

LIGHT

Christian Life Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention
October-November 1980

Inside LIGHT

"Ku Klux Klan? I thought that was over with years ago," said a recent visitor to the United States. David Wilkinson reminds us in our Opinion column that the "hooded ones" are back in growing numbers and are promoting an ideology which Christians must confront.

Henlee Barnett's "Stewardship of the Environment: A Moral Responsibility" provides a challenging restatement of the need of an environmental theology and calls for renewed commitment for Christians to an eco-ethic.

The New Right is not all that new. Similiar elements can be found in Constantine's activities during the fourth century and in motivations underlying the Crusades seven centuries later. However, momentum building over the last decade has surfaced in a phenomenon new to many neophyte students of theo-political weddings and on a much larger scale to those not so neophyte.

In "The New Right: Is it Right or Wrong?," Bill Elder gives LIGHT readers an excellent analysis of the current movement.—WMT

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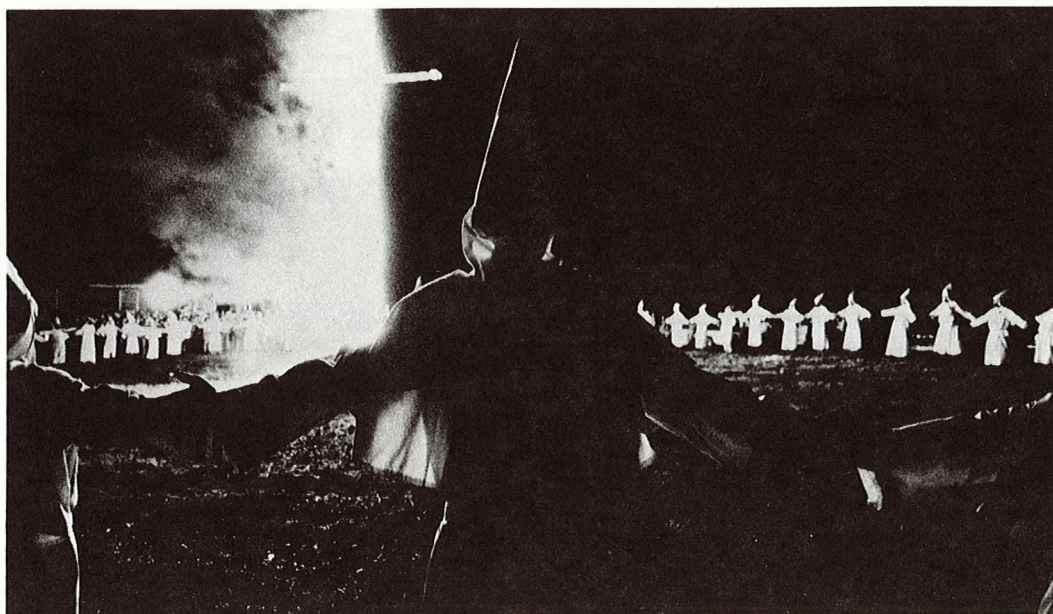


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Confronting the Klan

by David R. Wilkinson

Hooded Americanism has returned.

More than 11 decades after its birth in Pulaski, Tennessee, the Ku Klux Klan is once again clamoring for the attention and support of white, Protestant Americans. Although its numbers are few and constant internal divisiveness weakens its political effectiveness, the Ku Klux Klan has been growing in the past decade.

U.S. Justice Department officials estimate that the combined membership of the four "national" Klan organizations is now more than 10,000, compared to an FBI estimate of 4,300 active members in 1971.

The Ku Klux Klan of the 1980s espouses the same fundamental philosophies of white supremacy and separation of the races as its hooded predecessors. Its "pro American" language translates easily into fiercely anti-black and anti-Semitic ideology.

But today's "new Klan," in a quest for "respectability," seeks to capitalize on the current mood of social, political and economic frustration by riding the pendulum of public opinion on its swing to the conservative right. While the Klan campaigns vigorously against public school integration, affirmative action policies, and other civil rights causes, Klan leaders have also taken conservative stands on such attention-grabbing issues as abortion, the Equal Rights Amendment, prayer in the public schools, national defense, foreign aid, and immigration.

Although Klan traditionalists prefer to shroud their "Invisible Empire" in secrecy, younger, more media-conscious leaders such as Bill Wilkinson and David Duke (who recently formed the National Association for the Advancement of White People) have succeeded in thrusting the Hooded Order into the national spotlight by taking advantage of the ever curious medium of television.

In light of this recent increase in numbers and visibility, there are several important reasons why the Klan of the 1980s must be confronted by the Christian community:

Threat of Violence

Bill Wilkinson, Imperial Wizard of the fastest-growing and most militant Klan faction in America, publicly urges American whites to arm themselves for the "imminent race war." Although other Klan leaders tend to shy away from such bold, public pronouncements, the fact remains that wherever the Hooded Order appears, violence lurks in its shadow.

The bloody confrontation between Klansmen and

neo-Nazis and anti-Klan protestors in Greensboro, North Carolina, last November offered a dramatic illustration of the Klan's propensity for violence. That incident left five persons dead and 10 wounded. Other less bloody incidents have occurred during the past two years in Tennessee, Texas, California, New Jersey, Mississippi and Louisiana. The scattered events of violence, coupled with reports of growing Klan arsenals and Klan-sponsored training in weapons use, are sobering reminders that the Klan's threat cannot be measured in numbers alone.

