Jimmy Carter and the rise of the New Christian Right.

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JIMMY CARTER AND THE RISE OF THE NEW CHRISTIAN RIGHT

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Submitted to the University of Wales in fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Swansea University

2007

CONTENTS

ABSTRACT:

This thesis will extend the current re-evaluation of the presidency of Jimmy Carter through a detailed examination of the enduring impact of his Southern Baptist Christian faith upon the modern American political discourse. It will show that the relationship between Jimmy Carter's deeply felt religiosity and his political vision is primary to an understanding of the lasting legacy of his presidency. Carter dramatically reconfigured the relationship between religious faith and the presidency. The first president to articulate forthrightly a highly intimate and deeply felt personal religious faith to the American electorate, Carter placed spiritual concerns at the centre of the American political debate.

I will investigate Carter's relationship with the forces of conservative Christendom with regards to a number of interwoven policy issues deemed by the evangelical community to be emblematic of the increasingly liberal, secular humanist nature of the American public and political discourse. Specifically, I will explore the issues of abortion, the role of religion in private schools, the place of prayer in public schools, gay and lesbian rights, Christian family values and the Congressional ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment. I will discuss how the policies of the Carter White House on these so-called 'hot button' issues for religious conservatives acted as a catalyst for Christian political activism during the 1970s, laying the basis for their key role in American political life thereafter. I will explain how, paradoxically, the most overtly evangelical president in American history not only failed to retain the support of the conservative Christian community but was integral in the emergence of the New Religious, or New Christian Right, as a key Republican Party constituency.

Jimmy Carter successfully reawakened faith-based politics but because his faith did not exactly mirror the religious and political agenda of the disparate groups that make up the religious conservative movement within the United States, that newly awakened force within American politics ultimately used its power to replace him with Ronald Reagan, a president who more carefully articulated their agenda.

PREFATORY NOTES

1.1 Sources and Methodology

The arguments contained in this thesis stem in large part from primary archival research conducted in 2002 and in 2004 at the Jimmy Carter Presidential Library and Museum in Atlanta, Georgia. This thesis combines research of previously unexamined memoranda, personal correspondence, close textual analysis of Carter's public and private Presidential papers alongside the memoirs of members of the administration and secondary historical analysis of the Carter presidency. Oral Histories, taken as a part of the National Archives and Records Administration Exit Interview project, the National Park Service Plains Project and the Carter Library Oral History Project held at the Carter Presidential library were utilised. This thesis also employs the interview transcripts recorded as part of the University of Virginia's White Burkett Miller Centre Carter Presidential Oral History Project, also held at the Carter Presidential Library. Alongside these are Presidential memoranda, reports and personal letters from the Gerald Ford Presidential Library in Ann Arbour, Michigan. Furthermore, I have undertaken a detailed study of the politically motivated literature of the early Christian Right. Largely published by evangelical presses, this has often been ignored. Further research for this thesis was undertaken at Columbia University, New York City.

1.2 Acknowledgements

I wish to acknowledge the support of my supervisor Dr Joy Porter of the Department of American Studies at the University of Wales, Swansea and the help and direction of Albert Nason, archivist at the Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta. I wish to thank Professor Tony Badger, Master of Clare College Cambridge for providing generative comments in connection with this thesis. The Arts and Humanities Research Board, the British Association for American Studies and the Richard Stapely Educational Trust supported research for this thesis.

1.3 Nomenclature

Within this thesis I use the term "evangelical" to describe Bible-believing, Christ centred Christians. I use the terms "evangelical," "religious conservative," and "conservative Christian" interchangeably. These terms are problematic in part because there remains no unanimity amongst those defined as such on matters of Scriptural doctrine or even as to the correct definition of each term. I have chosen "evangelical" since evangelicalism is an umbrella term that encompasses a diversity of fundamentalist, Charismatic, Pentecostal Protestant and socially conservative Roman Catholic congregations. It is also the term used most often in the memoranda written by Jimmy Carter's White House staff and quoted at length in this thesis. Since many of these memoranda were themselves written by an evangelical pastor, the Reverend Robert Maddox, a Southern Baptists Minister from Calhoun, Georgia, I have retained it as a general descriptive term. The terms "Religious Right" and "New Christian Right" have been used within this thesis to include members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints despite the fact that a number of Christian denominations, including a number of evangelical and fundamentalist Protestant churches whose congregations in large part make up the "New Christian Right," would refute the definition of Mormonism as Christian on grounds of doctrine.

DECLARATION

This work has not previously been accepted in substance for any degree and is not being concurrently submitted in candidature for any degree.

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STATEMENT 1

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Other sources are acknowledged by footnotes giving explicit references. A bibliography is appended.

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INTRODUCTION:

JIMMY CARTER AND THE RE-EMERGENCE OF FAITH BASED POLITICS

Since 1985 there have been clear transdisciplinary efforts to revise understanding of the Carter Presidency. The first wave of revisionist scholarship was based upon the Oral History Project carried out by the White Burkett Miller Centre at the University of Virginia. These efforts were given further impetus in 1987 with the opening of the Carter Presidential Library in Atlanta, Georgia. Such work calls for an approach that transcends the Neustadt paradigm that defines Presidential power as "the power to persuade." Instead, it calls for Jimmy Carter to be seen as a "non-political politician," in Erwin C. Hargrove's phrase, a "trusteeship President" in that of Charles O. Jones or even, in the words of John Dumbrell, a "Presidential Robert Pirsig."[1] Essentially, it presents Jimmy Carter as a figure marking a departure in modern Presidential politics. The following work extends this approach through highlighting the centrality to Carter's Presidency of his deeply pious religious faith.

So far initial appraisals of this key phenomenon have been limited. Kucharsky, Baker, Ribuffo and others have all either largely focused on Carter as an evangelical candidate rather than upon the Carter Presidency as a whole, or they have taken only partial steps towards marshalling primary sources in tracing Carter's relationship with religious conservatism.[2] To date the most detailed analysis is Ribuffo's 'God and Jimmy Carter,' where he argues, "Carter's religion affected the image of his Presidency more than his substantive policies."[3] Here and elsewhere, Ribuffo emphasises contemporary commentary describing Carter as "weird," "strange" and "quirk[y]" and links this to his faith.[4] Instead, this work argues that far from being superficial or primarily an issue connected to image, Carter's religion had a key impact upon policy, most significantly in terms of what it prevented him from doing. Rather than being weird or incomprehensible, Carter was in fact acting as President

in a manner consistent with the precepts of his Southern Baptist faith. His Christianity played a significant role in his electoral success in 1976; however, delving into Carter's Presidential Papers, his public statements and his private memoranda shows that his religion was also a factor leading to his rejection by the American electorate in 1980, alongside more obviously fundamental factors such as the stagflation economy, the USSR's invasion of Afghanistan, the awakening of religious fundamentalism in Iran and fragmentation within the Democratic Party.[5]

By placing Carter within the context of the rightward shift in the American body politic during the late 1970s this work shows that his Presidency was a catalyst for the re-emergence of Christian conservatism as a dynamic political force in the late twentieth century. Carter was a Southern Baptist Christian and to varying extents, his faith influenced his policies as well as his relationships with key Democratic Party constituents including the leftist evangelical black civil rights movement and the gay and women's liberation movements; it also impacted upon his foreign policy, particularly his approach to the Middle East, the Panama Canal and human rights more generally.

The 1970s, Spiritual Malaise, and the Carter Candidacy

In 1970s America, Jimmy Carter's religious fervour and its association with old-time traditional American values had great political resonance. What is significant is that by the 1970s religious issues had re-entered mainstream politics even though conventional indicators register that the 1970s were a less religious decade than the 1920s or even the 1950s. As E. J. Dionne has noted, both mainline and fundamentalist churches were "too busy growing" in the 1950s to be heavily engaged in politics.[6] The failure of the utopianism of the 1960s meant the nation turned inward and the 1970s became in Tom Wolfe's phrase, the "Me Decade."[7] A narcissistic preoccupation which Roof called "the flight into self," fostered a growing interest in personal spirituality as America experienced its "third great awakening," a

wave of religious revivalism to match that of the mid-eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.[8] Lasch wrote that the American people "seem to wish to forget not only the sixties, the riots, the new left, the disruptions on college campuses, Vietnam, Watergate and the Nixon Presidency, but their entire collective past," a desire, he suggested, that "proves on closer analysis to embody the despair of a society that cannot face the future."[9]

"New Age" religions gained in popularity, but so too did more traditional, doctrinally conservative forms of worship. As conservative political commentator and former Presidential speechwriter David Frum suggests, "The truly big news in American religion in the 1970s was not the rise of outlandish new religions but the shifting balance of power among the old."[10] Schulman notes how the Jewish faith became more conservative and Catholicism joined the search for "privatised spirituality."[11] Most markedly, Protestant evangelical Christianity, defined by an intensely personal preoccupation with salvation not of the collective but of the self, and with the formation of a highly intimate relationship with Jesus Christ as saviour, appealed to an increasing number of Americans.

Schulman has linked the tendency for introspection within American society with the increase in popularity of the evangelical born-again experience. Rather than a communal or congregational religious conversion, a "rebirth in Christ" was an experience of deliverance that came about through acceptance of Jesus as spiritual redeemer. It emphasised "the individual's experience of grace, the personal discovery of one's own salvation."[12] Furthermore, fears over modern America's precipitous downward spiral of morality were matched by evangelical eschatology that foresaw an impending Armageddon and an imminent Second Coming of Christ. Thus the 1970s saw a dramatic shift in the balance of denominational power as evangelical congregations swelled at the expense of their mainstream rivals.[13] One much quoted Gallup poll conducted in 1976 showed that 48 percent of American Protestants and 18 percent of American Catholics considered themselves to have undergone a "born-again" religious conversion.[14] And evangelicalism spread beyond its traditional Southern and Western homelands and took root across the country, part of what Egerton observed as the "Southernization of America."[15]

During the 1970s, born-again evangelicalism represented more than the acceptance of salvation through Christ. It translated into a strict moral code and conservative positions on religious-cultural "family" issues. This diverse range of social and gender issues included the availability of abortion, the place of religious activities in public schools, sex education and creationism within the school curriculum, homosexuality, pornography and the Equal Rights Amendment. Deeply concerned with what they interpreted as a loosening of traditional social standards and the resulting hedonism, sexual promiscuity, materialism, and moral relativism, Christian conservatives called for the nation's moral and spiritual parameters to once again be defined by a strict adherence to Biblical absolutes. Though many Christian conservatives harked back to the 1950s, the high-water mark of American religious piety, they looked further back into history for inspiration to reverse the modern day decline. They believed America to be a Christian nation blessed by divine providence as one "nation under God" suffering under the yoke of the immoral ideology of "secular humanism." America's renewal would be realised only through reaffirmation of both the nation's historic Judeo-Christian heritage and its covenant with God.

Jimmy Carter brought Christian conservatism back into the political centre in 1976, retrieving evangelicalism from the political hinterland to which it had retreated at the end of the 1920s. As a self-proclaimed born-again evangelical, he brought an overt Biblical spirituality into the American political discourse. His 1976 campaign for the White House placed the comparative piety of Presidential candidates under close scrutiny for the first time since John Kennedy's election in 1960. Although Kennedy's candidacy had raised the question of whether a Roman Catholic could become President, Kennedy went out of his way to assure suspicious voters that his Catholicism would not dictate his politics. "My body went to mass but my mind went to Harvard," he told them.[16] As Shogan has noted, although both Carter and Kennedy used their character as a background for their candidacy, the Georgian was the first to use his character, explicitly expressed through his religious faith, as a direct reason for voting for him.[17] This is not to say that Carter was the first President to co-opt religion as a means of enunciating his vision or to deny that Gerald Ford also used evangelical themes in 1976, albeit in a less intimate and forceful manner.[18] A Christian faith had previously been an unspoken Presidential

pre-requisite and Presidents had always used Biblical symbolism in their political rhetoric to varying degrees. However, no previous President so personalised nor so ostentatiously articulated their religiosity as a facet of their political vision as Carter. He openly announced his belief that "I'll be a better President because of my deep religious convictions," and freely admitted that what he called "My deep and consistent religious faith" was "the most important thing in my life."[19]

Carter's 1976 electoral campaign was not based on specific issues or, given his status as a political outsider, even on partisan loyalty. As Skowronek put it, it was an "autobiographical campaign."[20] A vote for Carter was not a vote for the agenda of the Democratic Party; it was a vote for who Carter was and what he personally represented. What he was, was a man of Christian faith whose public pronouncements reverberated with Biblical undertones. And Jimmy Carter was not just any Christian. According to Tom Wolfe, he was a member of the "Missionary lectern-pounding Amen ten-finder C-major-chord Sister-Martha at the Yamaha-keyboard loblolly piney-woods Baptist faith in which the members of the congregation stand up and "give witness" and "share it, Brother" and "share it, Sister" and "praise God" during the service."[21] Carter actively identified himself with born-again evangelicalism.[22] He established his Christian credentials with thinly veiled rhetorical nods tailored to the sensibilities of evangelical voters that called for love, compassion, service and faith. His campaign emphasised the link between his small town upbringing and his traditional principles nurtured by his Southern Baptist beliefs. Unsurprisingly, his candidacy inspired the evangelical community. "Surely the Lord sent Jimmy Carter," said Daddy King to the Democratic Party convention in 1976, "to come on out and bring America back where she belongs."[23] "You could almost hear Carter utter the first Amen," wrote one reporter at the convention.[24] It was as if, wrote Witcover, "Madison Square Garden had been converted into a cavernous Baptist Church."[25]

Carter's born-again faith as expressed during the Presidential campaign has often been questioned. More often than not Carter's faith was a source of suspicion or confusion. Glad characterised it as an attention-seeking ploy, a cynical effort to energise support amongst the evangelical community, much of which had hitherto resolutely refrained from "worldly" political activity. Though he campaigned "above

politics," she accused Carter of being "the ultimate politician," cynically using religion for his own political ends by "getting God in his corner." He manipulated his discourse to "wet the appetite" of the media and the electorate, "guaranteeing press coverage" and displaying his piety as a means to "quiet apprehensions" about what she terms "his darker, enigmatic side."[26] Witcover referred to Carter as a "peanut-farmer Billy Graham" and expressed "a general uneasiness" about "this rather strange man who strode boldly onto the political landscape, speaking unabashedly about love and compassion and being influenced in his conduct of public office by God's word."[27] Richard Reeves felt Carter's faith was part of a political "act." He derided Carter as "a phoney...an actor, a salesman."[28] Liberal historian Arthur Schlesinger observed that Carter's "dominating theme" was "Trust me, trust me," but was profoundly troubled by "the implication that evangelical principles can solve social, economic and international perplexities." Such a belief, he cautioned, was "errant sentimentalism."[29] Others were concerned that Carter might be a dangerous religious fanatic, bringing a religion of "hell fire and damnation" to the Presidency.[30] Liberal clergyman Malcolm Boyd warned that Carter might possess "a messiah complex."[31] Others found Carter's faith bizarre because it seemed so unusual. Carter's press secretary Jody Powell claimed that one *Boston Globe* reporter privately derided Carter during the Democratic primary campaign as "a redneck, Baptist, Bible thumper." The reporter admitted that Carter "may win the nomination and he may even make the best President of the bunch," but, he told Powell, "I don't like it one damn bit."[32] Wooten was even more condescending and dismissive, arguing that Carter's faith made the Georgian not only "odd" but "down right peculiar."[33] "The trouble with Jimmy Carter is not only is he a Southern Baptist," said one evangelical President of Christian seminary, but "he talks like one."[34]

The disquiet as to the explicitly religious aspects of Carter's election campaign led some of his aides to urge the candidate to stop talking publicly about his faith. In early May 1976, Stuart Eizenstat, the campaign's issues and policy director sent a memorandum to Carter regarding his faith. He warned Carter, "While those [religious] views undoubtedly have helped in many states, they have hurt among liberals." He told Carter to deflect further questions regarding religion. "Do not

raise the issue," he said. "We have gathered all of the support we will get from it" he warned, "and can expect more negative reaction." Instead Eizenstat suggested that Carter avoid answering further questions regarding religion by saying, "My religious views, like yours, are personal and are something I keep to myself. Because of this it would be inappropriate for me to discuss in a Presidential campaign my religious beliefs." If questioned regarding the relationship between his religion and his political philosophy Carter should respond "My beliefs on religion do not influence my decision-making," it is "my opponents, not I, who continue to make religion an issue, when it should not be."[35] Eizenstat was concerned that the peculiarities of Carter's Southern Baptist faith made it difficult to win over voters of a different cultural or regional background. This was particularly true amongst non-evangelical faith-based voting constituencies, even traditionally Democratic ones, some of whom harboured a historical distrust of the Southern Baptist faith. Alexander M. Schindler, President of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations admitted Jews "to a greater extent than any other group, are troubled by the religious fundamentalism expressed by one of the candidates." This, he said, was "unsurprising" given that "much of anti-Semitism had its roots in fundamental Christian doctrine...and so we feel and express a certain discomfort when a candidate describes himself to be a 'born-again' Christian."[36] President Ford's re-election campaign team agreed that Carter's faith was a political liability. One memorandum from his campaign staff to the President listed as a "Negative" the fact that Carter was "A man who wears his religion on his sleeve." This led him to be a "self-righteous" politician who "Lacks humility." The President's advisers revealed their lack of understanding of Carter's appeal as a Christian. The President could win votes they said by portraying Carter as "one who uses religion for political purposes." Carter should be portrayed to the electorate as "an evangelic."[37] As one Catholic letter writer to the Carter White House later explained, "By the very fact he was so clearly identified with a religious tradition about which...northern and urban people knew little [Carter] started off the creation of a kind of uneasiness."[38]

The memoranda sent by both campaign teams revealed a misunderstanding of the importance of religion as an electoral asset in 1976 and, for his part, Carter did not heed the advice. Instead of de-emphasising his religiosity he sought to educate Eizenstat as to the precise tenets of his faith. When E. Brooks Holifield published an

article on Carter's Baptist faith the Presidential candidate sent a copy to Eizenstat and added a note "Stu – You may want to read and keep this."[39] Carter clearly understood that his Southern Baptist faith enhanced his candidacy. Carter's simple Baptist religiosity acted as a guarantee to the American people that he would never take on "the same frame of mind that Nixon or Johnson did – lying, cheating or distorting the truth."[40] In the aftermath of Watergate, Carter's promise to restore high ethical standards and moral integrity to government elicited suspicion amongst the journalists and commentators following the campaign. "To the cynics of the press, an honest man is as unlikely to be found as the Holy Grail," observed evangelical writers Norton and Slosser.[41] Yet Carter's religiosity held a strong political purchase. Carter presented himself not as a "Nietzschean hero" but as a "Whitmanesque redeemer," writes Roper, who promised for the first time to bring a "spiritual dimension to the moral dilemmas of the country." As a "faith healer," he promised, as Roper puts it, to be a "president as preacher," a man "who had repented and been saved."[42] John and Betty Pope, two of Carter's close friends and members of his voluntary campaign team dubbed "The Peanut Brigade," observed first-hand the importance of Carter's faith. They recalled that one question that they were asked time and again as they travelled from door to door canvassing for Carter was "Is he a good man, is he a Christian?"[43] Many of the people they canvassed "tried to equate the J.C. –Jimmy Carter and Jesus Christ," especially, they said, given Carter's interest in carpentry.[44] One campaign aide admitted of Carter's faith, "It may not go over well in the suburbs of Washington or in Manhattan or Beverly Hills, but it goes over well with the rest of the country."[45] Even Carter's own campaign biography, was published by Broadman Press, a producer of Southern Baptist inspirational literature.[46] The dust jacket featured two other Broadman publications: "Modern Stories of Inspiration" featuring "true stories of people who have heard God through the clouds and in the middle of the storm" and, revealingly, "Politics and Religion Can Mix!"[47]

Evangelical Christians expected Carter's Presidential politics to be profoundly shaped by his religious convictions and much of the blame for those perceptions must be attributed to Carter himself. Time and again during the 1976 campaign Carter went out of his way to raise their aspirations. In an interview with representatives of the National Religious Broadcasters he declared "As far as my

decisions as a political leader, they are affected very heavily by my Christian beliefs."[48] Interviewed by fellow evangelical Pat Robertson on the televangelist's own Christian Broadcasting Network during the 1976 campaign he discussed the imperative "to assure that secular law is compatible with God's laws," with the proviso that if a conflict developed between the two "we should follow God's law."[49] Questioned about his faith and its role in his candidacy he told a reporter, "I'd like to exemplify as President, I hope in a humble way and a constantly searching way, the kind of life I would like to live as a member of a church or as a Christian."[50] Two months later in June 1976 Carter told reporters at Plains Baptist Church "We have a responsibility to try to shape government so it does exemplify the teaching of God."[51] In an interview with the Catholic News Service in August 1976, Carter declared that if elected he would "try to utilise my own religious beliefs as a constant guide in making decisions."[52] Carter also often cited the work of the theologians Paul Tillich and Reinhold Niebuhr and showed special fondness for Niebuhr's declaration that it was the "sad duty of politics to establish justice in a sinful world."[53] In seeking the support of evangelicals, Carter was also helped by the popularity of his sister, Ruth Carter, a Christian faith healer. Campaign media adviser, Gerald Rafshoon, recalled that Carter took advantage of "mailing lists of evangelicals which Ruth helped us get."[54] Through tens of thousands of contacts in Christian churches Ruth gave her brother vital access to the born-again community that *New York* magazine called "his original and most loyal network of supporters."[55] During the primary campaign Ruth Carter sent a letter to addresses on the mailing list of her organisation, 'Behold inc.' "Dear Friends" she wrote,

> My reason for writing you is to acquaint you with a most important facet of Jimmy, one that couldn't possibly be pursued with any depth by the press or television, and that is the quality of his deep personal commitment to Jesus Christ and his will to serve Him in whatever capacity he finds himself.
>
> As one who knows the importance of Christ in your personal life and who I'm sure wants our nation to be under His blessings and guidance – please pray for Jimmy. And if you share my feeling that he is the best candidate, I urge you to actively support him.

Ruth Carter-Stapleton signed the letter "Sincerely in Christ."[56] Schram notes "While others tried to sell Carter on the basis of his grasp of governmental issues, she sold Carter on the basis of his belief in Christ."[57] Another member of the Carter family, Rosalynn, also used religious contacts to help the campaign. She travelled to evangelical churches to speak in favour of her husband. She told one church in Baltimore that her husband was "a Christian man...we need your help, so that with your help and the help of our Lord Jesus Christ, Jimmy Carter can be a great President."[58]

One time when Carter's rhetoric conspicuously mirrored the language of born-again Christianity was when he gave his infamous interview with *Playboy* magazine. Carter agreed to the interview to convince voters that he was not, as he put it, "an ignorant...rednecked Georgia peanut farmer."[59] Carter told *Playboy* that whilst he tried "not to commit a deliberate sin" he recognised that as a human he was "tempted," and, what is more, Christ understood this weakness because he "set almost impossible standards." According to Christ, he said, looking "on a woman with lust" was paramount to adultery," and he admitted to having "committed adultery in my heart many times." Because of this he did not "consider himself better" or more Christian than another man.[60] The interview reinforced the public view of Carter as "odd" amongst secular commentators. But although the evangelical community was highly critical of the forum in which Carter chose to talk, the imprint of Bible-believing Protestantism on the words he chose were unmistakable. One priest declared that Carter's remarks simply "sound like good theology."[61] Fellow Southern Baptist Deacon Jerry Clower agreed and declared in typically vivid evangelist language, "Any red-blooded male who says he ain't lusted after a woman he's seen is just plain out lying. When a woman puts a craving on me, it makes me want to run home right then to Mama." That, he said, was all "Jimmy Carter was trying to say."[62]

The conviction that Carter represented both a validation of their faith and the opportunity to realise their social agenda led those evangelicals who did participate in the political process to desert their traditional support for the Republican Party in 1976. Many who had never voted before did so for the first time. It seemed that the prayers of conservative evangelicals had been answered. A Christian group calling

itself Citizens for Carter took out a full-page advertisement in the evangelical magazine *Christianity Today* to ask, "Does a Dedicated Evangelical Belong in the White House?" The group noted, "In this post-Watergate era, people throughout the country are disillusioned with the moral corruption and incompetent leadership they see in the political arena." Observing that "America's problems are the result of a spiritual crisis at heart" and calling for "a return to decency and integrity in government" the advertisement lauded Carter's "abiding sense of the importance of morality in our national life." It urged evangelicals to "play an important part in this restoration of confidence."[63] The Reverend Bailey Smith, a popular evangelical preacher announced, "This country needs a born-again man in the White House" and "his initial are the same as our Lord's."[64]

But despite being a committed member of the evangelical community, politically Carter was never, as Wills put it, "an authentic representative of their grievances."[65] In fact, opposition to the linkage of political authority to religion lies at the core of Carter's own Baptist faith; it is a defining commitment that goes right back to the foundation of the Baptist church in America by Roger Williams. In 1639 Williams established the first Baptist Church in North America at Providence, Rhode Island in reaction to the religious intolerance of the Puritan theocracy that governed the Massachusetts Bay Colony. Banished from the Colony because of his radical views, Williams established a haven for those whose religious convictions had incurred the ire of the Puritan establishment. Dismissing the belief that God had called upon the government of Massachusetts to establish a divine kingdom in the New World, and protesting the church-state union practiced in the Colony, Williams rejected the right of civil authorities to intervene or legislate in personal matters of religion, arguing that each individual possessed the right to follow their individual conscience in questions of faith. Instead, it was the role of government to defend this principle of "soul liberty." For Williams, any attempt to enforce uniformity of religion was a denial of the moral role of the church. It contravened the principles of both civility and Christianity, damaging both the spiritual and political realms. As the final authority, God stood as ultimate judge between churches, doctrine and man. What Williams called "freedom of conscience" should never be influenced or curtailed by involvement with secular politics. "Williams", observed Holifield, "stands as close to sainthood as any Baptist ever gets. ...every southern Baptist youngster learns in

Sunday school the exploits of Roger Williams."[66] As Carter himself put it, "One thing the Baptists believe in is complete autonomy...The reason the Baptist church was formed in this country was because of our belief in absolute and total separation of church and state."[67]

A President whose entire political philosophy was moulded centrally by his own personal religiosity was an open violation of the doctrine of separation of church and state. Once elected, Carter upheld his own church's historical commitment to the exercise of religion free from state involvement, reminding voters of Christ's admonition to "Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's; render unto God the things that are God's." This led contemporary commentators to characterize Carter as unpredictable, complex and even untrustworthy. Even while announcing his 1976 Presidential election victory to be a "political miracle" *Time* commented upon the Carter "enigma."[68] Noting his fondness for quoting Kierkegaard that "every man is an exception," *Time* said it was "a view that certainly fits him."[69] Subsequent analysts have also tended to interpret Carter's separation of his religion and politics as evidence of inconsistency and paradox. While White observed that Carter's personality had two intersecting layers, Strong quipped in response that this "probably short-changes him."[70] Mazlish and Diamond felt that Carter fought "his own private wars" and that he had a "basic need to embrace contradictions."[71] Those same contradictions led William Lee Miller to entitle his biography of Carter "The Yankee from Georgia." Miller called Carter both a "manager" and a "moralist" and was left wondering how Carter could be "liberal on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, conservative on Thursdays and Saturdays, mixedly moderate on Tuesdays."[72] According to another observer Carter had "more positions than the Kama Sutra."[73]

Religion and its limits within the Carter Presidency

Evangelical Christians helped secure the election of the most avowedly devout President in the nation's history in 1976 and notably, Carter's vision for America in his inaugural address concerned itself much more with faith than policy. *The New York Times* called the speech "less rallying cry than sermon," as Carter embraced the evangelical vision of moral and spiritual renewal and presented a re-affirmation of old-time American values.[74] In one of the shortest inaugurals ever he admitted that he had "no new dream to set forth" but instead wanted to generate "fresh faith" in the existing American dream. Invoking the nation's "inner and spiritual strength," he recited the admonition of the Old Testament prophet Micah (6:8): "He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy and to walk humbly with thy God." Carter declared that America was "the first society openly to define itself in terms of...spirituality." The nation needed once again learn to "work together and pray together," to renew its "search for humility, mercy, and justice." America, he said significantly, had learned "that 'more' was not necessarily 'better.'" What was important was "we simply do our best."[75] According to one reporter, Carter presented himself as a leader who like Isaiah and Jeremiah would "pronounce God's judgement" from "the very centre of political power."[76] This was truly revolutionary, repositioning a spiritual impetus at the core of American civilisation and renewing the spiritual values held to be central to both its foundations and future.

