any given week to double in the coming decade, and a growing proportion of house church attendees to adopt the house church as their primary faith community. That continued growth and public awareness will firmly establish the house church as a significant means of faith experience and expression among Americans.⁶⁷¹

There is concern, however, that as the house church becomes of ever-greater importance to the American religious experience, the risk that these congregations will lose ties with larger religious matrixes intensifies, thus increasing the potential for isolation and extremism. While troubling, it is important to place this concern in greater relief. For instance, while Barna currently estimates that 1 in 4 church-going Americans attend a house church, he concludes that only 1 in 20 do so exclusively.⁶⁷²

Another way to look at this phenomenon is like this: while the house church movement is today an important development on the religious scene, it serves primarily, though not exclusively, as a supplement to one's faith experience. The overlap which exists between house churches and traditional worship venues is likely of crucial importance as it may well serve to moderate smaller, would-be dissident religious elements, while simultaneously pushing larger, more stagnant religious bodies into new theological territories. This can be true from both a liberal and conservative perspective, but as Chapter 7 has shown, the fragmentation of the evangelical tradition, while creating extremes on both ends of the political/religious spectrums,

⁶⁷¹ Ibid.

⁶⁷² Ibid.

similarly serves to moderate America's religious impulse by reinvigorating a religious marketplace once dominated by the Christian Right.

While some might view alternative theological and religious expressions as simply a matter of faith, such a perception would indeed be naïve. For instance, in expanding their social concerns beyond the culture war issues of the 1980s and 1990s, many evangelicals are bringing considerable new weight to issues such as environmental protection, the eradication of HIV/AIDS, the end of poverty and the prevention of human trafficking. Moreover, this expanded list of social concerns is serving to further undermine the historic electoral strategy of the Republican Party, as attention to such issues provides Democrats a crucial entry point in their courtship of evangelical voters.

The Politics of Evangelical Environmentalism

Historically, environmental protection has mattered little to American evangelical Christians and as a result, Republican lawmakers have had few political incentives to adopt environmental protection as a centerpiece of their legislative agenda. More recently, however, a growing number of evangelicals have come to adopt environmental protection as a matter of biblical importance. Their belief that God entrusted humanity to care for, and tend to the "Garden," has up-ended established political orders and is arguably the single most significant development to occur within the broader environmental movement over the past several decades. This is so as in order for meaningful environmental policies to be passed in Washington, some measure of bi-partisan support will inevitably be needed. Yet the impetus for such support has

long been lacking, as it has been only recently that evangelical voters have come to view environmental degradation as a serious moral and political issue.

As this thesis has shown, the Internet has played a sizable role in connecting what has at times been called the “diaspora” of the creation care movement. Unsurprisingly, however, evangelical environmentalism, with its widespread religious appeal, its nuanced creation theology and its transformative cultural and political capabilities, has similarly emerged as one of the most divisive issues confronting the evangelical community today. While many religious organizations and individuals have spoken out against evangelical environmentalism, few have done so with more vitriol than the Cornwall Alliance, which through the Resisting the Green Dragon campaign, has had this to say about creation care:

Climate change has split the Evangelical Christian world asunder. On one side, a minority say that the biblical edict to look out for the poor and be good stewards of God's creation makes them natural allies of those who would limit human emissions of greenhouse gases.

On the other, a far larger group argues that climate change is a fairy tale that progressives tell their children to scare them into being good little humanists, and environmentalism is a “false gospel” that threatens to co-opt the teachings of Christ himself.⁶⁷³

⁶⁷³ See for instance, Wen Stephenson, “Evangelicals are Greener Than You Think,” *Grist*, December 21, 2010. Found online at: <<http://www.grist.org/article/2010-12-21-evangelicals-are-greener-than-you-think>> (Accessed July 5, 2011).

Undoubtedly, it is the hope of the Cornwall Alliance that campaigns such as Resisting the Green Dragon will ultimately prove successful in stemming the rising tide of the creation care movement. It is for this reason why many Alliance members celebrated the findings of an October 2010 survey by the Pew Research Center, which showed a mere 16% of regular churchgoing evangelicals believed climate change to be a “very serious” problem.⁶⁷⁴ As expected, some observers flagged this poll as evidence that the creation care movement had failed to win sizable support within the evangelical community.⁶⁷⁵ Yet in order to arrive at this conclusion, one would have to dismiss the poll’s other findings, such as the number of evangelicals who believe climate change to be a “somewhat serious” problem. When these two groups are added together, the number of evangelicals who view climate change as a “somewhat” or “serious” problem rises to a more respectable 47%. Similarly, this same survey also found that some 42% of evangelicals believe climate change to a problem requiring “immediate government action.”⁶⁷⁶ Though in fairness to the Cornwall Alliance, when the findings of the 2010 Pew Research Center survey are compared against those of the 2008 Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life survey, we do find evidence that suggests some waning of evangelical environmental support. With this said, it is important to remember that like all public opinions, those of the evangelical community are subject to fluctuations as well as periodic mood swings. Moreover, if there has been a decline in evangelical support for greater environmental protection, as there may well indeed be, such a decline would mirror that of the

⁶⁷⁴ Pew Research Center Staff Writer, “Little Change in Opinion for Climate Change,” *Pew Research Center*, October 27, 2010. Found online at: <<http://people-press.org/2010/10/27/little-change-in-opinions-about-global-warming/>> (Accessed July 6, 2011).

⁶⁷⁵ Wen Stephenson, “The Good Fight,” *Slate*, December 13, 2010. Found online at: <<http://www.slate.com/id/2277608/pagenum/all/#p2>> (Accessed July 6, 2011).

⁶⁷⁶ Stephenson, “Greener Than You Think.”

broader American public, which on the whole has become more skeptical of climate change science since 2008.⁶⁷⁷

Yet while polling data may suggest some evangelical retreat from the creation care movement, other evidence indicates that the cause of evangelical environmentalism is as strong as ever. For instance, as late as 2004 only a handful of colleges affiliated with the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities (CCCU) had any creation care programs on campus. Today, however, a creation care program and/or initiatives can be found on campuses of more than half of all affiliate institutions. During this same period, a number of national evangelical leaders have come out in support of creation care, including some who previously railed against it. Their support could well bring others to the cause, while the very fact that the Christian Right now feels the need to attack creation care as openly and as hostilely as the Cornwall Alliance does, should serve as further evidence to the growing popularity of evangelical environmentalism.

As the number of evangelicals who view environmental protection as a matter of theological importance grows, Republicans, whose electoral success has for decades now have been dependent upon the evangelical vote, find themselves under new pressure to adopt greener environmental policies. While many elected Republicans have thus far largely resisted these pressures, increasingly, a number of high profile Republicans, such as South Carolina Senator Lindsey Graham, are coming out in favor of greater environmental protections. As Graham notes, “I have been to enough college campuses to know if you are 30 or younger this climate issue is not a debate...it’s a value. These young people grew up with recycling and a sensitivity to the environment—and the world will be better off for it. They are not brainwashed...From a

⁶⁷⁷ Pew Research Center Staff Writer, “Few Americans See Solid Evidence of Climate Change,” *Pew Research Center*, October 22, 2009. Found online at: <<http://people-press.org/2009/10/22/fewer-americans-see-solid-evidence-of-global-warming/>> (Accessed July 28, 2011).

Republican point of view, we should buy into it and embrace it and not belittle them.”⁶⁷⁸ Given this information, we can confidently affirm the third hypothesis of this thesis: that with the growing popularity of the creation care movement, environmental protection has increasingly become an important electoral issue among evangelical Christians, and is putting new pressure on Republican politicians to support greener environmental policies.

If Republicans are wise, they will take Senator Graham’s advice and begin adopting a friendly environmental platform. If they do not, not only does the party run the risk of alienating a future generation of American voters, but they also place into jeopardy the support of evangelical environmentalists, whose votes Republicans desperately need to win elections. Already, Democrats have attempted to dampen evangelical Republican support by using the environment as a decisive electoral wedge issue. Yet as we have seen, even this strategy is not without its political risks, as like the Republicans, Democrats must also navigate a complex political coalition, of which many members are uneasy over party’s recent faith outreach endeavors.

Faith Outreach, Abortion Politics and the Democratic Party

Increasingly, Democrats are viewing the changing cultural landscape of the evangelical community as a means of making electoral inroads with religious voters. Environmental protection is one issue Democrats have sought to use as a wedge between evangelicals and the Republican Party. As this thesis has shown, in recent years, a growing number of evangelicals have adopted creation care as a matter of theological importance and have even gone so far as to

⁶⁷⁸ As quoted by Tali Aaron, “Are Red Republicans turning Green? Lindsey Graham Leads the Way,” *Buildaroo*, March 3, 2010. Found online at: <<http://buildaroo.com/news/article/republicans-green-lindsey-graham/>> (Accessed July 28, 2011).

equate environmental protection as part of the broader pro-life agenda.⁶⁷⁹ However, while the values of the Democratic Party and evangelical voters are increasingly finding common ground, the party's historic support of abortion rights keeps it at odds with most evangelicals, even those who have become more moderate on several other political issues.⁶⁸⁰ Democrats are well aware that the issue of abortion remains a key hurdle in winning additional evangelical votes; they want to use the bridge provided by environmental protection, but not if it means compromise on core values. Comparing the abortion voting records of the 105th through 111th Congress, I found that despite a growing pro-life Democratic House Caucus, the number of anti-abortion floor votes dramatically declined in those congresses where Democrats were the majority party. Moreover, during these same Congresses, similar declines were also noted among all Democrats with respect to the propensity of casting pro-life votes. This decline can be attributed to the power of congressional agenda control. For instance, when Republicans exercise this power, we see a dramatic increase in the number of abortion votes more generally, as well as votes on more divisive topics specifically, such as third trimester abortion bans. Given this information, Democrats interested in defending abortion rights would be wise to embrace the simple compromise of running pro-life candidates in conservative districts and states, as it is a far better thing to have a pro-life Democrat voting for a pro-choice congressional leadership, than a pro-life Republican voting for a pro-life congressional leadership. As such, we can confirm the final hypothesis of this thesis, that despite the growing number of pro-life Democrats in congress, abortion rights will remain unaffected at the federal level so long as Democrats retain their congressional majorities, as party leaders are unwilling to bring legislation restricting the rights of women to a floor vote.