Threat to Racial Harmony

The resurgence of the Klan is a painful reminder that we still have a long way to go in race relations. By polarizing people and issues within communities, the Klan threatens to undermine the progress achieved during the last two decades.

Although it lacks a cohesive, well-defined ideology, the Klan is also making a concerted effort to indoctrinate a new generation of racists. Most of the Invisible Empire's most militant and racially strident members are under 40 years of age. In addition to attracting younger adherents, some Klan factions are also focusing on the family, allowing women and children to participate in cross burning rituals and other klavern activities.

Threat to the gospel

Protestantism, along with Americanism and racism, form the three pillars of Klan ideology. From its infancy, the Ku Klux Klan has claimed to be a Christian organization, formed to defend Christian causes. Christian symbols, from the cross to the Bible, are integral



parts of Klan ritual and Klan propaganda.

Southern Baptists, who represent the largest Protestant denomination in the world, should be at the forefront in the effort to counter the Klan's Christian pretensions. Blinded by outdated and erroneous stereotypes of the Klansman and his beliefs, too many of us have dismissed the latest revival of Klan racism as a minor flare-up, a peripheral issue fueled by the sensation-seeking news media. But to ignore the threat of the Klan is to abdicate our responsibilities as God-called agents of reconciliation. From the pulpit to the marketplace, we must communicate clearly that the gospel of the Klan is incompatible with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

But we must not preach a half gospel. If we are to be prophetic, we, like the Old Testament prophets, must do more than breathe condemnation on an easily identifiable target such as the Ku Klux Klan. As we search for a word from the Lord in this issue, we must take a look inward.

Perhaps, if we are truly honest, we will make some startling discoveries about similar tendencies toward prejudice, exclusiveness and pride within ourselves, our families and our churches. The Klan doesn't have a corner on racism. And it is not the only movement that marches behind the twin banners of Americanism and Christianity, offering simplistic solutions to complex social and moral problems.

In a time of increasing social unrest, Christian discernment is desperately needed. As we examine the threat of the Klan, we must recognize that it is often a deceptively subtle shift from conviction to close-mindedness, from loyalty to superpatriotism, from concern to reactionism.

Finally, in our attempt to preach a whole gospel, we must not forget the gospel's call to wholeness. That call must be extended to the Klansman, even as we challenge his beliefs.

David R. Wilkinson is associate editor of *World Mission Journal*, Brotherhood Commission, SBC. A more indepth article on the KKK by Wilkinson appears in September, 1980 *Home Missions* magazine.



IN ADDITION

Doing and Being

Our prayer life has much to say about our effectiveness as disciples. A helpful word comes to us about public and collective prayer by E. Lee Phillips in *Prayers for Worship* (Word, 1979).

"Good public prayers are one of the great overlooked tasks in the worship life of the present day evangelical church. The worst that can happen to the prayer life of the church is to take it for granted; allow it to become rote, perfunctory, routine, stagnant; to dilute its potency through misuse and its power through neglect. . . .

"Redemption takes on reality in prayers and liturgies that aid in confession, receiving pardon, scriptural instruction, realigning personal and community priorities, and deepening personal piety. . . . The minister who delivers an effective pastoral prayer has learned that outward expression reveals inward intention. Prayer reveals us. We learn to pray by praying. We become what we pray."

Where Are the Peacemakers?

Where are the peacemakers? asks Thomas R. McKibbens, Jr., pastor of First Baptist Church, Bristol, Virginia-Tennessee. His answer is too good to omit any of it:

"War talk is terribly easy and takes very little imagination. If things don't go right, just blast them off the face of the earth! That's not too far removed from a teenager who fights his way out of every problem just to discover that fighting only causes more problems.

"When Jesus said 'Blessed are the peacemakers,' he knew full well that making peace goes against the grain of human nature. We would much rather make war. After all, for some people war has provided a thrill, a life-sacrificing excitement! 'Dust off your guns and go, my boys!' What else can get the blood moving like the threat of battle? 'War,' Benito Mussolini once commented, 'puts the stamp of nobility upon the peoples who have the courage to face it.' That, of course, was not his only mistake.

"The truth is that it takes much more courage to make peace than to fall down before the 'blood-swollen god' of war. Any war is fratricide, but to assume that nuclear war is inevitable is suicide.

"The Cross is a witness to the unpopularity of making peace. Maybe that's why, in an election year, when popularity is at a premium, we hear so little about peacemaking."

(*First Baptist Church Bulletin*, February 21, 1980)

Responsible Christian Citizenship

by Foy Valentine

Politics is the business of deciding who gets what, when and where. It is not necessarily a dirty business any more than family life is. The institution of government, like the institution of the family, is ordained by God. It follows that Christians ought to be involved in government, not leaving the running of our communities and of our country to the wisdom of unbelievers.

To the extent that Christians in general and Baptists in particular are now becoming more committed to involvement in the whole political process, therefore, we are on solid ground—theologically, biblically, ethically, and Baptistically.

To the extent that some Baptists have recently jumped noisily into partisan politics and have equated the political party of their choice with morality and Christianity, however, a foolish, harmful, counter-productive, and ultimately an evil, thing has been done.

Any Christian church that hitches its star to any Caesar's wagon is in for big trouble.

And any Christian leader who identifies the cause of our Lord Jesus Christ with the parade of some passing politician and his particular political party invites disaster.

Ask Billy Graham who became so closely identified with Republican Richard Nixon in the pre-Watergate era that he vowed after the post-Watergate fallout that he had learned the lesson of his life and would never, never do such a damaging thing again.

