Defying the odds: The Christian Coalition in the life cycle of the Religious Right

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DEFYING THE ODDS: THE CHRISTIAN COALITION
IN THE LIFE CYCLE OF THE RELIGIOUS RIGHT

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

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in

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ABSTRACT

According to the established theories on the life cycle of social movements, the Maintenance Stage of a movement is a critical time that marks a crossroads. One path leads to victory and the other to oblivion. The odds are strongly against victory for any social movement because the bureaucratic necessities for long-term maintenance of a movement siphon off spontaneity, excitement, and “esprit de corps.” Few social movements are totally successful and many are absorbed or cooped by established institutions. This study examines how the Religious Right, under the leadership of the Christian Coalition, has defied the odds and has become more powerful while transforming itself into a mainstream political organization. A carefully planned shift in rhetorical strategy has helped the Christian Coalition coopt an established institution, the Republican Party, rather than being cooped by it.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT ............................................................................................................... iii

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION .............................................................................. 1
Literature Review .......................................................................................... 3

CHAPTER 2 HISTORY OF THE RELIGIOUS RIGHT .............................................. 10
Evangelicalism Comes to the New World ...................................................... 10
Rise of Fundamentalism .................................................................................. 12
A New Devil Emerges ...................................................................................... 15
The Moral Majority Renews the Faith .............................................................. 16
Pat Robertson Runs for President ................................................................. 22
The Genesis of the Christian Coalition ............................................................. 28
The Issues ....................................................................................................... 31

CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY ............................................................................... 34

CHAPTER 4 ANALYSIS ......................................................................................... 42
Genesis: Where Do We Begin? ........................................................................ 42
Social Unrest Stage ......................................................................................... 44
Enthusiastic Mobilization Stage ..................................................................... 45
Christian Coalition as Maintenance Stage ....................................................... 51
Transition ....................................................................................................... 57
Persuasive Feats of Magic ............................................................................... 63
Getting Tangles in a Wider Net ....................................................................... 70

CHAPTER 5 CONCLUSION .................................................................................... 74
Discussion ....................................................................................................... 74
Conclusion ..................................................................................................... 81
Implications for Further Research ................................................................. 82

BIBLIOGRAPHY ..................................................................................................... 86
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

For a group that claims to have no party affiliation, the Christian Coalition, the powerful political arm of the Christian Right, has had considerable impact on the American political scene and Republican Party politics in recent years. The group has been blamed for George Bush's downfall in the 1992 presidential election and credited with aiding the Republican takeover of Congress in 1994. The Coalition, which claims 1.7 million members (Reed, 1996a), held virtual veto power over the Republican presidential nomination in 1996. Studies estimate that evangelicals backed George Bush in the 1992 presidential election at a higher rate than any other religious group and provided 29 percent of the total Republican vote in 1994 (Moen, 1996).

As a social movement, the evangelical or fundamentalist movement has existed since the early 1900s (Jost, 1994) but the Christian Coalition has existed as an organization only since 1989 (Clarkson, 1992a). During the 1994 Congressional elections, the Christian Right dominated Republican Party organizations in eighteen states and wielded substantial influence in thirteen others (Jost, 1994). The Coalition's volunteers work through 1,500 local chapters in all fifty states (Current Biography, 1996) and the group's clout influenced the inclusion of the anti-abortion plank in the Republican
Party platform (The stealth platform, 1996).

In spite of the Coalition's high profile and obvious strong political influence, there has been little scholarly investigation into the communication methods the group has used to achieve its success.

Stewart, Smith and Denton (1989) say that few social movements are totally successful and many are absorbed or coopted by established institutions. This study will show that, so far, the Religious Right and the Christian Coalition have defied this prediction and have coopted an established institution, the Republican Party, rather than being coopted by it. Two factors have contributed to handing the Christian Coalition success where others have failed. First, the Coalition's astounding success in the 1994 elections can be directly attributed to a carefully calculated change in rhetorical strategy. The shift Reed calls "casting a wider net" was intended to broaden the Coalition's appeal and expand its power base (Reed, 1993b).

Other tactics involved avoiding the scrutiny of the mainstream press. The group does not depend on traditional media outlets to transmit messages to its audience. In fact, the Coalition actively avoids mainstream media attention and reaches supporters through a network of alternative media (Conason, 1993). A lack of attention from the media usually spells doom for a social movement but the Coalition's "stealth politics" have turned that lack of attention into a strong advantage. This study will examine the communication techniques the Coalition has used so effectively to turn a lack of media attention into an advantage.
Literature Review

The literature reviewed for this study will fall into three categories: 1. Communication studies on social movements; 2. existing studies from various fields on the Christian Right and the Christian Coalition; and 3. documents reflecting the rhetoric of the movement.

Three valuable works on rhetorical studies of social movements will provide the foundation for this study. First is Leland Griffin's 1952 article "The Rhetoric of Historical Movements" which poses several questions students of social movements should ask while studying an historic movement. Griffin's study establishes three phases of development for an historic movement: the "Period of Inception"; the "Period of Rhetorical Crisis"; and the "Period of Consummation" (Griffin, 1952).

A second study by Herbert W. Simons (1970) focuses on the problems faced by movement leaders and suggests persuasive strategies for dealing with those problems. According to Simons, "The primary rhetorical test of the leader — and indirectly, of the strategies he employs — is his capacity to fulfill the requirements of his movement by resolving or reducing rhetorical problems" (p. 2-3).

The third study is Charles Stewart, Craig Allen Smith and Robert D. Denton's "Life Cycle of Social Movements" (1989) which expands Griffin’s three phases into five: Genesis, Social Unrest, Enthusiastic Mobilization, Maintenance, and Termination. The study describes each stage in detail and explains the rhetorical challenges presented by each and the effects of internal and external forces on a movement’s evolution from one stage to the next.
While a healthy body of literature exists on the study of social movements and on the Religious Right, very little scholarly work has been done in communication studies specifically on the Christian Coalition. Most of the information available is from the mass media or from advocacy press such as Church and State, a journal published by Americans United for Separation of Church and State. A book published in 1996 and titled The Most Dangerous Man in America? Pat Robertson and the Rise of the Christian Coalition was written by Robert Boston, an American United staff member. The book cites examples of Robertson's colorful speaking style and tendency to outlandish statements as evidence of Robertson's opposition to separation of church and state, the public school system, women's rights and other issues typically favored by liberals.

Other books on the Religious Right examine the political implications of the movement (Moen, 1995a). These studies include extensive literature detailing the Christian Right's support of Ronald Reagan (Guth and Green, 1991) and an examination of Pat Robertson's 1988 presidential bid (Hertzke, 1991).

Hertzke's 1993 work, Echoes of Discontent, demonstrates the similarities between the 1988 presidential campaigns of Robertson and Jesse Jackson. Hertzke, a political scientist, argues that, though the two candidates were from different parties, their campaigns were more alike than different and that both men were manifestations of American populism. The author describes how a new form of "Gospel Populism" has developed to fill a vacuum left by the weakening of local political institutions such as labor unions and local party organizations (Hertzke, 1993, p. 11). Strong parallels are drawn between Robertson, Jackson and turn-of-the-century populist presidential candidate
William Jennings Bryan. The author demonstrates that populism of the mid to late 1800s was infused with religious fervor and passion and Bryan used religious language to make his populist appeals (Hertzke, 1993).

Matthew C. Moen of the University of Maine is the author of several books and articles dealing with the evolution of the Christian Right and its political influence (Moen, 1996, 1995a, 1995b). In a September 1996 article, Moen examines a 1996 essay by Ralph Reed to demonstrate a change in rhetorical tactics from a political perspective that shows the movement pressing for a more moderate image. Moen also discusses some of the Christian Coalition's uses of current communication technology.

A collection of articles on the Religious Right in an issue of Sociology of Religion (Spring, 1995) has been republished as a book entitled The Rapture of Politics (Bruce, 1995). The authors look at the sociological and political impact of the movement with some arguing that the actual influence has been overestimated while others argue the influence is real, formidable, and continues to grow. The collection offers a wealth of background information on the movement and statistics on relevant quantitative studies. The essays question whether the Religious Right (known by these authors and others as the "New Religious Right") is a social movement or a voting bloc and even whether it is a distinct movement or a sub-set of conservative Protestantism. The collection of essays points out a lack of a clear consensus among sociologists on the impact, or even the definition, of the Religious Right.

In a book published in 1988, Bruce examines the New Christian Right (NCR) as a social movement from a sociological point of view. The author uses the NCR as a case
study to examine the accuracy of several sociological theories on the evolution of social movements. Lipset's Status Anxiety Theory, the author explains, holds that extremist movements of the lower middle class are driven by a desire to regain power and status or protect it (Bruce, 1988). Another theory proposes that major structural changes in a society produce "irrational behavior" and that such movements are characterized by Hansel's "paranoid style" or an "over determined response" to social strain (Bruce, 1988). Smelser's genesis theory breaks the process into three steps: 1. Social strain creates anxiety; 2. The identification of a cause of the strain; and 3. The identification of a solution (Bruce, 1988).

Sociologists who advocate the Status Inconsistency Theory claim "status inconsistencies," for example, people with high education but low occupational attainment, express anxiety in "irrational collective behavior" which leads to social movements. The "Status Defense" theory, on the other hand, holds that social movements are formed in response to a threat to a cultural group's status (Bruce, 1988).

After explaining and examining each theory, Bruce argues it is not the presence of a grievance that causes a movement but leaders who capitalize on a preexisting grievance to mobilize resources. He holds that social movements evolve when culture, rather than status, is threatened. Threats to culture create structural strain that causes social unrest (Bruce, 1988). Movements, the author argues, are caused by a threat to the social prestige of a culture rather than an individual. Movements evolve as a reaction to changes in the social, moral, cultural, and political environment that threaten the ability of a group to maintain its culture (Bruce, 1988).
A lengthy study in the *Congressional Quarterly Researcher* (Jost, 1994) offers a detailed look at the history of the Religious Right from the turn of the century to today. The article, titled "Religion and Politics," provided a large part of the background information on the Coalition presented in this study.

Several communication studies have examined the rhetoric of fundamentalism and its impact on the rise of the New Christian Right. In a study examining the paradox between the fundamentalist apocalyptic religious doctrine and the Religious Right's political agenda, Daniels, Jensen and Lichtenstein (1985) offer a detailed history of the fundamentalist religious movement and definitions of evangelicalism and fundamentalism. In a case study of the debate between the Christian Right and its opponents, W. Barnett Pearce, Stephen W. Littlejohn and Alison Alexander (1987) attempt to show that, because the two groups argue from incompatible premises, they cannot understand, and will not accept, the moral basis of the other's argument. This study also offers historical information as well as an analysis of the rhetoric of the movement.

A communication study by Charles Conrad (1987) examines the romantic rhetoric of the Moral Majority and describes the secular and spiritual myths that formed the group's societal vision. Edward C. Appel (1987) examined the rhetoric of the Moral Majority's leader, the Reverend Jerry Falwell, in terms of Burke's principle of perfection and used nine indexes of dramatic intensity to study Falwell's use of tragic symbols. Appel found Falwell's televised discourse to be strongly dramatic and appropriate considering his audience of true believers bent on changing society.

Existing communication studies provide background material and historical
context for this study's examination of speeches, books and articles by Ralph Reed, (Reed, 1993a, 1993b, 1994, 1995a, 1995b, 1996a, 1996b) executive director of the Christian Coalition, the writings of Pat Robertson, the founder of the Coalition (1991), and documents published by the group. Reed, the consummate politician, is well spoken and highly literate. His public discourse is carefully crafted to gain the desired result. Because of these qualities, his work reflects the changes in the organization as it evolves through the stages of the Life Cycle.

Pat Robertson is the ultimate behind-the-scenes authority in the organization but his rhetoric is not as polished and purposeful as Reed's. Robertson stands somewhere between the "prophet" and the "rabble rouser" described by Stewart, Smith and Denton while Reed has evolved from the "rabble rouser" to the "diplomat" and may represent a new breed of movement leader. This study will focus on the rhetoric of the movement leaders to show how the movement has evolved since its foundation in 1989. Finally, quotes from Reed, Robertson and other leaders in the mass media will be used as examples of the rhetoric of the movement and as evidence of the strategies and tactics used in maintaining the movement.

This study examines the social movement known as the New Christian Right at the moment of its transition from "Enthusiastic Mobilization" stage to "Maintenance" stage by examining the rhetoric of its formal leader, Ralph Reed, and its founder and informal leader, Pat Robertson. The study will pull together information from a wide variety of sources to demonstrate how the movement has evolved from one stage to the next to arrive at its current state using the established theories on social movement studies as
patterns on which to lay out the dissected segments. The study includes an extensive history of the Religious Right and biographical studies of both Pat Robertson and Ralph Reed. The study will examine the communication techniques used by the organization to maintain and expand its power base and will examine the rhetoric of the movement as exemplified by the work of Reed, Robertson and other leaders to compare the language used in early works with more current writings and speeches to show a shift in rhetorical strategy that helped ease the transition between the last two phases of the movement’s life cycle.
CHAPTER 2

HISTORY OF THE RELIGIOUS RIGHT

The rhetorical study of a social movement should place the movement in its historical context and examine the effects of society upon the movement according to Hahn and Gonchar (1971). To understand the rhetoric of Pat Robertson, Ralph Reed and the Christian Coalition, it is important to understand the history of the Religious Right and evangelicalism, its place in the culture of the United States, and the issues the movement addresses in trying to influence that culture.

Evangelicalism Comes to the New World

The Religious Right has its roots in fundamentalism that in turn grew out of the evangelical movement, an important part of American culture for more than three hundred years. A definition of evangelicalism by James E. Phueddemann, an evangelical educator, outlines the basic tenants of the movement:

(1) Belief in the authority of the Scripture as revealed by God, (2) the necessity for each individual by faith to make a personal commitment to Jesus Christ who is both God and human and who died as our substitute for our sins so we can be reconciled with God, (3) a responsibility to share the good news (the evangel or gospel) of forgiveness of sins through Christ. . . (4) a responsibility to glorify God by living a holy life, with the life of Christ as our pattern (Daniels, Jensen, and Lichtenstein, 1985. p. 249).
Evangelicalism was brought to America by the Anglicans, Pilgrims, Society of Friends, and other groups who evolved from the European Protestant Reformation. Baptist preachers and Methodist circuit riders put a uniquely American spin on Protestant doctrine and spread it throughout the colonies until evangelicalism became a dominant force in American culture up to the end of the nineteenth century (Daniels, Jensen, and Lichtenstein, 1985).