⁶⁷⁹ Ohlman, "21 Reasons."

⁶⁷⁹ Hunter, "Completely Pro-Life."

⁶⁸⁰ Chamberlain, "Younger Evangelicals."

Final Remarks

Although there is no dispute that religious communities are politically significant, there has been insufficient work probing the relationship between new forms of communication technology and evangelical political mobilization. Academia has similarly failed in addressing how these changes are affecting the broader interplay between religion and politics in the United States.

To fill this gap, this thesis has shown that different media have divergent effects on the potential for the cultural and political orientation religious communities. Due to its sheer size and its past voting practices, this thesis has paid specific attention to the evangelical community. It has shown that while a number of historical events propelled evangelicals to abandon their self-imposed political isolationism, which began in the wake of the Scopes Monkey Trail and lasted through much of the 1970s, the medium of radio and television helped focus evangelical attentions on a narrow set of cultural issues. As a result, from about the 1980s and on, evangelicals have been one of the most monolithic voting blocs in American politics and are today an irreplaceable pillar of Republican political support.

However, recent advances in communication technologies are threatening the established political order by ushering in new religious possibilities that are subsequently resulting in the cultural fragmentation of American evangelicals, a process that both destroys as well as creates social capital. While such fragmentation may be a relatively new phenomenon, historical evidence shows that changing media regimes often have profound and long lasting impacts on religious bodies. In the United States, the Internet has better enabled dissident religious elements the means to more easily and efficiently connect and organize, thus allowing for a propagation of

their message and for the proselytizing of new adherents. Among the movements dividing the evangelical tradition are evangelical environmentalism and the emerging church, which the Christian Right views as both subversive and heretical. Yet due to their growing popularity, these movements are helping to revitalize a stagnant religious marketplace while similarly serving as an ever-greater balance to the cultural and religious hegemony of the Christian Right. For their part, the Democratic Party has begun taking notice of this phenomenon and is attempting to capitalize on what seems to be a moderation of political values among many evangelicals. Indeed, the party's historic support of environmental initiatives as well as its embrace of social justice has allowed Democrats a crucial entry point into the evangelical community. But while Democrats and evangelicals may find themselves with more and more in common, the issue of abortion remains politically problematic. To better navigate this issue, Democrats have recently begun running pro-life candidates in more conservative and heavily evangelical districts and states. Based on the 2006 and 2008 elections, this strategy appears to hold some merit, but it is not without its risks. In particular, the running of pro-life candidates has proved to be a source of tension within the party as fears persist that such an electoral strategy jeopardizes the party's core commitment to the protection of reproductive rights. As this thesis has shown, however, the election of pro-life Democrats actually serves to better reinforce the rights of women, inasmuch as it denies Republicans a congressional majority, thus placing the power of the gavel, and its agenda control, firmly in the hands of the Democratic Party.

Regardless of whether or not Democrats continue to make electoral inroads with religious voters, the cultural fragmentation that currently besets the evangelical community will continue to weaken the Christian Right and will inevitably lead to a reconfiguration of the Republican

political agenda. Such news should come as welcome relief to anyone troubled by the recent wayward drift of the Republican Party or, for that matter, its promotion of policies that reinforce the structures of poverty, which plunder our environment, and that rob future generation of continued prosperity. Like the printing press before it, the Internet is radically changing the world in which we live and is doing so, at least in part, by affecting the way we worship and understand religion at the most fundamental level. In the United States, this shifting religious ground is likewise impacting the nature of political discourse. As scholars it is crucial that we better understand the many cultural, economic and political complexities of a fragmented evangelical community. For this reason, additional inquiry is demanded.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Aaron, Tali, "Are Red Republicans turning Green? Lindsey Graham Leads the Way," *Buildaroo*, March 3, 2010. Found online at: <<http://buildaroo.com/news/article/republicans-green-lindsey-graham/>> (Accessed July 28, 2011).
- Abbot, Andrew, "Sequence Analysis: New Methods for Old Ideas," *Annual Review of Sociology* 21, no.1 (1995).
- Adamany, David, "Are Political Scientists Ready for Politics?," *Remarks at the Annual State Politics and Policy Conference*, Springfield, Illinois, June 5, 2010.
- Ahlstrom, Sydney E., *A Religious History of the American People*, 2nd Ed. (New Haven and London: Yale University of Press, 1999).
- Ammerman, Nancy T, "Bowling together: Congregations and the American civic order," *The Arizona State University Lecture in Religion*, February 26, 1996. Found online at: <<http://digilib.bu.edu/dspace/bitstream/handle/2144/43/bolwing.pdf?sequence=1>> (Accessed November 14, 2007).
- Anderson, Benedict, *Imagined Communities: Reflections and on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism, Revised and Expanded Edition* (London: Verso, 1991).
- Antle, W. James, III., "The Brad Ellsworth Test," *The American Spectator*, April 2, 2010. Found online at: <<http://spectator.org/archives/2010/04/02/the-brad-ellsworth-test>> (Accessed September 1, 2010).
- Armstrong, Ben, *The Electric Church* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1979), 7-8.
- Arniel, Barbara, *Diverse Communities: The Problem with Social Capital* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006).
- Bader-Saye, Scott, "The Emergent Matrix: A New Kind of Church?," *The Christian Century* 121, no. 24 (2004).
- Ball-Rokeach, Sandra J. and Melvyn DeFleur, "A Dependency Model of Mass-media Effects," in *Inter-Media: Interpersonal Communication in the Media*, eds. G. Gumpert and R. Cathcart (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979).
- Bampton, R. and C. J. Cowton, "The E-Interview," *Forum Qualitative Social Research* 3, no. 2 (2002). Found online at: <<http://www.qualitative-research.net/fqs/>> (Accessed March 3, 2009).
- Bandow, Doug, "Who Would Jesus Kill?," *Anti-War.com*, May 18, 2007. Found online at: <<http://original.antiwar.com/doug-bandow/2007/05/18/who-would-jesus-kill/>> (Accessed January 6, 2011).
- Barna Group Staff Writer, "Christian Mass Media Reach More Adults With the Christian Message Than Do Churches," *The Barna Research Group*, July 2, 2002. Found online at: <<http://www.barna.org/barna-update/article/5-barna-update/77-christian-mass-media-reach-more-adults-with-the-christian-message-than-do-churches>> (Accessed June 6, 2011).
- Barna Group Staff Writer, "House Church Involvement is Growing," June 19, 2006. Found online at: <<http://www.barna.org/barna-update/article/19-organic-church/151-house-church-involvement-is-growing>> (Accessed April 20, 2010).
- Barna Group Staff Writer, "Christian Mass Media Reach More Adults With the Christian Message Than Do Churches," *The Barna Group*, July 2, 2009. Found online at: <<http://www.barna.org/barna-update/article/5-barna-update/77-christian-mass-media-reach-more-adults-with-the-christian-message-than-do-churches>> (Accessed May 22, 2011).

- Barna Group Staff Writer, "How Many People Really Attend a House Church?," *The Barna Group*, 2009. Found online at: <<http://www.barna.org/barna-update/article/19-organic-church/291-how-many-people-really-attend-a-house-church-barna-study-finds-it-depends-on-the-definition>> (Accessed November 21, 2010).
- Barna Group Staff Writer, "New Barna Study Explores Current Views on Abortion," *The Barna Group*, June 14, 2010. Found online at: <<http://www.barna.org/culture-articles/394-new-barna-study-explores-current-views-on-abortion->> (Accessed September 9, 2010).
- Barna Staff Writer, "Born Again Christians Remain Skeptical, Divided About Global Warming," *The Barna Group*, 2007. Found online at: <<http://www.barna.org/barna-update/article/20-donorscause/95-born-again-christians-remain-skeptical-divided-about-global-warming>> (Accessed January 16, 2010).
- Barna, George, *Revolution* (Carol Stream, Illinois: Tyndale House Publishing, 2005).
- Bates, Vernon L., "Lobbying For the Lord: The New Christian Right Home-Schooling Movement and Grassroots Lobbying," *Review of Religious Research* 33, no. 1 (1991).
- Baym, Nancy K., "The New Shape of Online Communities: The Example of Swedish Independent Fandom," *First Monday: Peer-Reviewed Journal of the Internet* 12, no. 8 (2007). Found online at: <<http://firstmonday.org/htbin/cgiwrap/bin/ojs/index.php/fm/article/view/1978/1853>> (Accessed February 8, 2010).
- Bebbington, David B, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989).
- Beck, Glenn, and E. Calvin Beisner, "Glenn Beck," *Fox News*, October 16, 2010. Found online at: <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hvctF7qfQB8>> (Accessed January 13, 2011).
- Berger, Peter, *The Sacred Canopy* (New York: Doubleday, 1967).
- Berger, Peter, *The Heretical Imperative: Contemporary Possibilities of Religious Affirmation* (New York: Doubleday, 1979).
- Bimber, Bruce, Andrew J. Flanagin and Cynthia Stohl, "Reconceptualizing Collective Action in the Contemporary Media Environment," *Communication Theory* 15, no. 4 (2005).
- Bimber, Bruce, "The Internet and Political Transformation: Populism, Community, and Accelerated Pluralism," *Polity* 31, no. 1 (1998): 133-160.
- Bimber, Bruce, *Information and American Democracy: Technology in the Evolution of Political Power* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).
- Blessed Earth Staff Writer, "National Day of Prayer for Creation Care," *Blessed Earth*, 2010. Found online at: <<http://www.blessedearth.org/blogs/news/evangelicalministrieshost300milecreationcarewalk.html>> (Accessed May 28, 2010).
- Boerl, Christopher Wayne Frazier-Crawford and Chris Perkins, "The Political Pluralisation of American Evangelicals: How Old Media Built a Movement and Why the Internet is Poised to Change It," *International Journal for the Study of the Christian Church* 11, no. 1 (2010).
- Boerl, Christopher Wayne Frazier-Crawford, "American Evangelical Christians and the Politics of Climate Change," *St. Anthony's International Review* 5, no. 2 (2010).