Ask Norman Vincent Peale who jumped on an early anti-John F. Kennedy bandwagon only to be so powerfully confronted with his foray into partisanship that he immediately jumped off in a moment of truly positive thinking.

Ask the church leaders of Germany in the 1930s who threw their support to Adolph Hitler because he did not smoke or drink only to find that they had bought history's worst pig in a poke.

Ask the Roman Catholic prelates for the last 1500 years who have abhorred the idea of separation of

church and state as "a shibboleth of doctrinaire secularism" and have worked tirelessly to engage the gears of their particular church with the cogs of the state only to find a pot of poison, intrigue, compromise, and debilitating entanglements at the foot of this rainbow of supposed power and prestige.

The brain trusts and power brokers of the so-called New Right are now seeking openly, aggressively, and shamelessly to use Baptists and other Bible-believing Christians for their special political purposes. It is the nature of any organized political force, of course, to try to use any organized group which will hold still and allow itself to be used. It is required of Christians in general and of Baptists in particular, however, that we not so submit because such prostitution of the body of Christ would represent gross unfaithfulness to Him who loved us and gave Himself for us.

It is not clear whether those who have given evidence of being perfectly ready, even eager, to submit themselves to these political seducers and who are trying to deliver Baptist Christians on November 4 in a bloc vote for the political party of their current choice will fail miserably or succeed smashingly. Roman Catholic "leaders" with their own special agendas have not been very successful at playing this game of instructing their people as to how to vote in the United States of America. Baptists have never in history paid much attention to self-appointed bosses who have tried to tell them how to vote. But whether those who are now playing this game fail or succeed with their patently political ploy in this particular political election is not the main issue. The main issue is a theological one: will Baptists and other Bible-believing Christians submit to being pawns in the hands of these or any other political brokers?

For more than two hundred years this country had had a two-party system. That system has served our nation well. By whatever name, one party has always been an innovating party with a pro-government bias and the other party has always been a conserving party with an anti-government bias. Each of these emphases is important and each is always needed.

America does not need a so-called "Christian" political party. We need Christians in both political parties or movements year after year faithfully committed to being God's salt and God's light in pursuit of the never-changing goals of righteousness, justice, peace, and morality.

If Baptists are true to our Baptist heritage we will refuse to fall into this trap which has been set for us and which is currently being skillfully and expensively worked by the political bosses of the New Right.

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Foy Valentine, Executive Director
William M. Tillman, Jr., Managing Editor
Tim Fields, Production Editor

Stewardship of the Environment

by Henlee Barnette

Stewardship of our environment is basically a religious and moral responsibility. Biblically, stewardship or management and the environment stem from the same Greek word which came to mean house and world. Unfortunately the term stewardship suffers from certain limitations in our society. Churches, for example, have tended to interpret it in terms of tithe, time, and talent. In contrast, the biblical view of stewardship encompasses the totality of man's existence and environment. It includes his moral responsibility for the cosmos as well as his personal conduct.

Toward an Environmental Theology

Stewardship of the environment needs a realistic theological underpinning. Theodore Roszak charges that Christianity destroyed pagan animism and made the earth an object, stripping away a sense of divine presence in nature. Hence Western man is ravishing the earth without responsible care. He calls for a recovery of ancient animism as a theological basis for environmental concern and care.¹

Lynn White, Stanford University historian, declares that more science and technology are not going to solve the environmental problems "until we find a new religion or rethink our old one."² I reject the return to animism and the search for a new religion and opt for rethinking our old one, "the faith once delivered to the saints," as the realistic theological approach to the environmental issue.

God's Covenantal Concern for Nature

An eco-theology demands rethinking of God's covenant with his people to care for the earth. God's covenant with his people extends from the individual, to society, to nature itself. It involves laws for the protection of the environment. Every living creature, trees, and the land have their legal and moral right of protection in God's covenant (Gen. 9:8-17; Exodus 23:4-5; Deut. 20:19-20; Deut. 22:6-7).

When people break the laws of the covenant the environment suffers. As the prophet Isaiah declared: "The earth mourns and withers. . . The heavens languish together with the earth. The earth lies polluted under its inhabitants; for they have transgressed the laws, violated the statutes, broken the everlasting covenant" (Isa. 24:4-5).

The Biblical Model of Man

An eco-theology requires rethinking about man and his relationship to nature. There is some truth in the

charge by White, Roszak and numerous others that the biblical text to subdue and conquer the earth lies at the heart of the eco-crisis. While the text, Genesis 1:28, does declare that man is to have dominion over the earth, it does not mean domination. His dominion is always under the dominion of God the Creator. Man is to use—not abuse—the earth. The earth is The Lord's (Ps. 24:1), and man is the manager not the mangler, the caretaker not its undertaker.

Genesis 1:28 must be seen in the light of Genesis 2:15 where God places man in The Garden of Eden "to till and keep it." The injunction to "keep" means to preserve the garden from any damage. Hence, the vocation of man is that of a curator or custodian of the earth for God's own glory—not man's!

The Sacrality of the Earth

An adequate environmental stewardship theology requires that we rethink nature itself. For centuries theologians have tended to view nature as a mere stage on which the drama of redemption takes place. But nature is not mere "scenery"; it is sacramental and has intrinsic value in and of itself.

From the biblical perspective the material world is good. In the creation narrative, Genesis 1, God declares that his world is very good and expresses his divine satisfaction in all that he has created. Thus, from the beginning, creation manifests a sacramental quality.