Many early settlers were self-consciously Protestant and highly anti-Catholic having moved to the New World to escape religious persecution and to find religious freedom. Protestants have long resisted allowing Catholics access to political power out of fear Catholics would have more allegiance to the Pope than to the country and might turn the United States over to a “foreign power.” This anti-Catholic sentiment helped prevent Al Smith from winning the presidency in 1928 and was still a factor during the election of John F. Kennedy in 1960. Conservative Protestants of the early and mid-1800s aggressively campaigned for the separation of church and state that was expressed as a policy of “no money for Catholic schools” (Bruce, 1988).

The decentralized form of government and the massive size of the country contributed to small distinct religious enclaves in sheltered cultures. These factors also contributed to minimizing religious conflict early in the country’s history (Bruce, 1988).

The issue of slavery divided evangelicals during the mid-1800s. Northern evangelicals were at the forefront of the abolition movement while Southerners defended slavery as divinely ordained. Slavery and war strengthened the bond of Southern evangelicals and produced the Southern Baptist denomination, a mainstay of the modern
Religious Right (Bruce, 1988).

Rise of Fundamentalism

The end of the 19th century saw massive changes such as industrialization, advances in scientific theory and methods, and a rise in secular education that undermined evangelical dominance of the national moral code and challenged the infallibility of the Bible (Daniels, Jensen, and Lichtenstein, 1985). These changes caused a conservative reaction that resulted in the fundamentalism that emerged in the early 1900s. Fundamentalism took its name from a series of religious tracts called “Fundamentals of the Faith” published between 1910 and 1912 (Bruce, 1988). The movement evolved out of discontent with liberal theology, the growth of religious indifference, and discomfort with the impact of science and materialism on traditional faith (Jost, 1994). Adherents refused to accept modern scientific thinking they saw contradicting the word of the Bible. At first, fundamentalists were found in all Protestant denominations but, when it became clear most Protestants would not be diverted from a more liberal interpretation of scripture, the fundamentalists left to form their own denominations (Bruce, 1988).

Daniels, Jensen and Lichtenstein (1985) argue that fundamentalism was the product of a shift in evangelical theory to an apocalyptic doctrine known as premillennialism that presumes a steady downward spiral in world events predicted in the Bible and preordained by God. Drawn from the book of Revelations, premillennialism holds that Christ will return to establish a 1,000-year reign on earth but, before that happens, the world will experience progressive decline ending in a Tribulation Period in
which forces of Satan will rule. According to the doctrine, true believers will be spared the horrors of the Tribulation when they are “raptured” out of the world to join Christ. The Tribulation will end when Christ returns to overthrow the Antichrist marking the beginning of Christ’s Millennium of Peace or 1,000-year reign. At the end of the Millennium, Satan himself will be destroyed and the resurrection of the dead and final judgement will come (Daniels, Jensen, and Lichtenstein, 1985).

Daniels, Jensen, and Lichtenstein point out the importance of the distinction between “premillennialism” and “postmillennialism” that dominated evangelicalism during most of the nineteenth century. Postmillennialists believed the Millennium would begin once most of the world had been converted to Christianity and the Tribulation would begin after the Millennium. These evangelicals, believing that spreading the gospel, or evangel, was necessary to bring on the Millennium, supported social welfare as a way to spread Christian doctrine. Premillennialists rejected the notion that human effort could influence the arrival of the Millennium believing the timetable to be preordained by God (Daniels, Jensen, and Lichtenstein, 1985).

Though premillennialist theory made political activism irrelevant, fundamentalists did engage in political activism in support of prohibition and in the anti-evolution movement (Jost, 1994) but the premillennialist theory that the course of history was preordained led to an antiwar sentiment that came under attack when the United States entered World War I (Daniels, Jensen, and Lichtenstein, 1985). The Scopes Monkey Trial, a rise in liberal doctrine in several major religions, and dissention within the ranks of the movement caused fundamentalism to founder in the 1920s and 1930s (Daniels, Jensen,
and Lichtenstein, 1985).

In the 1920s, groups such as the Flying Fundamentalists lobbied state legislatures to ban teaching evolution and agitated against communism (Wilcox, 1995) and in the 1930s, some fundamentalist leaders became vocally racist, anti-Semitic, and anti-Catholic. The 1930s saw the advent of the radio preacher who would serve as a prototype for the future of evangelism. Gerald L.K. Smith, a fundamentalist preacher from Louisiana and Father Charles Coughlin, a right-wing Catholic priest from Detroit, used their broadcasts to espouse what amounted to populist fascism (Jost, 1994) and radio evangelists Billy James Hargis and Carl McIntire dished up anti-communism with their hellfire and brimstone (Bruce, 1988).

Events of the 1940s convinced many fundamentalists that the Rapture was immanent. Soviet control of Eastern Europe after World War II, the Communist revolution in China, and the reestablishment of a Jewish State of Israel were all seen as signs of the beginning of the end as predicted in Revelations. Fundamentalist bunkered in for a cataclysm that did not come (Daniels, Jensen, and Lichtenstein, 1985).

With the growth of the electronic media, fundamentalism made gains in the 1940s and 1950s and, with the dawn of the cold war, anti-communism became the movement's political hallmark establishing the "gods" and "devils" and furthering the "we-they" division necessary for group cohesion (Stewart, Smith, and Denton, 1989). New organizations such as the Christian Crusade and the Christian Anti-Communism Crusade put a religious tint on domestic issues and painted communism as the force of Satan (Wilcox, 1995).
A New Devil Emerges

The dramatic social changes that took place in the 1960s and 1970s battered the fundamentalist movement and drove members farther into their ideological bunkers. The permissiveness of the 1960s posed a threat to the morally conservative (Bruce, 1988) but, a new “devil” emerged to give the movement new life and a new agenda. This evil took the form of “secular humanism” which rejects the concepts of deities, divine intervention and, most certainly, a preordained historical course (Daniels, Jensen, and Lichtenstein, 1985).

The following definition of “secular humanism” was provided by the Pro Family Forum, a right-wing, “family values” organization:

- Denies the deity of God, the inspiration of the Bible and the divinity of Jesus Christ.
- Denies the existence of the soul, life after death, salvation and heaven, damnation and hell.
- Denies the Biblical account of Creation.
- Believes that there are no absolutes, no right, no wrong — that moral values are self determined and situational. Do your own thing, ‘as long as it does not harm anyone else.’
- Believes in the removal of distinctive roles of male and female.
- Believes in sexual freedom between consenting individuals, regardless of age, including premarital sex, homosexuality, lesbianism and incest.
- Believes in the right to abortion, euthanasia (mercy killing), and suicide.
- Believes in equal distribution of America’s wealth to reduce poverty and bring about equality.
- Believes in control of the environment, control of energy and its limitation.

This list of beliefs was culled from the Humanist Manifestos of 1933 and 1973 which enjoyed limited distribution. Still, Christian Right groups point to Secular
Humanism as evidence of discrimination and persecution of religious conservatives. The Christian Right claims Secular Humanism is a religion that enjoys protection denied evangelicalism under the guise of separation of church and state. The Supreme Court referred to "Secular Humanism" in a decision on freedom of religion and the Religious Right points to that reference as proof that Secular Humanism is a religion (Bruce, 1988).

After the defeat of Barry Goldwater in the 1964 presidential campaign, the Christian Right sank into obscurity. Activity on the issue of school prayer, prohibited by a 1962 Supreme Court decision, waned after efforts to overturn the rulings by Constitutional amendment failed in 1971 (Bruce, 1988). The Roe Vs. Wade ruling on abortion was made in 1973 but years passed before the right-to-life movement emerged in strength (Jost, 1994). The emerging liberal moral climate promoted an increase in Protestant religious schools but many argue the increase was a reaction to integration in the South (Bruce, 1988). However, during this period, televangelism was on the rise. In the 1960s and 1970s, four in ten households tuned into one or more religious TV programs. Television preachers played a major role in popularizing and legitimizing conservative Protestantism (Bruce, 1988).

The Moral Majority Renews the Faith

Several political events fostered the disaffection and disillusionment that gave rise to the New Religious Right. According to a Gallup poll, more than 34 percent of the adult population shared Jimmy Carter's "born-again" faith when he was elected president and George Gallup Jr. declared 1976 "the year of the evangelical" (Hertzke, 1991).
Evangelicals were encouraged by the thought of having “one of their own” in the White House but soon became disillusioned by Carter’s liberal stands on social issues. By the third year of Carter’s term, a group of arch-conservative political activists persuaded the Rev. Jerry Falwell, a Baptist preacher and televangelist from Lynchburg, Virginia, to lead a new conservative Christian organization known as the Moral Majority. The group quickly became the largest organization in the Christian Right (Jost, 1994). The movement’s disillusionment with Carter’s too-liberal politics provided the catalyst needed for the movement to grow.

Falwell was pastor of the Thomas Road Baptist Church, one of the largest of the Baptist Bible Fellowship. The Fellowship is characterized by preachers who start churches in their homes, later rent larger space and, all the while, raise money to eventually build a church. Many of these entrepreneurs are also involved in forming Christian schools (Wilcox, 1995). Falwell began his ministry in an old soda bottling plant in Lynchburg in 1956 and by 1964, the Thomas Road Baptist Church moved into a 1,000-seat theater and, three years later, broke ground on a facility that would hold 3,000. Services were broadcast on 392 television stations, 600 radio stations and, by 1981, the ministry enjoyed an annual income of $60 million. Falwell added a Christian school to the ministry and later founded Liberty Baptist College that, in 1985, became Liberty University (Bruce, 1988).

The credit for the creation of Moral Majority goes to what Bruce calls the “holy trinity”: Richard Viguerie, Howard Phillips, and Paul Weyrich. With financial support from Joseph Coors of the Coors Brewing Company, Weyrich had created a number of
right-wing political action committees. Phillips and Vigerie had worked for Young Americans for Freedom (YAF), a conservative group formed in the early 1960s and led by William F. Buckley. The trio was in the process of creating a network of conservative organizations that had become frustrated with the Republican Party to build a conservative majority to counter social and moral liberalism. Their political activity included supporting several third-party candidates including George Wallace in 1972. They were the first to attempt to combine single-issue constituencies into a multi-issue movement and, in the process, turned to the conservative religious movement for support (Bruce, 1988).

In meetings in 1979, Phillips coined the term Moral Majority and Weyrich first used the label publicly in a presentation to Falwell and his associates. It was during this time that Weyrich discovered his true calling and the value of direct mail. He developed mail campaigns that addressed issues individually and sent a response card along with his messages on a specific issue that recipients could easily mail to their legislative representative. This method created the impression of a huge constituency without much commitment on the part of the respondent (Bruce, 1988).

Falwell claimed the Moral Majority was neither a political party nor a religious organization (Bruce, 1988) in order to attract broad-based support for what he called, “pro-life, pro-family, pro-moral, and pro-American” positions on social and political issues (Daniels, Jensen, and Lichtenstein, 1985). Moral Majority activists railed against Secular Humanism in the classroom and advocated a strong military (Wilcox, 1995). Ronald Reagan reaped the benefit of the Religious Right’s increased political

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activism but his failure to promote right-wing causes deepened feelings of discontent. According to Hertzke, conservative evangelicals received a lot of verbal support but few tangible rewards from the Reagan Revolution, “Abortions continued, pornography survived, and public schools remained generally hostile to traditional faith” (Hertzke, 1991, p. 6). Reagan’s deregulatory policies also led to excesses in the marketplace the Christian Right finds so disturbing such as violence and commercial exploitation of children on television (Hertzke, 1993).

The Moral Majority benefited greatly from the resources of Falwell’s electronic ministry, both in money and following, but the group’s influence was minimal and short-lived. With Reagan’s reelection in 1984, the Moral Majority began to fold, having seen failure on two major campaign objectives. The first objective was to become a major political player through fund raising but the group’s major fund raising program, direct mail, lost its profitability due to increased competition, adverse political conditions, and a market saturated with solicitations from every political group on the right (Wilcox, 1995). In 1984 the organization raised $11.1 million through the mail but, by 1988, contributions had declined to $3 million. The other major objective was to build grassroots organizations. The movement failed in this area largely because efforts depended on the activism of Baptist Bible Fellowship pastors who were preoccupied with building churches and religious schools (Wilcox, 1995).

In the Moral Majority era, the Religious Right achieved the most in education by following courtroom failures with legislative action to give special protection to evangelical causes such as school prayer, banning textbooks espousing Secular Humanism,
and demanding equal time for teaching creation science (Bruce, 1988). In North Carolina, for example, in 1979, after a state court upheld a plan for regulating private schools, the state legislature passed a law stating “in matters of education . . . no human authority shall, in any case whatever, control or interfere with the rights of conscience” (Kivisto, 1995, p. 8).

The decline also came in part because Reagan’s and the Republican Party’s continued success belied the Moral Majority’s message that the Godless humanists were taking over the country (Wilcox, 1995). Reagan coopted many Moral Majority activists by giving them low-level positions in the administration (Bruce, 1988) but, the agenda of the Religious Right remained unfulfilled under Reagan who was more interested in a conservative economic and foreign policy agenda (Wilcox, 1995). Though the Moral Majority began to disintegrate during the Reagan years and was bankrupt and disbanding by 1989 (Wilcox, 1995), the Religious Right’s disaffection set the stage for Pat Robertson’s presidential aspirations and the subsequent creation of the Christian Coalition.

Moral Majority leaders blamed the GOP’s failure to address socio-moral issues for the party’s poor showing in 1982 congressional elections but took credit for the Reagan landslide in 1984 (Bruce, 1988). Analysis of both the 1980 and the 1984 presidential elections show that the Moral Majority failed to mobilize the huge block of voters Falwell claimed would respond to his traditional religious ideology (Conrad, 1983). However, minimal its actual impact during its existence, the Moral Majority gave the Religious Right a taste of political power and served as the basis for the formation of the more powerful and effective movement to follow.
Though the Moral Majority billed itself as a political powerhouse, its actual clout was later shown to be exaggerated. Studies indicated the Religious Right brought in only 6 percent of the vote in the 1980 presidential election (Jost, 1994). American Coalition for Traditional Values, the umbrella organization including the Moral Majority (Bruce, 1988), claims to have registered 150,000 voters in North Carolina in 1984 for the senatorial battle between Republican Jesse Helms and the popular Democratic governor, Jim Hunt. But, registering and voting are different acts and the actual effect of the registration drives has been questioned. Studies of elections targeted by the Moral Majority show little difference from those not targeted. However, one area in which the Moral Majority had serious impact was in financing. Pumping money into the campaigns of chosen candidates allowed those candidates to do better than they would have without the additional support. An example is the 1984 Helms campaign where he received money and support from the Moral Majority that aided in his victory over the popular Hunt (Bruce, 1988).