In practice, however, Christian conservatives quickly become disillusioned with the Carter Presidency. Archival evidence suggests that the Carter White House failed to recognise or successfully respond to the growing alienation of what should have been the President's most natural constituency, the evangelical Christian community. This happened in spite of repeated advice from within the community itself. In one letter Carter was explicit in explaining why, even though he was a devout Southern Baptist evangelical, he had let this situation develop. Precisely because he was a Southern Baptist, he was committed, spiritually, to the doctrine of separation of church and state. In January 1977 Reverend Robert Maddox, a Southern Baptist minister from

Calhoun, Georgia, contacted the White House advising the President of the growing need to build bridges between the administration and the conservative Christian constituency. He recommended himself as a liaison to act as a "lightening rod" for contact between the two.[77] Maddox wrote to Carter:

> It occurs to me that the nations of the world need a pastor. Surely our own country needs a pastor...you can speak to that gnawing hunger in the American and international spirit by carefully making evident and living out who, in fact, you are...There are no easy, slick ways to pastor this nation...Mr President, make more evident that spiritual dimension of your leadership. Be a spiritual catalyst. Call us to greatness.[78]

The President declined the invitation, telling Maddox, as he puts it, "thanks but no thanks."[79] Carter scrawled that he did "not want a national pastor" on Maddox's request. White House aides wrote a routine form letter reply, but Carter rejected it, choosing instead to reply to Maddox in person, carefully outlining his response. He was at pains to point out the difference between religious leaders like Maddox and men of religiosity who held secular office like himself. Although he noted, "it goes without saying that I will continue to make my personal witness," he told Maddox "You and I both subscribe to the doctrine of separation of Church and State, and I trust that you and others who are not restrained by Constitutional limitations will continue to provide leadership in spiritual affairs."[80] When the White House finally realised the need to appoint an advisor for religious affairs, and brought Maddox into the administration in 1979, the evangelicals were already beginning to turn against Carter. By then Maddox observed, Carter was "in pretty bad trouble with a lot of religious people." In particular he was inundated with complaints from evangelical groups, even Southern Baptists. They were angered by what they perceived as the "insensitivity to the point of animosity from the administration." Their biggest complaint was the lack of access to the White House. "Under Johnson and Nixon they could get in and get things done," recalls Maddox, "but they couldn't find anyone to work with in the Carter White House." Many had expected that Carter would bring Christians into influential positions in government but Maddox recalls that they were angry that there were "no evangelicals other than Carter in the government. The perception was [that] all the people who he [Carter] had

surrounded himself with were Godless. They couldn't speak the language of the Bible." Maddox was especially concerned that members of Carter's own denomination shared these complaints. "That frightened me," he said. "If he was in trouble with Southern Baptist leaders, what would he be [in] with the others?"[81]

The Carter White House's unwillingness to reach out to the religious community, especially those on the political right, was a serious error with long-term electoral consequences. Ironically that failure was a response to criticism over close involvement with Southern Baptists early in the Presidency that had left Carter open to the stinging charge that he was blurring the line between religion and politics. Carter's private correspondence reveals that he became progressively more uncomfortable with being perceived as allowing his religion to influence his actions as President. Early in his Presidency he had invited leaders of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) to meet at the White House to discuss Baptist missionary strategy. Included in the ten invitees was Reverend Charles Trentham, pastor of Carter's own church in Washington. At the meeting Carter mapped out an aggressive proselytising strategy for the church's missionary program. In particular, he urged the SBC to create an international missionary corps. He told the guests, "The test of a church is not in its building or in its staff, but in the number reached for Christ."[82] Carter touted the hugely successful missionary program of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons) as an example to follow. A week later, Carter appeared on videotape at the Southern Baptist annual convention, in which he urged the SBC to increase their missionary efforts. "There is an immediate, documented need to increase the number of foreign missionaries by 50 percent," he told the convention, "but our official approved goal for the rest of this century is only 2.5 percent." Carter pledged "I can and will support a volunteer missionary for two years."[83] In direct response to Carter's urging the SBC Executive Committee revised its missionary plans, and voted to adopt the President's proposed strategy as its policy and mission programme for the following five years, pledging to double their home and foreign mission force by 1982. Carter called "Bold Mission Thrust" an "innovative convention programme designed to expand the global evangelistic effort of Baptists."[84] The Southern Baptist Convention was overjoyed at Carter's intervention. One SBC leader wrote to the White House describing it as "the best thing that had ever happened to a Southern Baptist Convention." Carter had

"electrified the convention." Another wrote, "It meant a great deal to the Baptists, who are very proud of their President, to have him say something to them especially."[85]

Carter was immediately accused not only of church-state interference but also of undue denominational favouritism. Perhaps aware of the difficulties even fellow evangelicals had experienced in getting access to the President, Jack U. Harwell, editor of the *Christian Index* and a friend of Carter's, wrote to the President's brother Jack with an urgent warning that he wanted to be sure reached the President. He warned of his "grave concern" that Carter would be "accused of using the White House to plot denominational strategy" and of "establishing some kind of Baptist Vatican on the Potomac." He reminded the President that Southern Baptists had fought hard against the election of John Kennedy "because they thought he would do with the Roman Catholic hierarchy just this very thing." He reminded Carter that Baptists have historically stood as "absolute champions of religious liberty and separation of church and state" calling it "our greatest contribution to Christendom." Harwell feared that "to call the denominational leadership into the White House and to discuss details of missionary strategy and for the President to make concrete suggestions which become denominational policy, throws you and Southern Baptists open to some extremely serious criticism." Chastised, Carter replied personally to Harwell. He defended his right to meet with the Baptist leaders, writing "I live at the White House, and as was the case at the Georgia Governor's Mansion, have felt free to discuss religious matters with other Baptists." However, Carter went on "Your concern troubles me a great deal" and admitted, "perhaps a meeting place outside my public home (in a hotel perhaps) would have been better." Reaffirming his belief in church-state separation he vowed "not to use my authority to violate this in any way" because "obviously, I realise that I, as President, have a special influence." He ended his letter, "Jack, I trust your judgement about matters such as this and will be careful." Pledging to consult his own pastor, he promised to ensure "that Baptists have no reason to be concerned about my actions in future."[86] Thereafter Carter did not allow himself to be overtly politically linked to the evangelical Christian community: in a sense he overcompensated at the expense of the Christian conservatives, rejecting their overtures so as to signal that he was a President who happened to be a Southern Baptist, not a Southern Baptist President beholden to the

edicts of religious fundamentalism. After all, his office as President was defined by the Constitution, not by the Southern Baptist faith and message. This manifested itself in Carter's approach to a number of so-called "hot button" Christian conservative issues, including abortion rights, religious education, gender equality and gay rights.

Footnotes

[1] Richard E. Neustadt, *Presidential Power: The Politics of Leadership from FDR to Carter.* New York: Wiley, 1980), 29; Erwin Hargrove, *Jimmy Carter as President: Leadership and the Politics of the Public Good* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1988), 164; Charles O. Jones, *The Trusteeship Presidency: Jimmy Carter and the United States Congress* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1998), 2; John Dumbrell, *The Carter Presidency: A Re-evaluation* (Manchester: University of Manchester Press, 1995) 3.

[2] David Kucharsky, *The Man from Plains: The Mind and Spirit of Jimmy Carter* (New York: Harper and Row, 1976); Howard Norton and Bob Slosser, *The Miracle of Jimmy Carter* (Plainfield, N.J.: Logos International, 1976); James T. Baker, *A Southern Baptist in the White House* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1977); Nielsen, Niels C., Jr., *The Religion of President Carter* (New York: Thomas C. Nelson, 1977); James Hefley and Marti Hefley, *The Church That Produced a President* (New York: Wyman Books, 1977); Niels C. Nielsen, Jr., *The Religion of President Carter* (New York: Thomas C. Nelson, 1977); Wesley Pippert, *The Spiritual Journey of Jimmy Carter* (New York: Macmillan, 1978); Dan Ariail and Cheryl Heckler-Feltz, *The Carpenters Apprentice: The Spiritual Biography of Jimmy Carter* (Michigan: Zondervan, 1996).

[3] Leo P. Ribuffo, "God and Jimmy Carter,"in *Transforming Faith: The Sacred and the Secular in Modern American History*, ed. Myles Bradbury and James B. Gilbert (Westport: Greenwood, 1989), 150.

[4] Ribuffo, *God and Jimmy Carter*, 141-159; Leo P. Ribuffo, "Malaise Revisited: Jimmy Carter and the Crisis of Confidence," *The Liberal Persuasion: Arthur Schlesinger Jr and the Challenge of the American Past*, ed. John Patrick Diggins (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 164-184.

[5] There are clearly a number of reasons, alongside the emergence of an anti-Carter religious vote, for Ronald Reagan's electoral victory in 1980. Appraisals of the failure of Carter Presidency by historians and political scientists offer a range of analyses. There remains no clear consensus of opinion on the Carter Presidency. Negative evaluations of the Carter years include James Fallows, "The Passionless Presidency: The Trouble with Jimmy Carter's White House," *Atlantic Monthly*, May 1979, 33-48 and "The Passionless Presidency II: More from Inside Jimmy Carter's White House," *Atlantic Monthly*, June 1979, 75-81; Haynes Johnson, *In the Absence of Power: Governing America* (New York: Viking Press, 1980); Richard E. Neustadt, *Presidential Power: The Politics of Leadership from FDR to Carter* (New York: Wiley, 1980); Barbara Kellerman, *The Political Presidency: The Practice of Leadership from Kennedy to Reagan* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984); Robert Shogan, *The Double-Edged Sword: How Character Makes and Ruins Presidents, from Washington to Clinton* (Boulder: Westview, 1999); Burton I Kaufman, *The Presidency of James Earl Carter, Jr.* (Lawrence: University of Kansa Press, 1993); Fred I Greenstein, *The Presidential Difference: Leadership Style from F.D.R to Clinton* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000). Johnson calls the Carter Presidency "a tragedy" (1980, 1). Neustadt observes that Carter made a number of mistakes early in his Presidency that badly damaged his reputation and therefore his ability to bargain effectively in a Washington political community to which he was never truly reconciled for the duration of his 'outsider' Presidency. He compares the early mistakes of his administration with those of John Kennedy. Whilst JFK had the Bay of Pigs, Carter suffered from politically tactless decision to cancel pork-belly water projects and the Bert Lance affair. Furthermore, Carter's refusal to move his transition headquarters from Atlanta to Washington after his election victory in 1976 alienated the media. Kellerman observes that Carter "conspicuously lacked the quality that is "most essential to an effective Presidency: political skill" (1984, ix). He "was very much a failed politician" whose "most memorable achievement was getting elected in the first place" (preface). Greenstein places Carter "in the category of chief executives whose emotional susceptibilities complicate their public actions." "No Presidency," he observes, "provides a fuller catalogue of avoidable shortfalls than his." For Greenstein, Carter is merely "informative as a limiting case" (2000, 193). Shogan describes Carter as a "Punching Bag" President, victim of a backlash after Nixon's disgraced imperial Presidency (1999, 129). Kaufman writes that Carter "projected an image to the American people of a hapless administration in disarray and of a Presidency that was...divided, lacking in leadership...and uncertain about its purpose, priorities and sense of direction. He never adequately articulated

an overarching purpose and direction for his administration." The contemporary image of an administration in disarray were "all too accurate and helped to assure a mediocre...Presidency" (1993, 3). More forgiving views include Stephen Skowronek, *The Politics Presidents Make: Leadership from John Adams to George Bush,* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993) and Jody Powell, *The Other Side of the Story* (New York: Morrow, 1984). Powell blames media prejudice for creating a negative image of Carter. He writes, "Those journalists who really care about certain policy positions tend to hold Democratic Presidents to a higher standard" (1984, 38). The liberal press "overcompensated for their ideological preferences (42).

6 E. J. Dionne, Jr., *Why Americans Hate Politics* (New York: Touchstone, 1992), 271.

7 Tom Wolfe, *The Purple Decades: A Reader* (New York: Berkley Books, 1983), 265.

8 Wade Clark Roof, *A Generation of Seekers: The Spiritual Journeys of the Baby Boom Generation* (New York: HarperCollins 1993), 89.

9 Christopher Lasch, *The Culture of Narcissism: American Life in an Age of Diminishing Expectations* (New York: Norton, 1979), 5.

10 David Frum, *How We Got Here. The '70s: The Decade That Brought You Modern Life (For Better or Worse)* (New York: Basic Books, 2000), 147.

11 Bruce Schulman, *The Seventies: The Great Shift in American Culture, Society and Politics* (New York: The Free Press, 2001), 100.

12 Ibid., 94.

13 David Frum, *How We Got Here*, 153.

14 Ribuffo, *God and Jimmy Carter*, 143.

15 John Egerton, *The Americanization of Dixie, the Southernization of America*, (New York, 1974).

16 Herbert D. Rosenbaum and Alexej Ugrinsky, ed. *The Presidency and Domestic Policies of Jimmy Carter* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1994), 123.

17 Robert Shogan, *War Without End: Cultural Conflict and the Struggle for America's Political Future* (Boulder: Westview, 2002), 159.

18 Ford attempted to reach out to leaders of the evangelical community, filming a message for Pentecostal Pat Robertson's Christian Broadcasting Network and for Independent Baptist Jerry Falwell's Thomas Road Baptist Church. Gerald Ford Library (cited hereafter as GFL), Thomas Road Baptist Church Bicentennial Taping. Reading Copies of Presidential Speeches and Statements. Box: 35. Folder "6-21-76 Filmed Message for the 20th Anniversary of the Thomas Road Baptist Church, Lynchburg, VA."; Tape for Christian Broadcasting Network, Reading Copies of Presidential Speeches and Statements. Box: 37. Folder "8-5-76 Filmed Message for the Christian Broadcasting Network Special Program on Prayer".

19 Pippert, *The Spiritual Journey of Jimmy Carter*, 117.

20 Stephen Skowronek, *The Politics Presidents Make: Leadership from John Adams to George Bush* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press), 374.

21 Tom Wolfe, *The Purples Decades*, 273.

22 The necessity of becoming "born-again in Christ" to be able to enter heaven derives from the Gospel according to John (3:3) wherein Jesus warned Nicodemus, a Jewish religious leader, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God."

23 William Martin, *With God on our side: The Rise of the Religious Right in America* (New York: Broadway Books, 1996), 154.

24 Roger Rosenblatt, "The Back of the Book: The Carter Congregation", *New Republic*, August 7 & 14 (1976), 42-3.

25 Jules Witcover, *Marathon: The Pursuit of the Presidency, 1972-76* (New York: Viking Press, 1977), 370.

26 Betty Glad, *Jimmy Carter: In Search of the Great White House* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1980), 336-40.

27 Witcover, *Marathon*, 272.

28 Richard Reeves, "Carter's Secret," *New York*, March 22, 1978, 30.

29 Arthur Schlesinger, "God and the 1976 Election," *Wall Street Journal*, April 28, 1976.

30 Richard G. Hutcheson, *God in the White House: How Religion has Changed the Modern Presidency* (New York: Macmillan, 1988), 100.

31 Baker, *A Southern Baptist*, 53.

32 Jody Powell, *The Other Side of the Story* (New York: Morrow, 1984), 206.

[33] James Wooten, *Dasher: The Roots and Rising of Jimmy Carter* (New York: Summit Books, 1978), 26-7. Carter speechwriter Patrick Anderson recalled that the oddities of Carter's Baptist faith earned him the nickname 'Crater,' the transposing of the letters of his name suggesting that "he was just a bit off, a bit miswired." Patrick Anderson, *Electing Jimmy Carter: The Campaign of 1976* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana University Press, 1994), 162.

[34] Nielsen, *The Religion of Jimmy Carter*, 37.

[35] Jimmy Carter Library (cited hereafter as JCL), Memorandum, from Stuart Eizenstat to Governor Carter, May 3, 1976. Box: Religious Matters 1. Folder "RM 3 1/20/77-6/30/77".

[36] JCL, Letter, from Alexander M. Schindler to Board Members of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, June 3 1976. White House Central File (WHCF) Subject File. Box: Religious Matters 1. Folder "RM 3 1/20/77-6/30/77".

[37] Martin Schram, *Running for President, 1976: The Carter Campaign* (New York: Stein and Day, 1977), 256.

[38] JCL, Letter, from Dale Francis to Mr. Wurfel, September 14, 1978. WHCF Subject File. Box: Religious Matters 2. Folder "RM 3 1/1/78-1/20/81."

[39] E. Brooks Holifield, "The Three Strands of Jimmy Carter's Religion," *The New Republic*, June 5, 1976, 16. Copy with Carter's handwritten note in JCL, Pre-Presidential Issues Office: Stuart Eizenstat. Box: 27. Folder "Religion 2/75-6/76 through Soviet Union, 12/74-7/76".

[40] Robert Scheer, "Jimmy Carter: A candid conversation with the democratic candidate for the Presidency," *Playboy*, November 1976, 86.

[41] Norton and Slosser, *The Miracle of Jimmy Carter*, 5.

[42] Jon Roper, *The American Presidents: Heroic Leadership from Kennedy to Clinton* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000), 126-8.

[43] JCL, John and Betty Pope Interview, 28 June 1989, National Park Service Interviews, 4.

[44] Ibid., 16.

[45] Glad, *Jimmy Carter*, 337.

[46] Brinkley, *The Unfinished Presidency*, 49.

[47] Carter, *Why Not the Best*, rear dust jacket.

[48] Jimmy Carter, *The Presidential Campaign 1976*, volume 2 (Washington DC: US Government Printing Office, 1978), 967.

[49] Pippert, *The Spiritual Journey of Jimmy Carter*, 106.

[50] Ibid., 112.

[51] Ibid., 117-8.

[52] Ibid., 111-12.

[53] Jimmy Carter, *Why Not the Best* (Nashville: Broadman, 1975), Preface.

[54] Nesmith, *The New Republican Coalition*, (New York: P. Lang, 1994), 62.

[55] Dotson Radar, First Sister, *New York*, March 27, 1978, 38.

[56] Schram, *Running for President*, 88.

[57] Ibid.

[58] Glad, *Jimmy Carter*, 335.

[59] Scheer, *Jimmy Carter*, 64.

[60] Ibid., 86.

[61] Nielsen, *The Religion of Jimmy Carter*, 107.

[62] Hefley and Hefley, *The Church That Produced a President*, 141-2.

[63] Citizens for Carter advertisement, *Christianity Today*, July 1976.

[64] Baker, *A Southern Baptist*, 105.

[65] Garry Wills, *Under God: Religion and American Politics* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1990), 119.

[66] Holifield, "Three Strands of Jimmy Carter's Religion," 16.

[67] Scheer, *Jimmy Carter*, 86.

[68] James Atwater, "Man of the Year: I'm Jimmy Carter," *Time*, January 3, 1977, 6.

[69] Ibid., 9.

[70] Theodore White, *America in Search of Itself: The Making of the President, 1956-1980* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1983), 269; Robert Strong, "Recapturing Leadership: The Carter Administration and the Crisis of Confidence," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 16 (1986): 649.

[71] Bruce Mazlish and Edwin Diamond, *Jimmy Carter: A Character Portrait* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1979), 260, 231.

[72] William L. Miller, *Yankee from Georgia: The Emergence of Jimmy Carter* (New York:

Times Books, 1978), 144-5.

[73] Peter N. Carroll, *It Seemed Like Nothing Happened: America in the 1970s* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1990), 189.

[74] Hedrick Smith, "A Call to the American Spirit," *New York Times*, January 21, 1977.

[75] Jimmy Carter, *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Jimmy Carter*, 1977, no. 1 (Washington DC: US Government Printing Office, 1978), 1-4.

[76] Pippert, *The Spiritual Journey*, 23.

[77] JCL, Robert Maddox, Interview, December 8 1980, White House Staff Exit Interviews, Audiotape.

[78] JCL, Letter, from Robert Maddox to Jimmy Carter, September 1, 1978. WHCF Subject File. Box: Religious Matters 1. Folder "1/20/77 – 12/31/78".; Letter, from President Carter to Reverend Bob Maddox, October 3, 1978. WHCF Subject File. Box: Religious Matters 2. Folder "RM 10/1/78 – 5/31/79".

[79] JCL, Robert Maddox, Interview.

[80] JCL, Letter, from President Carter to Reverend Bob Maddox, October 3, 1978. WHCF Subject File. Box: Religious Matters 2. Folder "RM 10/1/78 – 5/31/79".

[81] JCL, Robert Maddox, Interview.

[82] William Willoughby, "Carter Urges Baptists to Expand Foreign Missions," *Washington Star*, June 15, 1977.

[83] JCL, President Jimmy Carter, June 13, 1977. Transcript. Staff Offices: Press (Advance) Edwards. Box: 2. Folder "Baptist Videotape Recording (VTR) Jimmy Carter 6/77)".

[84] Jimmy Carter, *Our Endangered Values: America's Moral Crisis* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2005), 56.

[85] JCL, Letter, from Charles A. Trentham to President Carter, June 23, 1977. WHCF Subject File. Box: Religious Matters 1. Folder "RM 3 7/1/77-12/31/77".; Letter, from Laura M. Styles to Ann Edwards, July 18, 1977; Letter, from Janet K. Stokes to Ann Edwards, June 22, 1977; Staff Offices: Press (Advance) Edwards. Box: 2. Folder "Baptist Videotape Recording (VTR) Jimmy Carter 6/77".

[86] JCL, Letter, from Jack Harwell to Jack Carter, 23 June, 1977; Letter, from Jack Harwell to Jimmy Carter, 23 June, 1977; Letter, from Jimmy Carter to Harwell, 11 August 1977. WHCF Subject File. Box: Religious Matters 1. Folder "RM 3 7/1/77 – 12/31/77".

JIMMY CARTER AND THE ABORTION RIGHTS ISSUE

This chapter will show that a key issue that marked the intrusion of highly contentious religious-cultural issues into the political debate during the Carter Presidency was abortion. This issue was emblematic of both the engagement of religious conservatives in political life in this period and of the limitations of Carter as their authentic political agent because Carter responded according to the specifics of his faith and not according to the expectations of Christian conservatives. Abortion powerfully brings into focus Carter's seemingly contradictory commitments; on the one hand to old-time religious values and their importance in the political arena, and on the other, to the maintenance of constitutional separation between the affairs of the church and the state. This manifested itself in Carter's approach to a number of so-called 'hot button' Christian conservative issues, in particular abortion rights. Because he felt constrained by the Constitution, he was unwilling to use the executive office to advocate a tightening of abortion laws. For Christian conservatives, it was an issue that brought Carter's failure to uphold religious imperatives starkly into focus.

The tension between Carter and Christian evangelicals over the abortion issue was ironic in that it had been the Carter candidacy that had done most to politicise abortion as an issue for evangelicals in the first place. Though the word 'abortion' does not appear in the Bible, opposition to abortion was always an issue of faith for evangelicals, with a basis in Scripture.[1] Critchlow has observed that up and beyond *Roe vs Wade* in 1973, political opposition to abortion rights "remained primarily a Catholic issue," with an anti-Catholic bias keeping evangelical Protestants from involvement in the pro-life campaign.[2] Involvement would also have required an abandonment of their political non-interventionist position to challenge the United States Supreme Court, the ultimate authority of legal jurisprudence in a nation evangelicals perceived to have been built around the tenets of their Protestant faith.

The Carter candidacy was critical in changing their perception. He was not alone in catalysing abortion into a political issue but the candidacy of a born-again Southern Baptist brought it to the forefront of Presidential politics and greatly energised evangelical involvement. Specifically it drew evangelical denominations, especially fundamentalist Independent Baptists and the Pentecostal Assemblies of God, into the pro-life movement. After observing that the 1976 election re-enfranchised evangelical Christians and brought them into the political arena with gusto after years of political apathy, O'Connor points out, "Carter and his administration's handling of abortion provided an impetus for further anti-abortion organisation," an impetus that spread nationally to the point where "the evangelical Christian right's opposition to abortion was embraced in the highest places in Washington."[3]

A further irony was that Carter was in fact personally extremely conservative on the abortion issue. During the 1976 primary and Presidential campaigns, Carter made his conservative personal views on the issue obvious to anti-abortion groups. Calling abortion "wrong," he announced that abortion rights as they stood after *Roe vs. Wade* were "one instance where my own beliefs were in conflict with the laws of our country."[4] Although he told a meeting of Catholic Bishops in Washington that he would act only "under the laws which I would be sworn to enforce" and "within the confines of the Supreme Court ruling," he then went out of his way to say that any citizen was entitled to lobby for an amendment to overturn the *Roe v. Wade* decision.[5] He also declared his opposition to the routine federal funding of abortions. His conservative views on the issue led Carter to clash with pro-choice feminists at the 1976 Democratic convention. Disavowing the official, pro-choice party platform that declared a constitutional amendment to overturn the Supreme Court decision on abortion to be "undesirable," he reaffirmed his belief that "abortion is wrong."[6]

Opponents and supporters alike believed that Carter was vulnerable on the abortion issue. President Gerald Ford's re-election campaign quickly recognised that the issue might cause Carter political difficulties and sought to take advantage. Campaign aide Pat Buchanan told the President that he should announce "my opponent says he dislikes abortion—but will do nothing to stop them...That's what he calls leadership." Carter's political positions, he said "are like the weather in New England. If you don't like it, just wait a minute; it will change."[7] One Ford

campaign memorandum regarding abortion declared that Carter was "vulnerable on this issue."[8] Another told Ford that he should "make a very striking contrast with Carter" on the abortion issue.[9]

Concerned Democrats even contacted the Carter campaign in an attempt to help him overcome his difficulties with the abortion issue. In mid-September 1976 Barbara Nixon, a member of Senator Birch Bayh's staff wrote to Stuart Eizenstat, "I really regretted the governor's statement on federal funding [of abortions]." She counselled Carter to "do as the White House and deny comment."[10] Bayh himself also wrote to Carter. Claiming that he had "been picketed longer and been called more dirty names on this issue than anyone else in America," he warned the Governor, "this issue will not disappear" and there was "no way you can win votes." Bayh told Carter not to attempt to win the support of "the voters who represent the militant right to life group," many of whom were conservative Christians. It was "impossible to gain the support of this group," he said.[11] Another Democratic Congressman, William R. Roy also wrote to Carter. He warned, "Do not waffle...if you waffle, you lose general creditability and become 'another politician.'" Roy concluded, "Abortion will remain an issue. You cannot ignore it, forget it, not mention it, compromise on it, or get angry about it." Rather, he urged Carter, "you must have a positive plan to deal with it."[12] Carter's own campaign team also became worried. One memorandum, from two campaign aides to Eizenstat warned that the press were reporting the abortion issue was evidence of Carter's "flexibility under pressure." "The greatest damage [to Carter]" they wrote, "may be with respect to voters who could care less about abortion but are concerned about whether he is a political opportunist because he seems to be trying to come down on all sides of the issue." Carter needed to "regain stability on the issue." To this end they warned, "He shouldn't meet any further with anti-abortion leaders...While this approach would close the door on the votes of the single-issue, pro-life voters, it is worth stemming the losses among those voters concerned about his consistency."[13] Despite their advice abortion rights, and particularly the perception that he was inconsistent in his position on the issue, continued to be troublesome for Carter.

Once in office, Carter named Joseph A. Califano, a veteran of the Kennedy and Johnson administrations and a devout Catholic, as his Secretary of Health, Education

and Welfare. The HEW was the department responsible for overseeing Medicaid, the health cost assistance program for the poor, and this included the public funding of abortion. Carter told Califano that he wanted a "good Catholic" to advance his anti-abortion policy. Califano, who believed that Carter's stand on abortion was sincere and a critical factor in his 1976 election victory, held strongly pro-life sentiments. Califano argued against the use of federal funds to pay for abortion and believed his view to be shared precisely by the President. "Carter never asked my views on the subject and I never expressed them," recalled Califano; the two men "simply assumed complete agreement."[14]

Given the nomination of Califano and the sincerity of Carter's evangelical faith, it is unsurprising that Carter's oft-repeated promise that he would be bound by the *Roe vs. Wade* decision received little attention from the evangelical community. Certainly his promise that he would remain "within the framework of the decision of the Supreme Court" on abortion, made during his infamous 1976 *Playboy* interview, was unlikely to have been widely read by evangelical Christians.[15] Blinded by their religious expectations, evangelical voters either failed to notice Carter's theological peculiarities or disregarded them as necessary electoral expediency.[16] So eager were they to elect a born-again to the White House, and so hungry for national acceptance, Ribuffo notes that evangelicals "paid scant attention to Carter's theology and overlooked political differences to embrace him as one of their own."[17] Similarly, Baker explains that evangelicals quickly, but mistakenly, dismissed his liberal statements as "the natural compassion of a Christian heart." It might be "wrongheaded" but was "well intended."[18]

As a result abortion became a highly contentious political issue that plagued Jimmy Carter. Moreover, according to Rev. Robert Maddox abortion became "the flag issue" for religious conservative groups. Maddox observed that the inevitable clash was one the Carter White House "walked into."[19] Christian conservatives viewed the availability of abortion as indicative of the erosion of modern America's moral consensus over the traditional role of the family. Likewise, federal protection of abortion rights was evidence of the depraved influence of secular humanism in Washington. The President's unwillingness to negate the pro-abortion advances represented by *Roe vs. Wade* fundamentally alienated evangelicals. To them, it made

his professions of Christian piety ring false. Their perception of the Carter White House was worsened further by the appointment of the high profile pro-choice advocate, Margaret "Midge" Costanza as a Presidential assistant. A former vice-mayor of Rochester, New York and long time Carter supporter the feisty and outspoken Costanza was the first woman to hold the post. She held aggressively feminist views, leading one Christian to write to Carter to complain that the appointment of the "raucously pro-abortion" Costanza was a "slap in the face."[20] It is possible that Carter made the appointment in an attempt to placate pro-abortionists infuriated by the nomination of Califano. Whatever the reasoning behind her appointment, Costanza's position proved troublesome in that it internalised dissent for the President's position on abortion within the administration.