A sacramental view of the universe is one in which the material becomes a symbolic instrument of the spirit of God. As William Temple explains: It is a "spiritual utilization of a material object whereby a spiritual result is effected."³

The incarnation of God in the flesh of Jesus Christ is evidence of the goodness of the material. Here the sublime truth that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself is effected by the spiritual use of the material. Likewise the bread and the wine used in the Lord's Supper become symbols through which spiritual blessings are communicated to the believer.

Recovery of a sacramental view of the earth will help to restore a spiritual kinship to nature. It will aid us in overcoming the false notion that nature is a mere object and an enemy to be dominated without a sense of creative stewardship. It is our hope of making more humane the management of the good earth.

Personal and Cosmic Redemption

Creation itself is the realm and an object of God's redemptive purpose. Man and nature are so closely

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bound together that in Adam's fall a curse fell upon all creation. Nature was subjected to "futility" and now groans for liberation from bondage to decay and awaits for the "glorious liberty of the children of God" (Romans 8:20-22).

Thus the tragedy of nature and man are linked together and the redemption of nature is related to that of mankind. Creation will share in the salvation of man. Personal and cosmic redemption are inseparable. As The Apostle Paul puts it: "Through the Son, then, God decided to bring the whole universe back to himself" (Col. 1:20). The ground of cosmic redemption is personal encounter with Christ the cosmic redeemer.

It is wrong, therefore, to ruthlessly destroy nature and add to its suffering. In the light of our common salvation with nature, there is a moral and religious responsibility to conserve and to care for nature's well-being.

Stewardship in Its Eco-ethical Expression

A realistic stewardship demands a holistic ethic which embraces our responsible care for the totality of our environment. Agape love of biblical revelation is such an ethic. It means to will and to work for the well-being of all of God's creatures and creation. Agape constrains us to preserve and to promote the kind of environment which maximizes the possibility of full personhood.

Love of neighbor and nature means to work for and to maintain an optimum ecological and environmental balance. An ethic of soil, reverence for life, technology, progress, energy, conservation, and ecological asceticism are some practical implications of agape so essential in achieving a healthy environment.

Space permits only a brief comment about eco-asceticism, something every person can do. Eco-asceticism means the development of a disciplined life-style. We are a nation of consumerholics. Millions of dollars are spent on gadgets that have little value for actually improving quality of life. With six percent of the world's population, Americans consume approximately 40 percent of the world's resources. No doubt we will be forced to consume less as the Third World Nations continue to raise the cost of the materials we have bought from them so cheaply for so many years.

The Christian life-style as described in the New Testament is one of discipline in the family (Eph. 6:1-4), modesty (I Tim. 2:9) and self-control (Titus 2:12). A recovery of the biblical life-style is imperative because it will contribute to a better quality of life and a healthier environment.

The Church and the Energy Crunch

In the midst of the current energy crisis, the church



has a significant role to play. Paul Ehrlich, the ecologist, asserts that religious institutions provide the most effective means of sensitizing concern for the environmental crisis.⁴ Paul Sears, Yale professor of conservation, agrees and states: "If ever the custodians of religious faith have been challenged" to proclaim the environmental values, it is today.⁵

Churches can do two things in beginning to meet the environmental challenge. First, they can teach their members to have an eco-conscience. Ministers can help them to develop an ecological psyche and to bridge the gap between human beings and nature by proclaiming the gospel of redemption, reconciliation, and the broader concept of stewardship of the soil, air, water, and natural resources. Seminars as a part of eco-education in the churches can be structured to sensitize laypersons to the environmental problem and to stir them to engage in responsible action.

In the second place, churches can let judgment begin with the "household of God" (I Peter 4:17). This means that they will take seriously the stewardship of energy in the operation of their church houses. Some denominations already have set up energy stewardship committees and agencies. For example, North Carolina Baptists now have an Energy Strategy Committee. It seeks ways to aid churches in conserving energy and avoiding "irresponsible and sinful waste."⁶

At the Southern Baptist Convention level, the supervisor of the Sunday School Board's Church Architecture Department has asserted that architectural designs for new churches must contribute to saving energy.⁷ He even suggests that several religious denominations may have to use the same building for services to save energy.

By way of summary, stewardship of the environment

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The New Right- Is It Right or Wrong?

by William H. Elder, III

The emergence of what the media sloganeers are presently labeling "The New Right" and its linkage to certain newly formed conservative Christian political activist groups is significant.

This "New Right/Conservative Christian Coalition" has emerged at a time when there appears to be vastly increased political activity on the part of conservative evangelical Christians. Many Southern Baptists are involved in this movement.

There does appear to be a new awakening among these Christians to their own political potential and responsibilities and to a new willingness to jump head first into those unfamiliar, uncharted, murky political waters.

The reforming spirit has been aroused. A growing sentiment is "Sure, politics is dirty, but it's high time God's people got involved to clean up the whole mess."

According to George Gallup, who conducted a major poll on the status of evangelical Christianity, "Evangelicals appear to be of one mind and want the churches and clergymen to speak out" on political and economic issues and to try to persuade legislators to take certain actions. That new interest is evident in terms of evangelical money, organization, campaigns, and professional and lay lobbying efforts all over Capitol Hill, the White House, and throughout the nation on state and local levels. The evangelicals are becoming politically alive.

The political revival in the larger conservative evangelical ranks is both good news and bad news. It brings unique opportunities perhaps never before available. These opportunities must not be allowed to pass us by. However, it also brings with it severe liabilities which we must mitigate with all the discernment, intelligence, compassion, and good judgment we can muster.