Christian Right groups gave little money directly to candidates but spent large amounts on negative campaigns, which have no legal spending limits, against liberal candidates. A great amount of resources were spent on general sensitizing campaigns and on voter registration that meant indirect support for candidates. In 1980, all Christian Right groups combined spent less than $500,000 for Democratic candidates, $1.3 million for Republicans, $100,000 against Republicans and $2 million against Democrats. That year, of twenty seven congressional liberals targeted, twenty three were defeated (Bruce, 1988). Most of the $2 million spent in negative campaigns was against six liberal
Democratic senators, four of whom were defeated. The Moral Majority and other Religious Right groups targeted liberal candidates and made public their records on "moral" family values issues. To aid this process North Carolina's Helms would often attach amendments on socio-moral issues to unrelated bills so his opponents would be forced to go on record voting against "family values" issues. Congressional report cards would then report these votes and the records became fodder for negative ad campaigns (Bruce, 1988).

Moral Majority leaders also introduced a concept Pat Robertson espouses today, that modern interpretations of the First Amendment mandate for separation of church and state have barred the righteous from access to political power while allowing the "evil" pseudo-religion of Secular Humanism to dominate political decision-making (Conrad, 1983). The idea that "moral" Americans could, and should, counteract this evil influence by taking an active part in local and national politics was here to stay.

Pat Robertson Runs for President

Pat Robertson was born the son of a Virginia senator in 1930. He was educated in prep schools, entered Washington and Lee University at age 16, and graduated Magna cum laude. He traveled Europe as a young man drinking in culture and good times. He served in the military during the Korean War where he was dubbed "division liquor officer" by his buddies. He never saw combat and later faced charges that his father's influence kept him from the heat of battle. After the Marines, his father treated Robertson to another tour of Europe before he entered Yale Law School. At Yale, he led a well-
documented hedonistic lifestyle. His performance in law school suffered and he failed the New York bar exam. He abruptly married Adelia Elmer (Dede) a nursing student, ten weeks before their first child was born. After graduating from Yale, he joined the New York investment company W. R. Grace, hoping to make a quick fortune. He resigned in less than a year to start his own company but it failed.

By his own account, Robertson was a discontented young man and spiritually hungry. His mother, who was active in fundamentalist churches, introduced Robertson to Cornelius Vanderghreggen, an itinerant preacher, who witnessed to Robertson in classic born-again fashion. The next day, “laughing, rejoicing that he had been saved,” Robertson began a new life and demonstrated his rebirth with gestures such as pouring “a bottle of Ballantine Scotch down the drain.” Robertson enrolled in Biblical Seminary of New York and was introduced to the “speaking of tongues,” and other signs of active faith (Hertzke, 1993, p. 82).

Robertson’s spiritual journey ultimately took him back to Virginia where, in 1959, he purchased a defunct television station for $70 and began spreading the word. From there he launched the Christian Broadcasting Network (CBN) which would serve as a model for modern television ministries. The flagship of the CBN was the “700 Club” that got its name from a 1963 fund raising campaign that asked for 700 viewers to put up $10 each to sustain the ministry (Hertzke, 1993).

Robertson’s brand of evangelicalism is known as Charismatic religion characterized by paranormal encounters such as glossolalia, prophecy, miracles, and faith healing. Charismatic religions represent a form of protest against the modern emphasis
on functional rationality. The Charismatic or Pentecostal movement that evolved at the turn of the century was embraced by blacks and whites and was associated with the lower class. But Robertson's conversion to Pentecostalism represented a move "down" in social status at a time when supernatural religion was on the rise and its appeal was spreading to millions (Hertzke, 1993).

Over the years, Robertson's ministry grew at an amazing rate. CBN added satellite broadcasting capabilities in 1977 and four years later began broadcasting as a cable channel. From there, Robertson developed The Family Channel that broadcasts old programs such as "Leave it to Beaver" "Waltons" and "Lassie" and other programs edited for moral content (Hertzke, 1993). At its peak, CBN reached 16 million homes per month and the 700 Club logged 4 million prayer calls. This formidable reach convinced Robertson that, if properly mobilized, religious conservatives could take over the Republican Party. A lifelong Democrat, Robertson switched parties during the Reagan years (Hertzke, 1993).

With the end of the second Reagan administration, Pat Robertson saw an opportunity to capitalize on his massive following. Early efforts to get signatures on endorsing petitions for his campaign for the Republican presidential nomination were largely church-based. The campaign mounted a highly successful fund raising drive through lists of ministers, evangelical associations and CBN contributors. But, white theological conservatives held a long-standing suspicion of politics. Robertson had to rely on a "para-church" network of CBN viewers, religious activists, abortion activists, and lay congregational members willing to organize fellow parishioners (Hertzke, 1993). The
campaign built a network of local pastors, pro-life activists, and CBN viewers and enjoyed the support of members of the “super churches,” large charismatic Assemblies of God congregations. The campaign often used church facilities to pass out literature and sign up supporters and went largely undetected by opponents until Robertson’s support in the Iowa caucus doubled projections (Hertzke, 1991).

Although Robertson spent the largest amount in U.S. history on his bid for the nomination, he won only 35 delegates to the GOP national convention, the worst dollar-to-delegate ratio in recent history (Wilcox, 1995). Robertson was beaten by George Bush in every demographic group, including fundamentalists, even in Robertson’s home state of Virginia (Bruce, 1988). While Robertson’s overall performance in the nomination race was grim, he did score some successes. He raised nearly $30 million in contributions and matching funds, second only to George Bush’s campaign. He received more than one million votes in GOP primaries and caucuses, nine percent of the total. He scored major victories in caucuses in Hawaii, Alaska, Nevada, and Washington and made respectable showings in Iowa, Michigan, and Minnesota (Hertzke, 1991). However, the results were minuscule compared with the total number of voters. Robertson failed to attract a large block of support outside the super churches and he remained a highly controversial figure who was seen as a detriment to the GOP. His own campaign manager, Marc Nuttle, labeled him “a little radioactive” (Hertzke, 1991).

His campaign strategy involved two main goals: (1) to pack state caucus and party meetings with Robertson faithfuls, and (2) to broaden Robertson’s appeal to compete in states with primaries (Wilcox, 1985).
The first objective was accomplished very well, to the dismay of Republican Party regulars. Robertson did well in many of the caucuses because his active and committed following was willing to show up and be counted (Bruce, 1988). His early successes in Michigan stunned party veterans and sent the Republican party into a year-long struggle. While the Moral Majority had enjoyed the support of the politically powerful Southern Baptists, Robertson's influence was among the evangelicals and charismatics (Wilcox, 1995). The Southern Baptists may have agreed with Robertson's politics but they looked down on his religion (Hertzke, 1991). Georgia's "Country Club" regulars were offended by the audacity of the newcomers (many were former Democrats) who expected to share power and authority. In North Carolina, fist fights broke out when Robertson delegates were disqualified from the 4th District Convention. In Oklahoma and Nevada, Robertson forces elected state party chairs who later faced charges of incompetence. In Arizona, Robertson backers helped write a highly controversial state platform declaring the United States a "Christian nation" and asserting that the constitution created a "republic based upon the absolute laws of the Bible, not a democracy" (Hertzke, 1991, p. 19).

The second campaign objective, to broaden support to achieve success in the states that held primaries, was not accomplished for several reasons. For one, the Bush organization, working from the strength of the Reagan legacy, was tremendously effective. Also, a series of scandals seemed to conspire to make Robertson's brand of religion socially unacceptable. Perhaps most damaging was that, during the campaign, Robertson was forced to settle a liable suit involving using his father's influence to avoid military action in Korea and it was revealed his marriage license was doctored to conceal the fact
his wife was pregnant when they married (Wilcox, 1995).

Other scandals involving televangelists surfaced within months of the election and damaged the Robertson campaign. Jimmy Swaggart fell from grace after being caught with a prostitute, the Jim and Tammy Faye Bakker sex and fraud scandal erupted (Bruce, 1988), and Oral Roberts claimed God would take him home if he didn’t raise $6 million (Hertzke, 1991). All of these events aggravated doubts about the legitimacy of televangelism and the honesty of its practitioners. Robertson’s campaign strategists attempted to distance him from the scandals by changing his image from televangelist to successful communications executive whose business happened to be religious broadcasting but the distinction was lost on the electorate (Bruce, 1988). Robertson was also outdone by his own overconfidence in himself as God’s vehicle (Hertzke, 1993). This overconfidence led to what his campaign operatives lamented as Robertson’s “funny facts,” such as accusing Bush of being behind Swaggart’s down fall (Hertzke, 1991) and statements that he knew the Soviets still had missiles in Cuba (Cantor, 1994).

Following Reagan’s lead, the Bush campaign effectively coopted Robertson supporters after the 1988 nomination and even recruited Robertson as a substitute speaker for Bush during the remainder of the campaign (Hertzke, 1993).

While Robertson’s political campaign failed, his religious empire continues to thrive. Today the organizations under Robertson’s control include the Christian Broadcasting Network, the Family Channel cable network, Regent University that trains born-again broadcasters, educators, lawyers, and ministers, and the American Center for Law and Justice, run by Regent University lawyers, the Religious Right’s answer to the
American Civil Liberties Union (Fineman, 1993). These organizations continue to give Robertson an audience and a following that serve as the basis for the Christian Coalition's power.

The Genesis of the Christian Coalition

Robertson used the mailing list from his campaign to form the Christian Coalition in October of 1989 (Clarkson, 1992a) and began to move quietly but effectively to control the future of religious conservatism and to take control of the Republican Party (Conason, 1992). He met Ralph Reed, the executive director of the Coalition, at a banquet during Bush's inauguration in January 1989 when Reed was only 27 years old. Over dinner, Robertson revealed his plans for a new organization to replace the collapsing Moral Majority and soon thereafter, Reed wrote a memorandum on how the new group should be run (Barrett, 1993). Nine months later, Reed was putting the prospectus into practice as the Coalition's executive director (Barrett, 1993).

As a student at the University of Georgia, Reed wrote a weekly column for the college newspaper as a "fire-eating Republican" and rushed up the student leadership ladder winning the chair of the school's College Republicans and, soon after, of the statewide organization. In the summer of 1981, he served as a Senate intern and remained in Washington for a semester to work with the National College Republicans. Back at school in 1982, he was fired from the school paper for plagiarism but continued his work to establish a conservative student movement (Barrett, 1993).

Reed showed a penchant for sudden self-reform in his early career. He was a
heavy smoker as an undergraduate but one day pitched his pack of Marlboro Lights out a car window and never bought another. Booze was also a problem, so he went instantly dry during the summer after graduation. Weeks later, he was seized by a thirst for "deeper spiritual meaning" in his life. Reed chose a church at random from the Yellow Pages, went there the next morning, and soon became a born-again Charismatic, abandoning the Methodist faith of his upbringing (Barrett, 1993). In his recent book, Politically Incorrect, Reed gives an account of his conversion:

One Saturday, after an evening of socializing with friends, I felt a gentle tugging in my conscience that I should start attending local church. New to the area and not knowing where to go, I walked to a phone booth at a restaurant on Capitol Hill and flipped through the yellow pages. My finger fell by a listing for an evangelical church in the suburbs just outside Washington. The next day, following morning services, the pastor led an altar call for those desiring to have a closer relationship with Christ. I raised my hand in affirmation and began a new life of faith (Reed, 1994, p. 26).

After graduation, Reed went back to Washington for a job with the National College Republicans. After a successful stint as executive director, he moved to Raleigh, N.C. and set up a conservative evangelical organization called Students for America. The group was involved in the country’s hottest Senate race; the 1984, Jesse Helms Vs. Jim Hunt race, which saw Helms reelected. Reed attended Emory University on a scholarship and received his Ph.D. He had planned to abandon politics for a more stable career in academia until his fateful meeting with Robertson (Barrett, 1993). According to Reed, the memo he wrote for Robertson after that meeting said that the new group must tread new ground by building a grassroots infrastructure all the way down to block captains and it must avoid the strategy of seeking to gain influence by merely assembling a huge mailing
There exists in American politics today a tremendous vacuum that must be filled. Estimates on the number of evangelicals range from a low of 10 million to a high of 40 million. Whatever the actual number, there is no constituency in the American electorate with greater explosive potential as a political force. Nor is there any constituency of comparable size and energy so pitifully unorganized and uneducated (Reed, 1994, p. 2).

The memo recommended mobilizing evangelicals and "their Catholic allies," steering clear of controversial figures, and avoiding a "spiritual litmus test" for membership. Reed suggested that by 1992, he could construct an organization with 3 million members and chapters in 350 of the 435 Congressional districts. All this would be accomplished with a field staff of fifteen full-time recruiters and an annual budget of $10 million (Reed, 1994). The goal of the organizational structure would be to enfranchise "one of the largest and most under-represented constituencies in the United States" (Reed, 1994, p. 2).

The half-century of retreat of evangelicals from social and political action that followed the Scopes Trial of 1925 had many profound consequences for American society. Yet surely none is more important than this: we have now had two full generations of Bible-believing Christians ... with virtually no hands-on experience in the political decision-making process (Reed, 1994, p. 3).

In his book, Reed said the Christian Coalition was started with $3,000 in contributions from personal friends. Robertson loaned the Coalition the money for the first fund raising letter and, by November 1989, the group raised $82,000 and had signed up 2,000 members. This type of phenomenal growth and astute fund raising would characterize the Coalition over the next eight years. Under Reed's direction, the Christian Coalition learned valuable lessons in what strategies worked and what traps to avoid by
looking at the successes and failures of its forerunners. A powerful player in American politics was created and began its legendary rise.

The Issues

A social movement is defined by its agenda, the issues it supports or opposes, and its members shared beliefs (Hahn and Gonchar, 1971). Opposition to abortion might appear to be a unifying issue for religious conservatives but, recently, Reed and other Religious Right leaders have attempted to broaden the movement's scope to attract broader support. Other issues include:

1. Opposition to perceived challenges to traditional moral values. These challenges include pornography, equal rights for homosexuals, condom distribution in schools, sex education that does not emphasize abstinence, violence and sex in entertainment and, the National Endowment for the Arts (Beck, 1992).

2. Promotion of private school vouchers. The Religious Right believes the current public school system is a monopoly controlled by a leftist teachers' union and advocates public support of private instruction (Conn, Sept., 1993, p.10).

