



The new "Christian Right"

What will happen now that the election is over?

Now the election is over and the conservatives have swept into office, the question is: What will become of the New Christian Right political movement?

The New Christian Right is the catch-all name for such groups as Moral Majority, Christian Voice, the Roundtable, and other religiopolitical groups who helped oust liberal politicians in the name of Jesus.

Will the New Christian Right feel its job is done and get on with the business of edifying the Church?

Will it target others to be removed from office and start a huge media campaign to raise money?

Will it shift to sponsoring legislation for moral issues?

Even more interesting is whether the old gang will stick together now the election is over.

Some strange bedfellows were formed over the last year as conservatives, regardless of spiritual persuasion, held hands in unity.

The problem is not a lack of witches to hunt in the days ahead. Rather the question is whether all those Fundamentalists can actually get along together. Like the 99 men in the boarding house bed, one wonders if they will all continue to roll over when Jerry Falwell says "roll over."

There are some indications the foundation is crumbling.

Southern Baptists, although fundamental in doctrine, are objecting to being lumped with Fundamentalists (with a capital "F"). Many Southern Baptists have begun to backpeddle out of the movement.

Both Pat Robertson and Jim Bakker severed their ties with the New Christian Right movement before the election. This happened about the time Southern Baptist president Bailey Smith made his public assertion that God does not hear the prayers of Jews.

That sent Jerry Falwell running to Jewish leader Rabbi Marc Tannenbaum where he agreed on a statement that "God hears the cry of any sincere person who calls on Him."

At the same time, many charismatics who backed the Moral Majority movement because they thought it was moral, became disillusioned when it came to light that Moral Majority did not see anything wrong with holding hands under the table

with the Immoral Minority, just as long as they voted conservative.

One of the directors of Christian Voice said he saw no conflict in supporting non-Christian conservatives over Spirit-baptized moderates who were running for Congress.

Obviously, this kind of unholy alliance has shaken a lot of idealists who have been praying diligently that America would return to God, but were uncomfortable when they discovered their leaders were in-breeding with the Samaritans and promoting the Philistines for office as long as they voted for the death penalty.

Commenting on Falwell's alliance with nonbelievers, Bob Jones, Jr., the presiding bishop of the arch-Fundamentalists, called Falwell, "the most dangerous man in America for biblical Christianity."

You know, sometimes it's downright confusing to be a Christian these days.

Eternity magazine says a joke now circulating has it that Falwell, Jones and Oral Roberts got caught smuggling Bibles into Russia. They were sentenced to be hanged.

Asked if they had any last words Falwell said, "I believe in America. God bless America."

Roberts said, "Something good is going to happen to me today."

And Jones said, "Hang me separately from these two."

So goes the New Christian Right—right down the path first paved by the Pharisees, marched on by the Crusaders, stained by the Inquisitors, and charred by the Puritans in Salem.

Lest I be misunderstood and you try to find out where I live so you can burn a cross in my front yard, let me quickly state that any effort by Christians to take a stand for morality is good.

The efforts of men like Falwell and others to involve Christians in the political process are commendable. Aggressively urging church members to register and vote is needed.

Likewise, there must be continued effort to fight creeping immorality as an "accepted way of life." Paramount in this is the need of the Church to combat the nation's indifference about the wholesale murder of unborn children under the guise of abortion.

Christians must take a stand publicly—and in the halls of justice.

But any move to put together a Christian political party, or to insist that Christians vote as a bloc, must be equally resisted.

Is there, for instance, a "Christian point of view" when it comes to prayer in the public schools and the amount of money spent for national defense?

Was dropping the first atomic bomb "Christian"? Is it more human to kill with conventional bombs? Is it right to take a life at all—even to save the life of another?

Men have wrestled with these problems for centuries.

The danger comes when we realize how easy it would be for us to become like the Moslems, and enter into a *jihad*, a holy war, to defend the name of the Prince of Peace.

Jesus never led a crusade against the Romans—whose society was far more decadent than ours. Nor did he urge His followers to bloc vote. He knew that to impose the laws of the kingdom of God on a society operating under a system of justice devised and administered by the ungodly, would always bring chaos.

Years ago the secular prophet, George Orwell, warned us of the dangers of gradual surrender of individual rights to a totalitarian system. Both *Animal Farm* and *1984* pointed out what happens when people capitulate to a system.

The fact that "big brother" may be a Fundamentalist, or even a charismatic, does not let me rest any easier at night.

Real death does not come when a dictator tells us we cannot pray in public schools. Death comes when, under the guise of morality, we demand every one pray the way we do.

I do not fear political persecution. The Church has always flourished under such siege. I fear what happens when the Church becomes powerful, and tasting blood, swings toward legalism and reconstructs the party of the Pharisees.

There is no yoke as heavy as the yoke of legalism when fastened to the cart of religion.

Does that mean we give in to Satan and let him convince mothers to murder their unborn children?

Of course not. We fight that, and every other evil. But let us not do it by turning on one another.

Else we *will* hang separately. ☞