The Good News

Perhaps the most obvious piece of good news is that a lot more people are getting involved in the political process. That's significant in light of how few even bothered to vote in the last congressional election and in light of the fact we all learned in high school civics that our system cannot work properly without the participation of its citizenry.

Our system is now receiving a transfusion of new blood. New energy is being pumped into the process. That's at least potentially good. If that new blood proves to be the healthy type required by the system, then the potential good is realized. But there is always the chance that this new blood will be antithetical to the system, thus causing degeneration to occur. It seems to

be so early in the transfusion process that the overall system has not yet been affected. But, Christian citizens can play an important part in ensuring that the new blood is the right match.

Another positive dimension is that these new politicians are already having an accountability effect on some elected officials and bureaucrats. They seem to be having that effect because of an inherent naiveté about the political process. Many of them don't know how things really are done, how many rules are routinely disregarded, how gratuities are institutionalized. All they know is how it's supposed to work, and acting on that assumption sometimes forces the jaded veterans to respond accordingly. So, a reforming effect is already being felt.

Another potential benefit is that these new Christian political activists are highlighting moral "values" in the political decision-making process. This is a perspective which has too long appeared only as a rhetorical trapping attached to a political speech after the decision to support or oppose has been made, based on rationale not remotely related to those moral values. The new activists want those values considered up front and throughout as matters of the highest priority.

The Bad News

The bad news potential lies in the fact that these conservative evangelical Christians who have been recently turned on to politics are very susceptible to the gospel of the New Right in both its political and religious expressions. So the liability of the larger movement is that it is already bent in the direction of the New Right and therefore is in danger of being used in such a way as to compromise its own religious integrity and misuse its power.

A Look at the New Right

It is important that we bring into focus some of the people and organizations which make up this political New Right. The New Right is represented all over the nation, but the people and organizations are the ones who function not only in the political corner of the New Right, but in its new religious dimension as well.

There is the Committee for the Survival of a Free Congress, and the Free Congress Research and Education Foundation, both of which lobby for conservative causes and contribute money to selected candidates. The Foundation publishes a newsletter which features conservative evaluations on legislation which it believes has an impact on the family. The newsletter is entitled the "Family Protection Report."

Spokesman Paul Weyrich

Both the Foundation and the Committee are headed by Paul Weyrich, who many feel is the most influential

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and articulate spokesman for the New Right in America. Weyrich has served on the staffs of Senators Allott of Colorado and Curtis of Nebraska and helped form both the House Republican Study Group and the Senate Steering Committee.

Weyrich is rich in political savvy and expertise. Religiously, he is a devout Catholic who talks about having a deep religious basis for his conservatism in political matters. He has led the New Right into a real openness for and mastery of coalitions. This characteristic has spilled over into the religious expressions of the New Right, where at best denominational and doctrinal differences are seen as secondary considerations. Weyrich claims he has been advocating a right wing appeal to conservative religion since the early 1970s. "It is the agenda of those opposed to the Scriptures and the church which has brought us together," Weyrich says. This kind of thinking and rhetoric has characterized the development of the New Religious Right. According to New Religious Right "doctrine," not agreeing with conservative politics and social theory is tantamount to being unbiblical and un-Christian.

Fund Raiser Richard Viguerie

Richard Viguerie is considered to be the major fund raiser of the New Right. He is a direct mail fund raising expert for the New Right. In the last election, reports say he raised nearly \$8,000,000 for the reelection of Jesse Helms. Viguerie controls a mailing list of four million conservative voters. His firm publishes *Conservative Digest* which is the primary literary expression of the New Right.

Ousted Senator Thomas J. McIntyre

Perhaps the person who has seen the liabilities of the New Right most clearly and closely is former U.S. Senator Thomas J. McIntyre, who was defeated in 1978 by a candidate of the New Right—Gordon Humphrey, a Baptist from New Hampshire.

McIntyre considers this phenomenon so important that he has written a commentary and analysis entitled *The Fear Brokers* (Pilgrim Press, 1979). In a recent speech, "If the Self-Righteous Rule," Senator McIntyre spelled out the thesis he develops fully in *Fear Brokers*.

"I am convinced that the New Right poses the greatest threat to this country since the days of Joe McCarthy," he said. McIntyre feels the movement is only now beginning and that it has not peaked. He believes its appeal lies in its absolutism, authoritarianism, and apocalypticism, which all strike responsive chords with a national psyche still reverberating under the shocks of Vietnam, Watergate, unchecked inflation, the energy crisis, Iran and the Soviet turmoil.

According to McIntyre, the New Right so far has been very effective. In the '78 elections "they knocked eight senators out of office on the Panama Canal issue, elected thirteen of its own candidates and lost only one incumbent." McIntyre said he believes that all it will take to make the movement really peak is the enlistment of that emerging new bloc of political activists who are within the ranks of an estimated 75 million evangelical Christians. When that happens, the power of a lot more people will be activated and that power will be persistent because it has been elevated to the category of divine mandate.

Presently on the one hand there is the New Right made up of experienced political activists with a clear legislative agenda.

On the other hand, there are millions of conservative evangelical Christians who are convinced enough of the moral decay in the nation and of their right and responsibility as Christians and Americans to combat that decay, to be actively looking for ways to use the political process to do just that. The attractions between the two groups are obvious, so much so that if left alone, a marriage is likely to take place, and with it the peak McIntyre feared would become a reality.