3. Support for the two-parent family model where one parent stays home with younger children. The Religious Right sees taxes and welfare as biased in favor of single-parent families, opposes taxation of families with children, and is against federal child-care legislation because it would encourage mothers to work (Beck, 1992).

4. Opposition to higher taxes and all forms of additional government spending including, and especially, welfare. However, the Religious Right backs off from dealing...
with economic issues that cause mothers to work and children to be aborted (Beck, 1992). The group opposes a federally funded breakfast program on the grounds that it violates family values and is “socialist” (Siberi, 1993).

5. Opposition to the family leave act because it would benefit working mothers. On the other hand, they supported a measure that would encourage parents to stay home for six years. The reasoning is that businesses might not hire women of childbearing age to avoid the cost of parental leave (Beck, 1992).

6. Support for voluntary prayer in schools and other forms of religious expression in public (Christian Coalition presents, 1995).

In 1992, Christian Coalition members worked on the state level getting themselves elected as Republican National Convention delegates to make sure their voice was heard (Hertzke, 1993). Activists unseated incumbent GOP county committee members in contests across the country (Clarkson, 1992b). The Christian Right brought its influence to bear to make sure the Republican Party platform included hard line positions against abortion, homosexuality, pornography and AIDS prevention. Although not as radical as the platforms from some state conventions, the GOP platform adapted by the convention in Houston, Texas, in August 1992 embraced Christian Right positions on public prayer, the national religious heritage, and family values. The platform criticized the media’s “assault” on traditional values, asserted that the “unborn child has a fundamental right to life which cannot be infringed,” opposed programs in public schools that provide birth control or abortion services, denounced efforts by Democrats to redefine the traditional American family, opposed sexual preference as a protected minority, and opposed same-
sex marriages. The idea of distributing clean needles and condoms was denounced as a solution for stopping the spread of AIDS and education stressing marital fidelity, abstinence, and a drug-free lifestyle was advocated. The platform called for a national crusade against pornography and condemned the use of public funds “to subsidize obscenity and blasphemy masquerading as art.” The platform supported the rights of students to pray in school and supported public school vouchers (Hertzke, 1993, p. 168).

The New Christian Right and the Christian Coalition have evolved from the Protestant religious heritage that served as the foundation for the United States, its form of government, and its dominant culture. With its roots planted firmly in populist movements of the past, the NCR is a reactionary movement to dominant liberal culture of 20 to 30 years ago. Its strength and depth may be a reflection of the extreme of the liberal revolution of the 1960s and 1970s that the movement was born to counter.
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Griffin (1952) asks how a student should go about the process of examining a movement. In answering his own question, the author suggests the proper method may involve, “turning the movement on a spit, as it were, by piercing it now from one angle, now from another, as the movement spirals to its consummation” (p. 188). One might also describe this method as “taking snapshots” of a movement at a specific point in order to see how the movement came to be and where it is going. Griffin’s 1952 article, “The Rhetoric of Historical Movements,” poses several questions that students of social movements should ask while studying an historic movement and sets forth three phases of development. The first of these phases is the “Period of Inception” when the public becomes aware of a problem or a need for change and sufficient discourse is generated to initiate a movement. Next comes the “Period of Rhetorical Crisis” when “one of the opposing groups of rhetoricians . . . succeeds in irrevocably disturbing that balance between the groups which had existed in the minds of the collective audience” (p. 186). Last is the “Period of Consummation” when the movement is abandoned either because the cause has been won or because no hope of success exists (Griffin, 1952).

Simons (1970) discusses Griffin’s theory and suggests a method for applying it by
studying the rhetorical dilemmas faced by leaders of social movements. “The primary rhetorical test of the leader — and indirectly, of the strategies he employs — is his capacity of fulfilling the requirements of his movement by resolving or reducing rhetorical problems” (p. 2-3). These requirements are: 1. To attract and maintain followers or workers; 2. To secure the adoption of their product or message by society; and 3. To react to external resistance. The success or failure of a movement and its leaders can be traced to the success or failure in meeting these rhetorical demands. Meeting these requirements create rhetorical problems which the leader must develop rhetorical strategies to address (Simons, 1970). “By enumerating rhetorical requirements, theory identifies the ends in light of which rhetorical strategies and tactics may be evaluated. By suggesting parameters and directions to the rhetorical critic, theory places him in a better position to bring his own sensitivity and imagination to bear on analyses of particular movements” (Simons, 1970, p. 2).

In 1971, Hahn and Gonchar proposed a methodology for rhetorical analysis of social movements that took both Griffin’s and Simons’ theories a step further. Hahn and Gonchar stated that movements can be defined by shared beliefs in an inequity in society and socially shared activities directed toward addressing that inequity. The rhetorical study of a social movement should place the movement in its historical context and examine the effects of society upon the movement. The authors demonstrate how the movements can be studied by examining the “intertwining of four traditional categories of analysis, (ethos, logos, pathos and style) . . .” (Hahn and Gonchar, 1971). Examining the “ethos” involves discovering the movement’s ideal member or by identifying the kinds of
antagonists they choose to vilify. A study of the “logos” of a social movement looks at the underlying premises that unite the members in one world view. The specific arguments expose the movement’s philosophy and epistemology and patterns of evidence indicate shared values. An analysis of “pathos” will “seek to discover which emotions the movement appeals to, which it ignores, and the targets of emotional appeals” (p. 50). The rhetorical style of a movement is significant because, while the specific attitude of the group may not be immediately recognizable, it can often be identified by a stylistic analysis of recurring images and metaphors (Hahn and Gonchar, 1971).

These factors interact with each other and that interaction can also be the subject of rhetorical examination. The intertwining of logos and ethos can be seen in the effect of logical contradictions upon ethical appeal. The pathos and ethos can interact either to damage the movement by appealing to “unapproved” emotions or enhancing movements by playing upon acceptable emotions. A movement’s ethos can also be enhanced or damaged when judged by the movement’s stylistic tactics (Hahn and Gonchar, 1971).

In “Life Cycle of Social Movements,” Stewart, Smith, and Denton (1989) pull together previous methods and expand Griffin’s three phases to five: Genesis, Social Unrest, Enthusiastic Mobilization, Maintenance, and Termination. The “Genesis” stage, as described by Stewart, Smith, and Denton, begins during relatively quiet times when the public has little awareness of the issue the movement will address. During this stage, scattered individuals become aware of a problem or “imperfection” and become restless with the need for change. These early leaders are the “prophets” of the movement, intellectuals who strive to improve or perfect society.
The Genesis Stage may last for months or it may last for decades but it is during this stage that the "apprehension of an exigence"—the acknowledgment of a social wrong—emerges and enters the consciousness of an audience. This step is vital to the creation of a social movement (Steward, Smith, and Denton, 1989).

A triggering event is needed to propel the unorganized, generally invisible movement from the "Genesis" stage to the "Social Unrest" stage. A triggering event is a specific incident that gives the disbursed individuals a means for focusing their dissatisfaction. For example, a triggering event may be new legislation, a court decision, an accident, military action, disparaging comments by opposition leaders, or the publication a book which consolidates the movement's views. Stewart, Smith and Denton (1989) refer to a comment by a North Dakota legislator to a farm delegation in 1915 to "Go home and slop your hogs," that incited farmers and triggered the formation of the Nonpartisan League in the Midwest (p. 23). A triggering event does not create the dissatisfaction or the "apprehension of an exigence" that brings about a social movement, it merely provides a rallying point that brings restless individuals together to express their concern.

As more people express frustration and call for a resolution to the perceived problem, the movement passes into the "Social Unrest" stage. Manifestos or proclamations are issued that describe the movement's purpose and needs and establish the gods to be served and the devils to be banished through the movement's work. During this phase, the movement attempts to bring change by working through existing institutions in society. At this point, the mass media begins to take notice of the
movement and established social institutions may move to stigmatize or trivialize the movement and its cause. In response to this pressure, the "prophets" of the genesis stage turn into, or are replaced by, "agitators" who attempt to organize the elements of the movement to demand change.

When change does not come, frustration leads to disaffection with established institutions and the movement enters the stage of "Enthusiastic Mobilization." During this stage, the movement abandons attempts to bring about change through established channels and takes to the streets. Increased resistance from the institutions causes the movement members to band even more tightly together to combat the evil forces from without. During this time the movement expands at a rapid rate as agitators demand, and receive, more and more attention from the mass media. However, with or without meaningful progress, the movement will eventually stall. If no significant progress is seen, followers become frustrated and disillusioned. If the establishment partially concedes to the movement's demands, the movement can fragment while searching for a new central issue to address.

If the movement survives the waning of the "Enthusiastic Mobilization" stage, it moves into the "Maintenance Stage." The Maintenance Stage is a critical time for a social movement as it marks a crossroads with one way leading to victory and the other to oblivion. The odds, the authors say, are against victory because the bureaucratic necessities for long-term maintenance of the movement siphon off spontaneity, excitement, and "esprit de corps." Leaders resort to ceremonies, rituals, and celebrations memorializing significant events in an attempt to hold the movement together. During this
phase, leaders hold on in hopes a new triggering event will bring about a new phase of Enthusiastic Mobilization and new life to the movement.

Failure to find a new triggering event eventually leads to the "Termination" stage. Rarely is a movement totally successful and rarely do they totally disband. Most shrink into other, smaller organizations while others are coopted by external institutions. The rare movement that does succeed is adopted by society at large as the new order and the movement becomes the establishment. Much more often, movements shrink or die or are transformed into something else entirely. The disintegration of a movement can be traced to its failure to meet the rhetorical demands (Simons 1970).

A major rhetorical problem addressed by the leaders of the New Religious Right involved encouraging their followers to register their discontent through political mobilization. Sociological theories suggest that some cultures promote a fatalistic resignation in the face of misfortune, misery, or oppression. Another set of theories contend that the manipulation of powerful symbols of state authority or the existence of dominant ideologies effectively intimidates lowly individuals into silence. A third suggests that collective action is inherently difficult especially for the less well heeled. Those with the most to gain through collective action are the hardest to organize and have the least money available for political struggle and are most tempted to be "free riders" by letting others fight for them. Lower classes use more of their resources in money and energy in work and care of the family and have less energy to devote to political activism (Hertzke, 1993). These factors are compounded in the case of religious conservatives whose faith teaches a fatalism and a belief that problems of the earth are of little concern to the
spiritually fulfilled.

In spite of the problems inherent in maintaining the momentum of a social movement over time, especially a movement targeted primarily at the lower classes, the New Christian Right's power and influence has continued to grow along with its membership and resources. Few social movements have enjoyed successes that come even close to the accomplishments of the NCR under the Christian Coalition.

According to Foss (1989), the most significant purpose of rhetorical criticism is to make a contribution to rhetorical theory or to explain how some aspect of rhetoric operates. Rhetorical criticism can be used to confirm existing principles or suggest changes. This study will attempt to do a little of both. First, this study will demonstrate how the New Christian Right has evolved in accordance with the Stewart, Smith, and Denton model, and second, show how movement leaders have addressed the problems presented at each stage and the strategies that have contributed to the movement's success in keeping with Simon's theory on leadership. However, this study will also examine how violating some of the principles of existing social movement rhetorical theory has afforded the movement success where others have failed.

The study examines the rhetoric of the movement as exemplified by the work of Reed, Robertson and other leaders as well as information published by the Christian Coalition to explain and defend the movement's stance on significant issues. The study will compare language used in early works with more current publications to show a shift in rhetorical strategy that helped ease the transition between the last two phases of the movement's life cycle. The Maintenance Stage should be a time of decline or at least a
time of holding on desperately to retain membership. The bureaucratic necessities involved in fund raising, organization, and intergroup negotiation consume the energy of the movement’s leaders and dampen the excitement and spontaneity that attracted followers during earlier stages (Stewart, Smith, and Denton, 1989). An examination of the metaphors applied and themes addressed will show how New Christian Right leaders in the Christian Coalition have manipulated the language of the Religious Right in an attempt to appeal to a broader audience and how that strategy has contributed to the movement’s growth.
CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS

Genesis: Where do we begin?

Stewart, Smith, and Denton (1989) state that any effort to develop a generalizable description of the life cycle of social movements is “fraught with dangers” (p. 21.) but that the effort can be rewarding if the scholar proceeds with the understanding that social movements change and develop at varying speeds and degrees, “stalling at times, rushing forward at others, retrenching to earlier stages, or dying premature deaths before all stages are completed.” The authors show that social movements have a tendency to be absorbed or transformed into another movement before the final curtain is drawn (Stewart, Smith, and Denton, 1989). These factors can make it difficult to pinpoint the exact moment a social movement is born and to tell the genesis of a new movement from a new manifestation of an old one.

Examining the evolution of the conservative religious movement presents an interesting example of all of the problems faced when identifying the genesis of a social movement. It could be argued that the genesis of the Religious Right began with the crucifixion almost 2,000 years ago or maybe with the arrival of the fundamentalist movement in the early 1900s. Certainly the seeds of discontent needed to stimulate the
movement's growth were planted long ago with the Protestant world view that so strongly influenced the national culture.

Sociologists Ralph Turner and Lewis Killian define a social movement as "a collectivity acting with some continuity to promote or resist a change in the society or group of which it is a part" (Bruce, 1988, p. 1). Another, even broader, definition is offered by Sillars who defines a movement as a combination of events which can be linked in such a way that the critic can argue an effective case for treating them as one unit. The author then broadens the definition even further by saying, "What makes a movement is that someone observes that it exists" (Sillars, 1980).

This study examines the social movement known as the "New Christian Right" and identifies its Genesis Phase as that time of social upheaval in the 1960s and 1970s when religious conservatives began feeling out of place in their own country. Stewart, Smith, and Denton say a social movement usually begins when there is little public attention being paid to the issues the movement will address (1989). That would serve as an apt description of the liberal 1960s and 1970s with regard to religious conservative issues. During the genesis stage, restless individuals become aware of the problem or perceived imperfection and strive to spread the word of the dangers (Stewart, Smith, and Denton, 1989). Evangelicals saw the changes in social structures and a rise in the influence of liberalism as a threat to the conservative religious ideology. Civil Rights rulings from the Supreme Court threatened the Religious Right's ability to dictate how and with whom their children would be educated (Bruce, 1988) and the Roe Vs. Wade ruling legalizing abortion planted the seeds for the Right to Life Movement that would
later serve as the original power base for the Religious Right (Jost, 1994).