- Bourdieu, Pierre, "The Forms of Capital," in *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*, ed. J.G. Richardson (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986).
- Breimeier, Russ, "Light of the World?," *Christianity Today*, May 16, 2007. Found online at: <<http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2007/may/28.66.html?start=1>> (Accessed November 23, 2010).
- Brody, David, "Pro-Lifers Rip Rick Warren on Obama Invocation," *CBN News*, December 18, 2008. Found online at: <<http://blogs.cbn.com/thebrodyfile/archive/2008/12/18/pro-lifers-rip-rick-warren-on-obama-invocation.aspx>> (Accessed August 5, 2010).
- Brody, David, "Obama Campaign Will Launch 'Joshua Generation Project,'" *CBN News*, June 6, 2008. Found online at: <<http://www.cbn.com/cbnnews/388366.aspx>> (Accessed June 15, 2008).
- Brown, Leslie, "50 State Strategy puts faith in action in Oregon," *Faithful Democrats*, 2006. Found online at: <<http://faithfuldemocrats.com/content/view/443/108/>> (Accessed June 16, 2008).
- Buchanan, Mark, *Nexus: Small Worlds and the Groundbreaking Science of Networks* (New York: Norton, 2002).
- Buchanan, Patrick J., "Address to the Republican National Convention," *American Rhetoric*, August 17, 1992. Found online at: <<http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/patrickbuchanan1992rnc.htm>> (Accessed July 9, 2011).
- Burton, Cheryl, "The Mega Church Movement," *ABC News*, November 8, 2005. Found online at: <<http://abclocal.go.com/wls/story?section=news/local&id=3597263>> (Accessed November 24, 2010).
- Butt, Riazat, "Gay Bishop Gene Robinson Announces Plan to Retire Early," *The Guardian*, November 7, 2010. Found online at: <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2010/nov/07/gay-bishop-gene-robinson-retires>> (Accessed December 20, 2010).
- Callahan, Maureen, "Obama Preaches to the Choir: Courts Votes From 'The Joshua Generation,'" *The New York Post*. June 15, 2008. Found Online at: <http://www.nypost.com/seven/06152008/postopinion/opedcolumnists/obama_preaches_to_the_choir_115595.htm> (Accessed June 18, 2008).
- Campbell, David E. and J. Quinn Monson, "The Religion Card Gay Marriage and the 2004 Presidential Election," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 72, no. 3 (2008).
- Campbell, Gabe L., "Right Brain/Left Brain Religion," *TAT Journal* 12, no. 1 (1981). Found online at: <http://www.searchwithin.org/journal/tat_journal-12.html#10> (Accessed June 9, 2011).
- Carnes, Tony. "Disappointed But Holding," *Christianity Today*, February 1, 2006. Found Online at: <<http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2006/february/22.78.html>> (Accessed January 6, 2011).
- Carpenter, Joel A., "Fundamentalist Institutions and the Rise of Evangelical Protestantism, 1929-1942," *Church History* 49, no. 1 (1980).
- Carr, Nicholas, *The Big Switch: Rewiring the World, From Edison to Google* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 2008).
- Carter, Denise, "Living in Virtual Communities: An Ethnography of Human Relationships in Cyberspace," *Information, Communication and Society* 8, no. 2 (2005): 148-167.
- Cathcart, Rebecca, "California's Crystal Cathedral Files for Bankruptcy," *The New York Times*, October 18, 2010. Found online at: <<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/10/19/us/19crystal.html>> (Accessed November 24, 2010).

- Cave, Damien and Anne Barnard, "Minister Wavers on Plan to Burn Koran," *The New York Times*, September 9, 2010. Found online at: <<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/09/10/us/10obama.html>> (Accessed June 14, 2011).
- Chadwick, Andrew, "Digital Network Repertories and Organizational Hybridity," *Political Communication* 24, no. 1 (2001).
- Chamberlain, Pam, "Younger Evangelicals: Where will they take the Christian Right," *The Public Eye Magazine* 24, no. 1 (2009). Found online at: <<http://www.publiceye.org/magazine/v24n1/younger-evangelicals-where-wil-whey.html>> (Accessed September 2, 2010).
- Christian Retailing Staff Writer, "Religious Book Sales Up," *Christian Retailing*, May 23, 2011. Found online at: <<http://www.christianretailing.com/index.php/newsletter/latest-etailing/23146-religious-book-sales-up>> (Accessed June 6, 2011).
- Christian Right Watch Staff Writer, "Glossary," *Christian Right Watch*, 2012. Found online at: <http://www.religiousrightwatch.com/glossary/christian_right.htm> (Accessed March 10, 2012).
- Christians and Climate Staff Writer, "Climate Change: An Evangelical Call to Action," *Christians and Climate*, 2006. Found online at: <<http://christiansandclimate.org/learn/call-to-action/>> (Accessed June 3, 2011).
- Christians and the Environment: Stop the Creation Care Movement!*, Facebook group page. Found online at: <<http://www.facebook.com/home.php?#!/group.php?v=info&ref=ts&gid=167873995384>> (Accessed March 8, 2010).
- Cizik, Richard, "Warming Up to Creation Care," *Prairie Fire*, February, 2008. Found online at: <<http://www.prairiefirenewspaper.com/2008/02/warming-climate>> (Accessed January 16, 2010).
- Claiborne, Shane, "Such a Thing as 'Just War?'" Shane Claiborne," YouTube video interview, 2009. Found online at: <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WjFoNIOPJec>> (Accessed January 6, 2011).
- Cole, Jeffery, "Surveying the Digital Future," *The UCLA Internet Report*, 2000. Found online at: <<http://WWW.CCP.UCLA.EDU/pages/internet-report.asp>> (Accessed December 12, 2007).
- Coleman, Simon, "Words as Things: Language, Aesthetics and the Objectification of Protestant Evangelicalism," *Journal of Material Culture*, 1 no. 1 (1996): 111 of 107-128.
- Conger, Kimberly H. and John C. Green, "Spreading Out and Digging In: Christian Conservatives and State Republican Parties," *Campaign and Election* 23, no. 1 (2002).
- Copperman, Alan and Thomas B. Edsall, "Evangelicals Say They Led Charge for the GOP," *The Washington Post*, November 8, 2004. Found online at: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/ac2/wp-dyn/A32793-2004Nov7?language=printer> (Accessed March 12, 2008).
- Cornwall Alliance, *Resisting the Green Dragon Video Trailer*, 2010. Found online at: <<http://www.resistingthegreendragon.com/>> (Accessed June 14, 2011).
- Cox, Gary and Matthew McCubbins, "The Motion to Recommit in the United States House of Representatives," in *Party, Process and Political Change in Congress: New Perspectives on the History of Congress*, eds. David W. Brady and Matthew D. McCubbins (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002).
- Crystal Cathedral Staff Writer, "Architecture," *Crystal Cathedral Website*, 2010. Found online at: <<http://www.crystalcathedral.org/about/architecture.php>> (Accessed November 24, 2010).
- Cummings, J. B. Butler and R. Kraut, "The Quality of Online Social Relationships," *Communications of the ACM* 45, no. 7 (2002).

- Curasi, F.F., "A Critical Exploration of Face-to-Face Interviewing vs. Computer-Mediated Interviewing," *International Journal of Market Research* 43, no. 1 (2001).
- Staub, Dick, *The Culturally Savvy Christian* (San Francisco: Wiley Imprint, 2007).
- Duchesne, Ricardo, "Asia First?," *The Journal of the Historical Society* 6, no. 1 (2006).
- Dutton, William H. and Wan-Yin Lang, "Using the Web in the Democratic Process. The Web-orchestrated 'Stop the Overlay' Cyber-campaign," *European Review. Journal of the Academia Europaea* 9, no. 2 (2001).
- Dyke, Chuck, "Bourdieuian Dynamics: The American Middle-Class Self-Constructs," in *Bourdieu: A Critical Reader*, ed. Richard Schusterman (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1999).
- EEN Staff Writer, *EEN Home Page*, 2011. Found online at: <<http://creationcare.org/>> (Accessed July 8, 2011).
- EEN Staff Writer, "The End Mercury Poisoning Pledge," *Evangelical Environmental Network*, May 18, 2011. Found online at: <<http://www.creationcare.org/mercury/>> (Accessed March 12, 2012).
- Eisenstein, Elizabeth. *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979).
- Ellison, Nicole B, Charles Steinfield and Cliff Lampe, "The Benefits of Facebook 'Friends:' Social Capital and College Students' Use of Online Social Network Sites," *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication* 12, no. 4 (2007).
- Elving, Ron, "Watching Washington," *NPR*, August 26, 2010. Transcript available online at: <<http://www.npr.org/blogs/watchingwashington/2010/08/26/129444803/is-alaska-really-the-anti-universe-of-politics>> (Accessed September 2, 2010).
- E-mail Interview with 'Josh Brown' on creation care, abortion, and American politics, July 15, 2010.
- E-mail Interview with 'Linda Smith' on creation care, abortion and the evangelical community, July 13, 2010.
- E-mail Interview with Ben Calhoun on faith outreach, abortion and the Democratic Party, June 28, 2010.
- E-mail Interview with Mande Spotts on George Fox University and student majors, February 25, 2010.
- E-mail Interview with Michael J. Valanzola on public campaigning, August 24, 2009.
- E-mail Interview with Mike Heartly on faith outreach, abortion and the Democratic Party, July 12, 2010.
- E-mail Interview with Ramsey McPhillips on The Riverbend Landfill expansion and the students of George Fox University, January 13, 2010.
- Emergent Village Staff Writer, "Values and Practices," *Emergent Village*, 2011. Found online at: <http://emergentvillage.org/?page_id=77> (Accessed March 12, 2012).
- Enders, Danielle and Barbara Warnick, "Text-based Interactivity in Candidate Campaign Web Sites: A Case Study from the 2002 Election," *Western Journal of Communication* 68, no. 3 (2004).
- Ertelt, Steven, "Abortion Advocates Still Upset by Pro-Life Senate Candidates," *LifeNews.com*, March 11, 2005. Found online at: <<http://www.lifenews.com/nat1226.html>> (Accessed August 16, 2010).
- Falwell, Jerry, "God is Pro-War," *WorldNetDaily*, January 31, 2004. Found online at: <http://www.wnd.com/news/article.asp?ARTICLE_ID=36859> (Accessed January 4, 2011).