Christian Voice

Christian Voice was founded in January, 1979 and registered in June as a nonprofit, nonexempt lobbying organization with an announced budget of \$1 million for 1979 and \$3 million for 1980. It claims membership of 100,000 laymen and some 37,000 priests and ministers from over forty denominations.

The organization is the creation of Reverend Robert Grant of Pasadena, California, a Bob Jones and Fuller Seminary graduate who was instrumental in the founding of the California Graduate School of Theology.

Christian Voice already serves as a coalition for American Christian Cause (founded also by Grant to combat gay activists), Citizens for Decency Through Law, and the Pro Family Coalition.

Voice's stated objective is to unite the 75 million evangelicals in America. They want evangelicals to speak with one voice in order to turn the tide as they perceive it, from moral decay to moral revival and from government encroachment into religion to true religious liberty. They plan to unite the evangelicals through utilizing a sophisticated media campaign via Christian television and especially the 700 and PTL Clubs.

They plan spot announcements, issue commentaries and 30-minute productions. One film entitled "The Doomsday Report" is narrated by Senator Orrin Hatch and directed and produced by Hal Lindsey. The film highlights the moral decline of America.

In addition to shaping and mobilizing public opinion, Christian Voice plans to affect public policy and legislation through grass-roots citizen's action stimulated and informed by a legislative report and a morality report card which grades legislators in terms of the morality of their votes. Legislators are graded on their agreement or disagreement with Christian Voice's positions on the issues.

Moral Majority

If a legislator disagrees, the vote is considered not only wrong but immoral. In this way, Congressman Richard Kelly of Abscam infamy scored 100, while evangelical, "Mr. Ethics," Congressman Paul Simon received a zero. Voice wants to act "as a liaison between Christians and conservatives in Congress, and Christian leaders and pastors across the nation, guiding and channeling their efforts each month to motivate their constituencies/congregations along the appropriate course of action to affect target legislation."

Senator Gordon Humphrey who is on the advisory board of Christian Voice, in a letter to selected members of Congress urging them to join Voice's Congressional Advisory Committee, stated, "I can think of nothing more important than to organize millions of American Christians and provide a voice for them in our nation's capital. . . I am certain it will bring to the conservative cause a successful and influential ally."

Voice's positions are clear and remarkably identical to those of the American Conservative Union, from which came their chief lobbyist and legislative director, Gary Jarmin. Jarmin has been reported to be a Southern Baptist who spent six years working Capitol Hill for the Reverend Sun Myung Moon and the Unification Church. Christian Voice opposes abortion, gun control, busing, gay rights, E.R.A., the Panama Canal treaties, SALT II, cutting the military budget, recognizing the People's Republic of China, and the IRS attempt to deny tax exemption and deductibility to private schools which racially discriminate. It is for prayer in public schools, cleaning up television, removing sanctions from Rhodesia, appreciation for Ian Smith, restoring diplomatic ties with Taiwan, and Christian schools. Those positions indicate clearly how Robert Grant could say that political liberalism is "inconsistent with Christianity."

Senator Orrin Hatch, who also serves on Voice's Congressional Advisory Committee said recently that he was not troubled that the lines between church and state may be blurred by Christian Voice. Hatch also admitted that there are similarities between Christian Voice and the goals of Iran's Ayatollah Khomeini in the effort to establish a state based on religious principles.

Among those who serve on Voice's Congressional Advisory Committee are Congressman George Hansen, the frequent Iran visitor; Congressman Larry McDonald of the John Birch Society; and Senator Jim McClure who chairs the New Right's Senate Steering Committee.

Among those on the policy committee are Reverend Robert Billings, executive director of the National Christian Action Coalition and president of the Committee of Survival of a Free Congress; Doris Enderle, president of the Pro-Family Coalition; Hal Lindsay, author of *Late Great Planet Earth*; and Jess Moody of the non-aligned Van Nuys First Baptist Church. As fund raiser they have the professional services of Jerry Hunsinger, who numbers among his clients Jerry Falwell, whose active donors list of some 2 million has been made accessible to Hunsinger. It now appears that Hunsinger will also be permitted to use Viguerie's list of 4 million. Christian Voice has endorsed Ronald Reagan and has spent more than \$80,000 in an independent campaign on Reagan's behalf.

Moral Majority was formed in June, 1979, and in August 1979 they opened an office in Washington and registered as a non-profit, nonexempt lobbying organization. They have eight full-time workers in their Washington office and claim to have statewide organizations in all 50 states. They report a membership of 400,000 of which 72,000 are pastors or preachers. The founding figure is Jerry Falwell of the 17,000 member Thomas Road Baptist Church in Lynchburg, Virginia.

Falwell has a weekly television program which is carried on some 370 television stations, and his viewing audience numbers in the millions. In thinking about the size of his audience, Falwell began to see the signs of a moral majority in America, who if properly mobilized and organized, could have tremendous influence on the direction and goals of the nation.

Robert Billings serves as executive director. Billings has been the major lobbyist for Moral Majority until recently when he became the religious liaison for the Reagan campaign.

In 1976 Billings unsuccessfully ran for Congress in Indiana. With Paul Weyrich's encouragement he moved to Washington and hung out his shingle as a consultant particularly championing the causes of independent Christian schools. He developed expertise in dealing with conservative members of Congress and became clearly accepted in the circles of the emerging New Right. He serves as treasurer for the Free Congress Research and Education Foundation, which is led by Weyrich.