Here, the Religious Right enjoyed a communication benefit rarely seen in opposition movements. The early "prophets" of the Religious Right movement can be identified as the televangelists who enjoyed a huge growth in popularity during the genesis stage of the movement giving these prophets a massive audience and lending legitimacy to the movement in its early days. The television ministries and evangelical churches which were enjoying massive growth during the 1960s and 1970s provided a communication network and an automatic feeling of community. These early leaders enjoyed an ultimate form of legitimacy in the eyes of their followers who had already come to accept the "prophets" as messengers of God's word.

Social Unrest Stage

A triggering event is needed to propel a movement from the Genesis Stage to the Social Unrest Stage, according to Stewart, Smith, and Denton (1989). The event that triggered the flowering of the New Christian Right can be identified as the moment the triumvirate of Richard Viguerie, Howard Phillips and Paul Weyrich combined forces with televangelist Jerry Falwell to form the Moral Majority. This combining of forces can be identified as the moment the diverse individuals, who had previously been working and speaking individually, came together to express their dissatisfaction (Steward, Smith, and Denton, 1989). The new organization gave the Religious Right a point of focus for their disaffection and propelled the movement into the next phase.

The Moral Majority caused the mass media to take notice of the movement as
Stewart, Smith, and Denton prescribe (1989). The results of the group’s fund raising and letter writing campaigns made it impossible to ignore. It was during the Falwell era that the evil of “Human Secularism” began to take a prominent place in the rhetoric of the Religious Right helping to further the “we-they” distinctions that gave the movement its identity and set up the Godless liberals as the enemy. At this point, in keeping with the life cycle theory, the movement was attempting, with some success, to promote its agenda within the system working to block the Equal Rights Amendment, lobbying against legalized abortion, and supporting the election of “right thinking” leaders such as Ronald Reagan (Bruce, 1988).

Falwell used his high-profile position as television minister to promote Christian Right messages and galvanize the Moral Majority into a social movement by dramatizing the evils of Human Secularism and urging followers to rise up against the forces of Satan (Appel, 1987).

**Enthusiastic Mobilization Stage**

“When frustration leads to disaffection with institutions and their ability to change, the social movement enters the stage of ‘Enthusiastic Mobilization,’ ” Stewart, Smith, and Denton state (1989, p. 25). The Religious Right suffered that frustration under Ronald Reagan when his administration failed to address abortion, school prayer, and other issues important to the cause.

The Enthusiastic Mobilization Stage is populated with true believers who are tired of waiting for reform from within the system and believe the movement is the only way to
bring about urgently needed changes. The leaders see themselves as both right and having power on their sides (Stewart, Smith, and Denton, 1989). Robertson believed his legitimacy and power came from the ultimate source and saw his candidacy as being anointed by God. He developed a compelling narrative to convince his followers that God had given him a sign that verified his calling into politics. Robertson said he “put out a fleece” just as Gideon of the Old Testament did to test a message from God that instructed Gideon lead Israel into battle. Gideon asked for confirmation by a sign -- a wet fleece on dry ground or a dry fleece on wet ground -- to prove the message was real. Robertson’s fleece was a hurricane that threatened the coast of Virginia. Robertson describes the event: “At 9:15 I knelt on the floor of my small dressing room and poured my heart out to the Lord. ‘Father,’ I said, ‘If I can’t move the storm, how can I move a nation? Father, I am laying a fleece before You. If this storm hits our area, I am out of the presidential race completely’” (Hertzke, 1993, p. 19). At 4 a.m., Robertson woke to find the hurricane had veered away from the region before hitting land and decided God had given the stamp of approval for his presidential run (Hertzke, 1993).

To Robertson, his campaign was a movement of outsiders trying to “knock down the doors of power” and he expressed the common populist complaint that the Religious Right was kept at the periphery of cultural and economic life (Hertzke, 1993, p. 118). Robertson believed evil cultural trends were caused by a grand conspiracy that included communists, occult religions, and captains of wealth. He painted a dark picture of exploited children, poor schools, fractured families and a rocky economy caused by an evil plot (Robertson, 1991a).
Robertson’s theories on high finance bordered on paranoia with visions of secret cabals and behind-the-scenes sinister manipulation. “The money barons are getting much closer to control of the world’s economy than even they may have believed possible . . . Consider what would then happen if, in a Trilateral world, the central bank of Europe, the central bank of Japan, and the central bank of the United States began to coordinate their efforts, or even to merge. If that happened, some twenty-one people, possible as few as three people, could control the money and credit of essentially the entire world” (Robertson, 1991a, p. 130-131).

In Robertson’s view, this powerful financial elite is an enemy to the common businessman:

The power is subtle but incredibly intense. In high finance, all it takes is a quiet word from the right person to destroy the future of any public company that is carrying substantial debt . . . The coup de grace is always administered in a paneled, deeply carpeted environment in the most genteel of tomes. “I’m sorry, but our loan committee does not believe that this is a bankable proposition . . . Our loan committee has voted not to renew your company’s annual line” (Robertson, 1991a, p. 136).

One of the rhetorical requirements of movement leaders, according to Simons (1970), is to secure adoption of their product by the larger structure. Robertson’s views on economic issues had the opposite effect and caused conflict with the free-market enthusiasts in the Republican Party. He advocated boycotts to force advertisers in line and favored regulating television content. He attacked financial elites for stock manipulation, blatant greed, and corruption (Hertzke, 1993). Statements such as the following did not win Robertson friends in the upper echelons of the Republican party:

Unbridled capitalism must be restrained or people will get too much money and
too much power and will use it to oppress others . . . Just as the coercive utopianism of Communist materialism is not of God, neither is a capitalist materialism — based on the amassing of riches for personal gain, with disregard for the afflictions of the needy — right (Hertzke, 1993. p. 106).

Robertson's conspirators in the sinister plot to control the world included the Council on Foreign Relations, the Federal Reserve Board, the State Department, the Trilateral Commission, and New Age Religion. He saw symbols of the conspiracy in Masonic rituals, and occult signs on the dollar bill. He also saw in Bush's New World Order, a one-world occult conspiracy right out of Revelations (Robertson, 1991a). The one-world conspiracy theory can be traced back 200 years and involves a conspiracy to bring the destruction of national sovereignty, abolition of private property, and the elimination of Christian theism (Hertzke, 1993). "The new world order will have as its religion a god of light, whom Bible scholars recognize as Lucifer. Nations who walk in Lucifer's way will find only suffering and heartache, but never peace!" (Robertson, 1991a).

Robertson's plan for dealing with what he saw as impending financial collapse was a "Year of Jubilee" as mentioned in the Old Testament Book of Leviticus. It is not known if the program was ever instituted but the "Year of Jubilee" was a 50-year cycle in Israel in which all debts were to be canceled. As early as 1981, Robertson touted the idea of a constitutional amendment dictating periodic debt relief claiming debt reduction would soon come anyway in the form of financial collapse so the government might as well reduce debt in an orderly fashion (Hertzke, 1993).

Bruce points out that Robertson's conspiracy theory may seem strange to those
outside the movement but that secret cabals and global plots would seem quite reasonable to religious people who believe there is a hidden order to the world, a purpose to history, and that Satan is real (Bruce, 1988).

Robertson tended to confuse his personal agenda with God’s plan and often confused prophecy with prediction. He predicted a stock market crash that never occurred and predicted the Soviet Union would lead an army against Israel based on prophecy in Revelation. His rhetoric could be compelling as when he was chastising a doctor who performed third-trimester abortions or as outlandish as when he linked liberals with Satan and feminists with witchcraft (Hertzke, 1993).

Robertson compared his campaign to an epic struggle between good and evil. On Easter Sunday, 1988, on the eve of the Colorado caucuses, Robertson delivered a similar message at four evangelical churches: “It looks like the bad guys are winning in this country, but so did it look that way on Good Friday . . . It looked as if Satan had beaten Jesus that day” (Hertzke, 1993, p. 1). Just as Jesus Christ rose from the dead, so would moral Americans eventually prevail.

Advocating what he called “natural law,” Robertson saw the ills of modern society such as AIDS, the decaying family, poor education, and an eroding economy as inevitable consequences violating that law. “Well, people in this country are violating certain moral laws and standards and as a result, they’re getting diseases,” he said. When you “sew moral decadence” you “reap the whirlwind” (Hertzke, 1993, p. 97). “Human cruelty, human selfishness, drug addiction, and sexual promiscuity will always bring poverty and disintegration of society” (Hertzke, 1993 p. 87).
The New Christian Right, as manifested by the Robertson campaign, was beginning to serve as a surrogate third party. Though Robertson failed to receive enough support to arrive at the national convention as a serious contender, his organization continued to work to make sure his followers were well represented (Bruce, 1988). They depicted their struggle for representation at the convention as "Christians versus Republicans," equating party regulars as persecuting Romans and they saw themselves as a separate entity. "At our state convention, we had quite a few Christians there. In fact, we outnumbered the Republicans," Coalition leader Marlene Etwell said (Hertzke, 1993, p. 159).

The Enthusiastic Mobilization Stage of a social movement often achieves some significant goals and victories but a vision of sweeping change and instant success eludes the movement causing a loss of hope in the cause and a fading of enthusiasm (Stewart, Smith, and Denton, 1989). The successes of the Robertson campaign were certainly significant. Not only did the campaign succeed in raising a large war chest, capturing many primary caucuses, and injecting Religious Right issues into the Republican platform, it also educated many followers on effective grassroots campaign techniques. However, the ultimate failure of the campaign to win the Republican nomination demonstrates the end of the illusions and the fading of enthusiasm. The failure of the campaign may be traced to a failure to find a rhetorical strategy that would make the goals of the movement palatable to a mass audience but the campaign did accomplish the task of "giving structure to anxiety and a tangible target for hostility" and fostering group feelings (Simons, 1970, p. 5).
At the end of the long, hard-fought struggle, George Bush was the new president and it was evident that the causes so dear to the Religious Right would continue to receive the lip service so liberally applied under Reagan. At this stage, the movement faced the problem of “pseudosupporative reactions” from an administration that was “too kind” to the group (Simons, 1970) bringing the possibility of fragmentation. Robertson addressed these problems with the formation of the Christian Coalition and propelled the movement into the next stage of the life cycle (Stewart, Smith, and Denton, 1989).

Christian Coalition as “Maintenance Stage”

The onset of the “Maintenance Stage” is a critical time for a social movement and, as the struggle is prolonged, the odds are against victory because frustration will lead to disillusionment (Stewart, Smith, and Denton 1989). Few social movements are totally successful and many are absorbed or coopted by established institutions. So far, the Religious Right and the Christian Coalition have defied this prediction. Reed claims that Christian Coalition membership exploded in early 1993 as a backlash to Bill Clinton’s election and by 1994, the group was adding 10,000 new members each week (Reed, 1994). The Coalition now boasts 1.8 million active supporters (Neibuhr, 1996a), operates on a $25 million annual budget and, in 1996, wielded considerable influence over the Republican National Convention (Birnbaum, 1995).

Reed and his Coalition have combined old-fashioned grass-roots political organization with up-to-the-minute technology and communications techniques with astounding success (Lawton, 1992).
Denton's model, (1989) the group does not depend on traditional media outlets to transmit messages to its audience. In fact, the Coalition actively avoids mainstream media attention and reaches supporters through cable television religious programs and alternative media including direct mail, phone trees, and satellite interactive TV (Conason, 1993).

In his book, Politically Incorrect, Reed brags about the effectiveness of avoiding the mainstream press. "The genius of the Christian Coalition was its emphasis on the grassroots and its avoidance of a star-studded Washington media event or rally that announced lofty goals and attracted media attention" (Reed, 1994). He points to the value of fax networks and phone trees and describes how a Christian Coalition faction in Houston assembled a computerized phone tree that enabled them to reach 4,000 households in a matter of hours (Reed, 1994).

He claims alternative electronic media are now encroaching on the power of the mainstream press. "Talk radio and cable TV, dominated by conservative voices like Rush Limbaugh and Pat Robertson, now rivals or eclipses the establishment press in shaping the nation's political agenda," he said (Reed, 1994, p. 159).

The group's most successful communication tactics consist primarily of two programs; the Voter Identification program and the Voter Guide program. The success of the Voter Identification plan relies on general voter apathy in local elections where a small turnout is expected (Bringing in the votes, 1992). In these races, volunteers call into a preselected precinct and claim to be taking an informal survey for the Christian Coalition. In the 1992 election in Virginia, for example, the survey consisted of four questions: "Did
you vote for Dukakis or Bush? Are you a Republican or a Democrat?” If the respondent answered, “Dukakis, Democrat” the survey was ended. “We didn’t even write them down,” Reed said, “We don’t want to communicate with them. We don’t even want them to know there is an election going on.” The next question, for those who remained in the survey, was “Do you favor restrictions on abortion?” and finally, “What is the most important issue facing your community?” (Clarkson, 1992a, p. 5).

From the results of the survey, the Coalition created a database with survey answers coded according to the voter’s issue burdens. Voters would soon receive a letter, individually tailored to that person’s issue burden, from the Coalition candidate. If the voter happened to be pro-choice, the letter would not mention abortion. “I’ll take the votes of the pro-abortion Republicans to get anti-abortion Republicans voted in,” Reed said (Clarkson, 1992a, p. 5). In 1993, the Voter Identification Program amassed a computerized file of 1.6 million constituents (Siberi, 1993). Simons (1970) said movement leaders must adapt to several audiences simultaneously because, in an age of mass media, messages addressed to one audience were likely to reach many. It is doubtful Simons ever envisioned technology so sophisticated it would allow communication that was tailored specifically to individual audience members and delivered by media that circumvented mass transmission.

The Coalition’s Voter Guides is another highly successful strategy that also circumvents the disadvantages of traditional mass communication. In this program, publications Reed claims are “strictly nonpartisan and endorsed no candidates” (Reed, 1994, p. 8), compare candidates’ views or records on issues seen as important by the
Coalition. These “guides” are distributed in churches on the Sunday before key elections along with a cover letter signed by Robertson and others, asking church leaders to: “provide your members with nonpartisan knowledge they need to prosper as citizens.” The flyer assures readers that the Christian Coalition is a “nonprofit organization that is not affiliated with any political party and does not endorse candidates” (Clarkson, 1992b, p. 6).