- Fang, Lee, "Exclusive: The Oily Operators Behind The Religious Climate Change Denial Front Group, Cornwall Alliance," *The Wonk Room*, June 15, 2010. Found online at: <<http://wonkroom.thinkprogress.org/2010/06/15/cornwall-alliance-frontgroup/>> (Accessed January 13, 2010).
- Fea, John, "An Analysis of the Treatment of American Fundamentalists in United States History Survey Texts," *The History Teacher* 28, no. 2 (1995).
- Festinger, Leon, *A Theory of Dissonance* (U.S.A.: Row Pearson, 1957).
- Finke, Rodger and Rodney Stark, "Religious Choice and Competition," *American Sociological Review* 63, no. 5 (1998).
- Finke, Roger and Rodney Stark, "Religious Economies and Sacred Canopies: Religious Mobilization in American Cities, 1906," *American Sociological Review* 53, no.1 (1998).
- Firestone, Reuven, "Divine Authority And Mass Violence: Economies Of Aggression In The Emergence of Religions," *Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies* 9, no. 26 (2010).
- Flanagin, Andrew J., Cynthia Stohl and Bruce Bimber, "Modeling the Structure of Collective Action," *Communication Monographs* 73, no. 1 (2006).
- Flourish Staff Writer, "Floresta: Plant with Purpose," *Flourish*, 2009. Found online at: <<http://flourishonline.org/2009/05/731/>> (Accessed March 21, 2011).
- Flourish Staff Writer, "Partners and Friends," *Flourish*, 2009a. Found online at: <<http://flourishonline.org/about/partners/>> (Accessed June 9, 2011).
- Foot, Kirsten A. and Steven M. Schneider, "Online Action in Campaign 2000: an Exploratory Analysis of the U.S. Political Web Sphere," *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media* 46, no. 2 (2002).
- Foot, Kristen and Steven Schneider, *Web Campaigning* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2006). Found online at: <<http://www.csae.ox.ac.uk/conferences/2000-oia/pdfpapers/woolcock.pdf>> (Accessed January 18, 2008).
- Frey, Bruno, and Alois Stutzer, "What can Economists Learn from Happiness Research?," *Journal of Economic Literature* 40, no. 2(2002).
- Friesen, Dwight J., *The Kingdom Connected: What the Church Can Learn from Facebook, the Internet, and Other Networks* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 2009).
- Fukuyama, Francis, "Social Capital and Development: The Coming Agenda," *SAIS Review* 22, no. 2 (2001).
- Gardiner, Beth, "Global Downturn Sapping Renewable Energy Sector," *The International Herald Tribune*, February 17, 2009. Accessible online at: <<http://www.highbeam.com/doc/1P1-161051180.html>> (Accessed July 8, 2011).
- George, Marjorie, "And Then God Created Kansas? The Evolution/Creationism Debate in America's Public Schools," *University of Pennsylvania Law Review* 149, no. 3 (2001).
- Gilgoff, Dan, "Falwell Launched the Modern Christian Right," *USNews*, May 16, 2007. Found online at: <<http://www.usnews.com/usnews/news/articles/070516/16falwell.htm>> (Accessed December 1, 2008).
- Goldberg, Michelle, *Kingdom Coming: The Rise of Christian Nationalism* (New York, New York: W.W. Norton & Co, 2006).

- Golden, Sherry, "Keeping the Sabbath to Keep the Earth," *Shared Earth Network*, October 4, 2008. Found online at: <<http://sharedearthnetwork.org/articleStFrancisContest.html>> (Accessed May 29, 2011).
- Goodstein, Laurie. "Evangelical Leaders Join Global Warming Initiative," *The New York Times*, February 8, 2006. Found online at: <<http://www.nytimes.com/2006/02/08/national/08warm.html>> (Accessed July 8, 2011).
- Goodstein, Laurie, "Dispute Over Succession Clouds Megachurch," *The New York Times*, October 23, 2010. Found online at: <<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/10/24/us/24cathedral.html>> (accessed November 24, 2010).
- Granovetter, Mark, "Threshold Models of Collective Behavior," *American Journal of Sociology* 83, no. 6 (1978).
- Green, Amy, "Finding My Religion," *Sojourners Magazine* 37, no. 6 (2008). Found Online at: <<http://www.sojo.net/index.cfm?action=magazine.article&issue=soj0806&article=080610>> (Accessed March 12, 2009).
- Green, John C., "Religion and the Presidential Vote: A Tale of Two Gaps," The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, August 21, 2007. Found online at: <<http://pewforum.org/docs/?DocID14240>> (Accessed February 17, 2010).
- Greenberg, David, "The Legend of the Scopes Trial: Science Didn't Really Win," *Slate*, 2005. Found online at: <<http://www.slate.com/id/2125492/>> (Accessed December 1, 2008).
- Gross, Terry, "Rev. Richard Cizik on God and Global Warming," *Fresh Air with Terry Gross*, December 2, 2008. Found online at: <<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=97690760>> (Accessed July 10, 2011).
- Haberman, Aaron, "Into the Wilderness: Ronald Reagan, Bob Jones University, and The Political Education of the Christian Right," *The Historian* 67, no. 2 (2005).
- Habermas, Juergen, *Knowledge and Human Interests*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1968).
- Habermas, Juergen, *Theory and Practice*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1973).
- Hadden, Jeffery K., "The Rise and Fall of American Televangelism," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political Science* 30, no. 4 (1996).
- Hagerty, Barbara Bradley, "Christian Filmmakers Creating An Industry of Faith," *NPRs Weekend Edition*, February 25, 2009. Found online at: <<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=100927647>> (Accessed March 10, 2010).
- Hangen, Tona J., *Reclaiming the Dial: Radio, Religion & Popular Culture in America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002).
- Hanson, Gayle M.B., "To Green Fundamentalists, Earth is a Close Second," *Insight on the News*, September 2, 1996. Found online at: <http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m1571/is_n33_v12/ai_18625321> (Accessed January 16, 2010).
- Haraldsson, Hrafnkell, "Things the Culture Warriors Don't Want You to Know," *Politicus USA*, September 27, 2010. Found online at: <<http://www.politicususa.com/en/hoosier-dan-coats>> (Accessed July 8, 2011).
- Harding, Susan, "Imagining the Last Days: The Politics of Apocalyptic Language," *Bulletin of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences* 48, no. 3 (1994).

- Harris, Dan. "Are Younger Evangelicals Skewing More Liberal?" *World News with Diane Sawyer* February 10, 2008. Found online at: <<http://abcnews.go.com/Politics/Vote2008/story?id=4269824&page=1>> (Accessed January 10, 2011).
- Harris, Paul, "How Bush Tapped into a Well of Faith," *The Guardian*, November 7, 2004. Found online at: <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2004/nov/07/uselections2004.usa/print>> (Accessed March 12, 2008).
- Hauben, Michael and Ronda Hauben, *Netizens: On the History and Impact of Usenet and the Internet* (Los Alamitos, CA: IEEE Computer Society Press, 1997).
- Haythornthwaite, Caroline, "Social Networks and Internet Connectivity Effects," *Information, Communication & Society* 8, no. 2 (2005).
- Hendershot, Heather, "God's Angriest Man: Carl McIntire, Cold War Fundamentalism, and Right Wing Broadcasting," *The American Studies Association* 59, no. 2 (2007).
- Hengler, Greg, "Dobson on the Culture War: We Have Lost All Those Battles," *Townhall.com*, April 12, 2009. Found online at: <http://townhall.com/tipsheet/GregHengler/2009/04/12/dobson_on_the_culture_war_we_have_lost_all_those_battles> (Accessed November 1, 2010).
- Hilborn, David, "What is an Evangelical?," *Evangelical Alliance*, October 28, 2008. Found online at: <http://www.eauk.org/about/what_is.cfm> (Accessed December 14, 2009).
- Hopkins, Liza, Julian Thomas, Denise Meredyth, and Scott Ewing, "Social Capital and Community Building through an Electronic Network," *Australian Journal of Social Issues* 39, no. 4 (2004); 369-378.
- Hopson, Ronald E. and Donald R. Smith, "Changing Fortunes: An Analysis of Christian Right Ascendance within American Political Discourse," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 38, no. 1 (1999).
- Horsfield, Peter G. and Paul Teusner, "Mediated Religion: Historical Perspectives on Christianity and the Internet Studies in World Christianity," in *Studies in World Christianity* 13, no. 3 (2007): 278-295.
- Hunter, Joel C., "Completely Pro-Life," 2008. Found online at: <<http://completelyprolife.com/>> (Accessed September 11, 2010)
- Hunter, Joel C., *A New Kind of Conservative* (Ventura, California: Regal Books, 2008).
- Huysman, Marleen and Volker Wulf, eds., *Social Capital and Information Technologies* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2004).
- Institute for the Study of the American Evangelicals Staff Writer, "Defining Evangelicalism," *The Institute for the Study of American Evangelicals at Wheaton College*, 2009. Found online at: <<http://isae.wheaton.edu/defining-evangelicalism/>> (Accessed November 17, 2009).
- Jackson, Harry R., "Our Children are at Risk: Evangelical Environmental Network Needs to get it Right," *Right Side News*, October 5, 2011. Found online at: <<http://www.rightsidenews.com/2011100614651/life-and-science/energy-and-environment/our-children-are-at-risk-evangelical-environmental-network-needs-to-get-it-right.html>> (Accessed March 12, 2012).
- Janofsky, Michael, "When Cleaner Air Is a Biblical Obligation," *The New York Times*, November 7, 2005. Found online at: <<http://www.nytimes.com/2005/11/07/politics/07air.html>> (Accessed July 8, 2011).
- Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies Staff Writer, "The Black Vote," *Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies*, 2004. Found online at: <<http://iamsaam.org/userimages/BlackVote.pdf>> (Accessed June 3, 2008).