Jerry Hunsinger, already mentioned as a fund raiser for Christian Voice is involved with raising money for Moral Majority as well. It is reported that contributions for Moral Majority are averaging \$400,000 per month.

Recently, Moral Majority has been involved helping to draft S. 1808, The Family Protection Act, which has been introduced by Senator Paul Laxalt, Reagan's campaign manager.

The scope of this bill is extensive. It includes titles on education, welfare reform, religious liberty, taxation, and domestic relations.

With the Family Protection Act, Moral Majority, is attempting to legislate a whole slate of conservative concerns under the rubric of family. Consequently, those in other political camps who differ with Moral Majority's positions are automatically regarded as being anti-family.

Moral Majority implicitly promotes the assumption that pro-family means pro-New Right political philosophy. This approach allows them to transfer the obvious popular support for the value of the family to the not as obvious support for their ultraconservative stance on the issues.

What is missing is a defense for the implied causal link between the family and their positions. For example, one looks in vain for any explanation as to why taking college students out of a food stamp program is protecting the family or how state-sponsored prayer in

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school would be more pro-family than voluntary prayer. Indeed, it may just as easily be argued that prayer is best taught in the home and that government-sponsored prayer is infringing on an important family prerogative.

Moral Majority and Jerry Falwell use the same mental slight of hand regarding the whole complex of religious values. The assumption being promoted is that agreement with their political positions is the litmus test for whether or not one is moral, Bible-believing, and Christian.

Jerry Falwell has described the Republican Party platform, which clearly reflects the influence of the New Right as the "dream platform." He has said publicly, "It would be extremely difficult to be a Bible-believing Christian and support the Democratic Platform." For Falwell the test of faith has become New Right conservatism.

This tactic seems to be having its effect on many different levels. Congressman John Buchanan of Alabama, a Southern Baptist minister, has just been defeated after sixteen years in the U.S. House of Representatives. Buchanan cites Moral Majority as the key factor in his defeat. Moral Majority did not like his voting on ERA and busing, and they particularly resented his slowness to join the forces working for prayer in public schools. Buchanan was evaluated as being immoral and un-Christian by the opposition, while his opponent was publicly evaluated by Falwell as an example of pure virtue, which Falwell denies constitutes an endorsement.

Religious Roundtable

Religious Roundtable was founded by Ed McAteer of the Conservative Caucus, and evangelist James Robison. Like Christian Voice and Moral Majority, it has offices in Washington and lobbies Congress. Its major thrust is to attract religious leaders to their cause, whereas Moral Majority's greatest emphasis is on grass roots Christians. McAteer serves on the board of Moral Majority. "The two groups. . . share an identical political outlook: bedrock, Bible-believing, conservative."

Its most evident project thus far was the sponsorship of the National Affairs Briefing in Dallas this past August which attracted 15,000 people. Touted as nonpartisan, the list of speakers is no more than a Who's Who of the New Right and New Religious Right leadership; and, of course, Ronald Reagan himself.

Paul Weyrich advised the participants not only to register people to vote, but to tell them who to vote for.

And in a private meeting with Reagan, James Robison said, "If we help you get elected, will you appoint Christians to your Administration?" In the same meeting Reagan is reported to have promised to appoint Ed McAteer to his transition team, should Reagan be elected. This can hardly be called nonpartisan politics. The ingenious thing about the Briefing was that it could be presented and sold to evangelical Christians as a Christian citizenship event on behalf of building a more moral America. By parading New Right candidates and ideas in front of the people, it could promote the assumption and create the impression that a moral America means an America with the New Right in control.

It is clear that the New Right, Christian Voice, Moral Majority, and Religious Roundtable are all thoroughly allied and united in philosophy and methodology, and possess abundant resources. Their target is conservative evangelical Christianity first and then a reshaping of American life to their liking.

Liabilities of Religionized New Right

By this time the liabilities of this religionized New Right are obvious. In my opinion, it poses a serious threat to our form of democracy, particularly at the point of denying, or at least eroding, the principle of pluralism. This kind of religious politico seems to have lost the ability to distinguish between what the Christian Gospel declares would be best for society and the legislative agenda of the American Conservative Union or the Committee for the Survival of a Free Congress. They are absolutely convinced that the Bible has definitely spoken on each and every issue and that it continues to authenticate the views of the political Right. The stance of waiting to decide on positions until the specifics and complexities of particular legislation can be clearly evaluated in light of Christian ethics to them seems totally unnecessary, indicative of a lack of spiritual discernment, and a step down the road to compromise and equivocation.

It is this kind of religious/political synthesis that opens the door to undermining the principle of pluralism and with it the doctrine of separation of church and state. One of the cardinal tenets of theological orthodoxy is the one-wayness of the path to salvation. "No man cometh to the Father but by me." It becomes a very easy step to the belief that there is only one path leading to the salvation of the American way of life, i.e., the narrow path clearly marked out by the political Right.

In a day when the two-party system is deeply wounded and when special interests and single issue politics seem to be in the ascendancy, this version of a sacralized special interest group is indeed something to be reckoned with. If it is successful in mobilizing the so-called "silent majority" of which the conservative evangelicals make up a substantial part, we will take great strides away from the goal of a free society.

Threat to Authentic Christianity

More important than the potential political ramifications is the threat this movement poses for authentic Christianity at the point of enculturation. There has always been the danger of enculturating the Gospel in such a way as to enshrine either the status quo or some utopic, self-manufactured dream rather than allowing the Gospel to be the standard which continually calls both the status quo and the utopic dreams into question.