As an example of the Voter Guide Program in action, the Christian Coalition of Florida distributed 1.5 million guides to 4,000 selected churches in a 1990 campaign and obtained church membership lists and cross-referenced them against lists of registered Republicans in a voter identification project (Clarkson, 1992a). In the 1990 Senate race in North Carolina, the Coalition came to Sen. Jesse Helms’s rescue by inserting voter guides into church bulletins on the Sunday before the election. Helms had been eight points behind before the Coalition kicked into action but won by 100,000 votes out of 2.2 million cast. “The press had no idea what we were doing,” said Christian Coalition Southern Regional Director Judy Haynes, “And they still don’t know what we did, but it worked” (Clarkson, 1992a, p. 5).

A blanket of Coalition voters guides usually results in the election of Republicans. The guides were seen as a factor in the defeat of Democrat Wyche Flower in Georgia and the unseating of Democratic Governor Terry Sanford in North Carolina in 1992 (Clarkson, 1992a). A recent analysis of the Coalition’s Voter Guides for the 1996 elections by the People for the American Way, a group that advocates separation of church and state and opposes the Christian Coalition, found the information in the guides
distorted Democratic candidates' views and that the information often did not come from the candidates but was supplied by the Coalition. For example, while candidates were asked if they favored repealing the semi-automatic weapons ban, the voter guides substituted the word "firearms" for "semi-automatic weapons" making it appear the candidates favored a ban on all gun ownership. The study found that voter guides distributed in several states indicate President Clinton opposes a ban on late-term abortions when the president favors a ban that includes a meaningful exception to protect the life or health of the mother. The guides do not say that the president did not reply to the Coalition's questionnaire and that the group supplied the answers (People for the American Way, 1996). A few days before the 1996 election, President Clinton's campaign launched a television ad to combat a last-minute flood of 46 million Voter Guides the Coalition claims were distributed in 125,000 churches throughout the nation (Kurtz, 1996). The bulk of the guides, one for every three registered voters, were handed out at church doors, placed on pews or stapled inside church bulletins (Goodstein, 1996b.) The Coalition's tactics include distributing the Voter Guides on the Sunday before an election giving candidates little time to correct misinformation (People for the American Way, 1996).

Using these tactics, the group did well with anti-homosexual measures in Colorado and Oregon and defeated equal-rights for women laws in Iowa. With the Coalition providing behind-the-scenes support, the Washington Republican Party in 1992 adopted a platform that banned abortion, supported teaching creationism in schools, reclaiming the Panama Canal and putting America back on the Gold Standard (The godly
right, 1992). Mobilizing grass roots support through sophisticated marketing on radio and television, print advertisement, video tape distribution, advanced computer systems, phone banks, leaflets and direct mail make up what is known as “the air war” (Sibere, 1993).

In the last few years, the Christian Coalition has updated its use of the latest communications technology in the “air war.” The group has formed links with Weyrich to develop an interactive television network called National Empowerment Television (NET). NET is a closed-circuit satellite system (Clarkson, 1992b) which allows leaders to talk directly with grassroots activists via satellite hookup. Allies across the country meet at a chosen site and a nearby satellite dish beams Washington figures into the room for a live conversation. Weyrich’s group, Free Congress, used the system to inundate Senate offices with pro-Clarence Thomas telephone calls during the confirmation hearings. The Coalition has also purchased sophisticated computer software that combines voter registration information with census data, addresses and phone listings (Conn, 1993a).

These methods have proved highly successful in low-turnout, local elections. Evangelicals made the winning difference in November 1993 when Virginians elected a Republican governor, George Allen, for the first time in 16 years. Allen’s election helped dispel the theory that the Religious Right was a liability to the Republican Party (O’Keefe, 1993).

In 1993, the Coalition’s Voter Guides played an important part in a coordinated effort with the Catholic Archdiocese of New York to take over the city’s schools. Cardinal John J. O’Connor and the Roman Catholic Diocese of New York distributed thousands of Voter Guides in 213 parishes after school Chancellor Joseph A. Fernandez
alienated religious conservatives by advocating condom distribution in high school as part of an AIDS prevention program (Woodward and Rogers, 1993). Fernandez further fueled the flame by promoting the “Children of the Rainbow” curriculum that celebrated racial and ethnic diversity and encouraged tolerance of homosexuals (Minkowitz, 1993). The controversy brought an end to the chancellor’s employment and brought on a heated campaign for control of the city’s schools (Conn, 1993b). Ultimately, the Religious Right’s organizing in New York backfired. The opposition, which Reed labeled “gay activists and former anti-Vietnam war protesters,” (Reed, 1994, p. 9) organized a counter campaign. As a result there is evidence that homosexuals voted in higher numbers than in any previous election and openly gay candidates won in two districts (Religious bedfellows, 1993). However, from this experience, the Coalition found that conservative Catholics and evangelicals had common ground on abortion, homosexuality, private school vouchers, and control of public schools (Conn, 1993b).

Transition

The Coalition’s astounding success in the 1994 elections and its continued growth and power in the Republican party can be directly attributed to a carefully calculated change in rhetorical strategy that coincides with a transition between the “Enthusiastic Mobilization” stage to the “Maintenance” stage (Stewart, Smith, and Denton 1989). In this process, Reed has evolved from the group’s “rabble rouser” into the “statesman/diplomat” Stewart, Smith and Denton prescribe for the Maintenance Stage. Before 1993, Reed was known to brag about the group’s “Stealth Politics” and was
widely quoted using war and military metaphors when describing the group’s political tactics. In 1992, Reed told the Orange County Register (March 9, 1992) that the Coalition was “moving from a very visible, very vulnerable strategy to an underground strategy, to a stealth strategy. You wouldn’t know what’s going on because it doesn’t show up on a radar screen” (Clarkson, 1992b, p. 5).

“I want to be invisible. I do guerilla warfare. I paint my face and travel at night. You don’t know it’s over until you’re in a body bag. You don’t know until election night,” was one of Reed’s more widely quoted remarks (Clarkson, 1992b). Reed also talked of “Shimmying along on our bellies,” to get votes (“The godly right,” 1992) and “flying below radar” (Conason, 1992).

Reed said the Coalition travels “under the cover of night, where every moment you disguise your position and your truth from the enemy, because the minute you stick your head up, you can be shot” (Siberi, 1993, p. 782). He boasted of winning a majority of seats on the GOP central Committee in one California county but declined to say which one. “The county and the liberals and the media won’t know it until they take their seats and prove themselves to be what you would call Christian-right people” (Siberi, 1993, p. 782).

“We’ve learned how to move under the radar in the cover of the night with shrubbery strapped to our helmets,” Reed told Newsday. “It’s like being a good submarine captain; you come up, fire three missiles and then dive” (Clarkson, 1992b, p. 5).

Other Coalition leaders were heard using war metaphors but in a more defensive mode such as Gary Bauer who declared nothing less than a “Civil War” over American
culture. "I find a lot of people who feel under siege. Their perception is that they're
living in a hostile country, that everything they believe is under persistent attack"
(Hertzke, 1993 p. 114).

By 1993, Reed was trying to back-peddle on the war rhetoric. "The stealth thing
is bad for the movement. It isn't the future. It's the past, if anything," he said (Barrett,
1993 p. 60). Later he claimed the media had exaggerated and misquoted him. "Some
have inaccurately charged that religious conservatives hide their religious affiliation by
conducting stealth campaigns" (Reed, 1994, p. 37).

In a response to a publication by the Anti-Defamation League, the Christian
Coalition denied that the organization ever participated in "stealth" politics and denies that
Reed ever admitted they did. "The ADL is obsessed with the notion that Christian
conservatives engaged in so-called 'stealth' activities . . . It falsely claims that the
Coalition 'acknowledges having used (stealth tactics)'' (Campaign of falsehoods, 1994, p.
9). The publication goes on to deny that the Coalition had any part in a well-publicized
"stealth" campaign in San Diego in 1990 and says the Coalition "neither practices nor
endorses the 'stealth tactics' the ADL claims" (Campaign of falsehoods, 1994, p. 9-10).

The publication quotes Reed's new book:

We do not advocate electing officials by depressing voter turnout or taking
advantage of historically low voter participation. Some have inaccurately charged
that religious conservatives hide their religious affiliation, conducting "stealth"
campaigns in which they eschew public forums and campaign exclusively in
churches. The opposite is true . . . Pro-family candidates win at the ballot box
because of their views, not in spite of them (Campaign of falsehoods, 1994, p. 12).

Soon, the war metaphors were replaced with sports metaphors like the language
from Politically Incorrect (Reed, 1994): “In sports, if the defensive team is preventing the ground game, the offense should pass the ball. Likewise, in politics there is nothing wrong and everything prudent in changing the game plan at halftime if necessary to win. The key is not to become wedded to the play book but to win the game. Tactical intransigence hamstring the effectiveness of social movements” (Reed, 1994, p. 224). “I think the jump ball of the 1996 presidential election is the Catholic vote,” Reed said to the Detroit News (Stevens, 1996).

Reed also began backing down from triumphant talk, denying his group wanted to take control of any party and talking about “inclusion.” On “Meet the Press” in November 1992 he said, “We’d like to see a time when both parties are inclusive of our agenda and our constituents” (The godly right, 1992).

In spite of “inclusive” rhetoric, the movement remains overwhelmingly white, a backlash from the Religious Right’s lack of involvement in the Civil Rights Movement (Lawton, 1992). To gain some statistical legitimacy for his new “inclusive” campaign, Reed commissioned a national poll of minority churchgoers hoping to find a constituency among minorities and in 1993 announced figures showing that, on some social issues, devout blacks, Hispanics and Asians Americans sympathize with religious-right views (Barrett, 1993). The Coalition worked actively in South Carolina to recruit blacks and other minorities but attempts to broaden their minority support have not been highly successful (Pat Robertson calls, 1994).

According to Simons, the leader of a social movement must “constantly balance inherently conflicting demands” (1970, p. 4). Reed faced the rhetorical dilemma of trying
to maintain the established power base enjoyed by the Religious Right while broadening
the movement to include other groups. In July 1993, Reed held a Washington press
conference to announce plans to move beyond abortion and homosexuality and expand
into economics, taxes and other pocketbook issues with greater appeal to the general
public (Conn, 1993d). At the press conference, he said the shift was spurred by a poll
conducted among churchgoing voters shortly after the 1992 presidential campaign. “To
our surprise, their top five issues were the same as everybody else’s - the economy and
jobs, welfare, the budget deficit and crime. Abortion ranked eighth as an issue and gay
rights twelfth or thirteenth” (Conn, 1993d, p. 14). Reed said the Coalition would remain
active in its opposition to legal abortion and gay rights and in support of school prayer but
economic concerns would receive increased attention along with private school vouchers,
welfare reform and the North American Free Trade Agreement (Christian Coalition shifts
tactics, 1993).

This new theme was repeated in several speeches and articles in which Reed
advocated what he called “casting a wider net” and represents Reed’s attempt to “balance
inherently conflicting demands on his position and on the movement he represents” as
prescribed by Simons (1970, p. 4). The Christian Coalition “has not yet completely
connected its agenda with average voters. The pro-family movement still has limited
appeal,” Reed said. He said the movement is “policy-thin and value-laden” leaving many
voters tuned out. The movement needs to promote policies that provide personal benefits.
“The pro-family activists have built their movement around personalities rather than
policies. But their personal charisma, while an important asset, is no substitute for good
policy,” he said. The movement must “develop a broader issues agenda . . . must speak to the concerns of average voters in the areas of taxes, crime, government waste, health care and financial security” (Reed, 1993b, p. 311). Reed admitted that network exit polls in 1992 showed, “only 12 percent of voters indicated that abortion was a key issue in their voting decision,” and only 22 percent of evangelicals listed abortion as an important voting issue (Reed, 1993b, p. 312). At this point, Reed began to represent a new kind of leader for the movement, one Simons identifies as a “moderate.” “Dressed in the garb of respectability and exhibiting Ivy League earnestness and Midwestern charm, the moderate gets angry but does not shout, issues pamphlets but never manifestos, inveighs against social mores but always in the value language of the social order” (Simons, 1970, p. 7).

To further the image of inclusion and non-partisanship, Reed persuaded David Wilhelm, chairman of the Democratic National Committee, to be the token liberal among dozens of conservative speakers at the Road to Victory conference in 1993. To counter a conspiratorial image, for the first time, the conference was held in Washington rather than Virginia Beach and was partially open to the press (Barrett, 1993). The strategy backfired when Wilhelm used the opportunity to denounce the group’s tactics. “When you call yourselves the ‘Christian Coalition’ and savagely attack members of Congress for their point of view, implicit in that attack is the message that those who disagree may have taken an un-Christian position.” Wilhelm’s statements on a liberal stance on abortion and homosexuality were met with catcalls, groans and derisive laughter which belied Reed’s call to widen the group’s issue focus (Conn, 1993a).
Persuasive Feats of Magic

According to Stewart, Smith and Denton, "Persuasive feats of magic are required to keep coalitions intact for extended periods" (1989 p. 27). Reed and other Coalition leaders have been required to pull many a rhetorical rabbit out of their hats while working to transform the movement without becoming tangled in the "wider net."

In an effort to move beyond the issues of abortion and homosexuality and to counteract an image of moral superiority, Reed changed his message to illustrate that the primary interest of evangelicals is "not to legislate against the sins of others, but to protect the health, welfare, and financial security of their own families. The issue that most united evangelicals and fiscal conservatives was the deficit" (Reed, 1993, p. 312). On "Good Morning America" Reed defended his Voter Guides saying they show where candidates stand on such issues as a balanced budget amendment, term limits, lower taxes and tougher laws against crime and drugs. "We are not attempting to legislate our theology. We are trying to legislate our public policy views," he said (Jost, 1994, p. 894).

One of the rhetorical tactics Reed uses often comes directly from lessons he learned from Pat Robertson in presenting the Religious Right as a persecuted minority. He presents episodical evidence that Religious Right candidates are attacked and ridiculed for their beliefs as, for example, when an opposition candidate in South Carolina described the religious candidate's leading qualification for office as "Handling snakes and being able to speak fluently in tongues" (Reed, 1994). People of faith want to exercise their rights like anyone else, "but their religion makes them suspect, and a deep and abiding (distrust) often disqualifies them" (Reed, 1994). The prejudice against religious conservatives, Reed
states, goes back to the Scopes Trial when H.L. Menken's scathing descriptions of the religious conservatives involved in the trial fostered a prejudice still felt today. As a result, the Religious Right is the new "Amos and Andy" of society, a caricature that reinforces our culture's phobia against religion (Reed, 1994).

Reed claims that separation of church and state doctrine has replaced "Freedom of religion" with "freedom from religion" and communicates a message that religion is offensive and should be kept out of public view. The political activism of the Religious Right is merely an attempt to allow people of faith to enter the public square after they have "spent the last half-century with their noses pressed against the glass of culture" (Reed, 1994, p. 26). These themes are also seen in Robertson's rhetoric (Robertson, 1991a, 1991b).