- Jones, Tony, "The Emergent Church: Christianity in America Is Changing," *Tikkun* 23, no. 3 (2008);10-11. Article can also be found online at: <<http://www.tikkun.org/article.php/TonyJones-Theemergentchurch>> (Accessed April 20, 2010).
- Kahn, Richard and Douglas Kellner, "New Media and Internet Activism: From the 'Battle of Seattle' to Blogging," *New Media and Society* 6, no. 1 (2004).
- Kamarack, Elaine Ciulla and Joseph S. Nye Jr., eds., *Governance.com: Democracy in the Information Age* (Harrisonburg, Virginia: R. R. Donnelly and Sons, 2002).
- Kaplan, Abraham, *The Conduct of Inquiry: Methodology for Behavioral Science* (San Francisco: Chandler Publishing Company, 1964).
- Kaplan, Esther, *With God On Their Side: How Christian Fundamentalists Trampled Science, Policy, and Democracy in George W. Bush's White House* (London: The New Press, 2004).
- Katz, James E., and Ronald E. Rice, *The Social Consequence of Internet Use: Access, Involvement and Interaction* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002).
- Kavanaugh, A., Carroll, J. M., Rosson, M. B., Zin, T. T., and Reese, D.D., "Community networks: Where Offline Communities Meet Online," *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication* 10, no. 4 (2005). Found online at: <<http://jcmc.indiana.edu/vol10/issue4/kavanaugh.html>> (Accessed October 11, 2009).
- Kavanaugh, Andrea, "Community Networks and Civic Engagement: A Social Network Approach," *The Good Society* 11, no. 3 (2002).
- Kelleher, Kevin, "Can Obama Fight Climate Change and a Recession?," *earth2tech*, November 19, 2008. Found online at: <<http://earth2tech.com/2008/11/19/can-obama-fight-climate-change-and-a-recession>> (Accessed January 16, 2010).
- Kelley, Dean M., *Why Conservative Churches are Growing* (New York: HarperCollins, 1972).
- Kerry, John and Lindsey Graham, "Yes We Can (Pass Climate Change Legislation)," *The New York Times*, October 10, 2009. Found online at: <<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/10/11/opinion/11kerrygraham.html>> (Accessed July 8, 2011).
- Kiesler, S., ed., *Culture of the Internet* (Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum, 1997).
- Kim, Ji-Young, "The Impact of Internet Use Patterns on Political Engagement: A Focus on Online Deliberation and Virtual Social Capital," *Information Polity* 11, no. 1 (2006).
- Knowlton, Brian, "Republican Says Bush Panders to 'Agents of Intolerance': McCain Takes Aim at Religious Right," *The New York Times*, February 29, 2000. Found online at: <http://www.nytimes.com/2000/02/29/news/29iht-bush.2.t_9.html> (Accessed June 5, 2011).
- Kobayashi, Tetsuro, Ken'ichi Ikeda and Kakuko Miyata, "Social Capital Online: Collective Use of the Internet and Reciprocity as Lubricants of Democracy," *Information, Communication & Society* 9, no. 5 (2006).
- Korpi, Michael F., and Kyong Liong Kim, "The uses and Effects of Televangelism: A Factorial Model of Support and Contribution," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 25, no. 4 (1986).
- Kosmin, Barry A. and Ariela Keysar, *American Religious Identification Survey, 2009*. Found Online at: <http://b27.cc.trincoll.edu/weblogs/AmericanReligionSurvey-ARIS/reports/ARIS_Report_2008.pdf> (Accessed October 21, 2010).
- Kurlansky, Mark, *1968: The Year that Rocked the World* (New York: Random House, 2005).

- Kuruvila, Matthai Chakko, "Some Evangelical Christians Reconsider Their Faith in the GOP," *The San Francisco Chronicle*, November 13, 2006. Found online at: <<<http://www.commondreams.org/headlines06/1113-02.htm>> (Accessed August 12, 2010).
- Kushner, Adam, "See You at Reunion. Or Maybe Not," *Newsweek*, June 7, 2008. Found online at: <<http://www.newsweek.com/id/140480>> (Accessed June 16, 2008).
- Ladd, Everett Carl, *The Ladd Report: Startling New Research Shows How an Explosion of Voluntary Groups, Activities and Charitable Donations is Transforming Our Town and Cities*. (New York: The Free Press, 1999).
- Lake, Ronald La Due and Robert Huckfeldt, "Social Capital, Social Networks, and Political Participation," *Political Psychology* 19, no. 3 (1998).
- LaRose, Robert, Matthew Eastin, and Jennifer Gregg, "Reformulating the Internet Paradox: Social Cognitive Explanation of Internet Use and Depression," *Journal of Online Behavior* 1, no. 2 (2001). Found online at: <<http://www.behavior.net/JOBv1n2/paradox.html>> (Accessed November 17, 2007).
- Law, John, *After Method: Mess in Social Science* (New York: Routledge, 2004).
- Lazarsfeld, P., and R. K. Merton, "Methodological Analysis," in *Freedom and Control in Modern Society*, eds. Monroe Berger, Theodore Abel, and Charles H. Page (New York: Van Nostrand, 1954).
- Learn, Scott, "Riverbend Landfill Opponents Appeal Yamhill County's Expansion Vote," *The Oregonian*, January 5, 2010. Found online at: <http://www.oregonlive.com/environment/index.ssf/2010/01/riverbend_landfill_opponents_a.html> (Accessed February 16, 2010).
- Lee, Hangwoo, "Implosion, Virtuality, and Interaction in an Internet Discussion Group," *Information, Communication & Society* 8, no. 1 (2005).
- Lemons, Stanley J., *The Woman Citizen: Feminism in the 1920's* (Charlottesville: The University of Virginia Press, 1990).
- Lieberman, Ben, "Green Stimulus: Tying Economic Package to Environment Plan is Not Workable," *The Heritage Foundation*, January 26, 2009. Found online at: <<http://www.heritage.org/research/energyandenvironment/wm2245.cfm>> (Accessed January 16, 2010).
- Lin, Nan, *Social Capital* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).
- Litman, Barry R. and Elizabeth Bain, "The Viewership of Religious Television Programming: A Multidisciplinary Analysis of Televangelism," *Review of Religious Research* 30, no. 4 (1989).
- Luckman, Thomas, *The Invisible Religion*, (New York: McMillan, 1967).
- Mahoney, James and Dietrich Rueschemeyer, eds., *Comparative Historical Analysis in the Social Sciences* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003).
- Maneker, Jerry, "Radical Christianity," *Radical Christianity*, 2010. Found online at: <<http://www.radicalchristianity.net/>> (Accessed January 6, 2011).
- Marcus, Ruth, "The New Temptation of Democrats," *The Washington Post*, May 23, 2006. Found online at: <<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/05/22/AR2006052201154.html>> (Accessed June 5, 2010).

- Markell, Jan, "Resisting the Green Dragon: Part 1," *Understanding the Times*, August 18, 2010. Found online at: <<http://www.oneplace.com/ministries/understanding-the-times/listen/resisting-the-green-dragon-part-1-127170.html>> (Accessed January 13, 2011).
- Marostica, Matthew, "Religion and Global Affairs: Religious Activation and Democracy in Latin America," *SAIS Review* 18, no. 2 (1998).
- Marsh, Charles, "Wayward Christian Soldiers," *The New York Times*, January 20, 2006. Found online at: <<http://www.nytimes.com/2006/01/20/opinion/20marsh.html>> (Accessed January 6, 2011).
- Martha McCaughey and Michael D. Ayers, *Cyberactivism: Online Activism in Theory and Practice* (New York City: Routledge, 2003).
- Mascheroni, Giovanna, "Global Nomads' Network and Mobile Sociality: Exploring New Media Uses on the Move," *Information, Communication and Society* 10, no. 4 (2007).
- Mayer, J.P. , ed., and George Lawrence, trans., *Alexis de Tocqueville: Democracy in America*. (New York: Harper and Row, 1969).
- McCaslin, John, "Driving with Jesus," *Townhall.com*, 2007. Found online at: <http://townhall.com/columnists/JohnMcCaslin/2007/05/28/driving_with_Jesus> (Accessed January 16, 2010).
- McGrath, Alister, *Evangelicalism and the Future of Christianity* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1995).
- McIntosh, Wayne and Paul Harwood, "The Internet and America's Changing Sense of Community," *The Good Society* 11, no. 3 (2002).
- McKnight, Scott, "What is the Emerging Church?," *Fall Contemporary Issues Conference, Westminster Theological Seminary*, Conference date: October 26-27, 2006. Found online at: <http://www.andyrowell.net/andy_rowell/files/scot_mcknight_what_is_the_emerging_church.pdf> (Accessed May 30, 2011).
- McLuhan, Marshall and Quentin Fiore, *The Medium is the Message: An Inventory of Effects* (New York: Bantam Books, 1967).
- McLuhan, Stephanie and David Staines eds., *Understanding Me: Lectures and Interviews by Marshall McLuhan*, (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2004).
- McWhorter, John, "The New Republic: Angry Speech In A Digital Age," January 11, 2011. Found online at: <<http://www.npr.org/2011/01/11/132833850/the-new-republic-angry-speech-in-a-digital-age>> (Accessed February 8, 2011).
- Miller, Claire Cain, "Google's Chief on the Web and Political Polarization," *The New York Times*, July 10, 2010. Found online at: <<http://bits.blogs.nytimes.com/2010/09/17/googles-chief-on-the-web-and-political-polarization/>> (Accessed February 8, 2011).
- Miller, Kent D., "Competitive Strategies of Religious Organizations," *Strategic Management Journal* 23, no. 5 (2002).
- Minkoff, Debra, "Producing Social Capital: National Social Movements and Civil Society," *American Behavioral Scientist* 40, no. 5(1997).
- Mitchell, Chris, "The Liberal Church: Part of the Decline?," *CBN News*, February 25, 1997. Found online at: <<http://ucmpage.org/articles/libchurch.html>> (Accessed October 20, 2010).