This internal opposition crystallised after the President made clear in1977 his support of the Hyde Amendment prohibiting Medicaid financing of abortion except when necessary to preserve the mother's life, prevent severe and long-lasting physical health damage, or when the pregnancy resulted from rape or incest. Carter was concerned that the Hyde amendment's regulations be strictly enforced so that women were not able to use the rape and incest exemption to obtain an abortion deceitfully. At Carter's behest, Califano was indeed strict in his implementation of the amendment. His view was clearly outlined in a letter Califano wrote to Daniel Flood, chairman of the subcommittee on Labour, Health, Education and Welfare. He wrote,

> Federal funding of abortions should be restricted to two situations: first, where a doctor certifies that in his or her opinion the life of the mother would be endangered if the foetus were carried to term; and second, for the victims, where such rape or incest has been reported promptly to a law enforcement agency or a health facility.[21]

Califano supported a highly restrictive interpretation of these regulations. He promised to conduct "meticulous audits" to ensure compliance with the "rigorous enforcement requirement." He stated his belief that the 60-day legal limit for the reporting of incest or rape should be cut. "In order to reduce the potential for fraud and abuse" he wrote, "it may be advisable to reduce that period to a shorter period of

time."[22] A memorandum from Joe Onek to Stuart Eizenstat, now President Carter's assistant for Domestic Affairs and Policy, confirmed that "Secretary Califano checked with the President before he testified on abortion and before [he wrote] to Congressman Flood."[23] Jaffe, Lindheim and Lee bemoaned the fact that under Califano's leadership "Indifference to and avoidance of the implications of legalisation of a critical, widely sought health service were replaced by open hostility on the part of the pre-eminent public health official and agency in the United States."[24]

The Hyde Amendment prevented many poor women from obtaining abortions given that it effectively made abortions available only to those who could pay for the procedure themselves. When questioned during a press conference that took place after the Supreme Court had upheld the Amendment and ruled that federal funding for abortion was not a woman's constitutional right, the President announced that the ruling "ought to be interpreted very strictly." Carter felt that federal financing of abortion "was an encouragement to abortion and its acceptance as a routine contraceptive means." When the President was reminded of the inequity of this position he was dismissive, replying simply that "there are many things in life that are not fair, that wealthy people can afford and poor people can't." It was not the place of the federal government to attempt to make "opportunities exactly equal, particularly when there is a moral factor involved."[25]

The President's position and his apparent insensitivity to the plight of poor women incurred outrage from the pro-choice movement as a whole and concern from pro-choice advocates within his own administration. Costanza informed the President the day after the press conference of the "overwhelming number of phone calls from public interest groups, individuals and White House staff members and agency staff members expressing concern and even anger over your remarks." She suggested that by expressing his personal views on abortion Carter had "provided negative guidance to legislators and governors and interfered in a state process in an unfair way. As the Supreme Court ruling does not preclude the states from funding abortions, it was hoped by many women's groups that the question of government support for abortion could be successfully raised on a state by state basis." Costanza observed "the strongest and most serious criticism received has been in reaction to your

comments emphasising the differences in opportunities available to the rich and to the poor." She asked Carter to "reconsider your position and support the use of Federal funds for abortions when medically necessary." Tellingly, archives reveal that Carter wrote "no" next to this request and that he also noted acidly in the margin "If I had this much influence on state legis [latures] ERA would have passed." At the end of the memo, Carter scrawled "My opinion was well defined to the U.S. during (the) campaign." He concluded, "My statement is actually more liberal than I feel personally."[26]

Costanza proceeded to organise an extraordinary protest meeting of some 40 high-level pro-choice female administration members. Notes from the July 18, 1977 meeting reveal that the participants "expressed their dismay" with the President's position and wanted to "get a message to the President to express their disappointment." The participant's demands included that "an impartial study be conducted on the impact of the curtailment of abortion/medical funds," alongside the HEW carrying out a "poll of the people affected." They demanded to know in detail "what plans are being developed by HEW to help poor women." Contrasting Carter's personal approach to abortion to his comprehensive and detailed evaluation of other complex decisions, such as defence spending, the attendees were concerned that he had failed "to ask the best experts on the issue for information like he did on the B-1 bomber." On abortion they believed he was guilty of "legislating his personal views." They suggested that a meeting be set up "composed of poor women -- the women affected by the President's decision."[27] Carter remained resolute. "If the forty women had listened to my campaign statements they should know my position," he told the cabinet.[28] Similarly, Press Secretary Jody Powell wrote on his copy of Costanza's memorandum, "I believe the President's position is correct. It is also exactly the same position he took during the campaign. Anyone who is surprised didn't pay much attention."[29] Presidential aide Hamilton Jordan was particularly irritated. "The perception here was that she had generated the meeting instead of reacting to the expression of women in the administration," Jordan wrote to Carter. "That such a meeting had [taken place] after a final decision was made and announced by you was of questionable value and inappropriate;

> I told Midge that your public position on the issue should have come as no surprise to anyone who had ever read your campaign statements and promises...For a group of women who are in high positions because of Jimmy Carter to question publicly one of his positions that has been known for over a year after he simply restates it borders on disloyalty.

Jordan asked Costanza to "think about her reaction in terms of how she would have reacted if several days after you had announced your decision not to build the B-1, another member of the staff had hosted a meeting of generals at the White House who opposed his decision and made public statements in opposition and circulated a memorandum stating that." Jordan was especially scathing of the widespread belief, shared by evangelical Christians, that Costanza acted in favour only of those causes which she agreed with politically. He warned her of the "extent that she serves as a conduit to outside groups and organisations, the perception...is that she listens to persons espousing liberal positions and causes and not to others." Jordan told Carter that the result was a public perception that the President was not in charge of his staff. "They work for you...they're supposed to do your bidding; most importantly, you are fully responsible for them and their actions" said Jordan.[30] Speechwriter James Fallows recalled that, unlike other administrations, "The atmosphere of high peril doesn't exist" in the Carter White House. This was "one hundred percent because of Carter" who had "made it clear that people are not going to rise and fall by virtue of Machiavellianism." This meant "People can...attack Costanza, and she's not going to get fired."[31] Gerald Rafshoon was later tasked with instituting more "discipline" into the administration "so that you wouldn't have cabinet members going off in different directions" which, he recalled "happened with the Midge Costanza thing."[32]

Costanza and the flourishing feminist and women's liberation movements of the era can be forgiven for not quite comprehending Carter's position. To win the 1976 Presidential election Carter had made a point of courting the liberal woman's vote, creating a bond between himself, a small-town Southerner, and a traditional Democratic constituency. He accepted, for example, an invitation to address the Women's Agenda Conference held in Washington in October 1976. He told them, "There have been few political developments in America in recent years that have

impressed me more than the movement of women toward equal rights." Accusing the Ford administration of having "only paid lip service to women's rights," of offering them only "vetoes, indifference" and "empty rhetoric," he urged them to be "tough and militant and eloquent...and aggressive." Alluding to the central theme of his Presidential campaign, a call for renewed trust in the nation's political leadership, Carter declared, "We cannot expect America's women to have faith in a government that ignores your legitimate needs and aspirations and excludes you." Carter promised "to be the President who will implement your agenda."[33]

Feminist leaders like National Organisation for Women (NOW) founder Betty Friedan and New York Congresswomen Bella Abzug were won over. Abzug announced, "I think women can expect a real commitment (from Carter)," while Friedan believed that Carter "would do something for women...unless he's an absolute liar."[34] Jimmy Carter's strong and independent female relatives also impressed the movement. His mother Lillian had been an outspoken integrationist in a small town once rigorously segregated by Jim Crow legislation. She played a key role in forging Carter's attitude to inequality and injustice. "She would never assume an attitude of superiority toward the black women who worked alongside her" he said, calling her an "enlightened and progressive Southerner" who was "known in the community as the only supporter of the civil rights movement on a public basis."[35] Carter's sister Ruth was a best-selling author and figure of national renown long before her brother; and his wife Rosalynn was a both a business partner in the family farm and a full partner in her husbands political ambitions. When Betty Friedan was asked why she was so impressed by Carter during the 1976 campaign, and so sure that he would be committed to the cause of women's rights, she replied, "I had a feeling. It was the way he spoke about his mother and wife working.[36] Given that the 1976 Presidential election was one of the closest in American history, the support of the women's movement undoubtedly had value.

In his defence, once in power, Carter's administration did actively seek to include women's perspectives in policy making and not just on direct women's issues. Carter worked energetically in support of the ERA and one of the notable achievements of the Carter Presidency was the appointment of more women to his administration than any previous President.[37] However, Carter's inflexibility on the

abortion issue fundamentally damaged the relationship between the Carter administration and the women's movement. Carter was stung by criticism from women activists that he had not done enough to advance their cause in making female appointments or in working towards ratification of the ERA. After she organised the protest meeting over abortion Costanza was first ostracised and then forced to resign.[38]

Carter chose as her replacement Dr. Sarah Weddington, a lawyer whose most famous case had been as lead attorney for Jane Roe in the *Roe vs. Wade* case. Since Weddington was considered pro-abortion rights, it was now the Christian conservatives' turn to feel cheated. They had been led to believe that instead, Carter would bring Christian conservatives into government. Carter had promised exactly this when interviewed on Pat Robertson's Christian Broadcasting Network during the 1976 campaign. One right-to-life group complained to the White House that Carter had met with those female Presidential assistants who opposed his stance on abortion and demanded that he also meet with appointees who supported a restrictive abortion policy.[39] Worried that Carter was receiving pressure from both feminists and evangelicals, and concerned by the pro-life movement's calls for a constitutional convention dedicated to overturning *Roe vs. Wade* aide Beth Abramowitz wrote to Eizenstat to warn of the "nightmarish implications of holding the first and only constitutional convention of the United States since the constitution was first drafted." A convention on abortion would be troublesome for the President because "of its precedence setting nature, the climate of the times, and probable inability to control the convention once held."[40] When two Senators contacted the White House asking for clarification of the President's position, Carter's staff were clearly concerned that confusion over his attitude on abortion might cause further difficulties. Joe Onek wrote to Eizenstat, "I know you are sick of this," but the "House/Senate Conferees are now meeting on abortion," and two Senators had "sought clarification of [the President's] position" regarding funding of abortions. He wrote a memorandum for Eizenstat to present to the President outlining the Senate request. Advocating caution Eizenstat wrote back, "I've talked to Califano. He feels we should stick with our general position and let them workout [the] details." Abramowitz intercepted the correspondence and added her own warning to Eizenstat to "not bother the President" with the request." Underlining her words for

added effect she wrote, "For the time being, I think the less the President says about the subject the better."[41]

How can Carter's behaviour concerning abortion be explained? Carter revisionist John Dumbrell compares Carter to Robert Pirsig, whose popular book of the time, *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*, focused on harmonising the conflicts present in contemporary American society.[42] Certainly Carter wanted to transcend political ideology and idealistically, he refused to be constrained in an easily defined political pigeonhole. He said in 1976, "I am not an ideologue and my positions are not predictable."[43] In Jones's phrase, he acted "to do what is right, not what is political."[44] But instead of finding the political middle ground, he succeeded only in alienating both sides of the political spectrum. This was especially clear during the debate on abortion in which each side remained utterly adamant that theirs was the only conceivably humane position. The key fact is that Carter was not prepared to actively use the office of the Presidency to constitutionally suppress abortion rights, but neither was he prepared to support federal funding for it. This was a nuanced position and one entirely in keeping with his faith. Dumbrell points out that it was in fact "logically and constitutionally sound" and furthermore, had been made "abundantly clear" during the election campaign.[45] Unfortunately, in a debate governed by emotive Biblical rhetoric, constitutional adherence carried little weight. Carter's non-interventionist approach to Presidential power, and his vision of the President's role as being above politics, was untenable on volatile issues around which neither side could be reconciled. Like Christ, Carter required faith in his leadership from his flock and for them to exercise right-thinking of their own free will, rather than at the behest of an all-powerful authority. Far from being a post-1960s Zen harmoniser, Carter's Presidential politics were intrinsically Christian, and modelled not on Eastern spiritualism but on a Southern Baptist interpretation of God's leadership of a fallen world and the example of his son, Jesus Christ.

Anti-abortion Christian conservatives found Carter's position unsatisfactory. Califano recalled that pro-lifers were suspicious because "Carter's colours blurred on the litmus test of supporting a constitutional amendment outlawing abortion."[46] Despite Carter's unequivocal personal disapproval of abortion, his refusal to back a constitutional amendment, coupled with his appointment of high profile pro-choice

Presidential assistants like Costanza, Weddington, and Anne Wexler, meant that, as Maddox recalled, Carter soon got into "in deep trouble" with Christian conservatives. The mainline clergy "understood the ambiguity of the President's positions, most Southern Baptists did, the religious academic community were with the President. But the man in the pew, particularly the more conservative he was, and the conservative clergy [they] were really set against Jimmy Carter." Despite his efforts "There was no dealing with them...They were screaming about secular humanism and they were gonna get him on abortion," said Maddox; it was "an out and out hatchet job."[47] Faced with this anti-Carter sentiment, Maddox met with religious pro-life advocates to try and explain Carter's position. In one meeting Maddox talked with religious leaders who lambasted Carter's policy on abortion. Maddox defended the President, telling them that Carter was "willing to struggle with difficult moral questions – not to just pass a law so abortion will go away."[48] It was no use. As one aide to Jerry Falwell recalled, evangelicals simply "couldn't understand how a born-again Christian could ever become an abortionist run wild."[49] When Maddox countered that Carter was in fact opposed to abortion, the conservative Christians replied that Carter's "actions speak louder than his words" because he's got [Anne] Wexler and [Sarah] Weddington." They told Maddox "He can't be a Christian." "I eventually convinced them that he was," recalled Maddox, to which they replied, "well he isn't much of one."[50]

Carter and the Rise of the New Christian Right

As soon as Carter took office, members of the Christian community attempted to warn the new President of the pressing need to reach out politically to religious leaders. In February 1977, James Wall, the editor of *Christian Century*, wrote to Midge Costanza to warn her of the need for the President to do just that. "Since the key term in relating to the White House is 'access,'" wrote Wall, "I think it is important now to establish an informal relationship with these leaders so that in the future mutual concerns could be examined and discussed. It is my understanding

that under John Kennedy, the White House did relate in this positive fashion with Protestant leaders," but this relationship "broke down over the Vietnam War." When no meeting was forthcoming, Wall wrote again in June. He asked Fran Voorde and Greg Schneiders, "Has anyone in the White House pondered strategy for relating the President to the religious communities?" Wall wrote, "On any list of priority visits to the President, I would have thought key religious leaders would have a priority." Warning, "The Christian community in this country does not possess one voice," he wrote "Now is the time to quietly build bridges to these church leaders." Carter should meet with mainline Protestants, Catholic leaders and evangelicals such as the President of the Southern Baptist Convention. Wall concluded, "I hope some overall strategy is being considered in this connection."[51]

It soon became clear that no such coherent strategy had been formulated. Several key memoranda of 1979 plot the Carter White House's deteriorating relationship with the forces of Christian conservatism. They show Carter unable to retain or capitalise upon the support of evangelical Christians after the 1976 election, even though members of the administration warned of the dire consequences that would result. In a memo dated July 27, Religious Liaison Reverend Maddox told Carter, "A vast chunk of Christendom that past Administrations have overlooked is the conservative, fundamentalist group. Independent Baptists, Methodists, many Pentecostal groups and a huge 'television' church congregation make up this 40 million constituency...Their politics tend to be very conservative, even rightist. Careful, constructive contact...needs to be developed." Though Maddox pointed out their political incompatibility with the administration, he observed, "Most are genuinely concerned about people and the nation." Contact between them and the administration he felt, "could soften their political rhetoric and tap their strengths to help realise some of President Carter's transcendent goals for the country."[52]

A second Maddox memorandum, sent in late August 1979, once again strongly urged Carter to engage with religious conservative leaders. By now evangelical preachers like Jerry Falwell were openly voicing their disillusionment with the President on their popular syndicated television shows. Of even greater concern, Maddox warned the President of a new development: disparate conservative religious groups were beginning to agitate politically. "The coalescing of conservative, evangelical,

religious groups for political action," he told the President "is one of the most important political phenomenon [sic.] of our day." He told the President that religious leaders felt Carter had legitimated political engagement for evangelical Christians: "The left/liberals have been politically active for decades, now the conservatives are gathering. The Carter Presidency with its emphasis on religion has been a spur to bring these folks together." They were beginning to ask, Maddox said, "If *he* can be political, why can't we?" Maddox warned that conservative religious groups were rallying around concerns over pro-family issues such the ERA, and gay rights and foreign policy issues such as superpower competition with the Soviet Union. Some, like Falwell were particularly agitated by Carter's stance on abortion.[53] Religious activists that had mobilised on these diverse issues were beginning to form into more unified pressure groups and "at least two groups among several are emerging: Christian Voice and Moral Majority." With an eye on the 1980 election, Maddox told the administration:

> As a group they have been to [prospective Presidential candidate John] Connally's ranch in Texas but by their own word came away unimpressed. They plan to talk with other Republican leaders. They are fervently anti-Kennedy [Massachusetts Senator Teddy Kennedy, another prospective candidate] at this time. If I am a judge they are Republican in sentiment but so far no Republican has emerged whom they could freely support. Even though they have serious reservations about the President –SALT, Prayer in Public Schools, Panama Canal, etc., my feeling is they would <u>like to be able</u> [underlining in original] to support the President. They have no question about his character and Christian faith. Religion for religion they are near the President's own faith – personal, experiential, politically involved.

Were the administration to actively engage Christian conservative leaders they would be "much more inclined to look to him, not only for 1980, but to get behind some of the crucial Administration programs right now." The leaders Maddox urged the President to contact included Jerry Falwell (described by Maddox as the "Unofficial leader of the group"), Dr Bob Billings (Executive Director of Moral Majority), Dr Pat Robertson (host of a popular Christian television chat show, later candidate for the Republican Party Presidential nomination), Dr Adrian Rogers (whom Maddox said was "conservative, but reasonable"), and Bob Jones III, President of an ultrafundamentalist university (described by Maddox as "Extremely conservative on

every issue)." Maddox concluded by warning, "Several of the men have huge TV audiences...they have money and an eagerness to become politically involved. My very strong feeling is that the President should talk to these men."[54]

Still the White House refused to act. On October 5, 1979 an increasingly desperate Maddox wrote to the President and the First Lady. Conservative religious leaders, he warned again, "are moving into the political arena" and now they brought with them "grave misgivings" about Carter's policies. Maddox wrote, "Most of them will eventually endorse a candidate using their television programs as a forum...If they sufficiently mobilize their forces along their stated lines, they will be a significant factor in the 1980 election." Maddox feared that "they will set up a 'Christian Party Line' insisting that all born-again Christians have to buy into a set of political stands." Despite their concerns, Maddox stressed, "Given half a chance...most of them want to support the President" and that "Careful but sustained contact with...conservative leaders needs to be maintained."[55]

In a fourth memorandum dated October 22nd Maddox and Presidential Assistant Anne Wexler renewed the request that the President and evangelical leaders meet "to discuss several issues of importance to the men and their constituents." The most pressing issues were abortion, prayer in public schools, and the tax status of private Christian schools. The Christian conservatives were adamant about the need to put evangelicals in the White House. Maddox and Wexler asked, "Would the President seek a politically qualified and clearly identifiable evangelical to be on his senior staff?" They admitted that the meeting was a risk, writing, "We take our chances of legitimatising these men with a Presidential visit. They can go away saying 'We saw the President and told him a thing or two.'" Yet the two advisors believed that Carter's "Christian faith would come through in such a manner that they would be much more inclined to look to him." Furthermore, they warned Carter that the evangelical leaders were meeting with other leading Presidential candidates, one of whom was Ronald Reagan. They believed, "to ignore their presence and clout would be to ignore a source of political support" but the time to build support amongst the evangelical community was growing short. [56]

By 1980, Maddox saw his role within the administration as primarily being one of "putting out fires" in the relationship between the White House and the Christian Right who were by now "deeply set against Jimmy Carter."[57] Typical of such "brushfires" was a new book by fundamentalist Tim LaHaye that described Vice-President Walter Mondale as being affiliated with the Unitarian Church and accused him of being a "Secular Humanist" who Carter "should never have named....as Vice President." Knowing that Mondale was in fact active in the Presbyterian Church, Maddox "investigated" and found that he had "a brother who is a Unitarian minister." Although he had called LaHaye, who was now "hastily re-writing his book," Maddox told Anne Wexler he was being forced to "keep...fire extinguishers close at hand."[58] In another memorandum to Wexler, Tom Laney and Maddox warned, "The anti-abortion people are making a lot of noise again." A conservative Christian group called Intercessors for America had contacted the White House. "They trace the moral, military and economic decline of our nation to the Supreme Court ruling on abortion" wrote Laney, and "These people are deeply dissatisfied with President Carter's record."[59]

Desperate to rectify matters, in August 1980 Maddox tried another tack. He sent Rosalynn Carter a memorandum about the urgent need to develop a "Religious Strategy." His recommendations included planning a "Grass roots People's Meeting," an interview with religious television and a "Briefing and Presidential drop by with major religious weekly and monthly magazines and journals." Maddox advised that these "could be an opportunity for them to get his views on the 'flag moral issues.'" Realising that Carter had lost the support of religious conservatives, Maddox stressed the importance of allowing "the Christian community to get a clearer idea of <u>who</u> the President is and <u>why</u> he has taken certain positions." In particular, Maddox advised that the President attend a prayer breakfast of labour and management representatives. He noted their, and perhaps his, sense of frustration with the administration: "They have tried for three years to get the President."[60]

When White House staff did attempt to build support within faith communities they revealed their underestimation of the politically conservative nature of the evangelical community. When Carter sought the support of Christians he reached out not to conservative evangelists but to liberal church leaders. Typical of this was

a visit Maddox made to New York in August 1979 to meet religious leaders. He met with ministers who supported negotiation with the Soviet Union, unilateral disarmament, wealth redistribution and human rights issues. Not one of them was theologically or politically conservative, indeed Maddox notes that one, Dr William S. Coffin of Riverside Church, was "probably too liberal, or perceived as such, to be very effective."[61] Perhaps still fearing that such meetings could be conceived as an undue mixing of church and state, when Carter met with a number of liberal Christian leaders at the White House in August 1980 a note from Phil Wise to Anne Wexler preceding the meetings warned that given their sensitivity the discussions should kept 'Off Record.'[62] Still Carter remained unconvinced of the need to address politicised evangelicalism. When asked in late 1980 about television evangelists like Falwell, Robertson and LaHaye his reply revealed his lack of foresight regarding their future electoral impact. "I don't think that over a long period of time" he said, "that kind of a religious intrusion into the political process will be significant."[63]

When Carter did ask Maddox specifically to contact a leading evangelist he once again revealed his ignorance of the newly emergent conservative Christian leaders like Falwell and Robertson. Instead, Carter asked his Religious Liaison to contact Billy Graham. Carter had once led a Billy Graham crusade in Sumter County, Georgia, and whilst state governor had told the United Methodist General Conference that the evangelist had "had a great impression and impact on my own life."[64] Despite this, the two evangelicals were not close. Critics suspected a rift between the two because of Carter's oft-stated admiration for Reinhold Niebuhr, the theologian who had been a harsh critic of Graham's political involvement during the 1950s. Graham was also wary of further political activity. During the 1976 Presidential election he had refused to publicly endorse either Carter or Gerald Ford. In the face of consistent attempts by the Ford campaign team to utilise Graham's close friendship with the President for electoral gain, Graham wrote to Ford that he was "maintaining a neutral position" and praying only that "the man of God's choice will be elected."[65] His association with Richard Nixon had embarrassed Graham. "I learned my lesson the hard way," Graham had said of his support for the disgraced former President.[66] Graham told the *Los Angeles Times* that "I would rather have a man in office who is highly qualified to be President who didn't make much of a

religious profession," a statement that some Carter aides, including the candidate himself, interpreted as a refusal to support Carter's overtly religious candidacy.[67]

Maddox sought to meet with the evangelist to try and convince him to publicly declare his support for the Carter administrations policies, specifically on SALT and the ERA.[68] A public announcement by Graham in support of Carter might, the White House hoped, placate some anti-Carter evangelical sentiment. Carter's Presidential diary showed a number of private telephone conversations did take place between the President and Graham but although the evangelist agreed to meet with Maddox at his home in August 1979, he refused to speak publicly in favour of Carter. Maddox recalls that "Graham felt he had received the freeze-out treatment from the White House," and he admitted, "There was estrangement" between the President and the evangelist. There had been "no thought of inviting him for personal time with the President." He also observed "senior staff members complain about the evangelist."[69] As with his efforts to enlist the support of other evangelical leaders, Maddox failed to win over Graham. Private correspondence between Graham and Gerald Ford revealed the evangelist's personal and partisan political views. In November 1976 he wrote to Ford expressing his "warmest Christian affection" for the former President and of his disappointment with the election result, observing that "you will go down in history as one of America's great Presidents," and that "Mr Carter should be asking himself how he came so close to losing." Carter had been elected, he said, "For some mysterious reason unknown to us."[70] Furthermore, and unknown to Maddox and the White House, Graham had already expressed support for the agenda of the Christian Right. At a meeting with evangelical leaders in Dallas he had encouraged them to political action. Adrian Rogers, Pat Robertson, James Robison and Bill Bright were present. Graham told them "I believe God has shown me that unless we have a change in America, we have a thousand days as free nation...three years." Graham excused himself from direct political involvement saying, "I can only pray. I've been burned so badly with the public relationships I've had. I can't afford it," but "I care so much." According to Bright, each evangelist committed themselves to political action. "We're going to get involved," they said.[71]

On September 8 1980 a final memorandum on religious strategy was sent to the President and this time, someone from Carter's inner circle had begun to listen. With

the Presidential election just weeks away, Wexler, Maddox and press secretary Jody Powell, one of Carter's closest and most trusted advisers, urged the President to shore up his support amongst the evangelical community by conducting an interview with a religious television channel. "The interview would focus on you as a man of faith" they wrote. They advised the President "Conservative Christians need to hear your views accurately and will not without such an interview." Questions would focus on areas of the Presidency of specific interest to evangelicals, such as "How has your Christian faith worked itself out since you have been in the White House?" and "How do you maintain yourself spiritually? What place does the family have in your life?" It would "explore your views on the 'flag' moral issues, such as prayer in public schools, abortion, homosexuality and the ERA." They also recommended that Jim Bakker and Pat Robertson should "sit in on the interview." Even though the two high profile evangelical preachers were not going to directly participate, by associating Carter with Bakker and Robertson, the Presidential advisors felt that "their presence on camera would add great strength to the interview." Perhaps because he had belatedly recognised the importance of his reaching out to the by now flourishing Religious Right, Carter ticked his approval of the suggestion.[72]

Carter "Unborn" Again

Back in 1976, Carter's profile as a man of sincere and serious faith held great currency for the growing American evangelical community. His candidacy and Presidency had galvanised the political mobilisation of evangelical Christians through articulation of his own, deeply held religious faith and his interjection of openly spiritual themes into the body politic. He had tapped into the rapidly expanding evangelical constituency, acting as a catalyst for their widespread re-entry into politics for the first time since the 1920s. Unfortunately for Carter, after having drawn them into politics, he failed to retain evangelicals' support. It became apparent that Carter's understanding of the relationship between Christianity and politics bore little resemblance to their own. By 1980 it was obvious to Christian

conservatives that a Democratic President, whether a fellow evangelical or not, was not enough to ensure promotion of their agenda on the national political stage. The more the Carter administration refused to reverse the liberal advances of the previous decade, the more the Christian Right as an organised force mustered political strength.

Carter was unwilling to exploit the blurring of the church and state boundary upon which his Presidential candidacy had been built. "The religious [Christian] community belonged to Carter," close Carter friend Bert Lance observed, but "They were the first to abandon him."[73] Carter was simply not the President they believed they were voting for in 1976. Carter was far more politically liberal than had led them to believe, and he refused to use the Presidency as a pulpit from which to enforce a conservative social agenda. Therefore, Christian conservatives' initial feelings of kinship with the President faded quickly and, as Dionne puts it they "felt sold out by Carter."[74] Eventually they came to perceive him as having been "unborn again," as having abandoned his Christian principles in favour of "a deep-seated secular humanism."[75] Not least they felt betrayed by Carter's attitude towards abortion. Jack Wilke, the President of the National Right to Life Committee damned Carter's administration as "disastrous."[76] Their bitterness, Maddox recalled, led Christian conservative leaders to denounce Carter "as the anti-Christ,"[77] and when newspaper columnist Bob Novak attended a conference of conservative preachers in 1979 he observed minister after minister declaring "I was part of Carter's team in 1976. I delivered my congregation for Carter. I urged them all to vote for Carter because I thought he was a moral individual. I found out otherwise, and I'm angry." At that point Novak realised, "Jimmy Carter's goose was cooked."[78]

The conservative evangelical community, now politically activated as the Christian Right, instead turned to Ronald Reagan in 1980, a candidate who more carefully articulated their agenda. This was despite the fact that Reagan's nominal religious credentials bore no comparison to Carter's genuine piety.[79] Reagan did not regularly attend religious services. He was associated with liberal Hollywood, both he and his wife were divorcees and he had no record of commitment to cultural-religious issues of evangelical concern. Indeed, as Governor of California he had signed into law the nation's most liberal abortion bill. However his 1980 campaign literature, circulated

to conservative congregations, openly courted the religious vote. It declared his support for private Christian schools and school prayer while attacking both homosexuality and abortion. Revitalising the fundamentalist crusade of the 1920s, he openly questioned the theory of evolution and asserted the necessity of teaching the biblical story of creation in public schools. "The time has come," Reagan declared, "to turn to God and reassert our trust in Him for the healing of America."[80]

When recalling the 1980 Presidential campaign, Jimmy Carter explicitly acknowledged the central role of the New Christian Right, observing that the politically energised born-again community had "had a very profound effect" on his defeat by Ronald Reagan.[81] One Harris poll estimated that white, evangelical Christian voters accounted for two thirds of Reagan's 10-point margin of victory, while an ABC poll showed that 17 percent fewer Protestants voted for Carter in 1980 than in 1976. Even within his own Southern Baptist denomination, Carter's support dropped from 56 percent in 1976 to 34 percent in 1980. The Religious Right was especially successful in its stated aim of registering evangelical and fundamentalist Christian voters. Prior to 1980 only 55 percent of all fundamentalist Christians were registered to vote in comparison to 72 per cent of the general public. An analysis of electoral returns showed that that changed in 1980, when two million fundamentalists voted for the first time, a vital constituency given that Reagan was elected by only 26 per cent of the electorate.[82]

Carter brought evangelical concerns to the heart of American politics, but abortion was one of a series of key issues that revealed the contradictory imperatives affecting a Southern Baptist President. As an evangelical Christian, he was personally opposed to abortion but as a Southern Baptist he was also committed to the principle of church-state separation. Because Carter was not prepared to compromise his Southern Baptist adherence to that doctrine, he inevitably disappointed the sleeping giant of evangelical Protestantism his Presidency had awakened.