During a leadership conference in Charleston, S.C. in July 1993, Reed called on activists to tone down rhetoric on abortion and gay rights and begin focusing on broader issues. During the conference, National Field Director Guy Rogers urged activists to drop the language of "sanctification," "healing," and "baptism of the spirit" that even Southern Baptists found unnerving (Hertzke, 1993, p. 169). "Don't talk about reconciling the world to God or ushering in the kingdom of Christ," he said. He advised the crowd not to tell the public, "We're in this to tear down the kingdom of Lucifer and exalt the throne of Christ" (Conn, 1993d, p. 14). "When tactics become ends in themselves, however, social movements falter . . . The cluster of pro-family issues must now be expanded to attract a majority of voters," Reed said (1993b, p. 311).

To aid this expansion, Reed has made a conscious effort to appeal to minorities
and women saying the Coalition "must build a genuinely inclusive movement that embraces the full racial diversity of America, and makes room for our black, brown, and yellow brothers and sisters in Christ" (Reed, 1994, p. 239). His speeches and writings often attempt to form bonds with African-Americans, Hispanics and women. Former Education Secretary William Bennett starts his introduction to Reed's 1994 book with a salute to Martin Luther King and references to King are found throughout the work (Reed, 1994). Reed said among the universal truths government adopted from religion is the tenant that "blacks and whites are equal because God created them in his image" (Reed, 1994, p. 12). He cited a poll by Democrat Peter Hart that showed 87 percent of young blacks ranked the family as their most important concern in life and the 1993 Christian Coalition poll found that minorities tend to be more religious than whites with 63 percent of African-Americans and 43 percent of Hispanics identifying themselves as "born again." More African-Americans and Hispanics than whites say they pray every day, according to Reed. To demonstrate his sympathy with minority causes, he points out that murder is the leading cause of death for African-American males age 18 to 34 and said, "A minority adolescent in Washington, D.C. has a better chance of being killed than a soldier in Vietnam" (Reed, 1994 p. 12). "They [blacks and Hispanics] oppose the legalization of drugs, support the death penalty, and object to the teaching of homosexuality as an acceptable lifestyle in public schools" (Reed, 1994, p. 241).

Reed denies any historical connection between the Ku Klux Klan and the pro-family movement while admitting that the current rhetoric sounds hauntingly familiar. He draws a connection between current-day religious political activists and the "pastoral
leaders who transported supporters to protests in church buses,” in Atlanta during the civil
inght movement (Reed, 1994, p. 241). However, he also admits, details, and laments the
Southern clergy’s support for segregation and notes that although blacks agree with the
Religious Right’s views, they refuse to identify themselves as either Republican or
conservative. Reed advocates increased activism in the Democratic party as a way to
reach minorities (Reed, 1994).

Reed attempts to broaden the Coalition’s appeal to Catholics and Jews in his
books and speeches. He appeals to Catholics through the causes of anti-abortion and
private schools and said “nasty nativist and dark distrust about Popery and foreign
influence have been swept away into the trash heap of history” (Reed, 1994, p. 96). He
appeals to Jews by listing several Jewish leaders who have spoken before Christian
Coalition conventions and points to the Religious Right’s support of Israel as evidence of
inclusiveness (Reed, 1994). In a speech of reconciliation before the Anti-Defamation
League, Reed addressed “honestly and frankly” the “undeniable and palpable suspicion —
even fear — that divides the Christian community from many American Jews” (Reed,
1995a). He admitted that religious conservatives have “at times” been insensitive to the
experiences of the Jewish people and then assured the group that the Christian Coalition
does not advocate a national religion. He said the Religious Right advocated the
separation of church and state then he showed how governmental hostility toward religion
affects evangelicals, Catholics and Jews. “Today we deny the very freedoms that your
forbearers came to this nation to enjoy . . . I believe together we can bridge the chasm that
separates us and join hands together in a common crusade for the values and ideals that
define us and sustain us as a nation” (Reed, 1995a).

In an appeal to women, Reed said, “Women should be free to pursue the career of their choice and rise as high as their talents will carry them. But they should not be forced to work simply to compensate for the huge chunk of family income that currently goes to taxes” (Reed, 1994, p. 227-228). This language is in marked contrast to Robertson’s. A letter mailed to supporters in Iowa under Robertson’s signature said, “The feminist agenda is not about equal rights for women. It is about a socialist, anti-family political movement that encourages women to leave their husbands, kill their children, practice witchcraft, destroy capitalism, and become lesbians” (Boston, 1996). In later publications, Robertson and Reed have worked to combat an image of being against women’s rights. According to a Christian Coalition publication, Robertson supports women’s rights. “Dr. Robertson is a strong advocate of the rights of women and supports equal pay for equal work for women performing the same tasks as men” (Ten myths, undated, p. 13).

Reed’s rhetoric on abortion has also softened in an attempt to appeal to women. Instead of calling for laws against abortion, he claims the Coalition’s goal is to end taxpayer subsidies for abortions and to limit abortion to “hard cases of rape incest and the life of the mother.” He cites a 1993 Gallup poll to show strong support for his stance (Reed, 1994, p. 261). He claims the Religious Right seeks to “stop taxpayer subsidy, direct or indirect, and stop the spread of abortion by allowing states to restrict it,” (Reed, 1994, p. 260) and claims “70 percent (of American voters) oppose abortion on demand paid for by tax dollars” (Reed, 1994, p. 11). He paints abortion as a states’ rights issue saying, “While it is unlikely that a majority of the states would do so (limit or restrict
abortions) they should have that power (Reed, 1994, p. 260). Interestingly, when Reed talks about abortion he speaks of protecting "innocent" human life, not all human life, because the Coalition supports capital punishment (Reed, 1994, p. 254).

Reed’s solutions to the abortion debate include a simplistic stand on relaxing the adoption requirements. “Only 370,000 children live in foster homes while more than 1 million couples are seeking to adopt,” he said (Reed, 1994, p. 260). He said the “woman’s right to know” about the development of the fetus is really about requiring that a woman be informed not about intimidation tactics (Reed, 1994, p. 260). In response to the new direction, even Robertson has moderated his language on the abortion issue and denies that opposition to abortion is a litmus test for receiving Christian Coalition support (Pat Robertson Calls, 1994).

Reed claimed it was the issue of education, not abortion, which gave rise to the New Religious Right. “In fact, the spark that ignited the modern pro-family movement was the fear of increased government regulation of church schools.” He said churchgoing voters strongly support choice in education (Reed, 1993a). To avoid criticism that the Religious Right would abandon, and thereby destroy, the public school system, Reed minimizes talk about school vouchers and instead focuses on reforming the public school system to “restore parental rights and parental involvement,” (Reed, 1993a, p. 16). Reed no longer brags about taking over school boards and packing them with religious conservatives but instead speaks of “informing them (parents) of how school boards work and ways of effectively communicating with elected officials (Reed, 1993a, p. 16). Of primary concern, Reed holds, is making schools safe from drugs and crime, not from
religion (Reed, 1993a, 1994, 1995b).

The economy, according to Reed, is a family issue and a cause of “middle class anxiety” (Reed, 1994 p. 186).

Financial pressure on families must be addressed by the pro-family movement because it affects them as adversely as moral decay. Obviously the two factors (financial issues and family breakups) are intertwined. This suggests that the key to turning “family values” into a policy specific message that will resonate with voters is to address the real needs of financially pressed families (Reed, 1994, p. 225).

He advocated a 1994 GOP budget proposal that included a $500 per child tax credit that he claimed would transfer $103 billion from government to families with 86 percent going to families earning less then $75,000. He said the tax credit would have been paid for by cutting the Legal Services Corporation, the National Endowment for the Arts, and “consolidating social programs into block grants to the states.” The proposal failed, he said, on a “straight party vote” (Reed, 1994, p. 228, 1993b).

Higher taxes have caused women to join the workforce, Reed claims, as government “confiscates” two-thirds of a family’s second income (Reed, 1994). “Higher taxes have torn at the fabric of the American family. . . . Children are the main victims of this financial strain” (Reed, 1993b).

Reed says health care is also a financial burden on families and on the economy but he holds that the solution to the health care problem is healthier living. “Good Health reflects good living; poor health in many cases betrays poor living,” he said (Reed, 1993b). Of the $800 billion a year the United States spends on health care, “many of the most expensive items in the health care budget are directly attributable to behavioral
problems." He listed crack babies, drug abusers, lung cancer patients, victims of drive-by shootings, domestic violence victims, and the sexually promiscuous as the worst abusers of the health care system (Reed, 1993b, 1994). "Poor physiological health is often a reflection of psychological disorder," he said (Reed, 1993b). Welfare, in Reed's view, is also a family, rather than an economic, issue. "Strengthening families also means ending the financial subsidies for its breakup. Welfare reform must encourage work, savings, marriage, and personal responsibility" (Reed, 1994, p. 259).

Censorship, to Reed is another family issue but in Reed's rhetoric, books are not banned; concerned parents merely seek to regulate children's access to unsuitable reading material. He claims more censorship is practiced on the left than on the right when books are banned because of racial slurs (Reed, 1994). According to Reed, the Religious Right would like to see hard core pornography, not censured but, "stigmatized" and confined to "dirty old men" but he then goes on to laud an Oregon ballot initiative that would outlaw pornography (Reed, 1994, p. 29). The controversy over funding for the National Endowment for the Arts, Reed holds, is about wasteful government spending not about censorship (Reed, 1994, 1993b).

Getting Tangled in a Wider Net

Reed's broadened agenda exposed the Coalition to criticism from within, as Stewart, Smith and Denton predicted (1989). Simons (1970) said that within a movement, conflicts will develop over questions of value, strategy, tactics as purists clash with pragmatists over the benefits of compromise. This conflict can be seen in the
reaction to Reed’s attempt to move beyond abortion to other issues. Anti-abortion activists criticized the Coalition for softening on abortion and the Coalition was accused of helping to elect two Republican senators, Paul Coverdell of Georgia and Kay Bailey Hutchinson in Texas, who favor abortion rights. “We cannot -- in the name of the Christian Right -- compromise what God gave Moses on Mount Sinai. We cannot -- in the name of the Christian Coalition -- sell out the law of heaven for short-term political gain,” said Randall Terry, leader of the Pro-Life movement in speeches delivered at church gatherings throughout the south titled “The Sell-Out of the Christian Right.” “Certain Christian leaders are inspiring droves of Christians to move into the ‘big tent’ of the Republican party, a tent happily housing child-killers and sodomites,” Terry Randall said (Maxwell, 1994).

At the Road to Victory conference in 1993, several speakers rejected Reed’s “wider net” approach. Patrick Buchanan denounced multi-culturalism as “an across-the-board assault on our Anglo-American heritage. Our culture is superior because our religion is Christianity and that is the truth that makes men free.” Buchanan dismissed pleas from Republicans to distance the party from the anti-abortion movement: “If a political party will turn its back on 4,000 unborn children done to death every day in this country, then it is time to find a new party” (Conn, 1993a). At the conference, Bennett said, “It’s fine for you to expand your focus but don’t forget who you are. You are not the Lower Taxes Coalition, not the Free Trade and Full Employment Coalition, not even the American Empowerment Coalition. You are the Christian Coalition. You can’t be all things to all people. He [Christ] wasn’t. He, after all, was and is one thing to all people”
The rhetoric was in opposition to the new direction set by Reed and other Coalition leaders. Rogers told a workshop during the conference that members must stop using 'Christianese' which frightens the average citizen. "Our ultimate objective is to serve and glorify the Lord God. But, in the public policy arena, our immediate objective is not to win souls. It is to take the values we believe and translate them into public policy" (Conn, 1993d, p. 6).

Reed reiterated that thought recommending Coalition members alter their language to make it appeal to a broader audience. "Those of us who bear His name have a unique obligation to choose words that represent our Lord in a way that reaches others and makes knowledge acceptable," he said (Reed, 1994, p. 68). "Too often those of devout faith have spoken in the public square with a scowl, using language that did not embrace all their listeners" (Reed, 1994, p. 67). He advises his followers to soften their language just as Paul "learned to speak the language of his listeners so they might receive his message" (Reed, 1994, p. 221).

In spite of the dissention within the organization and its party of choice, the Christian Coalition continues to grow in numbers and in strength. In early 1994, the Coalition launched a $1.4 million lobbying drive against President Clinton’s health care plan that received partial credit for the plan’s defeat (Jost, 1994). The Road to Victory Conference in September of 1994 was attended by 3,000 delegates and the Coalition now claims more than 1.8 million dues-paying members. The 1994 conference drew presidential contenders Dan Quayle, Tennessee Gov. Lamar Alexander, Senator Phil...
Gramm of Texas, and Dick Cheney, former secretary of defense. Senate Minority Leader Bob Dole was represented by his wife. At the conference, Reed said, "We are fed up with Clinton-style liberalism and in six weeks it's going to end" (Jost, 1994, p. 892). Six weeks later, the Republican Party took over Congress.

At the 1994 conference, Robertson issued a blunt warning, "There are some members of the Republican Party who say they don't need us. They find the social and moral issues an embarrassment. We have no intention of advocating bizarre positions which will lose elections but, we also have no intention of surrendering our deeply held moral stands just to please a handful of moderates who don't stand for anything," he said (Jost, 1994).

Later, Reed said the election of 1994 was more than a partisan victory. "It was a victory for ideas and ideals. It was a landslide for a particular kind of change: pro-life, pro-family, low-tax, and unapologetically committed to restoring traditional values" (Reed, 1995b, p. 310).

Reed's "wider net" approach addresses the rhetorical problems of the Maintenance Stage which requires a "statesman or administrator who can appeal to disparate elements of the movement" (Stewart, Smith, and Denton, 1989, p. 29). Reed has evolved from the fiery "agitator" to the statesman/diplomat whose primary concern is maintaining the movement, increasing its political influence and financial power while waiting for the next triggering event that will rejuvenate the movement and push it on to victory (Stewart, Smith, and Denton, 1989).
CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

Discussion

In spite of Bennett’s warning, the Christian Coalition has effectively been “all things to all people” or, more accurately, has been able to adjust its messages to match the values of the individual members of its audience. By identifying each voter’s “issue burden” and tailoring the message to suit that burden, the Coalition has managed to avoid much of the divisiveness that usually ensues once a group begins to broaden its scope (Stewart, Smith and Denton, 1989).