- Moen, Matthew C., "The Evolving Politics of the Christian Right," *Political Science And Politics* 29, no. 3 (1996).
- Moffett, Jamie, "Movie Trailer for The Ordinary Radicals," *Jamie Moffett Media Design and Production*, 2008. Found online at: <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gNYgwNYf6Ok>> (Accessed June 14, 2011).
- Morozov, Evgeny, "Texting Toward Utopia: Does the Internet spread democracy?," *Boston Review*, March/April 2009. Found online at: <<http://bostonreview.net/BR34.2/morozov.php>> (Accessed February 27, 2010).
- Morris, Merrill and Christine Ogan, "The Internet as a Mass Medium," *Journal of Communication* 46, no. 1 (1996).
- Multimedia Staff Writer, "Political Polarization and Social Media," *Multimedia Politics*, January 16, 2011. Found online at: <<http://multimediapolitics.net/2011/01/13/political-polarization-and-social-media/>> (Accessed February 8, 2011).
- NARAL Staff Writer, "Why Give?," *NARAL: Pro-Choice America*, 2010. Found online at: <<http://www.naral.org/donate/>> (Accessed September 9, 2010).
- National Council of Churches Staff Writer, "NCC's 2009 Yearbook of American and Canadian Churches reports decline in Catholic, Southern Baptist membership," *National Council of Churches*, January 30, 2009. Found online at: <<http://www.nccusa.org/news/090130yearbook1.html>> (Accessed October 4, 2010).
- Nelkin, Dorothy, "From Dayton to Little Rock: Creationism Evolves," *Science, Technology, and Human Values* 7, no. 40 (1982).
- Nie, N.H., "Sociability, Interpersonal Relations, and the Internet: Reconciling Conflicting Findings," *American Behavioral Scientist* 45, no. 3 (2001).
- Nisbet, Matthew, "Communicating Climate Change: Why Frames Matter for Public Engagement," *Environment: Science and Policy for Sustainable Development* 51, no. 2 (2009).
- Noll, Mark A., *The Rise of Evangelicalism: The Age of Edwards, Whitefield and the Wesleys* (Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 2004).
- Norris, Pippa, *Digital Divide: Civic Engagement, Information Poverty and the Internet Worldwide* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).
- NRLC Staff Writer, "National Right to Life Federal Legislation," *National Right to Life Committee*, 2010. Found online at: <<http://capwiz.com/nrlc/home/>> (Accessed August 16, 2010).
- O'Conner, H. and Madge, C., "'Focus Groups in Cyberspace: Using the Internet for Qualitative Research,'" *Qualitative Market Research* 6, no. 1 (2003).
- Obama, Barack, Speech before Brown AMC, Selma, Alabama, March 4, 2007. Found Online at: <http://www.barackobama.com/2007/03/04/selma_voting_rights_march_comm.php> (Accessed June 16, 2008).
- Ohlman, Dean, "21 Reasons That Evangelicals 'Don't' Get Creation Care,'" *Restoring Eden*, 2010. Found online at: <<http://restoringeden.org/resources/Ohlman/21Reasons>> (Accessed September 11, 2010).
- Oliver, Charles, "Coalition Politics," *Reason*, 1996. Found Online at: <<http://www.reason.com/news/show/30009.html>> (Accessed February 2, 2009).
- Olson, Mancur, *The Logic of Collective Action: Public Goods and the Theory of Groups* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1965).

- Pappano, Laura, *The Connection Gap: Why American's Feel So Alone* (Piscataway, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2001).
- Parks, Malcolm and Lynn Roberts, "Making MOOSic: The Development of personal relationships on line and a comparison to their off-line counterparts," *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships* 15, no. 1 (1998).
- Pasek, Josh, Eian More, and Daniel Romer, "Realizing the Social Internet? Online Social Networking Meets Offline Social Capital," *Journal of Information Technology and Politics* 6, no. 3/4 (2009).
- Paxton, Pamela, "Is Social Capital Declining in the United States? A Multiple Indicator Assessment," *American Journal of Sociology* 105, no. 1 (1999).
- PBS Staff Writer, "Younger Evangelicals and the 2008 Election," *Religion and Ethics*, September 29, 2008. Found online at: <<http://www.pbs.org/wnet/religionandethics/week1204/survey.html>> (Accessed July 4, 2011).
- Pear, Robert, "Negotiating to 60 Votes, Compromise by Compromise," *The New York Times*, December 19, 2009. Found online at: <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/12/20/health/policy/20care.html?_r=1> (Accessed August 5, 2010).
- Penning, James M. and Corwin E. Smidt, *Evangelicalism the Next Generation* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2002).
- Perovic, Lydia, "Review: Web Campaigning," *Resource Center for Cyberculture Studies*, 2007. Found online at: <<http://rccs.usfca.edu/bookinfo.asp?BookID=373&ReviewID=509>> (Accessed February 3, 2010).
- Perriman, Andrew, "What is the Emerging Church?," *Open Source Theology*, November 23, 2003. Found online at: <<http://www.opensourcetheology.net/node/229>> (Accessed May 30, 2011).
- Personal Interview Shane Higgs on the effects of media on the evangelical church, September 17, 2009.
- Personal Interview with Lou on religious subsidization, October 26, 2010.
- Personal Interview with A.J. Swodoba on Restoring Eden and the creation care movement, May 15, 2009.
- Personal Interview with Al Tizon on ESA and the Social Gospel, September 17, 2009.
- Personal Interview with Barrett Duke on creation care, Emergent Village and the future of the evangelical community, May 17, 2009.
- Personal Interview with Ben Corey on Emergent Village, July 7, 2009.
- Personal Interview with Burns Strider on faith outreach and the Democratic Party, July 23, 2009.
- Personal Interview with Cheryl Loughhead on information sharing and the evangelical church, June 20, 2009.
- Personal Interview with Corey Beals on Creation Care, May 21, 2009.
- Personal Interview with Cris Bisch on Sustain Lane and the creation care movement, May 16, 2009.
- Personal Interview with Janessa on Evangelical Christianity, the Emergent Church and the Social Gospel, October 21, 2010.
- Personal Interview with Jeff Gentry on Emergent Village, July 20, 2009.
- Personal Interview with Justin McMurdie on creation care, Emergent Village and the future of the evangelical community, May 23, 2009.

Personal Interview with Keefe-Perry Callad on Emergent Village, July 27, 2009.

Personal Interview with Layne Berg on growing up evangelical, November 22, 2010.

Personal Interview with Pastor Mike on evangelical Christianity, October 7, 2010.

Personal Interview with Peter Illyn on Restoring Eden and the creation care movement, May 27, 2009.

Personal Interview with Phyllis Tickle on Emergent Village, August 21, 2009.

Personal Interview with Rev. Justin McMurdie on the current state of the evangelical church, May 18, 2009.

Personal Interview with Samantha on growing up evangelical, November 11, 2010.

Personal Interview with Susan Aguiar on Emergent Village, June 12, 2009.

Personal Interview with the Reverend Stephanie Spellers on Emergent Village, August 20, 2009.

Pew Forum Staff Writer, "U.S. Stands Alone In Its Embrace of Religion Among Wealthy Nations," *Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life*, December 19, 2002. Found online at: <<http://pewglobal.org/2002/12/19/among-wealthy-nations/>> (Accessed May 20, 2011).

Pew Forum Staff Writer, "Church Attendance," *The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life*, March 27, 2008. Found online at: <<http://pewforum.org/docs/?DocID=294#church>> (Accessed June 18, 2008).

Pew Forum Staff Writer, "How the Faithful Voted," *The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life*, November 10, 2008. Found online at: <<http://pewforum.org/Politics-and-Elections/How-the-Faithful-Voted.aspx>> (Accessed September 10, 2010).

Pew Forum Staff Writer, "Religious Groups' Views on Global Warming," *Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life*, 2009. Found online at: <<http://pewforum.org/docs/?DocID=238>> (Accessed January 16, 2010).

Pew Forum Staff Writer, "Religious Groups' Views on Global Warming," *Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life*, April 16, 2009. Found online at: <<http://pewforum.org/docs/?DocID=238>> (Accessed July 8, 2011).

Pew Forum Staff Writer, "Support for Abortion Slips: Issue Ranks Lower on the Agenda," *The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life*, October 1, 2009. Found online at: <<http://pewforum.org/Abortion/Support-for-Abortion-Slips%28%29.aspx>> (Accessed September 11, 2010).

Pew Research Center Staff Writer, "Few Americans See Solid Evidence of Climate Change," *Pew Research Center*, October 22, 2009. Found online at: <<http://people-press.org/2009/10/22/fewer-americans-see-solid-evidence-of-global-warming/>> (Accessed July 28, 2011).

Pew Research Center Staff Writer, "Little Change in Opinion for Climate Change," *Pew Research Center*, October 27, 2010. Found online at: <<http://people-press.org/2010/10/27/little-change-in-opinions-about-global-warming/>> (Accessed July 6, 2011).

Phaedrus dialogue on rhetoric and writing (274b-277a).

Philips, Kevin, *American Theocracy: The Peril and Politics of Radical Religion, Oil, and Borrowed Money in the 21st Century* (New York: Viking, 2006).

Phone Interview with Jim Jewel on Flourish and the creation care movement, August 11, 2009.