Footnotes

[1] Christian opposition to abortion derives mainly from Exodus 20:13; 21:22-23 and Jer. 1:5.

[2] Donald T. Critchlow, *Intended Consequences: Birth Control, Abortion and the Federal Government* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 208.

[3] Karen O'Conner, *No Neutral Ground? Abortion Politics in an Age of Absolutes* (Boulder, Col.: Westview 1996), 74.

[4] Wesley Pippert, *The Spiritual Journey of Jimmy Carter* (New York: Macmillan, 1978), 103, 111.

[5] Jimmy Carter Library (cited hereafter as JCL), Associated Press Release, "Carter-Catholics", September 5, 1976. Pre-Presidential Issues Office: Stuart Eizenstat. Box: 1. Folder "Abortion 9/76".; Joseph Califano, *Governing America: An Insider's Report from the White House and the Cabinet* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1981), 51.

[6] O' Conner, *No Neutral Ground*, 73.

[7] Gerald Ford Library (cited hereafter as GFL), Memorandum, from Pat Buchanan to President Ford [undated] Michael Raoul – Duval Papers. Box: 29. Folder "Input, Pat Buchanan".

[8] GFL, Memorandum, from Dr Melady and Dr Lee to Dr Myron B. Kuropas, June 23, 1976. David Gergen Files. Box: 1. Folder "Abortion (1)".

[9] GFL, Memorandum, from Henry C. Cashen II to Michael Duval, July 14, 1976. Michael Raoul – Duval Files. Box: 27. Folder "Republican Party Platform Catholic Issues".

[10] JCL, Memorandum, from Barbara Nixon to Stuart Eizenstat, undated. Pre-Presidential Issues Office: Stuart Eizenstat. Box: 1. Folder "Abortion 9/76".

[11] JCL, Memorandum, from Birch Bay to Governor Carter, September 16, 1976. Pre-Presidential Issues Office: Stuart Eizenstat. Box: 1. Folder "Abortion 9/76".

[12] JCL, Memorandum, from William R. Roy to Governor Carter, undated. Pre-Presidential Issues Office: Stuart Eizenstat, Box: 1. Folder "Abortion 9/76'".

[13] JCL, Memorandum, from Bob Havely, Doug Robinson to Stuart Eizenstat, September 6, 1976, Pre-Presidential Issues Office: Stuart Eizenstat, Box: 1. Folder "Abortion 9/76".

[14] Califano, *Governing America*, 49-50.

[15] Robert Scheer, "Jimmy Carter: A candid conversation with the democratic candidate for the Presidency," *Playboy*, November 1976, 84. During the interview with *Playboy* journalist Robert Scheer, Carter talked about the importance of Christ's warning against the sinful nature of pride. Christ, said Carter, had warned, "One person should never think he was better than anyone else." Carter confessed that he had not always reached the standards demanded by Christ. He told Scheer, "I try not to commit a deliberate sin. I recognise that I'm going to do it anyhow, because I'm human and I'm tempted. And Christ set almost impossible standards for us. Christ said, "I tell you that anyone who looks on a woman with lust in his heart has already committed adultery. I've looked on a lot of women with lust. I've committed adultery in my heart many times. But that doesn't mean that I condemn someone who not only looks on a woman with lust but who leaves his wife and shacks up with somebody out of wedlock" (86).

[16] Carter's struggle with the abortion issue is covered in accounts of the 1976 Presidential campaign. See Jules Witcover, *Marathon: The Pursuit of the Presidency, 1972-76* (New York: Viking Press, 1977); Martin Schram, *Running for President, 1976: The Carter Campaign* (New York: Stein and Day, 1977); Kandy Stroud, *How Jimmy Won: The Victory Campaign from Plains to the White House* (New York: William Morrow, 1977); James Wooten, *Dasher: The Roots and Rising of Jimmy Carter* (New York: Summit Books, 1978); Patrick Anderson, *Electing Jimmy Carter: The Campaign of 1976* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana University Press, 1994).

[17] Leo P. Ribuffo, "God and Jimmy Carter," in *Transforming Faith: The Sacred and the Secular in Modern American History*, ed. Myles Bradbury and James B. Gilbert (Westport: Greenwood, 1989), 144.

[18] James T. Baker, *A Southern Baptist in the White House* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1977), 31.

[19] JCL, Robert Maddox, Interview, December 8, 1980, White House Staff Exit Interviews, Audiotape.

[20] JCL, Letter, from Joseph J. Reilly to President Carter, September 29, 1978. White House Central File (WHCF) Subject File. Box: Religious Matters 2. Folder "RM 10/1/78-5/31/79".

[21] JCL, Letter, from J. Califano to Daniel J. Flood, February 22, 1978. Staff Offices: Domestic

Policy Staff (DPS) Eizenstat. Box: 323. Folder "Women's Issues [O/A 6348] [1]".

22 Ibid.

23 JCL, Memorandum, from Joe Onek to Stuart Eizenstat, March 7, 1978. Staff Offices: DPS Eizenstat. Box: 323. Folder "Women's Issues [O/A 6348] [1]".

24 Frederick S. Jaffe, Barbara L. Lindheim and Philip R. Lee, *Abortion Politics: Private Morality and Public Policy* (New York: 1981), 59.

25 Jimmy Carter, *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States, 1977*, no. 2 (Washington DC: US Government Printing Office, 1978), 1237.

26 JCL, Memorandum, from Margaret 'Midge' Costanza to The President, July 13, 1977. Office of Public Liaison "Costanza". Box: 1. Folder "Abortion, 1/77-12/77 (O/A 5772)".

27 JCL, Memorandum, from J. Peterson to Margaret Costanza. Office of Public Liaison (Costanza). Box: 1. Folder "Abortion, 1/77 – 12/77 (O/A 5772)".; Memorandum, from M. Costanza to H. Jordan, S. Eizenstat, J. Watson, R. Lipshutz, F. Moore, J. Powell, 13 July 1977. Staff Offices: Press – Powell. Box: 41. Folder "Memoranda: Costanza, Midge 31/18/77-7/15/77 [CF O/A 2]".

28 Califano, *Governing America*, 66.

29 JCL, Memorandum, from Midge Costanza to Hamilton Jordan, July 13, 1977. Staff Offices: Press – Powell. Box: 41. Folder "Memoranda: Costanza, Midge 3/18/77-7/15/77 [CF, O/A 2]".

30 JCL, Memorandum, from Hamilton Jordan to President Carter [undated]. Chief of Staff Files: Jordan. Box: 34. Folder "Midge Costanza".

31 JCL, James Fallows, Interview, 14 November 1978, White House Staff Exit Interviews, 18.

32 JCL, Gerald Rafshoon, Interview, 12 September 1979, White House Staff Exit Interviews, 6.

33 JCL, Remarks by Jimmy Carter to Women's Agenda Conference, Washington D.C., October 2, 1976; Chief of Staff Files: Jordan. Box: 1. Folder "[Campaign Speeches – Carter, 5/4/74-11/3/67 [O/A 10, 619]".

34 Stroud, *How Jimmy Won*, 326; Betty Glad, *Jimmy Carter: In Search of the Great White House* (New York: W.W. Norton), 274.

35 Richard G. Hutcheson, *God in the White House: How Religion has Changed the Modern Presidency* (New York: Macmillan, 1988), 107.

36 Stroud, *How Jimmy Won*, 327.

37 For analysis of the relationship between feminism, public policy and the Carter administration see Susan M. Hartmann, "Feminism, Public Policy and the Carter Administration," in *The Carter Presidency: Policy Choices in the Post-New Deal Era*, ed. Gary Fink and Hugh Davis Graham (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas), 1998.

38 JCL, Memorandum, from Hamilton Jordan to President Carter [undated]. Chief of Staff Files: Jordan. Box: 34. Folder "Midge Costanza".; Edward Walsh, "The White House Office Shuffle," *Washington Post*, May 20, 1978; Fred Barbash, "White House bumps Costanza off show," *Washington Post*, July 26, 1978; Fred Barbash, "Midge Costanza Resigns," *Washington Post*, August 2, 1978.

39 JCL, Memorandum, from Jan Peterson to Midge Costanza, September 3, 1977. WHCF Subject File "Human Rights". Box: HU-14. Folder "HU 1-6 4/1/77-7/31/77".

40 JCL, Memorandum, from Beth Abramowitz to Stuart Eizenstat, September 12, 1977. White House Staff Offices: DPS Eizenstat. Box: 323. Folder "Women's Issues".

41 JCL, Memorandum, from Joe Onek to Stuart Eizenstat, July 20, 1977; Memorandum, from Stuart Eizenstat to President Carter, July 20 1977. Staff Offices: DPS Eizenstat. Box: 323. Folder "Women's Issues [O/A 6348] [1]".

42 John Dumbrell, *The Carter Presidency: A Re-evaluation* (Manchester: Manchester University Press 1995), 3.

43 Don Richardson, ed., *Conversations with Carter* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1998), 34.

44 Charles O. Jones, *The Trusteeship Presidency: Jimmy Carter and the United States Congress* Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1988), 6.

45 Dumbrell, *The Carter Presidency*, 71-2.

46 Califano, *Governing America*, 54.

47 JCL, Robert Maddox, Interview.

48 Frye Gaillard, "Carter Aide Reaches Out For The Christian Vote," *Charlotte Observer*, September 1980, C1.

49 David Snowball, *Continuity and Change in the Rhetoric of the Moral Majority* (New York. Praeger, 1991), p. 38-9.

[50] JCL, Robert Maddox, Interview.

[51] JCL, Letter, from James Wall to Midge Costanza, February 21, 1977; Letter, from Jim Wall to Fran Voorde, June 24, 1977. WHCF Subject File. Box: Religious Matters 2. Folder "RM 3, 1/20/77-12/31/77".

[52] JCL, Memorandum, from R. Maddox to J. Rafshoon and G. Schneiders, July 27, 1979. Staff Office Files, Speechwriters. Box: 26. Folder "Religious Liaison/Religion 7/1/79 – 3/31/80".

[53] Jerry Falwell listed "five major problems that have political consequence, political implications, that moral Americans should be ready to face." Abortion topped the list. See Jerry Falwell, *Listen America!* (Garden City: Doubleday – Galilee, 1980), 252-53.

[54] JCL, Memorandum, from R. Maddox to P. Wise and A. Wexler, August 28, 1979. WHCF Subject File. Box: Religious Matters 1. Folder "RM 1/20/77 – 1/20/81".

[55] JCL, Memorandum, from R. Maddox to The President and Mrs Carter, October 5, 1979. WHCF Subject File IV (Invitations). Box: IV-7. Folder "IV/1980/FG 114, 1/20/77 – 1/20/81, General".

[56] JCL, Memorandum, from A. Wexler and R. Maddox to Phil Wise, October 22, 1979. WHCF Subject File. Box: Religious Matters 1. Folder "1/20/77 – 1/20/81".

[57] JCL, Robert Maddox, Interview.

[58] JCL, Memorandum, from Robert Maddox to Anne Wexler, February 22, 1980. R. Maddox / Religious Liaison. Box: 13. Folder "Weekly Reports".

[59] JCL, Memorandum, from Tom Laney to Anne Wexler, May 16, 1980. Robert Maddox Files. Box: 13. Folder "Weekly Reports".

[60] JCL, Memorandum, from R. Maddox to Mrs Carter, August 22, 1980. WHCF Subject File. Box : PR – 86. Folder "PR (Public Relations) PR 16 – 1, 12/21/79 – 1/20/81, Executive".

[61] JCL, Memorandum, from Robert Maddox to Anne Wexler, Phil Spector, Ed Sanders, August 3, 1979. Staff Offices: Speechwriters Subject File. Box: 26. Folder "Religious Liaison, 7/1/79 3/31/80".

[62] JCL, Memorandum, from Phil Wise to Anne Wexler, 31 August 1980. WHCF Subject File. Box: Religious Matters 2. Folder "RM 3 5/11/80-1/20/81".

[63] Jimmy Carter, Perth Amboy, New Jersey Question-and-Answer Session with New Jersey News Editors, September 9, 1980. John Woolley and Gerhard Peters, *The American Presidency Project* [online]. Santa Barbara, CA: University of California (hosted), Gerhard Peters (database). Available from World Wide Web: http://www.Presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=45014.

[64] Victor Lasky, *Jimmy Carter: The Man & The Myth* (New York: Richard Marek, 1979), 54.

[65] William Martin, *The Billy Graham Story: A Prophet with Honour* (London: Hutchinson, 1991), 462.

[66] William Martin, *God on our side: The Rise of the Religious Right in America* (New York: Broadway Books, 1996), 153.

[67] Ibid., 463.

[68] JCL, Memorandum, from Robert Maddox to Hamilton Jordan, Stuart Eizenstat and Jody Powell, August 21, 1979. White House Staff Office Files: Speechwriters. Box: 26 "Regulatory Reform 3/1/79". Folder "Religious Liaison / Religion 7/1/79-3/31/80/".

[69] Robert Maddox, *Preacher in the White House* (Nashville: Broadman, 1984), 142.

[70] G FL, Letter, from Billy Graham to President Ford, November 24, 1976. WHCF Name File. Box: 1233. Folder "Billy Graham".

[71] Martin, *With God on our side*, 206.

[72] JCL, Memorandum, from J. Powell, A. Wexler, R. Maddox to the President, September 8, 1980, WHCF Subject File. Box: PR-86. Folder "PR (Public Relations), "PR 16 – 1, 12/21/79 – 1/20/81, Executive".

[73] Peter Bourne, *Jimmy Carter: A Comprehensive Biography from Plains to the Post-Presidency* (New York: Scribner, 1997), 466.

[74] E. J. Dionne, Jr., *Why Americans Hate Politics* (New York: Touchstone, 1992), 226.

[75] Dan Ariail and Cheryl Heckler-Feltz, *The Carpenter's Apprentice: The Spiritual Biography of Jimmy Carter* (Grand Rapids: Zondovan, 1996), 42.

[76] Cynthia Gorney, *Articles of Faith: A Frontline History of the Abortion Wars* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1998), 336.

[77] JCL, Robert Maddox Interview.

[78] Martin, *With God on our side*, 207.

[79] One of the least religious Presidents in American history, Ronald Reagan was not a practicing member of a faith community. He rarely attended religious services nor did he give much attention to Christian causes throughout his term in office.

[80] Rowland Evans and Robert Novak, "Belted in the Bible Belt," *Washington Post*, July 4, 1980.

[81] Harrell, *Pat Robertson*, 181.

[82] Kevin P. Philips, *Post-Conservative America: People, Politics and Ideology in a Time of Crisis* (New York: Random House, 1982), 188; Harrell, *Pat Robertson*, 161; Sara Diamond, *Spiritual Warfare: The Politics of the New Christian Right* (London: Pluto, 1989), 63.

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION AND THE CARTER PRESIDENCY

This chapter explores the debate regarding the relationship between Christianity and education, both public and private, and the issue's contributory role in exacerbating tension between the Carter White House and the conservative Christian community. Whilst previous scholarship has portrayed the conflicts surrounding Christian education during the 1970s as being covertly about race and as masking a fundamentally racist Christian agenda, here I show this approach to be limited, unappreciative both of change over time in evangelical political engagement and of the larger platform of concerns that motivated Christian conservatives, including prayer in schools and curricular reform. The spectacular growth in Christian private schooling during the 1970s stemmed primarily from a religious rather than racial impulse and by then a religious rather than predominantly racial agenda guided the movement's political engagement. Failing to comprehend this development, in 1978 the Carter administration attempted to remove the tax-exempt status of private schools so as to combat segregated education. Alongside the administration's refusal, because of Carter's Southern Baptist commitment to the separation of church and state, to legislate the return of prayer to public schools, this succeeded in alienating a new electoral constituency of burgeoning significance - evangelical and fundamentalist Christians. Schooling became one of a series of "hot button" issues that prompted both religious and racially conservative evangelical Christians to join with secular political activists to form the heterogeneous phenomenon that became the New Christian Right.

It has taken some time for the specifics of Christian education and its relationship to the Carter Presidency to receive detailed consideration. Carter's Presidential memoir, for example, ran to over 600 pages but mentioned the strained relationship between the evangelical community and his administration only in passing.[1] Works that deal with Carter's devout religiosity written largely by evangelicals were unreservedly enthusiastic but did not cogently analyse the specific faith-based policies of the Carter White House that later enflamed conservative evangelical

opinion.[2] The first wave of scholarship on the Carter Presidency from 1980-1987, dominated by Betty Glad also did not address the phenomenon and focused instead upon Carter's economic failures and the Iran hostage crisis in order to explain Carter's failed 1980 re-election bid.[3] When in 1987, a second, revisionist wave of Carter scholarship developed, it presented Carter in a far more favourable light. Ribuffo provided the most useful examination of the political impact of Carter's Christian faith, but did not highlight the centrality of educational issues to his eventual abandonment by the evangelical community.[4] Kaufman focused largely on foreign and economic issues and ignored the role of conservative Christianity in explaining Carter's defeat in 1980.[5] Dumbrell limited his analysis of the rise of Christian conservatism to issues such as women's rights and the Equal Rights Amendment.[6] Bourne addressed the evangelical community's deep sense of disappointment with Carter as a born-again President but saw education as only one of a number of issues generating evangelical opposition.[7]

Today there is increasing recognition of the power and significance of the religious vote and of the specific importance of the Carter Presidency in the 20th century political mobilisation of theologically conservative Christians. The multiple factors that brought the New Christian Right to political significance in the late 1970s, including abortion, the Equal Rights Amendment, gay rights and the broad-based cultural shift towards popular defence of 'family values' have all received attention,[8] but what is not yet fully understood is how central schooling was to that mobilising process, especially in terms of the two main educational innovations Christian conservatives sought at the time: retention of the tax exempt status of Christian schools and the return of prayer to public schools.[9] However, an understanding of education's significance to Christian conservatives both prior to and beyond the Carter years is essential to any explanation of the Carter administration's loss of Christian conservative support and its coalescence elsewhere. For a time, Carter appeared to be the Christian conservatives champion in the ongoing struggle against the forces of secular humanism, but his determination to perceive schooling in fundamentally racial rather than religious terms long after the Supreme Court's *Brown vs. Board of Education* decision of 1954 led his administration to persist in

construing private Christian schools anachronistically as "segregation academies" and to alienate the Christian conservative vote.

Whilst it is impossible in the early post-*Brown* era to disaggregate racism from religion with reference to Christian private schools, racism cannot be said to fully explain the phenomenon, especially by the time the Christian school sector expanded during the 1970s.[10] Even so, a number of scholars have described the rapid expansion in Christian schooling as purely a racially motivated attempt to circumvent court-led attempts to desegregate public schools. According to Lugg white supremacist sentiments were the prime motivation behind the emergence of church-affiliated private schools. He observes, "White, typically fundamentalist, Christian churches played a critical role in the South's desire to thwart federal [integrationist] policy."[11] While acknowledging that many factors spurred the Christian private school movement, Wilcox finds "school desegregation efforts" to be the central organising factor.[12] Similarly, McLaren has highlighted the appeal of "intolerant" born-again Christian education to those "who are comfortably male and white." Christian education, he argues, was a key social tool for those who "wish to purge America of Blacks, Asians, Arabs and Jews."[13] Rose has also observed that schooling was a tool of those evangelicals who "wanted to restore the common ground that once belonged to white Anglo-Saxon Protestants" whilst Diamond contends that many Christian academies "were formed solely or primarily to evade racial integration."[14] Thomas and Mary Edsall go further, contending not only that racial prejudice motivated the spread of Christian private schools, but that a defence of segregated schools lay behind the emergence of the entire Christian Right. They chart the first stirrings of evangelical politicisation to a 1969 lawsuit relating to the federal tax exemptions granted to segregated private schools in Mississippi.[15] Dionne agrees, arguing, "Most of the evangelical conservatives [in the Religious Right] were white southerners who began voting against the Democrats because of civil rights."[16] Bawer observes that "the only reason for these private schools' existence was to serve white parents who didn't want their children going to school with Blacks" and that "Jimmy Carter, as a southerner, knew this to be the case." Bawer too also contends that evangelical political mobilisation was generated largely by the IRS attack on segregated Christian schools: "The Religious Right didn't grow out of a love of God and one's neighbour" he states, "—it grew out of racism, pure

and simple."[17] Carter himself clearly attributed the growth of private schools in the aftermath of the *Brown* decision to racial factors. In his 1992 book, *Turning Point*, he wrote, "the education system in the South...has borne the brunt of social change" leading to "a mass exodus of white students whose parents could pay the tuition fees to enrol in the private 'segregation academies' that sprang up in almost all communities." Their continued existence was based "on parental dedication to racial segregation."[18] Even Robert Maddox, the Carter administration's liaison between the White House and the religious community had no doubts about the close linkage between race, religion, the politicisation of the Christian community and their opposition to Carter. Recalling the place that race played in the growth of the Christian Right, Maddox observed "Racism was there, right beneath the surface. The same kind of mentality that cranked out the anti-nigger stuff in the fifties, cranked out the [anti-Carter campaigns] in the eighties. It's always been there, it submerged, but it never has gone away."[19]

However, other commentators point out that even though a number of schools were established during the 1950s and 1960s in an effort to avoid the consequences of court orders to desegregate public education, by the 1970s this "white flight" impulse had become less important to Christian parents.[20] Instead, the expansion of the Christian school sector was motivated not by a desire to retain racial purity but instead by a need to defend against the unwarranted intervention of the atheistic philosophy of secular humanism. This developed during the late nineteenth century, a descendant of the rational doctrines of the enlightenment. Affirming the free will and conscious responsibility of rational men, it declared moral values and ethical behaviour to be correctly founded on human nature and experience, rather than reliance on supernaturalism, theological abstractions or religious emotionalism. It stressed the primacy of human reason over divine intervention and a belief in moral relativism and situational ethics. It rejected Biblical concepts such as eternal salvation, divine redemption or the existence of a supreme creator. *The Humanist Manifestos* (published in 1933) declared there to be "insufficient evidence for belief in the existence of the supernatural," and announced humanity to "begin with man not God...no deity will save us; we must save ourselves."[21] It gave rise to liberal attitudes to sexuality, crime, drug abuse and education. For America's evangelical and fundamentalist Christian community secular humanism was regarded as the

overarching source of the godlessness that had eroded the nation's moral and religious principles.

For evangelicals, the centrality of these Christian principles derived from their conception of American history that placed the role of God and the Christian faith as central to America's national mission. They believed that the Lord himself had blessed America because first the Puritans of the Massachusetts Bay Colony and then the Founding Fathers of the Constitution had sought to honour God and the Bible by creating in America the 'New Israel,' a nation built upon Christian principles: "Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD" (Psalm 32:12). Jerry Falwell wrote, "America has reached the pinnacle of greatness unlike any nation in human history because our Founding Fathers established America's laws and precepts on the principles recorded in the laws of God, including the Ten Commandments."[22] Evangelicals considered the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States to be nothing less than religious documents and the nation created by them to be 'God's chosen country.' Formed to exemplify the righteousness of Holy Scripture, Winthrop's 'City on a Hill,' they defined America as "a bastion of traditional values and traditional faith in an increasingly godless age; as a citadel of righteousness in a corrupt world; as the earth's only truly Christian nation."[23] Pat Robertson agreed. "This is God's land" he said, "This land belongs to God Almighty."[24]

Legal acceptance of secular humanism appeared to evangelicals to represent an abandonment of America's historical Christian identity. In particular, three Supreme Court rulings, not connected to race, mandated the secularisation of public education and brought down the ire of conservative Christians. The first blow came with *Torcaso v. Watkins* (1961), which validated secular humanism as a religion. Maryland state law required Roy Torcaso to affirm his belief in the existence of God in order for him to be commissioned as a notary public. As a practising humanist, Torcaso refused and the Supreme Court subsequently found in his favour holding that the requirement for such an oath "invades the appellant's freedom of belief and religion." Presiding Justice Hugo Black declared: "Neither a State nor the Federal Government can constitutionally force a person to profess a belief or disbelief in any religion." The Black court found that a number of religions did not "teach what

would generally be considered a belief in the existence of God." These included "Buddhism, Taoism and Secular Humanism."[25] Other court rulings such as *Engel v. Vitale* (1962) removed prayer from public schools and *Abington School District v. Schempp* (1963) confirmed that, in relation to public schools, recitation of the Lord's Prayer was unconstitutional. *Murray v. Curlett* (1963) outlawed Bible readings in the classroom and *Lemon v. Kurtzman* (1971) allowed for private Christian schools to be more closely regulated. All of these added to the increasing sense of divergence from mainstream culture and political institutions felt by the evangelical community, a sentiment only exacerbated by the more widely publicised *Roe v. Wade* (1973) ruling on abortion.

During the 1970s, the *Torcaso* ruling was publicised by conservative Christian leaders such as popular evangelical author Tim LaHaye, Jerry Falwell and Bill Bright, the director of Campus Crusade for Christ, as clear evidence of a secular humanist conspiracy to infiltrate the 'American public square.' They claimed that the 1960s Supreme Court rulings enshrined secular humanism in law as a religion equal in legal status and validity to Christianity. Falwell warned that humanism denied the hand of God in man's creation: "It teaches that man is not a unique and specific creation of God" but rather "the ultimate product of the evolutionary process." As such it was responsible for the moral decay and permissiveness of modern society because it favoured "ethical relativism" and "situation ethics" and projected "man as an animal concerned only with fulfilling the desires of the moment."[26] Moral absolutes that derived from Biblical Scripture had been abandoned. Similarly, for LaHaye, the danger of humanism lay in its encouragement of mankind's attempts to understand his world and to "solve his problems independently of God." He traced its formulation back to Greek philosophers who believed that "man is the measure of all things." He identified its five basic tenets as atheism, evolution, amorality, autonomy of man and one-world socialism.[27] This arrogant promotion of man's rationality over the Almighty's divine will, evangelical leaders claimed, had caused all manner of social ills including the advance in abortion rights, gay rights, women's equality, the spread of pornography, drug abuse and a dangerous weakening of America's global military, political and economic hegemony. LaHaye declared, "Much of the evils in the world today can be traced to humanism, which has taken over our government, the United Nations, education, TV

and most of the other influential things in life."[28] Humanism had become, observed evangelical authors Hadden and Shupe, the "source of all critical social problems" and the "arch-villain" of America's Christian community.[29] In particular, secular humanism had infected the American political system. Nesmith observes that many evangelicals "increasingly felt that governmental policies are denying traditional moral values" and that the "moral fibre of society" was "decaying as a result."[30] Bill Bright declared,

> I believe the most dangerous religion is humanism...the greatest threat to our Judeo-Christian heritage and is doing more to destroy the moral and spiritual fibre of our society than any other peril. Have you ever wondered why our society is becoming more secular, why prayer and Bible reading are no longer welcome at our public schools? The religion of humanism is largely responsible. Have you ever wondered why Americans are much more tolerant today of sexual freedom, homosexuality, incest and abortion? The religion of humanism is largely responsible."[31]

This perceived attack upon Christianity in schools was particularly keenly felt because prior to the 1960s Christians had cherished the fact that the American public education system was at least informally Christian. As Harrell put it, until the beginning of the 1960s "education remained firmly in the hands of the believers."[32] In many schools instructors were often clergymen and school priests generally held esteemed positions on campus. Bible readings and class prayers were common and traditional moral values, founded in the Christian faith, were taught. The 1960s saw a profound change including a profusion of sex education courses, the banning of prayer and Bible reading, a more liberal attitude to gender equality, homosexuality and the teaching of what were perceived as unpatriotic ideas in history classes. For evangelicals, the undermining of America's public schools was part of nothing less than a co-ordinated secular humanist plot. For example, in *The Battle for the Public Schools,* dedicated to "awakening American Christians to secular humanism as the destroyer of our once-great country," LaHaye warned that secular humanism was being taught as an alternative religion to Christianity.[33] Calling secular humanism "the official doctrine of public education," he outlined a fifteen-point description of a philosophy that gave humanism "all the markings of a religion...eager to bring the

nation's into a one-world government based on socialism"[34] "Public education" warned LaHaye, "is a self-serving institution controlled by elitists of an atheistic, humanist viewpoint" dedicated to "indoctrinating their charges against the recognition of God, absolute moral values, and a belief in the American dream."[35] For Christians, the need to raise children in an educational environment of Biblically based morality, insulated from the pervasive influences of an increasingly godless mainstream society was primary. This motivated the foundation of more than ten thousand religious academies during the 1970s. By the time Jimmy Carter took office in January 1977 the public education system was a pivotal arena in the Christian struggle against secular humanism.