A lack of visibility in the media usually spells death to a social movement (Stewart, Smith and Denton, 1989) but the Christian Coalition has consciously avoided media attention and has turned that lack of attention into a benefit. Until the 1994 election, communication technology allowed the Coalition to avoid the media spotlight and still broadcast its message to a large audience. The group managed to “sneak in” to politics on a local level and, through the use of “stealth tactics,” build a grass-roots following that provided the impetus for success on the national level in 1994.

By encouraging members to be less than candid about the group’s ideology, agenda and ultimate goals, the Coalition increased its membership and political strength.
Leaders encouraged drawing attention away from the group’s conservative religious history so as not to “scare off” potential supporters who may not share the group’s beliefs. The strategies for the 1994 elections called for stepping away from the abortion issue in order to make Religious Right candidates more palatable to the majority of voters who hold pro-choice views.

Whether these tactics were influential in the 1994 “Republican Revolution” is a matter of debate but the magnitude of the GOP victory is not. In that election, Republicans gained 54 seats in the House and took control for the first time since 1953 and, in the Senate, Republicans gained eight seats and majority-party control (Moen, 1995b). The Republican victory ratified the significance of the Religious Right, quelled talk of “stealth candidates,” and belied theories that the Religious Right had damaged the GOP and cost it the 1992 presidential election. Moen argues that the Religious Right was more a beneficiary than an instigator of the 1994 Republican landslide. Pre-election analysis suggested that 40 to 60 congressional candidates were at least marginally involved with the Christian Right while post-election analysis found that seven to 10 backed by the Religious Right won House races (Moen, 1995a).

An ironic consequence of limited success, or even the appearance of success, for a social movement is that it motivates and mobilizes opponents (Bruce, 1988). In the years that have passed since the 1994 election, the Christian Coalition has had to face the paradox success creates. Once the aggressive outsider, the organization found itself in a defensive position as it prepared for the 1996 national elections (Niebuhr, 1996c).

The group’s tactics and claim to nonpartisan status have come under attack. On
July 30, 1996, the Federal Election Commission filed suit in U.S. District Court charging that the Christian Coalition violated federal law by failing to reveal expenditures for voter guides and voter identification programs and claims the group’s support of Republican candidates amounts to an illegal corporate contribution. The Christian Coalition is sticking to its claim that it is simply educating voters in a nonpartisan way but the news that the suit had been filed discouraged some pastors from distributing voter guides during the 1996 election (Niebuhr, 1996b). While commissioners agreed to file the lawsuit, they did not require that the Coalition register as a political action committee because several members disagreed with the general counsel’s position that the group acts as a political action committee (FEC Files, 1996).

In spite of the dissention within the organization and its party of choice, the Christian Coalition still wields powerful influence. The Road to Victory Conference in September of 1994 was attended by 3,000 and the convention of 1996 was attended by 4,000 delegates. In 1996, nearly one third of the 1,990 delegates to the Republican National Convention were members of the Christian Coalition or strong supporters of the group’s agenda. The convention delegates were combined into a formidable force by state-of-the-art computer and communications equipment for polling, rumor control and message delivery (Postman, 1996).

Was the Religious Right to blame for Dole’s failure to recapture the presidency for the Republicans or did he lose because he failed to address “pro-family” moral issues? (Feldmann, 1996). Dole hardly mentioned abortion during the 1996 campaign and during an appearance at the 1996 Road to Victory Conference he focused on his pledge to cut
taxes. Late in his speech, he promised to bar late-term abortions to which the audience responded with the most prolonged applause (Niebuhr, 1996c). The Religious Right’s voice was muted during the Republican convention when no religious conservative speakers were seen on the podium during network broadcasts (Edsall, 1996a).

Bruce argues that the Religious Right has enough power to put its concerns on the public agenda but is not united enough on socio-moral issues or on which policies to support to effect substantial change. The author said the fault lies in the group’s lack of understanding the need to accommodate other groups and in a lack of unity on priorities. This theory is illustrated best by conflicts that have arisen over whether voters can be trusted to enact public policy. In Texas, battles are being fought over whether to abandon support for initiatives and referenda. “Do we want to run the risk that such issues as homosexual marriage, right to life, right to carry (gun) laws, tort reform, home schooling and casino gambling would be decided by a poorly informed, growingly apathetic electorate?” asked Shirley Spellerberg of the Texas Eagle Forum (Edsall, 1996b). It may be suggested that this is a strange way for a leader of a populist movement to talk.

The lack of sustained success on the national level, Bruce claims, demonstrates the exaggerated influence of the mass media and points out that televangelism does not form a homogenous group equally committed to all positions presented. The movement illustrates the theory that mass media reinforces existing opinion and is better at reinforcing general opinions rather than promoting specific positions (Bruce, 1988).

A debate rages among scholars as to whether the power of the Religious Right is rising or falling and over the actual strength of its influence. Some, such as sociologists
Jeffrey Hadden and Anson Shupe, believe the Religious Right has all the tools necessary to launch a successful "cultural revolution" (Moen, 1995a) while Bruce has argued that the Christian Right has already failed to reshape America and its power to do so is decreasing (Bruce, 1988). Moen sees the movement moving into a "fourth wave" of political activism and claims the group's influence will continue to be felt for some time to come (Moen, 1995a).

Reed's and the Coalition's efforts to expand its agenda and to widen its appeal have suffered from a backlash effect. In spite of the common ground Reed sees between conservative evangelicals and Catholics, attempts to appeal to Catholics have met with strong resistance during the 1996 election when bishops refused to distribute voter guides and denounced association with the Catholic Alliance, the Catholic arm of the Christian Coalition. Of the Coalition's claimed 1.7 million members, only about 250,000 are Catholic (Goodstein, 1996a). A sample voter guide featuring the photograph of a fictitious Black candidate opposing Religious Right issues made the African-American community suspicious of Reed's avowed condemnation of a rash of arson of Black churches (Holmes, 1996).

Even before the 1996 election, Reed was already retracing his rhetorical steps to respond to criticism that the Coalition had abandoned the high ground on moral issues in favor of economic issues. In an interview on Robertson's 700 Club in May 1996, Reed explained the focus of his latest book, Active Faith:

Every great political movement in American history has arisen from the churches. The labor unions originally came out of the church, the suffragist movement came out of the church, the anti-slavery movement, the civil-rights movement. Every
transformational, political movement wasn’t about profits, it wasn’t about prime interest rates. It was about faith in God and about America restoring the righteousness.

My argument is that the collapse of liberalism under Bill Clinton is because it has turned its back on that religious heritage. And the rise of the right is because it is no longer fueled by a sort of accounting or bookkeeper’s desire to balance the budget. It is fueled by a sense of right and wrong and by morality and immorality. (Ralph Reed comments, 1996).

Reed called Roe Vs. Wade a “critical moment” in the exodus of the religious from the Democratic party. “At that point, it no longer became acceptable to be devoutly religious and pro-life in the Democratic Party. People like Bob Casey and... Ted Kennedy eloquently says that he will never give up on speaking out on behalf of the unborn. Al Gore co-sponsored a human life amendment to the Constitution... And every one of these major liberal figures had to leave their religious convictions on the doorstep of the party in order to maintain their electoral viability.” (Ralph Reed comments, 1996).

In response to charges he is giving up his hard-fought principles, Reed said, “God hates the sin and loves the sinner. I think that the style of our speech and the manner of our politics ought to reflect his love for those who are hurting and those who are in sin... With regard to protection of innocent human life, the unborn, with regard to opposing same-sex marriages and gay rights and so forth, I will never retreat. I will never walk away from that agenda and neither will the Christian Coalition and I think people know that” (Ralph Reed comments, 1996).

This language is in marked contrast to the Coalition’s earlier rhetoric on abortion
as exemplified by the group’s “Contract with the American Family.” The legislative agenda published in 1995 calls for protecting states right on abortion, limiting late-term abortions, and eliminating funding for organizations that promote and perform abortions but stops short of calling for a constitutional amendment outlawing abortion (Christian Coalition presents, 1995).

During the 1996 Road to Victory Conference in Washington, Reed reminded Dole that “man does not live by bread alone,” and warned that the emphasis on economics would threaten support among conservative Christians. “To the Republican Party we say this: If you want to retain control of the House and Senate, and you want to have any chance of gaining the White House, you had better not retreat from the pro-life and pro-family stands that made you a majority party in the first place” (Hutchenson, 1996). Reed warned Republicans that “I think clearly the tax message is important but (if the presidential campaign is to succeed) they have to talk about the culture, the family and the state of values in American society” (Edsall, 1996c, p. A12).

At the 1996 convention, the “redemptive” language Reed previously cautioned against was back in full glory. “We serve a risen Lord,” he said, “He is alive, and He’s coming back again very, very soon.” Reed expressed hope the returning Savior would look on the results of the 1996 election and say, “Well done, good and faithful servants” (Hutchenson, 1996).

On April 23, 1997, Ralph Reed announced his resignation as executive director of the Christian Coalition. “I believe and hope and trust my work in the political arena is not over,” Reed said. “But I believe that my work at the Christian Coalition is done” (Yang
and Goodstein, p. A6). Reed said he was resigning to form his own political consulting firm, called Century Strategies, which will work to help elect “pro-life, pro-family and pro-free enterprise candidates at every level of government” (Yang and Goodstein, 1997, p. A6).

Political analysts are speculating that Reed resigned because he felt he could achieve more for the Religious Right movement from outside the Coalition than from within it. “Before, his politics had to be baptized. Now they don’t,” said William Bennett (Balz, 1997, p. A11). There is also speculation that Reed became frustrated with working in Pat Robertson’s shadow and feels he can be more effective in promoted Christian Right issues by distancing himself from Robertson (Balz, 1997)

Reed’s resignation puts the future of the Coalition in doubt. “Ralph Reed has been the Christian Coalition,” said Michael Cromartie, a senior fellow at the Ethics and Public Policy Center. “Unless they get a highly visible person to replace him, I don’t think the Christian Coalition will have the same high profile they had in the past” (Yang and Goodstein, 1997, p. A6).

Conclusion

As the Stewart, Smith, and Denton’s Life Cycle Theory (1989) indicates, social movements do not evolve in a linear manner. Their evolution is more likely to be in a circular pattern with later stages regenerating earlier stages. This examination of the Life Cycle of the New Religious Right has shown how this circular or cyclical model operates in a practical situation. The communication strategies Pat Robertson, Ralph Reed and
other leaders have employed to address the problems of the Maintenance Stage of the movement's existence are already creating a backlash among members of the movement and resistance from outside the movement.

Further attempts on the part of movement leaders to soften rhetoric and back away from controversial issues in an attempt to attract broader support will probably cause dissatisfaction among long-time supports and could force the movement to revert to earlier stages. Failure to attract a broader power base will result in failure to enact the social reforms the movement demands. If no progress is seen, members will become frustrated and either leave the movement or again force a reversion to an earlier, more active stage.

This study has also shown that new communication technologies are having significant influence on the evolution of the New Christian Right. As new media are developed which allow movement leaders to communicate directly with members of the public, the influence of mediated communication channels will be missing from the process. The revolution in information delivery technology will have a profound impact on the evolution of social movements of the future and will necessitate a reexamination of existing theory.

Implications for Further Research

Whether the Christian Right is gaining strength or losing it, there are many lessons to be learned from its enduring success. The Religious Right is one of the first social movements to make effective use of recent advances in mass communication technology.
The Moral Majority Triumvirate pioneered the use of direct mail for fund raising and political mobilization and the practice was elevated to a science under the artful direction of Ralph Reed. Avoiding the established mass media and communicating directly with constituencies through cable television, telemarketing, and direct mail represents a brand new way of developing grassroots activism. Further research on the tactics and strategies employed may point to a completely new road map for charting the evolution of modern social movements. Further study of the group’s communication strategies and careful watch on its continued evolution may require that the “textbook” on social movements be rewritten to take into account current technology and communication techniques.

An examination of the time table of the New Christian Right’s evolution from one stage to the next could reveal some enlightening information on the effect of modern communication technology on the growth of a social movement. The New Christian Right has been developing for more than 20 years but the Christian Coalition had been in existence for less than four years when it caused chaos in the Republican Party in 1992 and less than six years by the time of the Republican “revolution” in 1994. Further study should examine whether that phenomenal growth in power and influence was due to the appeal of the movement’s issues or because up-to-the-minute communication technology and direct mail strategies made mobilization faster and fund raising more effective.

Communication scholarship could be enhanced by examining what the future holds for the Religious Right and how the new leadership addresses the problems that lie ahead. Whether the movement’s expanding power is real or a figment of the reactionary
imagination, established institutions will respond with resistance and new communication strategies will be required. The Christian Right will be forced to counter resistance, not only from the left, but also from within the Republican Party, the established institution it has so effectively disrupted. According to Simons, success or failure will depend on how well the movement leaders respond to those pressures (Simons, 1970).

This study has focused on the rhetoric of two of the movement’s leaders, Pat Robertson and Ralph Reed, but others have had an important part in developing the message of the Religious Right and new leaders are constantly emerging. Comparisons of the rhetoric of early leaders with that of current leaders would shed more light on the evolution of the movement. The impending change in leadership following Reed’s resignation will provide an excellent opportunity to examine how leaders affect a movement, the impact of different leadership and personality styles, and the changes in rhetorical strategy that come with a change in leadership.

The New Christian Right has enjoyed tremendous support for the issues it supports from right-wing radio talk show hosts such as Rush Limbaugh and his kin, but which came first? Is Rush Limbaugh’s enormous popularity a result, or one of the causes, of the success of the Religious Right? Further study into the growth in listenership for right-wing talk shows could help answer this chicken and egg question and provide new evidence for the ongoing debate on the effect of mass media on the evolution of social movements and on public policy.

Since the 1980s, journalists and scholars have been predicting the death of the Religious Right. “They all presume demise, or at least marginalization, of a social
movement striving to protect a declining way of life, rather than properly orienting
discussion toward the contour of a political player on the upswing two decades after it
was formed," Moen said (1995a, p. 20). Other authors hold that the movement's
methods, rather than its message, should strike fear in the heart of the opposition (Young,
Swirsky and Myerson, 1995). The Religious Right's rhetorical strategy and
communication techniques have not only allowed it to exert considerable influence over
the Republican Party it has also out-maneuvered the Democratic Party in grass-roots
politics and usurped its position as the political organization of the commoner. Political
activists on both the right and the left have a strong vested interest in tracking the progress
of the Religious Right and examining, perhaps imitating, the rhetorical strategies and
communication methods used as the movement adapts to internal and external challenges
ahead.
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