The prophets consistently tried to warn the people of this danger. Jesus did the same thing, particularly with the Pharisees, who were so sure their conservatism was divinely ordained that they failed to see God's promised Messiah. And that was a frequent note of Paul as well. Remember his words to the Galatians, "I'm astounded at the promptness with which you have turned away from the one who called you and have decided to follow a different version of the Good News" (Galatians 1:6, Jerusalem Bible).

Any rendition of the Gospel that always comes down on the same side of any given political philosophy—be it far right, conservatism, moderatism, or liberalism—is to be suspect of enculturation. When an enculturated Gospel is used to further enshrine a particular cultural model and political philosophy, the authentic Gospel is doubly compromised. The difficulty of being able to break through that enculturation cycle is greatly increased. Fundamentalist Christianity is particularly vulnerable at this point by virtue of its disdain for the role of critical thinking in matters of religion. Its spiritual leaders are followed for their authority, which has largely been established because of their so-called "soundness" in terms of orthodoxy.

This kind of spiritual mindset is difficult enough to deal with in ecclesiastical matters, but when it is politicized, and particularly when it meets with some degree of success, it becomes almost impregnable. The scenario appears to be: a conservatively enculturated Gospel is used as the platform for political involvement. That involvement is welcomed and encouraged by conservative politicians and respected by the whole political gamut because of the political fact of life that we are experiencing a conservative swing in the national psyche. That kind of door-opening reception then is easily evaluated as God's stamp of approval. The cycle then becomes locked in and insulated.

So, in my opinion the religionized New Right is worth our attention and time, for it does raise serious questions at the point of both authentic Christianity and authentic democracy. However, the group that merits most of our attention is that much larger community now opening up to political involvement—the conservative evangelical Christians—and specifically Southern Baptists of like persuasion.

The New Religious Right is speaking up at a particularly auspicious time. It is speaking to a group of whom

many have an understanding of the Gospel which has already been effected by political conservatism. They are easily enamored by the New Religious Right because that movement adds the final authentication to their leanings by sacralizing them as God's designs for the world. They can be conservative politicians and Christian crusaders at the same time. That's an appealing, persuasive package to say the least, but one which must be resisted. However, we must be careful to oppose only that which is inappropriate without writing off the entire conservative, evangelical, political interest movement or even everything about the New Religious Right.

What Can We Do?

So, what are we to do in light of this current citizenship challenge and opportunity?

We ought always to keep in mind the lesson frequently taught in the Bible that a Gospel label attached to something does not guarantee the presence of the authentic Gospel. Paul warned the Galatian Christians about those who would pervert the Gospel by using it to authenticate their own cultural and religious tastes (Galatians 1:6-12). Paul contrasts the "gospel" which originates with men, with the Gospel that is the gift of God. He uses the strongest condemnatory language for those who foster their own causes and biases under the sacred aegis of Gospel. The true Gospel is intended to serve as the standard by which all else is evaluated and shaped. When it is drained of its content, robbed of its function, and relegated to the realm of campaign sales pitches, a travesty of the deepest Christian dimensions takes place. That's why it is so important for Christian citizens to resist the temptation of assuming that any political philosophy is identical with the Gospel. What they must be willing to do is evaluate each and every issue and candidate in light of the Gospel.

For that kind of evaluation to be properly carried out, a preliminary step is involved which tries to ensure that one's concept of the Gospel is not already colored by one's cultural predispositions. In other words, to faithfully apply the Gospel, the first step is to search the Bible with a minimum of presuppositions for the vision of society toward which Christians are called to work. Then on the basis of that fundamental look, the present political options can best be evaluated and encountered. And that process must be repeated over and over again with each new political possibility which presents itself.

The fact remains that a lot of Christian people are ready to apply the Gospel to the country through involvement in the political process. If that involvement is accomplished in ways appropriate to American citizenship which recognizes religious liberty and the separation of church and state, and if it can be carried out in light of the authentic Gospel rather than a "politicized" one, then these Christian citizens can effectively and redemptively lead the way to a better future.

Stewardship. . .

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is a religious and moral issue. Persons made in the *imago Dei* have basic human rights and one of these is the right to a livable environment for self-fulfillment.

The earth is not merely an object to be ruthlessly and recklessly exploited. Man is its "dresser and keeper" for God's own glory. As the socioeconomist, Robert Theobald, puts it: "God is the giver, the world is the gift, the gift must be worked with, rather than worked over."⁸ Then the earth will cease to mourn and the heavens will no longer languish, for man will be working with nature in obedience to God's everlasting covenant.

Henlee Barnette is Clinical Professor in the Depart-

¹Theodore Roszak, *Where the Wasteland Ends* (New York: Doubleday, 1972), p. 128.

²Lynn White, "The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis," *Science*, 155, 1967, pp. 1203-1206.

³William Temple, *God, Man and Nature* (London: Macmillan Co., Limited), p. 491.

⁴Paul Ehrlich, *Population, Resources, Environment* (San Francisco, 1970), p. 262.

⁵Paul Sears, "The Injured Earth," in *This Little Planet*, ed. Michael Hamilton (New York: Scribners, 1970), p. 42.

⁶*The Florida Baptist Witness*, 6 September 1979, p. 9

⁷*Ibid.*, 23 August 1979, p. 9

⁸Robert Theobald, "The Changing Environment: Does the Church Have a Major Responsibility?" in Glenn Stone, *A New Ethic For a New Earth* (New York: Friendship Press, 1971), p. 158.

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