Once again, evangelical disappointment with Carter was magnified because of their dashed expectations. Evangelicals in his home state of Georgia would have recalled his pledge, made during his 1970 bid for the state governorship, to do "everything" he could for private schools.[36] "Don't let anybody," he said, "including the Atlanta newspapers mislead you into criticising private education. They need your support."[37] Early in his Presidency Carter appeared to fully support Christian private schools. In June 1977 representatives of the Council for American Education (CAPE), an organisation of private schools whose members included a large number of faith-based groups including the Lutheran Church, the U.S. Catholic Conference and the National Union of Christian Schools, met with members of the Carter administration. Afterwards, apparently assured by the meeting that Carter strongly supported private schools, Robert Lamborn, CAPE's Executive Director wrote to Beth Abramowitz, "I thoroughly enjoyed our meeting - - and came away reassured about the Administration's active interest in the welfare of private schools." Lamborn asked that "Based on the administration's positive attitude toward private schools," the Carter administration make a "commitment to protect the rights of parents in determining the nature of their children's education" and announce "the administration's intention to maintain the educational options assured by the existence of strong public and private schools." Regarding possible Internal Revenue Service (IRS) intervention against private schools he also requested "a systematic search be undertaken to determine a constitutionally acceptable method for providing tax aid to parents whose children attend non-segregated private schools." Abramowitz replied, "Please be assured that we are giving this matter

serious attention as part of the development of federal educational policy and initiatives for this administration."[38]

In the same year Jack Harwell, Carter's close friend and editor of *The Christian Index* wrote to Carter's son Jack to ask for his help in organising a meeting between the President and representatives of Christian private schools. As a result, in December 1977 Carter met a delegation of Christian educators at the White House. The meeting was described in an internal memorandum as being organised "to gain your [Carter's] special endorsement of the contribution church-related colleges can make to our society and to itemise some of the problems facing these colleges." The meeting was clearly a success. Afterwards a representative of the educators, Ben C. Fisher, Executive Director of the Education Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, wrote to Tim Kraft, the White House appointments secretary, to thank him. The meeting with the President had been "a very significant one for us. It will also be encouraging to the millions of church members whom this group represents." Harwell also wrote to Carter personally to express his "deep gratitude." The Christian educators were particularly impressed that Carter agreed to meet them even though the Prime Minister of Israel was visiting the White House on the same day. "I know you had a hectic day with the Prime Minister of Israel" wrote Harwell, "That makes us even more grateful."[39]

Carter singularly failed to make good on his promises regarding private Christian education to the evangelical community. Instead, action taken by the IRS against racial discrimination embroiled the President in a series of battles with the evangelical community over Christian schools. Until 1967 the IRS had not considered the racial policies of private schools in determining their entitlement to tax-exemption, but when the IRS was sued in 1971 on the grounds that the granting of tax-exempt status represented a form of indirect governmental assistance to 'segregated academies' it altered its regulations, ruling instead that any "purely private schools" which practised racial discrimination would no longer be tax-exempt. Even so, IRS regulations remained weak. According to Lugg many segregated schools retained their tax-exempt status by merely placing a statement in the local newspaper that they did not discriminate or by enrolling a "token Black family."[40]

All this changed in 1978 when the Carter-appointed commissioner of the IRS, Jerome Kurtz, launched a new crusade against racial discrimination in schools. Kurtz recalled his belief that private schools were being created for explicitly racist aims. For example, he recalled "There were whole new school systems formed in Mississippi [in the wake of desegregation rulings]."[41] At his direction the IRS moved to require that all private schools, including Christian schools and academies, prove they were not instituted as residual havens for segregation or face the loss of their tax-exempt status. Under the new guidelines, any school that came into existence or suddenly expanded when the public schools in its community were desegregated would be subject to investigation and would risk the loss of its tax-exempt status unless it had a substantial minority enrolment (a minimum of 20 percent of the total population of minority students in the surrounding community) or was shown to be making a 'good-faith' effort to operate a non-discriminatory enrolment policy. This meant that although aimed at denying tax-exemption to 'segregation academies' the new regulations encompassed church-affiliated private schools, the majority of which had been established by the Protestant evangelical community. Looking back to 1978 Carl Anderson, the Reagan administration's religious liaison observed, "Under the guise of getting at a very miniscule number of segregation academies" the IRS used "strong arm tactics" against all Christian private schools. "We're not talking about Bob Jones University [referring to the ultra-conservative fundamentalist institution] we're talking about *any* serious kind of Christian ministry through church-affiliated schools." That, Anderson noted "had a very big message for evangelical Christians."[42] The IRS regulations represented the unwarranted intrusion of secular government institutions into private, family affairs. As Steve Bruce has pointed out, the IRS intervention alerted Christians that "The "Bible Belt" had been penetrated by cosmopolitan culture" or, as political analyst Kevin Phillips observed, "The world of Manhattan, Harvard, and Beverly Hills was being exported to Calhoun County, Alabama, and Calhoun County did not like it."[43] The actions of the IRS were driven by racial concerns but IRS policy was misguided on two counts. The IRS failed to acknowledge that the boom in the private school sector in the 1970s was largely unrelated to race. Martin observed of Christian schools that "by the mid-1970s integration was no longer a significant factor in their continued proliferation."[44] Rather, the growth of explicitly Christian private schools represented an effort on behalf of the Christian community to insulate their children

from the secular and humanist bias of public schools. The IRS regulatory action, although focused upon a very small number of 'segregation academies' effectively denied legitimate efforts at Christian ministry through private education. Carl Anderson recalled that this sent the warning to Christians, "you can run but you can't hide. The reach of the government is going to find you. No matter how intimately you view this as part of your ministry, you will be supervised by government." Hutcheson observed of the IRS regulations "While the Carter people saw civil rights as the motivation, Christian school activists saw it as anti religious."[45] Christian Right activist Connaught Marshner recalled "The bureaucrats were so out of touch with real American culture that they assumed racial bias was the only reason somebody would want to start a non-public school." The Carter administration had "Not a clue about the real culture decay or about religious belief."[46] When in August 1978 the IRS proposals to end tax-exemption for schools found to be discriminating against minority students were made public "a huge furore arose in the ranks of the Christian Right" and their target, observed Shogan, "was Jimmy Carter."[47]

The issue of tax-exemption for private schools posed a pointed political dilemma for Carter. When he ran in 1976 as a 'political everyman,' a candidate far removed from Washington politics, he had badly antagonised key Democratic Party constituencies. In his December 1976 memorandum on political strategy Pat Caddell warned "To be frank, Jimmy Carter is not particularly popular with major elements of the Democratic party, whether it be activists, the Congress, labor [sic.] leaders, or the political bosses."[48] Once in office Carter was obliged to shore up his support amongst those Democratic interests that had backed him, specifically Black and civil rights interests, represented in the form of the Congressional Black Caucus. Heinemann writes that Carter's IRS launched "a new crusade against racial segregation" in the form of a move to revoke the tax-exempt status of private religious academies explicitly as a means of "seeking approval from the Congressional Black caucus."[49] Heinemann's explanation is conceivable. Blacks, without whom Carter would not have won the Democratic nomination in 1976, let alone the Presidency, had already attacked Carter for not doing enough to advance affirmative action programs, busing and welfare. They were dismayed by the naming of Griffin Bell to the Department of Justice and their appetites had already been whetted but not satisfied by Carter's appointment of Black activists to federal

judicial posts. The Congressional Black Caucus wrote to the President listing their grievances, specifically that Carter had not found a solution to the "still extraordinarily high Black unemployment rate," had instigated an urban policy "based on providing virtually no new funds," and had made only "limited Black appointments to top positions...particularly [noting] the absences of Blacks in top economic positions." They decried "the failure of the President to make a major civil rights speech to the nation." As regards education policy they declared their belief that "The Administration has not been fully sympathetic to the special needs of Black colleges" and accused the Department of Health, Education and Welfare of withholding funds from two Black colleges."[50] Their criticism was unfair. Carter appointed more Blacks and other minorities to his administration than any of his predecessors. White House Counsel Robert Lipshutz recalls that the administration "really searched out...the qualified Blacks...to make sure that the affirmative action goals of the President were met" even though this might mean that "we had to accept the fact that we might get the second-best qualified or the third best qualified [candidate]."[51] Yet segregated education continued to be a highly sensitive issue for the Black community because of the detrimental impact on public schools of white abstention. After Carter left office Stuart Eizenstat admitted that the President "had difficulty with the Black interest groups" who were "never quite satisfied with what he did."[52] Hamilton Jordan concurred. He observed that special interest groups like Blacks "didn't feel a part or didn't feel a stake in the election of Carter" and as a result "pursued their own institutional interests." Black leaders like Vernon Jordan, "couldn't stand up and say we were doing a good job...He had to stand up and point out all the shortcomings of the Carter Presidency." That, said Jordan, was "the story of the administration."[53]

Regardless of the motives of the Carter White House, for their part, evangelicals strongly dismissed the suggestion that racism was an organising principle of their schools. Rather, the schools were dedicated to providing a faith-based education. Heineman observed "The one thousand students enrolled at the Arlington, Virginia, Baptist school were taught to place "God and His Holy Word at the centre" of their education. Parents were exhorted "to win your child to Jesus Christ as his personal Saviour, and then to train him up for Christian service."[54] Falwell said of the accusations levelled at his Lynchburg Christian Academy "There were those who

thought we were probably starting [the academy] to have a white-flight school...but from day one I made it clear that Lynchburg Christian Academy would be for any and all who loved Christ and wanted to study under born-again teachers in a Christian environment with academic excellence." Although the school had no Black students in its first year because, said Falwell, "none applied," three Black students enrolled the second year. Falwell claimed he had built his Academy not in response to the 1954 Supreme Court ruling on education but on two later decisions, those of 1962 and 1963 banning prayer in schools, citing his fear that such decisions indicated that "the Christian worldview was not only going to be pushed back but eliminated."[55]

Falwell encouraged evangelicals to write to the White House in protest against the IRS intervention. Two Christian parents from New York wrote to Carter, arguing that the IRS proposals were "in violation of the principles of church and state...Most church schools are sponsored and largely supported by churches, and the government has no right to regulate church affairs. We believe that since Congress has not given, and cannot give, IRS the powers which it is usurping in this proposal, IRS must not tamper with the system which gives tax exempt status to <u>all</u> private schools." The writers also pointed out the economic issues involved to Carter.

> All of us who are property owners pay substantial school taxes for the use of the public schools. The schools thus enjoy the use of those tax monies without having to spend it on the students sent to private schools. Since parents have been taxed for their children's schooling, no matter where they go, should they not have the freedom to choose the place where they believe the superior education is being given? Parents putting their children into private schools are already paying double, and should not be penalised even further.

They strongly dismissed accusations of racism. "The several private religious schools with which we are acquainted could in no way be called racist. It is not economically feasible for them to actively and specifically recruit members of minority groups, but they do heartily accept students from such groups." Another evangelical from Carolina wrote to the President to declare, "Our schools are not racially discriminatory, and we strongly dislike being placed in the position of being

considered guilty until proven innocent. The Constitution has always guaranteed people their innocence until proven guilty, and now some people have chosen to completely reverse this idea and force their opinion upon many others. This restricts our freedom given to us by our Constitution tremendously." Evangelicals were disenchanted because of Carter's willingness to use his religious faith as a political asset in his Presidential campaign. "What happened to all the 'Christian' promises you made while campaigning?" asked one correspondent. "Why does [Joe] Califano and HEW ride white schools and institutions of Higher Learning when predominantly black colleges...get federal money? Is this the act of a born-again Christian? How do you sleep at night?" One writer claimed that the IRS regulations would "destroy the freedom of religion" and "freedom of choice of Christian education." Complaining "We pay over and above our school taxes for special Christian education which we feel is necessary since the Bible reading, prayer and discipline was taken out of our public schools," the revoking of tax-exemption was "the first step to undermining and destroying our country" because it threatened America's covenant with God. "To continue to destroy the reading of God's word and the teaching of his ways, I feel, will cause us to lose his blessing. At the rate we are going in twenty years our country and communism will be hard to tell apart." To reinforce his point, the writer announced that "I have never written to any political power before, but feeling the grave importance of killing this proposal and any of its kind, I felt I must."[56]

The IRS regulations represented more than an ideological threat to Christian parents. Whether predicated on racial grounds or religious doctrine, Christian private schools relied heavily on the tax deductible charitable gifts of private donors. The end of tax-exempt status would seriously endanger the financial well being of most Christian schools and parents would be forced to pay both for private tuition and to provide tax revenue to support a public education system that their children did not use and which spread a secular value system that they abhorred. Jerry Falwell quoted the economist Milton Friedman, "The present arrangement abridges the religious freedom of parents who do not accept the religion taught by the public schools but yet are forced to pay still more to have their children escape indoctrination."[57] In sum, tuition fees for Christian parents were to be effectively doubled. The fact that the background of the student bodies at Christian private

schools had changed radically during the 1970s, added to the impact of the legislation. Middle-class preserves during the 1960s, by the 1970s sixty percent of the pupils came from working class or lower-middle-class backgrounds.[58] According to one evangelical minister, the financial implication of the IRS proposals provided "the jolt" that generated conservative opposition, as he put it, "When it becomes not just a moral or a conservative/liberal issue, but a pocketbook issue, you definitely take an interest."[59] Inevitably a number of evangelical ministers organised a campaign in response. Robert Billings used his newsletter, *Christian School Alert*, to warn Christians of the IRS threat. Falwell used his popular television show, the 'Old Time Gospel Hour' to attack it, calling the federal government "sneaky" and declaring that it had made it "easier to open up a massage parlour than to open a Christian school."[60]

As well as bringing together the secular New Right and the conservative religious community, the IRS issue played a central role in forging the alliance between the New Christian Right and the Republican Party in the second half of Carter's Presidency. The rapid political mobilisation of evangelicals convinced conservatives in Congress to join them in battle. Arch-conservative Jesse Helms led the Congressional fight in the Senate, vowing that he was "not going to back up one inch" in the face of IRS "harassment," whilst two other conservative Congressmen, Representatives Bob Dornan and John Ashbrook lobbied in the House.[61] Ashbrook wrote to Carter in October 1978 warning that the IRS plan would "set a dangerous precedent in this country, creating a "new regulatory network which amounts to nothing less than legislation by decree...expanding federal power over private schools." This might "lead to total Federal control of private education. It will not be long before the Washington bureaucracy is scrutinising the textbooks and teaching of each private school." As such the plan "poses a serious threat to private education in America." Ashbrook vowed to "not permit any intrusion into the free exercise of religion." He warned

> To impose student and faculty quotas on private schools is a treacherous intervention into a constitutionally protected activity. By imposing severe compliance standards and volumes of paperwork, the Federal Government would sign the death warrant of more than half the nation's religious schools...Its arbitrary formula for student and staff recruitment will place Federal bureaucrats at the helm of policy formation for private schools...This

> plan violates the Constitutional separation of Church and State...Mr. Carter, as a Presidential candidate, you were portrayed as one seeking to become 'a pastor of 230 million.' You must not desert your religious followers by inaction.[62]

Ashbrook urged Carter to "act now to stop this Federal aggression against religious schools. You should order your appointed director of the IRS to rescind its quota plan."[63] In response, Stuart Eizenstat wrote to Ashbrook in December 1978. Noting that while the administration did "share your concern that implementation of the [IRS regulations] be sensitive to religious and academic freedoms," Eizenstat reinforced the administration's conviction that the issue at stake was racial equality, not religious freedom:

> This administration is committed to meeting the spirit and letter of the law as evidenced by Titles IV and XI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Brown v. Board of Education, and many subsequent Federal Court cases. Under the law, private schools that have a racially discriminatory policy as to students are not entitled to tax-exempt status.

Despite Eizenstat's intervention, Ashbrook and Dornan introduced a rider to the IRS appropriations bill that prohibited the use of federal funds to investigate or enforce alleged violations of IRS regulations by Christian schools.[64]

In 1976, the evangelical community remained, fundamentalist Reverend James Kennedy recalls, "a sleeping giant."[65] To arouse conservative Christians from their slumber, they needed to be educated into a political reaction. The evangelicals remained detached from modern culture. "Abortion, pornography, homosexuality – those are hard for average Christians to relate to" observed one fundamentalist preacher, "They don't read *Playboy*, their daughters aren't pregnant, and they don't know any queers."[66] Both historians such as Richard Neuhaus and Robert Shogan and Religious Right leaders like Ralph Reed all agree that in Reed's phrase, Carter's "ham-fisted" intervention against Christian schools was "the greatest spark" for the Religious Right because for Christians it represented "nothing less than a declaration of war" on their Biblically-centred way of life.[67] Secular New Right leaders such as

Weyrich, Richard Viguerie and Howard Philips saw in the growing evangelical community a potential constituency of grass roots support that could be used to help implement their conservative agenda. "It kicked the sleeping dog," recalled Richard Viguerie of the IRS issue, "It galvanised the religious right. It was the spark that ignited the religious right's involvement in real politics."[68] The New Right established political organisations in Washington including The Committee for the Survival of a Free Congress, The Heritage Foundation, The National Conservative Action Committee and The Conservative Caucus, and used them to make overtures to conservative Christians who had so far stubbornly resisted political involvement. It was through what Harrell calls this "fortuitous convergence" between New Right political experts and conservative evangelicals that the New Christian Right emerged.[69] In particular, New Right activists provided the political experience, vital in mobilising the evangelical electorate that the Christian leaders who had remained outside of the political mainstream lacked. Christians were persuaded to abandon their attachment to the doctrine of church-state separation, to embrace their secular allies, and to engage in what Wilcox calls "the politics of life-style defence" against the interference of the Carter administration.[70] The key meeting took place in May 1979. Weyrich, Philips and Viguerie travelled to Lynchburg to meet Jerry Falwell. Like Carter, Falwell was a Baptist, and as such held to his denomination's belief in church-state separation, rejecting political engagement and dedicating himself to 'the winning of souls for Christ.' However, the New Right leaders convinced him of the urgent need for a new, visibly Christian political organisation to rally Christian conservatives into action, an affiliation they dubbed the Moral Majority.[71] Weyrich was candid in admitting his partisan political goals. He was not dedicated to politicising the Christian vote, only the vote of Christians who supported his conservative agenda. "I don't want everyone to vote," he said. "Our leverage in the election quite candidly goes up as the voting population goes down. We have no responsibility, moral or otherwise, to turn out our opposition."[72]

Falwell publicly refuted his previous attitude to Christian political activism as "false prophecy" and the Moral Majority quickly became the largest and most visible of the New Christian Right organisations.[73] Falwell was a central figure in inspiring evangelical political engagement. Hadden and Shupe note that whilst Carter told evangelical Christians that it was "all right to get involved in politics" Falwell told

them "it was their duty."[74] It represented the total abandonment of Falwell's previous adherence to church-state separation. In explaining this change he recalled "the future of our nation was at stake...Satan had mobilised his own forces to destroy America by negating the Judeo-Christian ethic."[75] If his "Christian brothers and sisters could be mobilised to action" then the Moral Majority could "reverse the nation's downward spiral and set America back on the straight and narrow path once again."[76] The federal intrusion into private Christian schooling was pivotal in Falwell's conversion. "Back in the sixties I was criticising pastors who were taking time out of their pulpit to involve themselves in the Civil Rights movement or any other political venture. I said you're wasting your time from what you're called to do." But, says Falwell, "Things began to happen. The invasion of humanism into the public school system began to alarm us back in the sixties.... It became apparent that the federal government was going in the wrong direction, and if allowed would be harassing non-public schools. Step by step we became convinced we must get involved if we're going to continue what we're doing inside the church building."[77] Falwell became overtly political. He declared the three goals of the Moral Majority to be "First, get them converted; second, get them baptised; and third, get them registered to vote."[78] Hart notes "Before, evangelicals had not been inclined to translate their beliefs into political action," but were now being convinced of the imperative of "opposing sin at the ballot box."[79] The *Journal of Church and State* observed that conservative Christians were "clearly being led out of the pews and into the polls."[80]

The White House and IRS were inundated with complaints, including 126,000 letters, some of which were so vociferous that IRS commissioner Jerome Kurtz was forced to seek Secret Service protection. The National Christian Action Coalition (NCAC), headed by Robert Billings, organised a massive letter writing campaign. He also organised a meeting of preachers who opposed the IRS proposals. "[The] potential consequences of this are frightening," he warned. "If you can tax private religious schools...why not tax churches? And why not tax the particular churches with which the government disagrees? Why not tax the Quakers for their pacifism [or] the Catholics for their opposition to abortion?"[81] Billings declared that Kurtz had "done more to bring Christians together than any man since the Apostle Paul."[82] Other evangelical broadcasters like Pat Robertson, James Dobson and Jim Bakker

invited Christian school activists and attorneys onto their television shows to warn audiences about the need to resist the new federal regulations. Beverly LaHaye's self described 'Pro-Family' organisation, Concerned Women for America implored members "WRITE OR CALL your Congressmen and Senators immediately" in support of the Ashbrook/Dornan amendment and advised "President Carter has recommended them for deletion."[83] Ultimately, the campaign generated so much complaint that Congress called public hearings to discuss the IRS enforcement plans. Held in Washington in December 1978, these were highly charged affairs. Opponents attacked the IRS proposals as arbitrary and overly restrictive, a clear violation of First Amendment rights. Senator Dornan wrote to the President in July 1979 calling for the resignation of Kurtz and his chief counsel Stuart E. Siegel. He accused them of being

> ...the main architects of the assault on the private schools of this land, assuming that private schools were formed solely to escape public school integration and threatening their tax-exempt status. Contrary to our Anglo-Saxon legal tradition, a party was assumed guilty until proven innocent...People all over this land are sick and tired of unelected bureaucrats engaging in social engineering at the expense of our cherished liberties. [The IRS had] proven blatantly unworthy of their trust as government officials by blatantly attacking the First Amendment rights of private and religious schools.[84]

The IRS proposals were eventually defeated in the Senate. Then in August 1979 the Senate voted to suspend the application of the IRS guidelines for one year and to prohibit the allocation of the federal funds necessary for the IRS to determine which schools should lose their tax exemptions. The Senate also attacked the guidelines themselves, making it, reported the *Washington Post*, "unlikely that the guidelines would be revived by a future, more sympathetic Congress."[85] In her history of the rise of the Christian Right, Brown observes, "the government plan was pounded so thoroughly" that "it was never resuscitated."[86]

It was not until 1980 that the Carter White House finally understood the sense of disenchantment felt by the evangelical community over the IRS regulation of private schools. By that stage the administration was aware of the need to limit the damage

done and was purposely avoiding the issue in the face of repeated evangelical questioning. In January 1980 Frank White, the Carter administration's Head of Communications, wrote to his deputy Anne Wexler to warn her to brief the President against getting drawn into a debate over the IRS at an upcoming breakfast meeting with evangelical ministers. White said that the IRS procedures had been quickly attacked by "specialised religious schools" which were "afraid of being drawn in, even if it appeared they would, in the end, be exonerated." White warned that the issue might come up and advised that the administration's line should be that; "We have kept the White House out of the planning or development of these regulations" and that "All inquires should be relayed to the Treasury." White recommended that the President go no further than declaring that he "support[ed] the law of the land." White also advised Carter to plead ignorance and tell the evangelical leaders that he was "not really familiar with the issues in dispute." If the ministers asked Carter to help them rewrite the procedures, the President should say, "My policy has been to leave administration of the tax laws to tax officials. [The White House] has not gotten involved in such matters and I don't want to begin now." White was being politically disingenuous: the White House was clearly involved in the IRS intervention against private schools.[87] Archival documentation records that both he and Beth Abramowitz of the Domestic Policy Staff met with IRS staff to discuss IRS private school regulation at a meeting entitled "Meeting on Private School Revenue Procedure" dated February 15, 1979. Also in attendance were Howard Schoenfeld, S. Allen Winborne and Lauralee Matthews, members of the IRS Commissioners office, and Jim Fuller of the IRS Chief Counsel's Office.[88] Evangelicals continued to voice their concerns over the activities of the IRS. A month after the meeting Robert Maddox wrote to Ann Wexler to warn of an "intense, growing rebellion among denominational leaders across the theological spectrum against IRS."[89]

Prayer in Public Schools

The role of prayer in public schools simmered right from the controversial 1960s Supreme Court rulings that banned it, through the Carter years, into the 1980s and the question is still with us today. It was another issue on which Carter singularly failed to adequately address or fulfil the Christian agenda on education. It is important to recognise that prayer in schools engaged a very specific section of the evangelical Christian community. Whilst some evangelicals abandoned mainstream secular culture and sought refuge in specifically Christian institutions such as schools and colleges, others advanced "a strategy of engaged orthodoxy."[90] They remained reluctant to abandon all vestiges of "worldly" modernity, and sought instead to act, in accordance to Christ's admonition, "as the salt and the light," a redemptive, transformative force for the salvation of society and culture from within. Choosing to engage with the secular mainstream, they worked to strengthen of the role of Christianity within the public school system.

Before the 1960s, evangelicals had viewed the American public school system as analogous to institutions such as the church and the family, which were perceived to be advancing Christian morality. The public school was "virtually a sacred" institution, a principal instrument for the cementing of Christian national identity in a society conspicuously lacking in the unifying institutions already established in Europe. Thus, although the recitation of biblical commandments or non-denominational prayer may have seemed innocuous to many non-evangelicals, for conservative Christians the removal of prayer from the classroom represented a "symbol revolution," tantamount to "a spiritual betrayal" by the federal government, and signalling the dawning of "a dark new day" for America.[91] For evangelicals the removal of prayer in schools also heralded a precipitous decline in educational standards. Jerry Falwell observed the "decay in our public school system suffered an enormous acceleration when prayer and Bible reading were taken out of the classroom."[92] Pat Robertson recalled that in the Christian community there was "an intense...rage against the Supreme Court." And as he put it, when Christians, "the

most law-abiding in the society feel that the Supreme Court is their enemy" then "you've got something significant."[93]

Falwell's organisation, The Moral Majority, was to play a central role in the resulting campaign to return prayer to the classroom. Although he claimed that the Moral Majority did not endorse any political candidate or party, Falwell left readers of his newsletter (dated March 7, 1980) in no doubt of his own political persuasion, announcing that "even the President of the United States is against us!" He recounted a conversation he claimed to have had with Carter when, along with a number of conservative ministers, he had visited the White House. Carter declared "I oppose anything that would allow voluntary prayer in public schools, because I do not want an atheist or non-Christian child to sit there under pressure because the other children are having voluntary prayer." When Falwell replied, "But what about the 99% of children who want to pray and who are not allowed to pray because of the 1% who oppose the prayer?" he said Carter simply "had no answer." "Can you imagine?" asked an incredulous Falwell. So as to convince Carter of his error the newsletter asked members to "flood the President's desk with one million letters" to "force him to listen to the Moral Majority." To assist subscribers, the newsletter included a model letter that read, "Dear Mr President, I am in favour of voluntary prayer." What had especially shocked Falwell was Carter's affirmation that "he would absolutely never sign a bill that would restore voluntary prayer in schools." Alluding to legislation introduced by Senator Jesse Helms to return prayer to schools, Falwell claimed Carter had said, "even if both the House and the Senate approve the bill, he would veto it when it comes to the Oval office."[94] Robert Maddox recalled of the people like Falwell, "TV preachers, the religious broadcasters...they were all for Helms thing on prayer in schools."[95] The Congressional bid by Helms and Senator Bill Nichols, lobbying for legislation to "bring God back to the public schools" through school prayer became interwoven with the evangelical campaign and reiterated almost identically its rhetoric.[96] In fact, Carter was completely consistent in his opposition to a constitutional amendment to restore prayer to public schools. During the 1976 Presidential campaign a religious journal had written to candidate Carter with a list of questions regarding his attitude to issues of church-state separation. One of the questions was "What is your position on the proposed amendment to the constitution to permit or require prayer in public schools?" Next to

the question Carter himself wrote clearly "Do not favour."[97] Carter's personal position was clearly in line with the advice of Jody Powell, given on an attached advisory note that "you have a very deep religious involvement...the best place for this involvement is in the home and in churches and synagogues rather than public schools."[98]

Despite his consistent policy, in April 1980, using a letter from an evangelical constituent, Nichols forced the Carter White House to hurriedly clarify the President's position on prayer in schools and high-ranking staff personally responded in a poorly co-ordinated fashion to the uproar that ensued. Frank Moore, the Assistant to the President for Congressional Liaison, in response to the constituent, declared the President to be "like you...a Christian" and said Carter was "doing his best to uphold the ideals in which he believes." He directly questioned Falwell's account of his conversation with Carter writing, "The President has never said that he would veto any legislation passed by Congress providing for the return of voluntary prayer to the public schools." When evangelicals continued to question Carter regarding his treatment of Falwell at the breakfast meeting, Patricia Y. Bario, the administration's Deputy Press Secretary, wrote back to explain, "Dr Falwell misquoted the President." Carter had "said he is uncomfortable thinking about a Jewish child, for instance, sitting in a room under pressure because of Christian prayers being offered." Bario wrote that "when this misquote was pointed out to Dr. Falwell, he apologised and said he would print a correction in subsequent editions of his newsletter."[99]

The conservative Christian community however, accepted Falwell's original account unquestioningly. For example, James E. Damron, vice-President of the Christian radio station WVRC, wrote to the President to tell him of his "shock" in regard to his supposed position on prayer. "I simply couldn't believe it!" Damron wrote, "Moral decline is so rampant (as you well know) that we must do something to reverse this trend. He asked Carter "Are you not concerned about the spiritual health of our nation?" In response Bario wrote to Damron to say that the President was indeed "very concerned about the spiritual health of this nation" but he has "a dilemma" because the "Constitution is based upon the separation of church and state and he is sworn by his oath of Office to respect that." According to Bario, expressing Carter's

own view, the Constitution prohibited the President's involvement either way. As she put it, "The government has no business taking a stand – pro or con – on the issue" and this was "the way the Constitution wanted it."[100] Similarly, when Jim Purks, Carter's Assistant Press Secretary replied to an evangelical's threat that because of prayer he would not be voting for Carter again in 1980, he wrote that "although President Carter is one of the nations firmest advocates of prayer" the President "must adhere at all times to the doctrine of separation of church and state." Carter felt, Purks said, that "'government ought to stay out of the prayer business'" and not "dictate to school children."[101] Another evangelical complained, "the doors of our public schools [are] closed to prayer but remain open to the atheism of Communism." Pleading for Carter to return American schools to the religious bedrock upon which he felt the nation had been built, he declared school prayer to be the "moral rearmament that we need to inspire our youth and our nation through a manifesto of Americanism." In response Carter press secretary and close Presidential aide Jody Powell wrote; "As you know, the President is a very deeply religious man" who believes "in the efficacy of prayer." He would, Powell said in an attempt to placate angry evangelicals, "like to explore the possibility of reinstating some kind of prayer in the schools, perhaps a moment of silent prayer or meditation."[102] When one constituent prompted the President to write back personally, Carter actually took the time to reply and did so as the true Southern Baptist he was, reiterating his desire to uphold the doctrine of separation of church and state. "If Congress were to pass the legislation" he wrote, "it would be up to the courts to ensure the constitutionality of such legislation in the light of the separation of church and state doctrine"; he would "favour voluntary prayers in schools provided that they can be carried out in a manner consistent with the Supreme Court's ruling."[103]

Like so many other Christian conservatives, evangelicals wishing to re-instate prayer in schools were especially frustrated by their lack of access to the White House. Evangelicals remembered Carter's apparent promise to bring clearly identifiable evangelicals onto his White House staff and were angry, as Religious Liaison Robert Maddox put it, that there were "no evangelicals in the government." In fact, many of Carter's staff were religious, including such significant figures Jody Powell, Max Cleland, and Charles Kirbo but they were either politically or theologically liberal or,

like Carter, they held to the doctrine of church-state separation a situation that gave religious conservatives the impression, recalls Maddox, that "everybody was Godless." He believed that "overtures should have been made immediately after the election in 1977 to begin to bring those kind of people into the White House to even more substantially explain the President's position." This was not done and by the time he had joined the administration Maddox said, "I don't believe anyone knew what bad trouble he was in...on abortion, ERA and prayer in public schools because the White House staff was liberal." They clearly perceived Carter as a devoutly religious President and because of that "tended to discount the numbers and the intensity that was out there."[104]

One group that felt especially marginalised by the Carter White House was the Christian Civil Liberties Union (CCLU) an organisation dedicated to "support a moment of silence for meditation or prayer in the public schools." Its President, Rita Warren, despite frequent meetings with Congressional leaders and Supreme Court justices, made repeated but unsuccessful attempts to meet with the President. A Boston housewife, Warren was a highly vocal supporter of prayer in public schools and was the author of "Mom, they won't let us pray" (chapters included a useful guide to the terrifying challenges of "Caring and Sharing with an Atheist"). Despite writing to the President to warn that "Denial of the existence of God" and "Secular Humanism" were being promoted in schools, alongside "sexual perversion...violence, obscenities and disrespect for Authority," the group received only an invitation to see a lowly Presidential assistant. Warren and the CCLU were furious. "We 'the people' have elected Mr Carter to office to serve the American people. It seems that he has time to see spokesmen from other countries" but "when [the] time comes to see his own people he has no time." A month later White House aide Joyce R. Starr wrote not once but twice to Midge Costanza to warn that the CCLU was planning a protest rally at the White House "for the purpose of returning prayer to the public schools." They had requested that the President attend. Starr asked, "Do you feel there should be any attempt for us to get involved? She reminded Costanza, "Unless you direct otherwise there is currently no plan to meet with the group."[105] No member of the administration met with the group. Equally upset were people like Mr Blair Johnson, one of host of Christian individuals who tried to show the President petitions asking for the return of prayer in public schools.