- Phone Interview with Jonathan Merritt on Flourish and the creation care movement, September 4, 2009.
- Phone Interview with Rusty Pritchard on Flourish and the creation care movement, August 6, 2009.
- Pierce, John C. and Nicholas P. Lovrich, Jr., "Internet Technology Transfer and Social Capital: Aggregate and Individual Relationships in American Cities," *Comparative Technology Transfer and Society* 1, no. 1 (2003).
- Pimlott, Jamie Pamela, *Women and the Democratic Party: The Evolution of Emily's List* (Amherst, New York: Cambria Press, 2010).
- Planned Parenthood Staff Writer, "Planned Parenthood Federation of America 2006-2007 Annual Report," *Planned Parenthood*, 2007. Found online at: <http://www.plannedparenthood.org/files/AR_2007_vFinal.pdf> (Accessed September 9, 2010).
- Posner, Sarah, "The Fundamentalist (No. 82)," *The American Prospect*, May 27, 2009. Found online at: <http://www.prospect.org/cs/articles?article=the_fundamentalist_052709> (Accessed December 20, 2010).
- Postman, Neil, *Technopoly: The Surrender of Culture to Technology* (New York: Vintage Books, 1993).
- Prelli, Lawrence J. and Terri S. Winters, "Rhetorical Features of Green Evangelicalism," *Environmental Communication: A Journal of Nature and Culture* 3, no. 2 (2009).
- Public Religion Research Staff Writer, "The Faith and American Politics Survey: The Young and the Faithful," *Faith in Public Life*, October 8, 2008. Found online at: <<http://www.faithinpubliclife.org/tools/polls/faps/>> (Accessed July 10, 2011).
- Putnam, Robert D., "Social Capital and Public Affairs," *Bulletin of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences* 47, no. 8 (1998).
- Putnam, Robert D., "Bowling Alone: America's Declining Social Capital," *Journal of Democracy* 6, no. 1 (1995).
- Putnam, Robert D., "The Strange Disappearance of Civic America," *The American Prospect* 7, no. 24 (1996).
- Putnam, Robert D., *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (London: Simon and Schuster, 2000).
- Putnam, Robert D., ed., *Democracy in Flux: The Evolution of Social Capital in Contemporary Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).
- Rasanen, Pekka and Antti Kouvo, "Linked or Divided by the Web? Internet Use and Sociability in Four European Countries," *Information, Communication & Society* 10, no. 2 (2007).
- Regnerus, Mark D. and Christian Smith, "Selective Deprivation among American Religious Traditions: The Reversal of the Great Reversal," *Social Forces* 76, no. 4 (1998).
- Regnerus, Mark D., David Sikkink and Christian Smith, "Voting with the Christian Right: Contextual and Individual Patterns of Electoral Influence," *Social Forces* 77, no. 4 (1999).
- Renewal Staff Writer, "2008 Day of Prayer," *Renewal: Students Caring for Creation*, 2009. Found online at: <<http://www.renewingcreation.org/get-involved/pray/2008-day-of-prayer>> (Accessed August 18, 2009).
- Renewal Staff Writer, "Green Awakening Tour Report," *Caring for Creation*, 2009. Found online at: <<http://www.renewingcreation.org/images/Green%20Awakening%20Tour%20Report.pdf>> (Accessed January 16, 2010).

- Restoring Eden's Facebook Interest Page. Found online at: <<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Restoring-Eden/102243046502415>> (Accessed May 29, 2011).
- Reynolds, Dean, "Would Jesus Drive an SUV? Commercials Say Jesus Wouldn't Drive an SUV," *Good Morning America*, November 21, 2002. Found online at: <<http://abcnews.go.com/GMA/story?id=125583&page=1>> (Assessed January 16, 2010).
- Rice, Jim and Jeannhe Meaning of 'Life,'" *Sojourners*, November 2008. Found online at: <<http://www.sojo.net/index.cfm?action=magazine.article&issue=soj0811&article=the-meaning-of-life>> (Accessed February 3, 2011).
- Richardson, Lilliard E. Jr., Linda M. Daughty and Patricia K. Freeman, "E-mail Contact Between Constituents and State Legislators," *State and Local Government Review* 33, no. 1 (2001).
- Riesman, David, "The Suburban Sadness," in *The Suburban Community*, ed. William M. Dobriner (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1958).
- Roach, John, "Arctic Melt Opens Northwest Passage," *National Geographic News*, September 17, 2007. Found online at: <<http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2007/09/070917-northwest-passage.html>> (Accessed January 16, 2010).
- Rule, Sheila, "Reagan Gets A Red Carpet From British," *The New York Times*, June 14, 1989. Found online at: <<http://www.nytimes.com/1989/06/14/world/reagan-gets-a-red-carpet-from-british.html>> (Accessed July 10, 2011).
- Saad, Lydia, "More American's 'Pro-Life' than 'Pro-Choice' for First Time," *Gallup*, 2009. Found online at: <<http://www.gallup.com/poll/118399/more-americans-pro-life-than-pro-choice-first-time.aspx>> (Accessed September 9, 2010).
- Savigny, Heather, "Public Opinion, Political Communication and the Internet," *Politics* 22, no. 1 (2002).
- Schaeffer, Frank, "Obama Was Right to Pick Warren," *The Huffington Post*, December 19, 2008. Found online at: <http://www.huffingtonpost.com/frank-schaeffer/obama-was-right-to-pick-w_b_152330.html> (Accessed August 5, 2010).
- Schelling, Thomas, "Models of Segregation," *American Economic Review, Papers and Proceedings* 59, no. 2 (1969).
- Sellwood Baptist Church Pamphlet, October 3, 2010.
- Shah, Timothy Samuel, "Born Again in the U.S.A.: The Enduring Power of American E Evangelism," *Foreign Affairs*, 2009. Found online at: <<http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/65231/timothy-samuel-shah/born-again-in-the-usa?page=show>> (Accessed November 1, 2010).
- Sherrill, Kenneth, "Same-Sex Marriage, Civil Unions, and The 2004 Presidential Election," *The Task Force Action Fund*, 2005. Found online at: <http://www.thetaskforceactionfund.org/studies_analyses/2004electionandmarriage.pdf> (Accessed March 2, 2008).
- Shirky, Clay, *Here Comes Everybody: The Power of Organizing Without Organizations* (London: Penguin Books, 2008).
- Shriky, Clay, "Clay Shirky: How social media can make history," *TED Talks*, June 2009. Found online at: <http://www.ted.com/talks/clay_shirky_how_cellphones_twitter_facebook_can_make_history.html> (Accessed March 10, 2012).

- Silva, Ken, "Redefining the Church: The Church Growth Movements Unbiblical Definition of the Church," *Apprising Ministries*, 2010. Found online at: <<http://apprising.org/2010/10/03/redefining-the-church-the-church-growth-movements-unbiblical-definition-of-the-church/>> (Accessed November 24, 2010).
- Skocpol, Theda, *Diminished Democracy: From Membership to Management in American Civic Life*, (Tulsa: University of Oklahoma Press, 2003).
- Smietana, Bob, "Southern Baptist Fight Decline," *The Tennessean*, January 29, 2009. Found online at: <<http://www.bealembc.org/blog/latest/why-southern-baptist-churches-are-declining.html>> (Accessed October 1, 2010).
- Smith, Ben, "Tea Partiers Stir Evangelical Fears," *Politico*, March 12, 2010. Found online at: <<http://www.politico.com/news/stories/0310/34291.html>> (Accessed November 4, 2010).
- Smith, Joel, "A Methodology for the Twenty-First Century Sociology," *Social Forces* 70, no. 1 (1991).
- Sosis, Richard, "Does Religion Promote Trust? The Role of Signalling, Reputation, and Punishment," *Interdisciplinary Journal of Research on Religion* 1, no. 1 (2005). Found online at: <http://www.religjournal.com/articles/article_view.php?id=7> (Accessed March 18, 2011).
- Spencer, Michael, "The Coming Evangelical Collapse," *The Christian Science Monitor*, March 10, 2009. Found online at: <<http://www.csmonitor.com/Commentary/Opinion/2009/0310/p09s01-coop.html>> (Accessed October 1, 2010).
- Sprunger, Keith L., *Trumpets From the Tower: English Puritan Printing in The Netherlands 1600-1640* (Boston: Brill Academic Publishers, (1994).
- Stackhouse, Jr., John G., "Defining 'Evangelical,'" *Church & Faith Trends: A Publication of The Centre for Research on Canadian Evangelicalism* 1, no. 1 (2007). Found online at: <<http://files.etc-canada.net/min/rc/CFT-1-1-DefiningEvangelical.pdf>> (Accessed January 16, 2010).
- Starr, Paul, "The Public Vanishes," *The New Republic*, August 14, 2000. Found online at: <<http://www.princeton.edu/~starr/articles/articles00/Starr.Review.BowlingAlone-8-00.htm>> (Accessed November 17, 2007).
- Starr, Paul, "Governing in the age of Fox News," *The Atlantic*, January/February 2010. Found online at: <<http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2010/01/governing-in-the-age-of-fox-news/7838/>> (Accessed December 16, 2010).
- Steinfels, Peter, "Evangelical Group Defends Laws Protecting Endangered Species as a Modern Noah's Ark," *The New York Times*, January 31, 1996. Found online at: <<http://www.nytimes.com/1996/01/31/us/evangelical-group-defends-laws-protecting-endangered-species-amodern-noah-s-ark.html>> (Accessed July 8, 2011).
- Stelter, Brian, "Finding Political News Online: The Young Pass It On," *The New York Times*, March 27, 2008. Found online at: <<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/03/27/us/politics/27voters.html>> (Accessed May 2, 2008).
- Stephenson, Wen, "Evangelicals Are Greener Than You Think," *Grist*, December 21, 2010. Found online at: <<http://www.grist.org/article/2010-12-21-evangelicals-are-greener-than-you-think>> (Accessed July 5, 2011).
- Stephenson, Wen, "The Good Fight," *Slate*, December 2010. Found online at: <<http://www.slate.com/id/2277608/pagenum/all/#p2>> (Accessed July 6, 2011).
- Stoddard, Ed, "U.S. Evangelical Support for Iraq War Slipping," *Information Liberation*, October 28, 2006. Found online at: <<http://www.informationliberation.com/?id=17403>> (Accessed February 3, 2011).