Even though these were the very people who had helped elect Carter, once in office his "heavy schedule" and his Baptist concern to maintain separation of church and state concerns, made him reticent to engage in a Presidential capacity with Christian evangelicals.[106]

Carter's reticence allowed the Christian Right fundraisers increasing opportunity to confront their constituency directly through mail-shots and newsletters with what one author calls "rhetorical weapons of mass destruction", that is, hugely effective, fearsome examples of attempts to remove religion from the public square.[107] The utilisation of direct mail was vital in the development and funding of the Christian Right, because, recalled Richard Viguerie, it "allowed conservatives to by-pass the liberal media, and go directly into the homes of the conservatives in this country." [108] The Moral Majority's typical questionnaires asked, "Do you favour the right of parents to send their children to private schools?"; "Do you favour the removal of the tax-exempt status of church-related schools?"; "Do you favour sex education, contraceptives, or abortions for minors without parental consent?"; "Do you agree that voluntary prayer should be banned in public schools?"; "Do you favour more federal involvement in education?"; "Do you favour a reduction in government?"; "Do you agree that this country was founded on a belief in God and the moral principles of the Bible? Do you concur that it has been departing from those principles and needs to return to them?"[109] The answers, recommended Jerry Falwell, should be "evaluated in the light of scriptural principles."[110]

One Baptist minister sent a questionnaire to the President himself. "We are trying to educate ourselves with both the political process and the positions of the candidates," and "enhance our ability to understand everyone's position on the issues we feel vital and will facilitate a wiser vote" he wrote. In reply Robert Maddox was forced to reply that although the questions asked were important their complexity meant, "in almost every case, legitimate answers cannot be given in terms of a quick yes or no." He was moved to reassure the Baptist minister who had sent the questionnaire that, contrary to popular evangelical opinion, the President was "a man of deep faith in Jesus Christ" who was "profoundly concerned about the moral and spiritual welfare of the nation."[111] Unfortunately for the Carter administration, evangelicals found reluctance to address questions in this form inexplicable. Far from being complex or

controversial, they believed the answers to the issues they posed were obvious to a Christian with the most cursory knowledge of Biblical Scripture. That a President whose public persona derived strongly from affirmations of Christian piety could find questions of such vital importance to be in any way challenging gave rise to doubts about his religious sincerity. In response Robert Maddox sought to enlist the support of both the President and key administration staff in initiatives to reach out to the Christian conservative community alienated by his position on private education and school prayer. In November 1979 he requested that the President meet with evangelical leaders to allay their fears and end the loss of Christian support to political rivals. The request was firmly denied with the response: "NO: bad time." Maddox then tried writing to Fran Voorde, the President's Deputy Appointments Secretary, declaring it "a matter of urgency" that Carter "meets with conservative ministers as soon as possible." The President should answer questions that were "exceedingly important to these ministers and their large host of constituents." Maddox noted, "This request was first made in early September. Other political persons are making strong overtures to these leaders. We need to get them in before the campaign gets too intense and positions and endorsements get set." Wexler added, "This constituency is about 30 million – we may not get 'em all – half would be nice." The request was once again rejected.[112]

No one single reason can explain such apathy on the part of the administration. It failed consistently to comprehend the depth of evangelical disillusionment with the President or to sufficiently heed their growing political mobilisation. It may well be the case that, not understanding the doctrinal and theological divisions within and between evangelical and fundamentalist church-goers, the administration was simply complacent about the Christian vote and failed to see how a President who seemed to their secular sensibilities to represent the paragon of religious piety could fail to retain that support. In effect, they took the evangelical vote for granted. Such was the lack of understanding amongst secular members of the administration that one aide recalled that he considered it one of his jobs to strike the word Christian out of Carter's speeches.[113] This was perhaps unsurprising given that one Presidential speech writer admitted the White House speechwriting office "was mostly populated by diehard secular humanists."[114] Furthermore, they were taking their cue from the President himself. Whilst other members of his denomination were joining the

organisations of the Religious Right, Carter remained absolutely steadfast in his adherence to the Southern Baptist doctrine of church-state separation. Carter feared that overt political engagement with fellow evangelicals may have been misinterpreted by non-evangelicals as undue favouritism and a dangerous intervention of personal religiosity into secular affairs of state.[115] Certainly Carter did not care for Falwell and Robertson, two figures whose activities clearly represented an open violation of church-state separation. Carter's 1980 re-election campaign was characterized by the same dismissal of the political significance of the conservative Christian vote. When outlining the Carter re-election strategy in a memorandum dated August 18, 1980 entitled "How to win..." pollster Patrick Caddell listed the key constituencies whose support the President needed to secure. These included liberals, environmentalists, Blacks and Hispanics but revealingly, there was no mention whatsoever of the Christian vote.[116]

A further explanation for Carter's failure to take advantage of his faith to build support amongst evangelical voters might have been his desire not to further alienate Catholic voters, a key Democratic Party constituency, many of whom were wary of Carter's devout Protestantism, the Southern Baptist church having long being a bastion of anti-Catholic bigotry. This unease was clearly noticeable even before Carter took office. During the 1976 Presidential election campaign one Ford campaign memorandum explained the root of Carter's failure to win over many Catholics. "Catholics are very privately religious people" it said. "They do not like religion flaunted openly, like Carter has done. [Catholics] believe in praying to God for help, guidance and salvation but not associating with Him as a business partner." As a result, the memorandum noted, the Catholic vote was "unenthusiastic about Carter."[117] They were particularly concerned with Carter's position on abortion. Another Ford campaign memo observed, "Abortion is of great concern to most Catholics...those Catholics who do oppose abortion do so strongly."[118] Carter under performed amongst Catholic voters, winning just 54 percent of the vote and allowing Gerald Ford to win more Catholic votes than any Republican candidate in modern history.[119]

Once in office, Carter's Southern Baptist faith, coupled with his failure to appoint sufficient Catholics to high-ranking positions within his administration and his stance

on abortion, led to further Catholic disquiet. In September 1978 Dale Francis, a journalist from the Catholic periodical, *Our Sunday Visitor* wrote to the administration. His letter was typical of those received from disenchanted Catholics. He warned the administration that Catholics found the appointment of the pro-life Sarah Weddington as a Presidential adviser "insensitive." Francis pointed out that when Bishop Thomas Kelly, general secretary of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops had written to Carter to complain, he had received a routine form letter reply, wrongly addressed to 'Mr Kelly.' The letter "not only didn't recognise him as an official spokesman for the Catholic Church but by addressing him as 'Mr Kelly' it in a sense insulted his position." The journalist wrote, "someone at the White House should know" because part of the Southern Baptist's "bigotry against Catholics" had been "the refusal to address clergy by their titles." Through the ignorance of the White House Francis warned, "The appearance is being created, at worst, of a kind of bigotry against Catholics or, at best, or a lack of concern about Catholics."[120] In the same month another Catholic, Joseph J. Reilly, wrote to Carter to complain of the administration's "systematic exercise of prejudice against our Church." Pointing out that "The only member of a fifty million person religious body in your cabinet is Joseph Califano," Reilly concluded, "You sought Roman Catholic support in 1976. You have ignored or insulted the Roman Catholic community ever since. I regret your anti-Catholic discrimination and protest it in the strongest possible terms."[121] Carter failed to win support from conservative Catholics. In fact, when the 1980 Carter re-election campaign aired a commercial that showed the President meeting the Pope, conservative Catholic groups complained. "In appearing in public with President Carter" said Reverend Virgil Blum, President of the Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights, "the Pope was paying his respect to the office of the Presidency." It was not his intention to lend himself to a partisan political campaign." He accused the Democratic National Committee of "abusing a courtesy by including the Pope in a political advertisement."[122]

The failure of the White House to react sufficiently to the haemorrhaging of evangelical support may also be attributable to the fact Carter did continue to enjoy the support of a number of high-profile evangelicals, possibly leading some staff members, unaware of the political and theological diversity of the evangelical

community, to believe that the President retained the Christian vote. They would have observed that Carter corresponded with religious leaders, including a number of evangelicals, throughout his Presidency. In early 1977 evangelist Oral Roberts visited the White House and prayed with Carter. Afterwards the President wrote to Roberts, "I thoroughly enjoyed your visit and appreciated the opportunity to pray together."[123] In January 1980 a member of the National Religious Broadcasters told Carter "I am supporting you in prayer (and in the campaign)."[124] In February 1980 Robert Maddox wrote to Anne Wexler to inform her that popular television evangelist Rex Humbard had "offered himself and his organisation to us on behalf of the President." Maddox was "talking with his sons, who manage the organisation, on ways they can help."[125] Maddox later reported that such contact with fellow Christians was paying dividends. "The religious leaders with whom I talked to eagerly welcome direct conversation with White House people," he wrote in a memorandum to Anne Wexler, "They will help on issues." Maddox suggested that "Religious leaders in general feel much more favourably inclined toward the White House since you opened it to them. Everywhere I go people say...thanks for including us."[126] In July 1980 Dr Homer Linsay, minister of a Florida Baptist Church received Carter on a visit to the state. The visit was clearly a success, Carter writing personally to Linsay to thank him. "Yours is a great ministry" the President wrote, "Your efforts are important to God's kingdom and our nation."[127] Carter even received support from the leadership of the increasingly conservative Southern Baptist Convention. Bailey Smith, elected President of the Southern Baptist Convention told Maddox in 1980, "Tell the President we pray for him everyday." Calling Smith a "cordial supporter of the President," Maddox observed in a memorandum to Rosalynn Carter, "I believe we will be able to work with Dr. Smith."[128] R. Douglas Wead, a conservative evangelical who went on to serve in the Reagan administration wrote to Carter to thank the President for his political efforts regarding the Christian community.

> Your team of Bob Maddox –Tom Laney have operated in a spirit of Christian humility and integrity – a stark contrast to what the layman expects from a politician. It is having an impact on evangelical leaders (i.e., Jim Bakker) whose ideological and cultural leanings are conservative, but who find themselves drawn by the spirit of your team. Its cumulative effect is devastating.

Just how out of touch Wead was with the temper of the evangelical community was further revealed when he asked to "congratulate you on your sensitivity to the evangelical voter. Though she may be fickle and ungrateful at times, she is coming into her own as a political force and may be your best friend in a crisis." Unfortunately, it appears, Carter did not know any better. He wrote in reply, "Thanks – I agree."[129]

Even Maddox himself was guilty at times of overestimating the true level of evangelical support for Carter. After meeting with a prominent charismatic layman's group, the Full Gospel Businessmen's Fellowship he reported directly to the President and Mrs Carter, "there is a deep feeling akin to a vision" that "God placed President Carter on the scene for such a time as this," that he "deserves our prayers," and that "as leader of the nation we are bound by the Bible to pray for him." Maddox reported, "This group, Republican and Democrats alike, will support the President's re-election." Religious groups "regardless of denomination, tell me to assure the President of their prayers and support." Here Maddox even included the socially conservative Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. After attending the Southeastern Conference of Mormons in Atlanta, Maddox observed, "Leaders and congregants alike told me to assure the President of their prayers and support." A speech that Carter had made in Salt Lake City a year before had been "a high water mark for the church."[130] After another Maddox bridge-building trip to Missouri, the Religious Liaison reported that many Christian women had asked him to "Tell the President that many of us...love him and pray for him."[131] As late as July 1980 Maddox wrote to Jody Powell that "although the times are very rough right now, from my travels around the country, the word comes to tell the President to hang in there." Maddox was encouraged by "the number and quality of American religious leaders who are solidly behind the President. They are ready and willing to go to work."[132] Even Pat Robertson remained on cordial terms with Maddox. In a letter to the Religious Liaison in September 1980 Robertson gave the impression, at least in private, that he accepted Maddox's apologies for the failure to name evangelicals to high-ranking posts within the administration. He conceded "undoubtedly there was a great deal of confusion during the formative days of the new administration" and signed the letter "Yours in Christ."[133] Throughout Carter's re-election campaign Jim Bakker, another popular televangelist, remained a staunch

supporter. When he and Carter prayed together on Air Force One, Bakker wrote in "warmest Christian love" to thank Carter and called it "the high-light of my life."[134] Perhaps the White House's overconfidence was understandable. Even after the election, Carter retained the support of high profile evangelists. When Dr. Jimmy Allen, President of the Radio and Television Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention wrote to Carter with a letter of support, Carter wrote back "I will pray for you. May the power of Christ rest upon us." He signed the letter "Sincerely, in Christ."[135]

Moreover, the White House retained the impression that Carter remained the Presidential candidate of choice for evangelical Christians because of his strong support amongst Black evangelical churches. They had been amongst his strongest supporters in 1976 when his Baptist faith had lent him significant appeal. One memorandum from an organisation entitled "The Committee of Concerned Black Churchpersons for Jimmy Carter" to then campaign director Hamilton Jordan declared its goal to be reaching "the grassroots support of the Black community on a national basis" because "in the Black community it is the Black church that the average family looks to for leadership and guidance." The organisation sought "to organise and interrelate all Black religious leaders throughout this country" to create "a coalition of religious leaders from all religious faiths, and backgrounds...to organise and work for the election of Jimmy Carter."[136] Stuart Eizenstat told the Miller Centre Presidency Project that when Carter "would go into a Black church, there was a tremendous sense of shared background, of communication. It was really tremendously moving to see."[137]

> And Carter somehow sensed that intellectually and emotionally – the shared Baptist experience. And one really can't adequately describe what it was like to come into the church and hear the Black choir, and then Carter would speak and sing along and so forth. There was an enormous sense of shared experience.[138]

The Carter campaign clearly believed that they would retain the support of Black evangelicals in 1980. In October 1979 Robert Maddox wrote to the President and Mrs Carter to tell them that "a major key to securing the Black support and vote is

the Black pastor of local churches" who "exercise great influence over their congregations." Maddox assured them both that Black ministers "want to support the President."[139] This optimism was further strengthened when an organisation of Black ministers attacked Falwell's Moral Majority. An organisation calling itself 'The Concerned Clergy for Carter Interfaith Committee' released a statement that declared that a "cross section of leading Black clergy" had joined together to "denounce the views espoused by the Moral Majority in their support of Governor Ronald Reagan." They declared,

> Our primary focus is to ask clergymen of all faiths to join in an all-out campaign to re-elect President Carter. We also challenge the hypocrisy of the 'Moral Majority' Reaganites. We must recognise the danger of this movement is not only a threat to the man in the White House; it is a threat to the state houses; it is a threat to our houses. These ultra-conservative moral majority advocates are a threat to Catholics, Jews, Non-Fundamentalist Protestants, and even 'Born-Again' Evangelists who happen to disagree with their political positions.[140]

Aside from taking the support of Christians for granted, another explanation for the Carter White House's failure to build political links with the increasingly high-profile conservative evangelists derived from a sense of complacency born of Carter's southern Christian background. Regionalism was a clearly a vital part of Carter's appeal in 1976. "The Southern States provide us a base of support" Hamilton Jordan wrote to Carter in June of that year, "that cannot be taken for granted or jeopardised." Carter's faith allowed him to appeal to the South without risking his support in other regions. "Southern regional pride can be used to great advantage without unnecessarily alienating potential anti-Southern voters" wrote Jordan.[141] He later observed the South to be "the only region of the country that thinks of ourselves as a region and is regarded by other areas of the country as a region." Carter was "the only Democrat in 1976 that could have carried the South...to some extent he satisfied the feeling that we're in the mainstream of political life in this country."[142] In particular, Carter's exhortations of Christian faith and his public focus upon his born-again experience owe everything to the emotional traditions of his Southern Protestantism. This Bible-belt tendency towards hyperbolic piety was clearly present in his political statements. His use of religious

rhetoric, so-called 'Jesus Talk,' was typically Southern. Martin Marty observes of Carter's cultural "Jesusity," that "For Jimmy Carter to say that he is 'born again' is like you or I saying good morning." There is no threat in those words."[143] Jody Powell recalls that, "He, like I, grew up where as a child most of the public speaking you heard was preaching, and so without even thinking about it, that becomes part of your way of speaking."[144] Political commentator Garry Wills, a former Roman Catholic seminarian remarked that Carter "could not avoid Jesus talk, even if he wanted to [because of] where he comes from...Jesus talk is, at the least, a kind of static in the air." Wills travelled to Plains to research an article on Carter's southern background. "Every twist of the dial...finds a hymn or a sermon" he wrote, "the very graffiti in the gas station john mix religious slogans with obscenity." Overt professions of religiosity were a kind of "stickum or social glue."[145] Carter's religious professions endeared him to fellow residents of the region, black and white, who might not have previously voted for a Democrat. An administration analysis, written just days after the 1976 election victory confirmed that Carter's success amongst white protestants, both in the North and in the South had been "exceptionally good" for a Democrat.[146] Gerald Rafshoon, Carter's media adviser observed, "The South was our base. We won [the Presidency] because Carter was a southerner." This translated into the expectation amongst the campaign staff that Carter would receive the votes of evangelicals in 1980 because, said Rafshoon, as far as the administration was concerned "evangelicals were southerners."[147]

This led the Carter White House to take evangelical support for granted, a temptation only exacerbated by the identity of the Republican challenger in 1980. Stuart Eizenstat recalls "There was almost jubilation in the Carter White House over his [Reagan's] nomination...He was not a regular churchgoer; he had been divorced; he didn't teach Sunday school." In contrast, "Jimmy Carter was a native Southerner, he had grown up amongst Southern whites, he was part of that whole background" and so, says Eizenstat, "it was very painful to see someone from California, from Hollywood, be able to so successfully appeal to this constituency."[148] Another Carter adviser, Robert Keefe, observed of the re-election campaign, "The idea was still to win the South. His people were counting on the natural attraction of a southerner to work for him there in '80 as it had done in '76." However, this time he did not receive the support of southern Christians and he "was undercut by

evangelicals and fundamentalists. Carter's campaign team didn't recognise this threat early enough and never met it very well."[149] Referring to the Christian Right Keefe observed that by 1980 there was "a leadership structure to move great masses of voters. Those leaders that emerged were very anti-Carter."[150]

A final additional explanation for Carter's reticence to act on Maddox's and others repeated advice as to the political benefits of engaging with conservative Christians was his antipathy towards the traditional process of Washington politics. Carter had run as an 'outsider' in 1976 and, as it quickly became clear, this was not cynical political posturing. Carter's staff soon realised the dangers of the President's abhorrence of a traditional bargaining style of government. A month into his administration Pat Caddell produced a lengthy memorandum detailing the requirements of political strategy for the new President. In a clear message to Carter he warned of the dangers of divorcing politics from "good government." He wrote "many people instinctively feel that 'good' is necessarily apolitical." However, "most times it leads to disappointing the voters and eventual political disaster." Carter himself underlined the phrase "governing with public approval requires a continuing political campaign" and wrote "Excellent" on the memorandum.[151] However, a recurring theme that emerges from examination of the White House Staff Exit Interview transcripts and those of the White Burkett Miller President Carter Oral History Project is Carter's failure to follow Caddell's advice and his consistent disdain for following a course of action solely for political expediency. According to one aide, Carter believed himself to be above the traditional system of political bargaining. He recounted,

> It was a matter of enormous frustration to some of us that the President didn't particularly like to hear...that a decision was political. It was one of the first lessons that I learned in the White House. I can recall one of the first meetings attended with the President when I went to the White House in the Cabinet Room with other members of the senior staff about a particular issue. The President went around the room asking each member what they thought he should do on this...issue. When he got to me I started by saying, "Mr President, I think that politically..." I got about that far when he shut me up...He put me down in front of the whole staff. So I was very careful after that to make my arguments, but in a different way...I could not believe that

anybody who operated in an atmosphere where literally everything's political could take such a view. [152]

Another member of the Presidential staff, Bruce Kirschenbaum, agreed that "Carter was so apolitical...He set an unbelievably apolitical standard. It was known among staff that if you had a decision memo on a substantive issue, you shouldn't go to the Oval Office and say, 'This is going to kill you politically.'" Carter "hated that" and the apolitical attitude "filtered down from the top."[153] Patricia Bario recalled reviewing numerous memoranda that spelled out choices for the President. "And there would be one saying 'This will cost you politically' but Carter would note on the memo 'that's okay.'"[154] Another aide put it bluntly: "He doesn't like politicians...He really just doesn't like them.... He's an anti-politician."[155] A concerned Hamilton Jordan wrote to Carter to warn him against his apolitical stance that meant that when deciding policy, "options were being negotiated unilaterally," and vital "political input from the White House staff was very much an afterthought."[156] According to Jordan, one example of this lack of political awareness that hurt Carter's support amongst evangelicals was his decision to return the Crown of St. Stephen to the Communist regime in Hungary. To evangelicals this appeared to represent accommodation with Soviet dominated Eastern Europe. "Our policy in the Middle East has cost us the support of American Jews...The Panama Canal Treaty has hurt us in the South with conservatives," Jordan warned. By returning the Crown, "we have hurt ourselves...through an action that has very little benefit." It was, said Jordan, "ridiculous" to "sacrifice the moral and political authority of your Presidency for such an issue. It is one thing for us to suffer domestically with a group of people in pursuit of a major policy that is important to us and the world. It is quite another for us to suffer politically for an action that has very little – if any – redeeming features." Jordan warned that if those responsible for policy decisions within the administration "don't develop <u>some</u> political sensitivity we are going to be in trouble."[157] Even the First Lady failed to convince Carter of the need to act according to political expediency. "Our most common argument centred on political timing" she recorded in her memoirs, "a question of strategy more than substance...on more than one occasion I appealed with Jimmy to postpone certain controversies...until his second term." However, "my pleas always fell on

deaf ears. "If securing a second term was more important to me than doing what needs to be done, then I'd wait," he would snap at me."[158]

This style of leadership was motivated in part by Carter's Southern Baptist faith.[159] Eizenstat observed that Carter's alienation from 'pork-barrel politics' essentially derived from his religious faith. He told the Miller Centre Presidency Project;

> ....that's a part of the political system which I think the President didn't feel comfortable with, that sense of sort of that implicit horse-trading. And I think that that's something that this President felt particularly uncomfortable doing, maybe because of his Christian background, his strong Christian beliefs.[160]

Mondale confirms that "Carter thought politics to be sinful." [It] used to drive me nuts."[161] Carter came in to office "with a kind of Baptist antagonism as to how the real world should respond to his concept of what his faith indicated should be done," he said.[162] As Eric Severaid put it Carter was a "wheeler-healer" who refused to become a "wheeler-dealer" in the traditional sense of a political powerbroker.[163] It was this relationship between faith and politics that led Erwin Hargrove to call Carter "fundamentally a Christian warrior" and Fowler to place Carter's politics within "a framework of biblical stewardship."[164] Jody Powell explained that Carter's devout faith was "integral part of him...and how he viewed his responsibilities [as a President]."[165] As Powell put it in his memoirs, Carter possessed a "quiet determination to do what he saw as right despite the consequences."[166] Carter certainly was capable of acting out of political necessity at times, but with their self-serving television shows, celebrity status and defence of overt wealthy lifestyles as proof of God's favour, televangelists like Falwell and Robertson represented the antithesis of Carter's pious religiosity. Carter was neither politically nor theologically pre-disposed to working alongside them.

For whatever reason, crucially, the Carter White House remained slow to realise the need to repair the damage between the Christian community and the President. Maddox continually advised that Carter use public events to display his personal faith yet Presidential aides repeatedly rejected his advice. One such opportunity

came in June 1979. Carter was to be awarded a prize from an organisation called 'The Peacemakers' who sponsored a convocation at a Baptist Church in his honour. Maddox wrote to Phil Wise to ask the President to tape a message of support for the church. The message, Maddox stressed, "need not be a formal statement." It could be "very brief." Even so, Wise declined the invitation.[167] Of greater significance, the President and the administration singularly failed to appreciate the importance of appearing upon the booming and increasingly influential Christian broadcasting networks. For example, in one memorandum, Maddox observed that an interview with religious broadcasters such as Pat Robertson's CBN and Jim Bakkers' PTL "would serve to reinforce President Carter's standing with many in the conservative/evangelical community." The "main thrust of the interview would be to let the President talk about his spiritual pilgrimage since he has been in office." Maddox wrote "Millions in the conservative/evangelical community want to vote for the President but need assurances that he is indeed a devoted Christian who relies heavily on the leadership of the Lord as he makes his difficult decisions." Subsequently, Carter agreed to interviews with four secular television networks but refused "an open invitation for a half hour general interview on PTL." At the time Bakker's PTL (Praise the Lord) show attracted audiences upwards of 5 million viewers. It was an excellent opportunity to circumvent the secular media and reach out to Christian voters through their own medium. An aide wrote on Maddox's request that such an interview was "No longer considered a priority to the President."[168]

Despite Maddox's best efforts, the Carter White House repeatedly passed up opportunities to prevent the political coalescing of evangelical Christian's in favour of Ronald Reagan. One repeatedly rebuffed organisation was the National Religious Broadcasters Association (NRB). In January 1977 Carter was invited to speak at the annual convention of the NRB. Having only recently taken office, Carter replied that "I deeply regret that the hectic pace of these first days in my new office makes it impossible for me to join you" but Carter concluded, "I look forward to an opportunity to meet with you in the future." However, this refusal to accept the invitation of a sizeable religious group set a pattern for the rest of his administration.[169] One memorandum from the NRB forwarded to the White House by Executive Director Ben Armstrong pointed out that his organisation reached

115,000,000 radio listeners and 14,000,000 television viewers every week, a total "larger than the entire American weekly church attendance," with programs presented by stars like Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson. As with so many evangelical groups, their disappointment with Carter was heightened by what they saw as his failure to reward their support in 1976 with access to the White House. Armstrong pointedly reminded Carter that just a few weeks prior to his election he had promised to invite a delegation of religious broadcasters to the Washington. He now offered Carter an important opportunity to make good on his promise and so redeem evangelical Christian's increasingly negative view of the President. Armstrong wrote, "It is my sincere belief that a meeting with President Carter will have a salutary effect on the manner in which he is perceived by our ever larger evangelical constituency." Again in December 1979, 'God's Angry Man', TV evangelist James Robison wrote to Carter inviting him, and not his rival Ted Kennedy, to appear as guest speaker at his Texan Bible Conference. Robison told Carter "We are expecting over 30,000 people from at least 35 states," including "key leadership from the Christian community" representing "10 to 15 million people" who were "interested in the political future of the country." Reagan had been invited, as had Adrian Rogers, the newly elected President of the Southern Baptist Convention who, Maddox had earlier warned was "conservative in his politics and theology." Carter refused.[170]

Even when Christian broadcasters gave the White House an opportunity to build support amongst their viewers by focusing on an area of policy that Carter himself was intimately involved, namely peace in the Middle-East, the offer was rejected. The Christian Broadcasting Network was rebuffed in May 1978 when they asked President Carter to join their campaign for a peace settlement in the region by recording a televised 'Call to Prayer.' Perhaps by now realising the difficulty of convincing the President himself to become involved in such a project, they instead contacted his mother, Miss Lillian, asking her to pass on their request to her son. Reverend Harald Bredesen of the CBN wrote to White House aide Richard Harden, reminding him of a visit that Bredesen had previously made to Miss Lillian's house. Gloria Carter was also present at the house. During the visit, Bredesen wrote, Miss Lillian had been so enamoured with the idea of Presidential involvement with the 'Call to Prayer' campaign that she had called Harden then and there and said "You

know I never tell Jimmy what to do, but this is special." However, Miss Lillian herself recalled the meeting with Bredesen as somewhat less harmonious. She warned the White House "I was pressured into this by Gloria and friends from Alabama (very rich ones)" and she had agreed to contact the White House because "I couldn't stand another 2 hours of it."[171] Jody Powell replied to Bredesen that although it would be "very nice if the President could take part...the demands on his time" made it "impossible."[172] Unwilling to give in, Bredesen then wrote to another White House aide drawing attention to the favourable political exposure that involvement would garner the President amongst the conservative Christian community. Bredesen observed that "substantial portions of America's forty-five million evangelicals would be very much for it" and that "Their votes helped put Mr. Carter in the White House, and their loyalty could stand some rekindling right now."[173] Again White House aides sought ways to decline the invitation. One aide suggested that the administration tell the CBN to ask again in ten months time. "That should break their stride" he wrote.[174]

To his credit, Maddox continued to warn his colleagues "religion will be a major issue in the 1980 election" but "not like in 1976." He told Press Secretary Jody Powell, "Conservative groups will vote in greater blocks than ever before. The television preachers will play a major role in helping their millions of viewers to decide on candidates and issues. Many of these conservatives will vote for the President only if they are convinced that his stands on certain key issues are compatible with theirs." Although an asset, Maddox warned that the President's Christian faith did not guarantee the support of the evangelical community: "His 'born again' faith raises their expectations and makes him more vulnerable to their charges of inconsistency if he does not lift up selected issues." All was not lost however, because "millions want to vote for him and given half a chance they will." Alongside abortion, prayer in public schools was a pivotal electoral issue. "They puzzle: How can a born-again Christian be opposed to prayer?" "At carefully selected times," advised Maddox, the President should "re-state his reasons for not supporting prayer in public schools." Then at least, he wisely pointed out, "conservatives will have the advantage of understanding his position."[175]

Recalling his efforts to impress upon Carter the urgent need to reach out politically to the evangelical community, Maddox said, "It bothered me to think that fifty or sixty million evangelical Christians might rise up and vote against him."[176] He highlighted five key opportunities. Firstly, he advised Carter to give an interview with the major religious television networks. "Reagan," Maddox observed "has done such an interview." Although, he said, "Some of the executives of these stations are Republicans," their audience viewing figures were "incredibly large" and "they want to hear from the President." Secondly, Carter should address the National Convention of National Religious Broadcasters, an association embracing over 500 television and radio stations. Thirdly, he should accept the Abe Lincoln Award for Communications from the Southern Baptist Radio and Television Commission at a banquet in Dallas. Maddox also suggested that on the same trip, Carter should address the students of Southwestern Baptist Seminary in Fort Worth and explain the relationship between his Southern Baptist faith and his political office in the heartlands of Christian conservatism. "I recommend," he said sagely, "this Texas double-header." Fourth, Maddox begged the President to meet with eighteen evangelical conservative leaders, warning that already, "they have met with [Republican Presidential hopefuls] Connally, Crane, Baker and Reagan." Maddox believed that, because of Reagan's divorce, either Crane or Jesse Helms would be the Christian conservatives favoured candidate. Finally, Maddox said that Carter, as the only political leader invited, must address the huge "Washington for Jesus" rally planned for late April 1980, organised by the Full Gospel Businessmen's Fellowship. "Hundreds of buses will bring the people to the city" Maddox said: "all hotels have been booked for the weekend." Furthermore, the Fellowship President, Demos Shakarian, although a Republican was "a firm supporter of the President." The organisers were inviting Carter "as God's leader to the nation to address that rally. They are prepared to take some criticism for not inviting other candidates." Maddox observed that the Businessman's Fellowship "has 1700 chapters across the nation and around the world. They touch millions of people each year." Maddox also wanted the President to use his links with one of the high-profile televangelists who still supported him, the flamboyant preacher Oral Roberts. Significantly, Roberts offered the White House the chance to gain political purchase from the enduring popularity within the evangelical community of First Lady Rosalynn Carter. Roberts suggested that Mrs Carter appear on a number of Christian talk shows and make

personal appearances on the major preachers' shows. Roberts even offered to orchestrate the appearances "behind the scenes."[177]

Perhaps the seminal moment when the Carter White House failed to heed Maddox and so lost ground to the Reagan camp was at the 1980 National Affairs Briefing held in Dallas, Texas sponsored by two of the largest conservative Christian organisations, Religious Roundtable and the Moral Majority. As James Robison pointed out to Carter, the meeting was the year's "largest, most significant, political and spiritual gathering in the South," attended by a litany of high-profile leaders of the evangelical community including Jerry Falwell, Jesse Helms, Pat Robertson and Bill Bright. Although organised in the format of a traditional revival meeting, the purpose of the event was the "training of some 20,000 pastors and Christian leaders, representing between 20-30 million votes, in political involvement." Robison told the President, "we will be pressing people on to action and how to organise the vote." Carter was offered the opportunity to speak, this time not only to the audience in Dallas but by telecast to "100 cities on closed circuit television." Other speakers scheduled to appear included Senator Jesse Helms, Phyllis Schlafly and Paul Weyrich. For his part, Maddox was convinced Carter should attend, but he also knew that the offer represented a "no-win situation." "It would be a hostile crowd to the President" Maddox warned in an internal memo, but if Carter did not attend "he will be soundly criticised."[178]

In the event Carter failed to attend. Out of the sixty speakers who addressed the conference only one spoke in support of the President, and he was roundly booed. Ed McAteer, the founder of The Roundtable, one of the earliest New Christian Right organisations recalled the Dallas convention as crucial in "Carter's political demise." McAteer was, according to Victor, "more than any other evangelical leader responsible for orchestrating Carter's defeat" because he introduced Ronald Reagan to Jerry Falwell.[179] McAteer recalled, "From the beginning, I just knew that the Presidency surpassed Carter's abilities. It was too big a job for him. He never understood how to govern a country like America and he never understood that any political mandate is God-given and God-inspired."[180] Asked to attend the Dallas meeting, Carter, said McAteer, "decided not to attend the rally because his advisors told him that he should court the mainstream votes and not pander to his fellow born-

agains." He explained, "I got a call from one of Carter's advisors who told me that they had no intention of playing a 'ring around the roses' game with the Christian Right."[181] In stark contrast Reagan was only too happy to attend and to deliver perhaps his most famous address of the entire electoral campaign. His words went a long way towards convincing Christian conservatives that he, not Carter, was the candidate whose theological sensibilities were most in tune with their political ideology. Dexterously, he referred to the official evangelical philosophy on church-state separation and told the enthusiastic crowd that even though he knew that they could not endorse his candidature, "I want you to know that I endorse you."[182]

Reagan attacked government restrictions on "the independence of religious broadcasting" and stated sarcastically that "everybody in favour of abortion had already been born." He was especially unequivocal in his support for the evangelical's educational agenda, expressed doubts about the theory of evolution, denounced the "moral neutrality" of the government and vilified a Supreme Court that had "expelled God from the classroom," blaming social problems such as crime and drug abuse on the failure to uphold moral standards in public schools. When an evangelical minister asked for his views on prayer in public schools he replied, "No one will ever convince me that there's anything wrong with little children praying in the school house."[183] The crowd responded rapturously. They were equally impressed with his endorsement of Christian schools and his attack upon the IRS proposals that would "force all tax-exempt schools – including church schools – to abide by affirmative action orders drawn up by...IRS bureaucrats."[184] He went on to openly identify himself with the evangelical agenda, speaking, as Oldfield puts it, "straight out of the Christian Right's hymn book."[185] With this speech, Reagan, not Carter presented himself as the man who would turn the White House into God's House. Recalling the importance of the speech in Dallas, Pat Robertson declared on his Christian Broadcasting show that Reagan had "touched a chord across the United States of America."[186] Afterwards, Reagan continued to express the educational agenda of conservative Christendom. Previously Carter had irritated advocates of Biblical inerrancy and the teaching of creationism in schools. When asked whether he believed in the Garden of Eden, the serpent, whether Eve was taken from Adam's rib, and the return from the dead of Lazarus, he replied "Part of the Bible was obviously written in allegories" and "hard to believe on a scientifically analysed

basis."[187] In contrast, during the Presidential campaign, Reagan clearly expressed his inerrant belief in the story of Genesis and his support of its teaching in public schools. Declaring evolution to be "a scientific theory only" he said that if it was going to be taught in schools Biblical creationism "which is not a theory but the biblical story of creation, should also be taught."[188]

The 1980 Republican Party platform also clearly recognised the political power of the IRS issue to unite Republicans with Christian conservatives; it declared that if elected, Reagan would "halt the unconstitutional regulatory action launched by Mr. Carter's IRS Commissioner against independent schools."[189] The political battle had been joined. "The stage is set," Rev. James Robison informed seventeen thousand evangelicals at one political rally, "where we are either going to have a Hitler-style take-over, a dictatorship, Soviet Communist domination or we're going to get right with God in this country. It is time for Christians to crawl out from under their pews." "Many Americans are sick and tired of the way their government has been run," said Jerry Falwell. "They are tired of being told that their values and beliefs don't matter and that only those values held by government bureaucrats and liberal preachers are worthy of adoption in the area of public policy."[190] Once an outspoken defender of church-state separation, Falwell now presented the evangelical community's dilemma in starkly political terms. Flaunting the officially non-partisan position of the Dallas conference, Jerry Falwell told delegates to vote "for the Reagan of their choice" whilst Christian Voice maintained a "Christians for Reagan" booth.[191] Stephen L. Carter notes that after Dallas "many a religious leader preached that a vote for Reagan was a vote for God's truth."[192]

The Carter White House was shocked. One Maddox memorandum explained, "when people listen to the President and then to Mr. Reagan, especially on matters of faith, the President completely out-distances Mr. Reagan."[193] However, Maddox quickly saw the link between the Christian Right, including Falwell's Moral Majority, and the Reagan campaign blossom. He observed his suspicion when Bob Billings, the First Executive Director of Moral Majority left the organisation to become the religious adviser for the Reagan campaign. "There was a direct tie and there was no doubt who they were for," he recalled.[194] The predominately secular White House staff never conceived that their candidate might not win the evangelical vote and as a

result they never expended the necessary political effort to build links between the administration and the conservative Christian community. "The staff depended on the President's personal religious practices to keep that whole community," recalled Maddox. "They never did understand what being born-again means, how that translates to more conservative people."[195]

Unsurprisingly, in the Christian schools themselves, Carter was deeply unpopular. In his research on Christian education Peshkin interviewed the Headmaster of Bethany Baptist Academy. Headmaster McGraw made no secret of his support for Reagan, and alongside IRS intervention, ("he let the IRS interfere with our school" complained one teacher), once again the issue centred on Carter's failure to name evangelicals to key administration posts. "Jimmy Carter claims to be born-again," said McGraw. "Well, the Bible says, "By their fruits, ye shall know them." I can't question his personal salvation, but I question his biblical understanding. Look at his key appointments – not one of them even claims to be born again."[196] Peshkin observed that "for the world of Bethany" this was "an incredible omission" for to be born-again was "to possess the badge of respectability" a "password ...in the only way that counts." For a supposedly Christian President to ignore the born-again credentials of a candidate when making appointments led staff and pupils at Bethany to the conclusion that "the President's integrity and intelligence must be subject to doubt."[197] "We've never been at a lower state in this country because Carter does not have a single Christian in his cabinet," said McGraw. Donna Reynolds, an English teacher at Bethany, also made her political sympathies clear. "It's important to the academy that Reagan becomes President; its for our future as Christians, I think."[198] The teachers at Bethany made no effort at political impartiality in their lessons. Peshkin observed elementary-grade children playing. "Who votes for Carter?" asked one boy, to which the children replied by sticking their tongues out and blowing raspberries in disgust. "Who votes for Reagan?" he asked. The children put their hands up and cheered.[199]

By the fall of 1980 a few members of the Carter administration had finally realised the extent of the alienation between the Carter White House and the evangelical community. They were warned of the increasing politicisation of conservative

Christians by Carter supporters amongst the liberal Christian community who were beginning to worry that the President was not doing enough to build support amongst evangelicals. One firm Carter supporter, Albert H. Rusher, wrote to the President to warn "One of the most important things that is now being preached to millions of people every week by many ministers, particularly Baptist Ministers" was that "the United States is turning to humanism." Rusher warned of the displeasure of evangelicals at Carter's staff appointments. He wrote, "One question that I have been asked frequently is why a professed humanist who formerly headed the Aspen Institute of Humanistic Studies (Shirley M. Hufstedler) has been appointed to head our Department of Education."[200] But once again the White House administration aides made little attempt to secure the support of what was potentially a natural constituency for Carter. In fact, members of the administration went so far as to actively criticise evangelical political activism. In late 1980, Carter aide Pat Harris launched a blistering tirade on the Religious Right and the growing involvement of the evangelical community in partisan politics. In a speech delivered to Princeton University students she warned that evangelical Christian groups had "become a major factor in energising right-wing politics in our country" and that the "moral absolutism" of religious conservatives posed "a threat to the pluralism and tolerance of American democracy." She was especially critical of the Moral Majority, and its proposed crusade to "re-Christianise" America, which she deemed to be "dangerous" and "intolerant." Comparing Christian fundamentalists to Iranian Islamic revolutionaries who had recently overthrown the Shah, she warned "I am beginning to fear that we could have an Ayatollah Khomeini in this country." Referring to evangelists like Falwell and Robertson she said, "He will not have a beard, but he will have a television program."[201]

Predictably, these ill-advised attacks did nothing to help rebuild support for the President amongst the evangelical community. "Pure rubbish," Jerry Falwell observed in rebuffing Harris's remarks as "ill informed and outrageous." He said, "The truth of the matter is that as long as it is a liberal group or an ineffective conservative group speaking out, Secretary Harris...has no objection." Yet when "the Judeo-Christian community bring[s] masses of new recruits to the conservative side of the spectrum they are desperately trying to discredit the movement." What Harris called "Invasion of the political process" was "known in pre-Harris days as

'registering to vote.'"[202] This squabble between Falwell and the administration only reinforced the image of a White House totally estranged from the Christian community. Indeed, the antipathy between the Christian Right and Carter reached absurd proportions. When a rabid rabbit attacked Carter during a fishing trip, Falwell was reported to have declared that swamp rabbits were referred to in the Book of Revelations in connection with Satan. Falwell suggested, Jody Powell observed, "that any true, heterosexual, right-thinking Christian would have seized upon this God-given opportunity to ruthlessly destroy this symbol of the Beast."[203] During the campaign Carter made clear his opposition to partisan political involvement by clergymen like Falwell. Citing his continued support of church-state separation he declared his opposition to groups like the Moral Majority who he accused of "dictating the qualifications for politicians to live up to." He said, "Certain religious groups are trying to say what the definition of a Christian is. That's wrong." Politically astute, Reagan declared that he "saw nothing wrong with Church involvement in politics" and likened it to the involvement of labour unions, a key Democratic Party constituency.[204]

The sense of irritation with conservative Christians for their part in Carter's subsequent defeat in 1980 was exemplified by one last White House memorandum written by Robert Maddox. In December 1980, with Carter defeated, Jackie Mitchum of Pat Robertson's 'The 700 Club' wrote to Carter to ask him to appear on the show and be interviewed by Robertson. For two years Maddox had been attempting to get the President to get his message across on conservative Christian television: now he was no longer interested. Maddox wrote a letter to thank Mitchum for her interest but apologised, warning, "so far, he [the President] has declined most interviews so I do not hold out much hope for the session." Privately, Maddox was less conciliatory. He wrote to Ray Jenkins, "I see no reason the President should do an interview on the 700 club." Maddox clearly believed Robertson had used his television show to Carter's detriment. He told Jenkins, "Pat Robertson did all he could to unseat the President."[205]

Today, over twenty years after evangelical Christianity has returned to political discourse and significance, it remains problematic to portray the Religious Right as either monolithic or unified. A diverse coalition of loosely connected groups, it is

mobilised on an extraordinarily broad number of issues, ranging from social concerns such as abortion and gay rights, to international affairs including nuclear proliferation and climate control. However, if one issue can be said to constitute an under-researched but significant factor in the journey conservative Christians undertook towards abandoning their long cherished attachment to the doctrine of church-state separation, it was the role of Christianity in the American education system. The issue energised evangelical Christians both defensively, in support of their cherished Bible-based way of life through tax-exempt private schools, and aggressively, through their campaign to re-institutionalise prayer in public schools.

One final anecdote highlights a fundamental message within this chapter - the depth of the Carter administration's failure to comprehend the political agenda of the evangelical Christian community, an agenda within which education was primary. Towards the end of his Presidency, Carter recounts that he invited Adrian Rogers, the newly elected fundamentalist President of Carter's own denomination, the Southern Baptist Convention, to a meeting at the White House. As Rogers was leaving he turned to Carter and said, "We are praying, Mr President, that you will abandon secular humanism as your religion and return to Christianity." Carter recalled his shock, admitting simply, "I didn't know what it meant."[206]

Footnotes

[1] Jimmy Carter, *Keeping Faith: Memoirs of a President* (New York: Bantam, 1982), 562.

[2] Howard Norton and Bob Slosser, *The Miracle of Jimmy Carter* (Plainfield, N.J: Logos International, 1976); Niels C. Nielsen, *The Religion of President Carter* (New York: Thomas C. Nelson, 1977); Wesley Pippert, *The Spiritual Journey of Jimmy Carter* (New York: Macmillan, 1978).

[3] Betty Glad, *Jimmy Carter: In Search of the Great White House* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1980).

[4] Leo P. Ribuffo, "God and Jimmy Carter," in *Transforming Faith: The Sacred and the Secular in Modern American History*, ed. Myles Bradbury and James B. Gilbert (Westport: Greenwood, 1989).

[5] Burton I. Kaufman, *The Presidency of James Earl Carter* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1993).

[6] John Dumbrell, *The Carter Presidency: A Re-evaluation* (Manchester: University of Manchester Press, 1995).

[7] Peter Bourne, *Jimmy Carter: A Comprehensive Biography from Plains to Post-Presidency* (New York: Scribner, 1997).

[8] See Peter N. Carroll, *It Seemed Like Nothing Happened: America in the 1970s* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1990); Bruce Schulman, *The Seventies: The Great Shift in American Culture, Society, and Politics* (New York: The Free Press, 2001); Ralph Reed, *Active Faith: How Christians Are Changing The Soul of American Politics* (New York: The Free Press, 1996); David Frum, *How We Got Here. The '70s: The Decade That Brought You Modern Life (For Better or Worse)* (New York: Basic Books, 2000).

[9] A third innovation, reform of the public school curriculum to reflect a Christian worldview, also agitated evangelical and fundamentalist Christians during this period. See Jerry Falwell, *Listen America!*, (New York: Doubleday – Galilee, 1980); Tim LaHaye, *The Battle for the Public Schools: Humanisms Threat to our Children* (New Jersey: Fleming H. Revell, 1983); Alan Peshkin, *God's Choice: The Total World of a Fundamentalist Christian School* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986).

[10] Whereas the overall school enrolment declined by 13.6 per cent between 1970 and 1980, the number of independent Christian schools grew by 95 percent. See Steve Bruce, *The Rise and Fall of the New Christian Right: Protestant Politics in America, 1978-88* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1988), 41. The philosophy of the Christian schools included the enforcement of strict dress codes and the use of corporal punishment. Creationism rather than evolutionary theories were taught: dancing, drinking, long hair and rock music were banned.

[11] Catherine A. Lugg, *For God and Country: Conservatism and American School Policy* (New York: Peter Lang, 1996), 86.

[12] Clyde Wilcox, *God's Warriors: The Christian Right in the Twentieth Century America* (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press 1992), 11.

[13] Peter McLaren, "Schooling for Salvation: Christian Fundamentalism's Ideological Weapons of Death," *Journal of Education* 169 (1987): 132.

[14] Susan Rose, *Keeping Them Out of the Hands of Satan: Evangelical Schooling in America* (New York: Routledge, 1988), 99; Sara Diamond, *Not by Politics Alone: The Enduring Influence of the Christian Right* (New York: The Guildford Press, 1998), 65.

[15] Thomas Edsall and Mary Edsall, *Chain Reaction: The Impact of Race, Rights and Taxes on American Politics* (New York: Norton, 1991), 131-2.

[16] E.J. Dionne, *Why Americans Hate Politics* (New York: Touchstone, 1992), 234.

[17] Bruce Bawer, *Stealing Jesus: How Fundamentalism Betrays Christianity* (New York: Crown Publishers, 1997), 144.

[18] Jimmy Carter, *Turning Point: A Candidate, a State and a Nation Come of Age* (New York: Times Books, 1992), p. 188-9

[19] Jimmy Carter Library (cited hereafter as JCL), Robert Maddox, Interview, December 8, 1980, White House Staff Exit Interviews, Audiotape.

[20] Peshkin, *God's Choice*; William Martin, *With God on our side: The Rise of the Religious Right in America* (New York: Broadway Books, 1996); Robert Shogan, *War Without End: Cultural Conflict and the Struggle for America's Political Future* (Boulder, Col.: Westview, 2002).

[21] Falwell, *Listen America!* , 153.

[22] Ibid., 29.
[23] Douglas Brinkley, *The Unfinished Presidency: Jimmy Carter's Journey Beyond the White House* (New York: Viking, 1998), 295.
[24] James E. Wood, "Religious Fundamentalism and the New Right," *Journal of Church and State* 22 (1980): 413.
[25] Jeffrey K. Hadden and Anson Shupe, *Televangelism: Power and Politics on God's Frontier* (New York: Henry Holt, 1988), 65.
[26] Falwell, *Listen America!*, 206.
[27] Jerry Falwell, *The Fundamentalist Phenomenon: The Resurgence of Conservative Christianity* (New York: Doubleday – Galilee, 1981), 199.
[28] LaHaye, *Battle for the Public Schools*, 9.
[29] Hadden and Shupe, *Televangelism*, 65.
[30] Bruce Nesmith, *The New Republican Coalition: The Reagan Campaigns and White Evangelicals* (New York: P. Lang, 1994), 21.
[31] Tim LaHaye, *Battle for the Family* (New Jersey: Fleming H. Revell, 1982), 34.
[32] David E. Harrell, *Pat Robertson: A Personal, Religious and Political Portrait* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987), 206.
[33] LaHaye, *The Battle for the Public Schools*, rear dust cover.
[34] Ibid., 71-97.
[35] Ibid., 14.
[36] James Wooten, *Dasher: The Roots and Rising of Jimmy Carter* (New York: Summit Books, 1978), 292.
[37] Glad, *Jimmy Carter*, 133.
[38] JCL, Letter, from Robert Lamborn to Dr Abramowitz, June 29, 1977; Letter, from Beth Abramowitz to Robert Lamborn, July 18, 1977. White House Central File (WHCF) Subject File: Education. Box: ED 1. Folder "ED 5/1/77-7/31/77".
[39] JCL, Letter, from Jack Harwell to Jack Carter, April 21, 1977; Letter, from President Carter to Jack Harwell, June 2, 1977; Letter, from Jack Harwell to Jack Carter, November 8, 1977; Letter, from Ben Fisher to Tim Kraft, December 20, 1977; Memorandum, recipients unspecified, "Meeting with Denominational Executives for Higher Education," December 16, 1977; Letter, from Jack U. Harwell to Tim Kraft, December 21, 1977. WHCF Subject File: Education. Box: ED 1. Folder "ED 1/20/77-1/20/81".
[40] Lugg, *For God and Country*, 86.
[41] Edsall and Edsall, *Chain Reaction*, 132.
[42] Richard G. Hutcheson, *God in the White House: How Religion Has Changed the Modern Presidency* (New York: Macmillan, 1988), 157.
[43] Bruce, *The Rise and Fall of the New Christian Right*, 68.
[44] Martin, *With God on our side*, 168.
[45] Hutcheson, *God in the White House*, 157.
[46] Shogan, *War Without End*, 170.
[47] Ibid.
[48] JCL, Memorandum, from Patrick H. Caddell, December 10, 1976. Jody Powell's Files. Box: 4. Folder "Memoranda – Pat Caddell 12/10/76-12/21/76".
[49] Kenneth J. Heinemann, *God is a Conservative: Religion, Politics and Morality in Contemporary America* (New York: New York University Press, 1998), 107.
[50] JCL, Review of the Carter administration, 29 September 1978, and Meeting with Congressional Black Caucus, 25 September 1978. Staff Offices, Louis Martin Files. Box: 22. Folder "Congressional Black Liaison [O/A 6475]".
[51] JCL, Robert Lipshutz, 29 September, 1979, White House Staff Exit Interview, 17.
[52] Stuart Eizenstat Interview, January 29-30, 1982, Miller Centre, University of Virginia, Jimmy Carter Presidential Oral History Project, 67.
[53] Hamilton Jordan Interview, November 6, 1981, Miller Centre, University of Virginia, Jimmy Carter Presidential Oral History Project, 8.
[54] Heineman, *God is a Conservative*, 107.
[55] Martin, *With God on our side*, 71; Jerry Falwell, *Falwell: An Autobiography* (Lynchburg, Liberty House, 1997), 320-21.
[56] JCL, Letter, from Herman J. and Emily S. Eckelmann to President Carter, 23 April, 1979, WHCF Subject File. Box: FI-31. Folder "FI 10-2 1/1/79-6/30/79".; Letter, from Mr and Mrs.

Glenn Brohard to President Carter, 8 May, 1979, WHCF Subject File. Box: FI-34. Folder "FI 10-2 1/1/79-1/20/81".; Letter, from Lesley V. Allen, Ortha B. Allen and Lisa K. Allen to President Carter, July 13, 1978. Name File: Helms, Jesse. Folder "Helms, Jesse 7/1/78-12/31/78".; Letter, from Robert Keefes to Jimmy Carter, 17 October, 1978. WHCF Subject File. Box: FI-34. Folder "FI 10-2 9/21/78-12/31/78".

57 Falwell, *Listen America*!, 164.

58 Heineman, *God is a Conservative*, 100.

59 Martin, *With God on our side*, 173.

60 Falwell, *Listen America!* , 220.

61 Ibid.

62 JCL, Letter, from John M. Ashbrook to President Carter, 3 November, 1978. WHCF Subject File. Box: FI-31. Folder "FI 10-2 10/1/78-12/31/78".

63 Ibid.

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HUMAN RIGHTS, THE EQUAL RIGHTS AMENDMENT AND THE CARTER PRESIDENCY

Through an examination of the activism of the Carter White House in favour of the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA), this chapter will show how the domestic application of Carter's human rights agenda generated a backlash against his Presidency from the evangelical community.[1] Through analysis of the highly divisive and emotive debate over the ERA, it will diverge from scholarship that predominantly views the Carter White House as politically naive, and Carter himself as aloof in the use of Presidential authority in support of his policy agenda. It will instead present an image of an administration that was deeply involved in the legislative process. Carter supported the ERA both because of his Southern Baptist Christian principles and his family background but also because of the political necessity of retaining the support of feminist women, a vital Democratic Party constituency, to whom Carter had made a number of ambitious electoral pledges in 1976. These promises included ratification of the ERA, a key tenet of the feminist agenda throughout the 1970s. This brought Carter into direct conflict with the newly emergent 'pro-family' movement, a force dedicated to the defence of Biblically ordained family values, and constituted in large part by members of evangelical and fundamentalist churches. These activists, led by veteran conservative political activist and devout Roman Catholic Phyllis Schlafly, perceived the ERA as representing a humanist assault upon their families and churches, emblematic of both the dangerous excesses of the secular 'women's liberation' movement and the degradation of the nation's religiously derived moral fibre and ultimately further evidence of the growing influence of an unbiblical worldview in society as a whole, and specifically the federal government. Feeling betrayed by Carter's public advocacy of the ERA and the highly active lobbying of state legislatures undertaken by him and his staff in support of its ratification, opposition to the ERA transformed into anti-White House sentiment and, in turn, laid the basis for the emergence of the Christian Right.