- Stricherz, Mark, "Secular Feminism's Path to Power," *First Thing*, November 26, 2007. Found online at: <<http://www.firstthings.com/onthesquare/2007/11/secular-feminisms-path-to-powe>> (Accessed September 2, 2010).
- Stricherz, Mark, *Why Democrats are Blue: How Secular Liberals Hijacked the People's Party* (New York: Encounter Books, 2007).
- Subrahmanyam, Kaveri and Patricia M. Greenfield, "Virtual World in Development: Implications of Social Networking Sites," *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology* 29, no. 6 (2008).
- Sullivan, Amy, "Do the Democrats Have a Prayer?," *The Washington Monthly*, June 2003. Found online at: <<http://www.washingtonmonthly.com/features/2003/0306.sullivan.html>> (Accessed July 20, 2010).
- Sullivan, Amy, "Are Evangelicals Really Sold on Palin?," *Time Magazine*, September 6, 2008. Found online at: <<http://www.time.com/time/politics/article/0,8599,1839190,00.html>> (Accessed February 3, 2011).
- Sullivan, Amy, *The Party Faithful: How and Why Democrats Are Closing the Gap*. New York: Scribner, 2008).
- Sunstein, Cass, *Going to Extremes: How Like Minds Unite and Divide* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).
- Sunstein, Cass, *Republic.com* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002).
- Sunstein, Cass, *Republic.com 2.0*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007).
- Surowiecki, James, *The Wisdom of Crowds* (New York: Random House, 2005).
- Talbot, Caroline J. and Ramona S. McNeal, "Unraveling the Effects of the Internet on Political Participation?," *Political Research Quarterly* 56, no. 2 (2003).
- Tamney, Joseph B and Stephen D. Johnson, "Religious Television in Middletown," *Review of Religious Research* 25, no. 4 (1984).
- The Leaders of the Evangelical Youth Climate Initiative, "Global Warming Letter to National Leaders," *Evangelical Youth Climate Initiative*, November 16, 2006. Found online at: <<http://restoringeden.org/getinvolved/protect/GlobalWarming/EYCILetter>> (Accessed March 21, 2011).
- The Sometimes Preacher, "Christianity-Lite," *The Sometimes Preacher*, November 2010. Found online at: <<http://thesometimespreacher.blogspot.com/2010/11/christianity-lite.html>> (Accessed November 23, 2010).
- Thomas, Oliver, "Where Have All the Protestants Gone?," *USA Today*, May 10, 2010. Found online at: <http://www.usatoday.com/printedition/news/20100301/column01_st.art.htm> (Accessed November 14, 2010).
- Thumma, Scott and Dave Travis, *Beyond Megachurch Myths: What We Can Learn From America's Largest Churches* (San Francisco: Wiley Imprint, 2007).
- Thumma, Scott, "Exploring the Megachurch Phenomena: Their Characteristics and Cultural Context," *Hartford Institute for Religious Research*, 2007. Found online at: <http://hrr.hartsem.edu/bookshelf/thumma_article2.html> (Accessed November 24, 2010).
- Tickle, Phyllis, *The Great Emergence: How Christianity Is Changing and Why* (Grand Rapids MI: Baker Books, 2008).

- Turow, Joseph and Andrea L. Kavanaugh, eds., *The Wired Homestead: An MIT Press Sourcebook on the Internet and Family* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2003).
- Turow, Joseph and Lokman Tsui, eds., *The Hyperlinked Society: Questioning Connections in the Digital Age* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 2008).
- U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops Staff Writer, "Pastoral Plan for Pro-life America," *United States Conference of Catholic Bishops*, 1975. Found online at:
<<http://www.usccb.org/prolife/pastoralplan.shtml>> (Accessed April 28, 2008).
- Unger, Paul, *The Fall of the House of Bush* (New York and London: Scribner, 2007).
- University of Akron New Staff Writer, "University Hosts Global Warming/Environmental Friendship Group," *University of Akron News*, August 31, 2007. Found online at:
<http://www.uakron.edu/news/articles/uamain_1839.php> (Accessed January 16, 2010).
- Uslaner, Eric M., "Trust, Civic Engagement, and the Internet," *Political Communication* 24, no. 1 (2004).
- Van Alstyne, Marshall and Erik Brynjolfsson, "Global Village or Cyber-Balkans? Modeling and Measuring the Integration of Electronic Communities," *Management Science* 51, no. 6 (2005).
- Vorster, Akobus M., "Perspectives on the Core Characteristics of Religious Fundamentalism Today," *Journal for the Study of Religion and Ideologies* 7, no. 21 (2008). Found online at:
<<http://jsri.ro/ojs/index.php/jsri/article/viewArticle/374>> (Accessed July 8, 2011).
- Vu, Michelle A., "U.S. Evangelicals Gather to Pray for Creation," *Christian Post*, May 27, 2010. Found online at:
<<http://au.christiantoday.com/article/us-evangelicals-gather-to-pray-for-creation-care/8319.htm>> (Accessed May 28, 2010).
- Wallis, Jim, "Pro-Life Democrats?," *Sojourners Magazine* 33, no. 6 (2004).
- Wallis, Jim, "An Evangelical Climate Change," *Sojourners Magazine* 35, no. 5 (2006). Found Online at:
<<http://www.sojo.net/index.cfm?action=magazine.article&issue=soj0605&Article=060551>> (Accessed March 14, 2009).
- Wallis, Jim, "Jim Wallis: Dr. Dobson, Let's Have a Real Debate," March 6, 2007. Found online at:
<<http://blog.beliefnet.com/godspolitics/2007/03/jim-wallis-dr-dobson-lets-have-real.html>> (Accessed March 21, 2011).
- Wallsten, Paul. 2006. "Latino and Black Voters Reassessing Ties to GOP," *Religion and Social Policy*, October 24, 2006. Found online at:
<http://www.religionandsocialpolicy.org/news/article_print.cfm?id=5336> (March 12, 2008).
- Warnick, Barbara, Michael Xenos, Danielle Endres, and John Gastil, "Effects of Campaign-to-User and Text-Based Interactivity in Political Candidate Campaign Web Sites," *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication* 10, no. 3 (2005). Found online at: <<http://jcmc.indiana.edu/vol10/issue3/warnick.html>> (Accessed August 24, 2009).
- Warren, Mark, ed., *Democracy and Trust* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).
- Warren, Rick, *Purpose-Driven Life: What on Earth am I Here For?* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002).
- Wasserman, Henry and Gary Yohe, "Segregation and the Provision of Spatially Defined Local Public Goods," *American Economist* 45, no. 2 (2001).

- Waters, David, "More Sin and Salvation at the Southern Baptist Convention," *The Washington Post*, June 24, 2010. Found online at: <http://onfaith.washingtonpost.com/onfaith/undergod/2010/06/sin_and_salvation_at_the_southern_baptist_convention.html> (Accessed October 1, 2010).
- Watson, James, *Media Communication: An Introduction to Theory and Process* (London: Macmillan, 1996).
- Wellman, Barry and Caroline Haythornthwaite, eds., *The Internet in Everyday Life* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2002).
- Wesch, Michael, *Podcast: Michael Wesch on the New Media Environment*, March 24, 2011. Found online at: <<http://www.educause.edu/blog/gbayne/PodcastMichaelWeschontheNewMed/226117>> (Accessed May 15, 2011).
- Westbury, Joe, "Have Southern Baptists Joined the Evangelical Decline," *The Christian Index*, 2008. Found online at: <<http://www.christianindex.org/4421.article>> (Accessed October 21, 2010).
- White House Staff Writer, White House Office on Faith Based and Community Initiative, 2008. Found online at: <<http://www.whitehouse.gov/government/fbci/president-initiative.html>> (Accessed June 3, 2008).
- White, Jr. Lynn, "The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis," *Science* 155, no. 3767 (1967).
- Wicker, Christine, *The Fall of the Evangelical Nation: The Surprising Crisis Inside the Church* (New York: Harper One, 2008).
- Wilcox, Clyde, "Political Action Committees of the New Christian Right: A Longitudinal Analysis," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 27, no. 1 (1988).
- Wills, Gary, *Under God: The Classic Work on Religion and American Politics* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1990).
- Albert L. Winseman, Albert L., "U.S. Evangelicals: How Many Walk the Walk," *Gallup*, 2005. Found online at: <<http://www.gallup.com/poll/16519/us-evangelicals-how-many-walk-walk.aspx>> (Accessed February 24, 2012).
- Winston, Diane, "Back to the Future: Religion, Politics and the Media," *The American Studies Association* 59, no. 3 (2007).
- Winter, Brian, "Religious Groups Active in Climate Debate," *USA Today*, December 15, 2009. Found online at: <http://www.usatoday.com/news/religion/2009-12-06-climate_N.htm> (Accessed January 16, 2010).
- Woelfkin, Cornelius, "The Religious Appeal of Premillennialism," *The Journal of Religion* 1, no. 3 (1921).
- Wojcik, Daniel, "Embracing Doomsday: Faith, Fatalism, and Apocalyptic Beliefs in the Nuclear Age," *Western Folklore* 55, no. 4 (1996).
- Woolcock, Michael and Deepa Narayan, "Social Capital: Implications for Development Theory, Research and Policy," *The World Bank Observer* 15, no. 2 (2000). Found online at: <<http://www.csae.ox.ac.uk/conferences/2000-oia/pdfpapers/woolcock.pdf>> (Accessed January 18, 2008).
- Robert Wuthnow, "The Social Significance of Religious Television," *Review of Religious Research*, 29 no. 2 (1987).
- Zheng, Yongnian, *Technological Empowerment: The Internet, State and Society in China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008).

SURVEY LINK AND INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTIONS

Internet and Evangelical Survey:

www.surveymonkey.com

Login: dewpacs

Password: liberal

Interview Transcriptions:

www.flipdrive.com

Login: dewpacs

Password: liberal