Carter has been criticised for politically naivety, particularly his failure to use the influence of the Presidential office effectively in order to convince legislators to support his agenda.[2] Most have agreed with Kaufman's contention that as a "novice in the White House" Carter "never reached an accommodation with the institutions and interests in Washington he had run against but whose support he needed."[3] Such criticism hinges upon Carter's refusal to abandon the 'outsider' motif that had been pivotal in his election victory. After he was elected, Carter's refusal to engage in the 'horse-trading' activities necessary for effective government meant he did not fit into Neustadt's model of political bargaining.[4] Kellerman writes of Carter's "introverted" personality and his abhorrence of "politicking and schmoozing," whilst Graubard notes that Carter's "barely concealed arrogance" meant that he "was a President who never earned the respect of his political peers."[5] For Jones, Carter was a president who was "basically anti-political."[6] Vice President Walter Mondale recalled, "Carter was not a buddy" and there was "No backslapping."[7] In his memoirs, Democratic Speaker of the House Thomas 'Tip' O'Neill called Carter "the smartest public official I've ever known," yet declared "When it came to the politics of Washington D.C., he never really understood how the system worked." Furthermore, "he didn't want to learn about it either."[8] This chapter presents a different picture of Carter. A thorough interrogation of primary archival data, including personal correspondence and administration memoranda provides a re-evaluation of the image of a President dismissive and ignorant of the legislatory process. This was in marked contrast to his unwillingness to acknowledge the political necessity of engaging with evangelical Christians. It will focus in detail upon Carter's highly activist approach to the passage of the ERA that, as Dumbrell puts it, "runs counter to any view of the Carter Presidency as standing aloof from legislative arm-twisting and as innocent of the ways of Washington."[9]

Jimmy Carter clearly saw his human rights agenda as a continuum of those of his Democratic predecessors in the White House. In accepting the Democratic Party Presidential nomination in 1976 he declared John Kennedy to have been "a brave young President" and called Lyndon Johnson "a great hearted Texan."[10] Regarding the continuation of the legacy of the two Presidents most associated with the advancement of modern civil rights, Carter said, "I just felt as if they were my duty."[11] Although Carter drew comparisons between his own aspirations and the

achievements of previous liberal Democratic Presidents, fellow Democrats were not convinced. Carter did not enjoy unwavering support amongst a number of traditional Democratic Party constituencies. In seeking the White House Carter ran not as an advocate of the liberal agenda of Democratic Party but as an 'outsider' removed from the political establishment. In doing so he raised the suspicions of Democratic activists, at one point stimulating an "anyone BUT Carter" campaign to prevent the Georgian securing the party's Presidential nomination. "I'm an organisation man," said one Pennsylvania Democrat of Carter, and "He scares the hell out of me."[12] Carter's campaign team recognised the need to secure greater support amongst key Democratic constituencies. In a pivotal 1972 memorandum, outlining Carter's ultimately successful political strategy a full four years before the election, Gerald Rafshoon explicitly focused upon the need for Carter to present himself as "a leader in the Democratic Party."[13] In another hugely influential memorandum written two years later Hamilton Jordan advised Carter upon the need to secure support amongst "key Democratic Party workers and activists."[14]

One staunchly Democratic constituency that Carter needed to win over was feminist women. As a southerner, a Baptist, and a political outsider with few ties to the Democratic Party establishment, Carter had to work extra hard to win the support of women's organisations. They simply were not a natural political constituency for him. Feminist women feared that, as a born-again Christian, a Carter Presidency might bring a renewal of conservative moral values to government policy and a slowing of their campaign for gender equality. During the Presidential election campaign Morris B. Abram observed that "for all his brilliance of mind and intellectual achievements...on the upper East side of Manhattan," the Georgian was "still suspect as a Bible thumper and a backwater hick."[15] Even one of Carter's own speechwriters, Patrick Anderson was concerned by the "harsh, judgemental culture" of the Southern Baptist faith and "the glee with which they would remind you that they would someday be sipping iced lemonade in paradise when you and yours were roasting in hell." It lent Carter, Anderson wrote, a "maddening piety" that meant "for all his protestations" he clearly believed himself to "have an inside track to the lemonade stand."[16] This fear was exacerbated by the patriarchal attitude of Southern Baptist Christianity towards gender equality. As Brinkley concedes "feminists found it hard to believe that a born-again Southern Baptist known to address women as

"honey" and "beautiful" could be on their side."[17] Carter later conceded that fundamentalist Christian movements were "almost invariably...led by authoritarian males" with "an overwhelming commitment to subjugate women."[18] This led outspoken feminist leader Bella Abzug to deride Carter during the election campaign as "a closet Moonie."[19] Furthermore, Carter was faced with the need to win votes amongst women from a Republican incumbent whose wife, Betty Ford, was popular with feminist women because of her public advocacy of abortion rights. Once again, the candidate's own campaign team insightfully recognised the need for Carter to improve his appeal amongst women. A month before election day Pat Caddell warned, "Were the election among men, Carter would win in a landslide," but women "view Carter less able than do men." When presented with the statement, "Jimmy Carter would be a risk as President because we don't know what he would do," a majority of women, unlike men, agreed.[20]

In response Carter himself attempted to allay fears that his religiosity made him incompatible with the feminist agenda for gender equality. In an interview for NBC television in March 1976 he declared that he "hated to admit" that there was a part of the Bible with which he could not agree but, referring directly to the Gospel of Paul which dictated male domination of the household, he said "that's a passage I've never been able to accept even though I've tried." To reinforce the point he added, "My wife doesn't accept it either." Talking to reporters at Plains Baptist Church in October of that year on his attitude towards Biblical inerrancy he declared that a literal interpretation of the Gospels was not valid since "Part of the Bible obviously was written in allegories." He dismissed the selective reading of Biblical passages that fundamentalists argued represented incontrovertible proof of female subservience because, he argued, they had been written at a time when male domination was customary in most aspects of society. He added that the Bible was not sexist since Christ had been "committed on an equal basis to women."[21] Far from relegating women to a secondary role, for Carter, the exaltation of Mary, mother of Christ, was indicative of the status of women in Christian theology.[22]

During the election campaign Carter also drew attention to his upbringing in rural Georgia and his unusual adult family life, both of which had been punctuated with strong and independent female role models and influences. Carter attributed many of

his core political principles to the influence his mother, who Carter recalls as the "real leader" of the Carter family.[23] Whilst he remembered his father Earl to be "quite conservative," Carter's attitude to equality derived from his mother who he described as "a liberal," and a "natural champion for those who were weak or the object of scorn or discrimination."[24] During her son's campaign she said "I've always had a feeling for the underdog."[25] While his father had been conventional and cautious, it was Carter's mother, wrote Anderson, who gave him his "big dreams."[26] Lillian Carter also possessed a level of independence in the running of the household that was unusual in a rural southern family of the era. Carter recalled, "All the time I was growing up it seemed on the surface that my father made the final decisions in our house." It was not until later that he realised, "how strong willed my mother was and how much influence she had in our family affairs." Household management, the purchasing of food and organising of bill payments were all areas in which "Mama prevailed with no discussion."[27] Kandy Stroud observed Lillian Carter to be "spunky, determined, witty" and "dominating."[28] Carter called his mother "the most liberal women in Georgia" and said "It is obvious she had a great influence on me."[29] When Lillian Carter herself was asked for her opinion on the ERA she replied, "I've been liberated all my life."[30] Moreover, Carter presented his marriage as the modern model of gender equality. Rosalynn had not been a typical middle-class southern homemaker. Carter liked to recite tales of how, after his wife's father had died, Rosalynn had washed hair in the local beauty parlour to help the family make ends meet. In his campaign biography he wrote, "When we decided to enter politics, Rosalynn helped me from every standpoint. We have been full partners in every major decision since we first married."[31] Carter also recalled his admiration for the women of his Georgia hometown. Although "everyone in a farm family had to work long hours," the heaviest burden, he wrote, fell on the women. "In addition to their fieldwork, often more onerous than the men's ploughing," the women were also responsible for "all the cooking, cleaning, other housework, and care for the family garden," he wrote. Later, when he ran the family peanut warehouse, he had "a number of highly valued female customers, some of whom operated very large farms."[32] With this in mind Carter recalled his unease that female workers were not treated equally with males. He noted that men were paid $1.25 a day, whilst women received only 75 cents.[33]

Carter also sought to capture the votes of women by actively addressing gender-specific issues during the 1976 Presidential campaign. Carter pledged to "tear down the walls" that obstructed gender equality. He outlined a nine-point program to meet the demands of the women's leaders, including support for the ratification of the ERA. Stating simply that "Equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any state on account of sex," the ERA was the cornerstone of the agenda of the feminist movement. Its ratification represented the most visible symbol of their campaign to overturn what they perceived as ingrained political, legal and social inequality. Thus Carter's declaration that "I understand the special discrimination that has hurt women for so long in the country," and promise to "get ERA passed" held significant electoral appeal. Carter went further, conspicuously equating the importance of the ERA to that of Lyndon Johnson's 1964 Voting Rights. Calling that act "the best thing that ever happened to the South," because it not only "liberated blacks but liberated the whites as well" he said, "the women's movement can do just as much for men as for women by passing the Equal Rights Amendment." Passage of the ERA was vital in order to give "women a chance in life" he declared.[34] When asked later to expand upon his position on ERA Carter replied, "I can answer that in three words: I'm for it."[35]

In part because of Carter's promise to support ratification of the ERA, the women's movement enthusiastically endorsed his candidacy at the 1976 Democratic Party convention. In accepting the party's nomination he announced that it was "time to guarantee an end to discrimination because of race or sex." He demanded "full involvement in the decision-making processes of government by those who know what it is to suffer from discrimination," promising "they'll be in the government if I'm elected."[36] Feminist leaders like Betty Friedan were won over. She informed reporters that Carter had told her "as President he would want to eliminate legal barriers against women" which was "a very important commitment we have never had from any President, candidate or nominee."[37] Friedan observed of the convention "This is so different...I was moved to tears by Carter."[38] The support of the women's movement helped Carter win an extremely close electoral victory in 1976. A memorandum from Patrick Caddell written just days after the election observed that Carter's pledges had meant his appeal had "gained tremendously with women," although he did presciently warn Carter that his female support was

weakest amongst the "non-working housewives" who were later most likely to be attracted to conservative Christian organisations.[39]

Throughout the decade the feminist movement had experienced consistent success.[40] These advances had been made under Richard Nixon and Gerald Ford. As a Democrat Carter raised feminist expectations even higher. "If the women's movement could accomplish [so much] during Republican administrations," asked one feminist, "could they not achieve so much more with a Democrat in the White House?"[41] In particular, ratification of the ERA now seemed assured. Shogan observes that at the time of Carter's election the ERA "seemed as close to coinciding with the American consensus on social and cultural values as was possible for a political issue."[42] Whitney notes the failure to ratify the ERA before 1976 seemed "like an oversight," simply "a mistake that would be cleared up."[43] Ratification by the necessary three-quarters of the states needed for a Constitutional amendment looked to be a foregone conclusion. Bella Abzug summed up the overwhelming sense of optimism amongst the feminist movement at the time, after all, she asked, "Who'd be against equal rights for women?"[44]

Yet Carter was unwilling to jeopardise his support amongst Bible-believing religious conservatives. Both as a candidate and later as President Carter was often attacked for his lack of ideological consistency, what Ribuffo called Carter's "propensity for murkiness."[45] His elusiveness caused Wooten to name Carter "the man of a thousand faces," and led *The New York Times* to note "Whenever Mr. Carter came close to embracing liberal dogmas," he almost always "carefully qualified his remarks to satisfy some conservative objections."[46] Bert Lance, a long time political ally of Carter recalled that his friend "was conservative to the conservatives, he was moderate to the moderates and he was liberal to the liberals. He covered the whole spectrum of political philosophy."[47] Carter's political manoeuvring on the ERA during the 1976 Presidential campaign was particularly obvious. For example, when he addressed voters in the Southern heartlands of born-again Christianity he was careful not to lead them to believe that he did not support their scripturally based view of gender equality. Regarding the debate over the ERA in Georgia in 1973 and 1974, whilst he was State Governor, he recalled that the mail he received ran 9 to 1 in opposition.[48] He had also falsely told anti-ERA demonstrators in Georgia that his

wife, Rosalynn, did not support the ERA.[49] The Georgia legislature refused to ratify the amendment during his governorship. He publicly distanced himself from the feminist movement when he reminded southern voters that "I'm from Georgia, and I understand Georgia, South Carolina, Alabama and North Carolina – states that didn't ratify the Equal Rights Amendment." He cautioned feminist "brassiere-burning firebrands" against coming to the South to down "ram the Equal Rights Amendment down the(ir) throats" and admitted that ERA activists sometimes appeared to be "a movement by the Gay Liberation Front or Gloria Steinem and other more liberal and exotic characters," who were seeking "to destroy proper relationships between husbands and wives.[50] Carter's inconsistency did not go unnoticed. In his memoirs of his time as speechwriter for the Carter campaign Patrick Anderson recalled his fury when references to the ERA were edited out of an address he had written for Carter on women's rights so as to avoid alienating conservative voters. "I couldn't believe it," he said.[51]

In contrast to Anderson, most evangelicals were impressed. They were fully aware that Carter's own Christian denomination, the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) stoutly defended a patriarchal position on gender equality, directly attributing this to an inerrant interpretation of Biblical Scripture. The SBC believed that the Apostle Paul's first letter to the Corinthians dictated male authority over women in church and in the home. Paul dictated that women were to be "commanded to be under obedience" (34:35).[52] To Southern Baptists, the ERA violated "the Biblical role which stresses the equal worth but not always the sameness of function of women."[53] Time and again during the election campaign Carter made clear the importance of the Baptist faith to his political philosophy. When criticised by liberals for his membership of a conservative denomination Carter impressed fellow evangelicals by refusing to leave the church and declaring, "If it were a country club I would have quit, but this is not my church it is God's church."[54] Significantly, Carter explicitly pledged that he would not utilise the influence of the office of the Presidency to pressure state legislatures over ratification of the ERA. It was, he said, a matter to be decided "between the individual legislator and his hometown women."[55] He told the Oklahoma Senate "I don't think it would be appropriate for the President to try to involve himself directly in the deliberations of the Oklahoma state legislature or any other."[56] His apparent refusal to compromise on his religious principles helped

attract evangelical support for Carter's candidacy in 1976. Steadfast in their belief that their Christian values were those of a majority of Americans, religious conservatives hoped that Carter's promise to once again "make government as good as [the American] people" would herald a revitalisation of Biblical morality in Washington.[57]

Phyllis Schlafly, Pro-Family Christians and the anti-ERA campaign

Even before Carter came into office in 1976, the forces of religious conservatism were marshalling to prevent the ratification of the ERA. The first national political organisation dedicated solely to preventing its ratification was STOP ERA, formed in 1972 by the conservative Republican political activist Phyllis Schlafly. A former campaigner for right-wing Presidential candidate Barry Goldwater, Schlafly organised her campaign through the Republican women's network that subscribed to her conservative newsletter, the Phyllis Schlafly Report. STOP ERA was dedicated to lobbying state legislatures to block ratification. Feminist pro-ERA activists clearly underestimated Schlafly. Frum points out that Schlafly was "not the sort of person feminists found it easy to take seriously." She wore bouffant hair, pastel suits and pink lipstick. She began her speeches by thanking her husband for allowing her time away from the family home. She appeared to represent precisely the sort of pre-suffrage matriarchal figure that feminists had sought to transcend since the 1960s. Unfortunately for them, writes Frum, "she also happened to be something none of them were: a genius grass-roots political organiser."[58] Schlafly was pivotal in the eventual defeat of the ERA. Conover and Gray observe that without Schlafly "the ERA probably would be in the Constitution today."[59] She "literally was the anti-ERA movement."[60] She became, in the words of her biographer, the "Sweetheart of the Silent Majority."[61] Merely mention her name, wrote Berkeley, "and feminists shudder."[62]

Schlafly played a key role in encouraging the politicisation of religious conservatives. At first her anti-ERA campaign focused upon secular and legal arguments against the amendment.[63] She soon realised, as Shogan observes, that for those seeking to politically activate the religious conservative community, "the ERA was a godsend" because "It offered the opportunity to draw a stark contrast between traditional values and the cultural revolution on one of the foundations of society," namely "the importance of distinctions along the lines of gender."[64] Schlafly consciously looked to build support for her campaign amongst the congregations of conservative churches. "We realised the forces against us were too powerful," she recalled of the feminist movement. "We needed reinforcements." That was when she "sent out the word to the churches." Schlafly remembered that religious conservatives were politically inexperienced. "The ones who came out of the churches...had never been to [a state] capitol before" she said, but under her tutelage, "they learned." Her campaign successfully transcended religious doctrinal differences. The anti-ERA movement was composed largely of a multi-denominational cross-section of the religious conservative community, including not only evangelical and fundamentalist Protestants but also Catholics, Jews and members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter day Saints. Unlike many of the organisations of the Christian Right that appealed consciously to Bible-believing Protestants and socially conservative Catholics, the constituents of Schlafly's anti-ERA campaign might therefore more usefully be described broadly as religious conservatives. "The Catholics, Protestants, Baptists, Presbyterians, Methodists, Mormons, orthodox Jews, many of these people had never been in the same room before," she said. "I used to say now the person sitting next to you might not be saved, but we are going to work together on the Equal Rights Amendment."[65] Another of Schlafly's anti-ERA organisations was Eagle Forum, whose motto "for God, Home and Country" explicitly linked the institutions most cherished by conservative Christians. Describing itself as an organisation determined "to defend the values that have made America the greatest nation in the world," Eagle Forum used overtly religious rhetoric in generating support for her campaign.[66] "We want to pray as though it's all up to God, but we want to work as though it is all up to us," said Schlafly. "If there is one word that best describes us, it is that we are believers. We believe that God is in his heaven, that eternal life awaits us...in eternal principles that do not change."[67] In particular, she was pivotal in convincing religious

conservatives that the ERA represented a feminist attack on their closely guarded traditional and Biblically based family. She warned them that Betty Friedan had declared "The ERA has become both symbol and substance for the whole of the modern women's movement for equality," a movement whose agenda centred upon "the restructuring of the institutions of [the] home."[68] Friedan, Schlafly claimed, had called housewifery a "comfortable concentration camp."[69] Schlafly pointed out that another high-profile advocate of ERA, Gloria Steinem, had stated her hope that by the year 2000 society would "raise our children to believe in human potential, not God."[70] To emphasise their attachment to the traditional gender roles of husbands and wives in states where a vote on ERA was tabled, Schlafly urged activists to bake loaves of bread as gifts for legislators – "from breadmakers to the breadwinners."[71] The home cooked food they distributed bore the motto "My heart and my hand went into this dough / For the sake of the family please vote no."[72] One evangelical wrote to her state representative, "Forced busing, forced mixing, forced housing. Now forced women! No thank you!"[73] Schlafly's organisations helped to transform religious conservatives into the self-defined "pro-family" movement that provided a key constituency of the Christian Right. Berkeley credits Schlafly with having "both anticipated and paved the way" for organisations like Moral Majority.[74]

The anti-ERA campaign had a strong appeal to conservative Christians who opposed the amendment for a multitude of reasons, all grounded in a religious worldview based on Holy Scripture. In particular, they dismissed the concept of an egalitarian marriage in favour of a hierarchical one because the origins of patriarchy were Biblically ordained. In studying the attractiveness of evangelical churches Roof notes that conservative religious institutions clearly reinforced the desirability of "a gender-specific division of labour" to their congregations. This meant roles as "breadwinner and provider for males, and moral and religious nurturer for females."[75] According to Roof, female subservience was encouraged through "cultural narratives emphasising the good women as a helpmeet," that is "a wife and partner to the man and as mother to her children."[76] Evangelicals also believed that Scripture taught the need for discipline and acquiescence to authority, a sort of social "chain of command."[77] "The Bible clearly states," wrote Ed Hindson, a popular evangelical author, "that the wife is to submit to her husbands leadership and help him fulfil God's will for his life," and therefore "She is to submit to him just as she

would submit to Christ as her Lord." [78] They pointed out that Ephesians mandated "the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church...As the church is subject to Christ, so let wives also be subject in everything to their husbands" (5:23-24).

As a part of the feminist project to create an entirely unisex society the ERA would radically alter this Biblically ordained gender relationship. As one pro-family activist complained, "Under the Judeo-Christian tradition, men are responsible. I did not get married as an equal partner."[79] In short, the ERA defied God's law, ranking alongside pornography, crime, homosexuality and drug abuse as indicative of the dangers of abandoning Biblical values. The enforced gender equality of the ERA would destroy the Christian family and as such, wrote Jerry Falwell, "the foundation of the entire social structure."[80] For Falwell, the ERA was nothing less than part of "a holy war" against the family, fought between "those who love Jesus Christ and those who hate him."[81] Falwell also saw ERA as part of the homosexual agenda. He warned "Feminists desire to eliminate God-given differences that exist between the sexes; that is why they are pro-homosexual and lesbian." It was "shocking how many feminists are lesbians," he said.[82] He continuously denounced the links between pro-ERA feminists and the "militant gays and known, practicing homosexuals."[83] Tim LaHaye asked "Who needs ERA?" Like Falwell his answer was not women, "but lesbians and homosexuals."[84] Evangelists also warned that ERA would end restrictions on abortion, an act, observed the Christian Action Council that was "a violation of God's fundamental laws for human society."[85] One typical pro-family mail shot, sent out by a Christian organisation entitled "Parents of Minnesota" declared

> Man and women have never been equal, aren't equal and can never be equal as long as they exist. Each was given a different role, a role that complimented [sic] the other, roles that blend into a harmonious unit. This unit is called the family and the family is the core of society. Now society can be good or depraved, civilised or uncivilised. It either possesses order or chaos depending on the degree on which the male and female sex roles are accepted or rejected. Thus, it is, that moral degeneration replaces moral virtues, and SOCIETY RETRACTS BACK, back, back INTO BARBARISM! [86]

In Georgia an Independent Baptist minister published an essay in opposition to ERA. Again reiterating the Biblical nature of patriarchal gender relationships he wrote,

> God clearly created male and female as different and distinct, though both are equally human. Thus, to deny the difference is to deny reality, but more than that, to deny the Word of God. I would point out here that I believe this is the essence of ERA. It is a denial of God, both as to His person and to His program and purposes for mankind.[87]

Furthermore, for conservative Christians the ERA was clearly indicative of the dangerous trend towards the transfer of state powers to the institutions of a federal government they believed to be dominated by secular humanists. Evangelical anti-Washington sentiment centred not upon Section I, but upon Section II of the ERA that declared "The Congress shall have the power to enforce, by appropriate legislation, the provisions of this article." The open ended nature of the language led Jerry Falwell to fear that the amendment would become "a blank check" for the government to "to tell Americans what it means *after it is ratified.*"[88] Fellow Conservative Christian Rosemary Thomson clearly revealed the anti-Washington sentiment of her constituents when she warned, "The real concern is that the federal government would come and tell states that all laws must comply with what they think."[89] The ERA would also mean federal intervention into the affairs of their churches. One piece of anti-ERA literature declared that the National Organisation for Women (NOW) was demanding "women be ordained in religious bodies where that right is still denied," and warned that "To refuse to do this will be illegal under ERA."[90] One evangelical author argued that "The assertion of governmental authority over areas of life once considered to be under individual and private control means that the American state has become more than government." Now it was "acting as if it possesses the attributes of deity."[91] This anti-government sentiment inevitably brought religious conservatives into open conflict with the Carter White House. Their opposition to the ERA, and as a result Carter, was extremely effective. After 1975 only one state ratified the amendment and a number of other states sought legal ways in which to nullify their previous ratification.

The Carter Presidency and the Failure of the Equal Rights Amendment

Once in office Jimmy Carter was faced with the need to retain the support of key constituents within an increasingly fractious Democratic Party, few of whose members owed him a strong political allegiance. Nesmith observes the desperate "need for Carter" to act in order to "hold together the increasingly fragile New Deal coalition."[92] One memorandum from Pat Caddell sent in December 1976, during the transition period and whilst Carter was still planning his new administration, warned "The Democratic party is in serious national trouble," and Carter's "political situation is precarious for a Democrat. Any loss that he sustains among the non-traditional groups which supported him in 1976 that is not compensated for among other groups would put his political future in danger."[93] Stuart Eizenstat also observed Carter's difficulties with his fellow Democrats first hand. Recalling one difficult meeting with labour leaders he noted the strained relationship caused in part by Carter's religious faith.

> And here's a President who is a fine Christian man, coming in and saying grace before the meal. One of the international Presidents made some sort of coarse joke, made some coarse remark that sort of berated the President for not doing something, and they all laughed at it. And it just, you know, it just turned him off. At the end of that lunch, he said he would never repeat that experience again.
>
> I think it was an important lunch because it was face-to-face with all of the leaders of the central backbone of the Democratic Party for the last four years. They didn't seem to have any respect for him which I thought they should exercise. They didn't show the sensitivity to his background that I thought they should have, and he wasn't part of their whole framework and background. And it was painfully obvious at that point that regardless of what he might do or say, neither was going to feel terribly comfortable with each other.[94]

Of the tension between the White House and what he called "screaming, unrealistic, doctrinaire liberals," Hamilton Jordan later observed "Our fights were always with Democrats" because the White House "had no unifying Democratic consensus." The

administration was forced to "put together one coalition" for some issues and "an entirely different coalition" for others. As such, "the same fragmentation that allowed [Carter] to be elected President made it more difficult for him to govern." Simply put, there was "general chaos in the party."[95] Similarly, Landon Butler observed that Carter tried to avoid "the obvious conclusion that the Democratic agenda was unpopular" but "a Democratic President does not have the freedom to completely repudiate his party's agenda."[96]

One Democratic group whose expectations had been raised by the promises that Carter made during the election campaign was feminist women. Indeed, Patrick Caddell wrote to Carter to warn him that he would face problems because of his "over promising" regarding what he could realistically achieve for feminists.[97] The need for Carter to placate feminists did not relent throughout his Presidency because of the resignation of Midge Costanza, caused in large part by her criticism of the President's abortion policy, and by his decision to fire Bella Abzug a year later, after she complained when Carter scheduled only fifteen minutes for a meeting with Abzug and feminist representatives.[98] Afterwards Abzug threatened to mobilise feminists against the Carter White House, telling the President "You'll regret this...I've got a constituency out there."[99] Finally, Carter fired Linda Tarr-Whelan, who had been specifically hired by the White House to act as a link between the administration and women's organisations, particularly those seeking ratification of the ERA.[100]

As soon as he took office, female advisors and feminist activists consistently pressured Carter to lobby aggressively in favour of ERA. They made it known that their continued support could only be guaranteed by aggressive political activism by the President in favour of its ratification. Just days after his election, Mary E. King, Deputy Director of Action, a Washington based women's organisation, wrote to Carter with a long list of demands, including ratification of ERA. Her high expectations of the new President were clear. "With your leadership" she wrote, "you can accomplish more than all the last 38 Presidents for over half the population." What was required from him, she said, was more "Direct Presidential Leadership."[101] Feminist organisations warned Carter of the electoral consequences of his failure to provide such leadership. In March 1977 one such organisation

entitled the Ad Hoc Coalition For Women met with Carter and Vice-President Mondale. They explicitly linked their expectations regarding ERA to Carter's pledges on human rights. They demanded that Carter "demonstrate his concern with the human rights crisis in our own country by exerting the necessary moral leadership to obtain ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment." Carter should "reiterate his support of the amendment made during the campaign" perhaps dedicating "a fireside chat" to do so. Passage of the amendment "must be given higher priority in a Democratic administration," especially when "14 of the 15 unratified states have overwhelmingly Democratic legislatures and 23 of the 15 have Democratic governors." They complained that the ERA "requires greater commitment of the White House resources and staff than currently exists."[102] NOW released a newsletter, entitled "National ERA: A Call to Action," that judged the President to be a "Target" for activists, naming him personally on "a constant list for pressure" for activists as part of the ratification strategy.[103] In February 1979 Sheila Greenwald, the executive director of NOW wrote to the Special Assistant to the President for Women's Affairs, Sarah Weddington, to forcefully remind the White House that it was "crucial that ERA maintain high visibility," and hoping that her letter would "serve as a note of encouragement" for the White House to do more to support ratification.[104]

However, as Berkeley observes, feminists quickly became "disenchanted" with Carter over what they believed to be his lacklustre efforts in support of women, including his "lukewarm support for abortion rights and the ERA."[105] In one example early in his Presidency, Secretary Juanita Krups wrote to Carter to complain that the number of qualified women appointees in the White House was "disappointing."[106] One feminist activist who wrote was highly critical of Carter's efforts regarding ERA and warned Weddington that the President "should not be saying that ERA is a top priority if it isn't."[107] Activists were infuriated with his failure to assist a NOW sponsored boycott of states that had not ratified the ERA.[108] Some feminists blamed not only Carter but his staff for the failure to ratify the ERA. One women's leader, Catherine East, wrote directly to Rosalynn Carter to urge her "to consult with you, Judy [the President's daughter in law] and Sarah Weddington on women's issues rather than Jody Powell or Ham Jordan, who manage to hurt the ERA and the women's movement with every move." Referring to the firing of Bella

Abzug as co-chair of the National Advisory Committee for Women, East wrote that "making a martyr of Bella is no easy task," but Powell and Jordan "did it with ease."[109]

Carter clearly heeded the feminist warnings. In a repudiation of the position taken by his own Southern Baptist denomination, he consistently acted as a strident and highly public advocate of the ERA throughout his Presidency. For example, in an address to the National Women's Political Caucus (NWPC) in March 1977 he admitted that the "failure to pass the equal rights amendment hurts us as we try to set a standard of commitment to human rights throughout the world," and he pledged women his administration's "continuing, unswerving, never-diminishing commitment...to the goals that you and I know are crucial to a better life for all Americans." He was extremely optimistic that with his support ERA would be passed. In regard to the failure to reach the number of states required for ratification he told them "I hope we can correct that defect by next year."[110] Five months later in a Presidential Proclamation marking August 26 as 'Women's Equality Day' Carter proclaimed "Ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment must be completed. Achievement of this goal was essential because "Equal rights for women are an inseparable part of human rights for all." He declared,

> Strong action is needed to guarantee women total equality in the areas of politics and government, education, employment and related benefits, health care, housing and justice. The needs, hopes and problems of a complex society demand the talents, imagination and dedication of all its citizens without regard to sex.[111]

In June 1979 a Presidential Statement, signed by Carter, in support of the ERA was sent to women's magazines for publication.[112] Moreover, Carter used his State of the Union addresses throughout his Presidency to make public his support of the ERA. He used his first address to Congress in 1978 to declare "the elimination of barriers that restrict the opportunities available to women" was a "major priority for our Nation." "What we inherited in the past must not be permitted to shackle us in the future," he said.[113] In his 1979 address he pledged to "work with all my strength for equal opportunity for all Americans," and to ensure that the "legal rights of women

as citizens are guaranteed under the laws of our land."[114] A year later he described himself to be "committed as strongly as possible to the ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment," calling its adoption "one of my highest priorities."[115] Carter explicitly linked ratification of the ERA with his high-profile human rights policy. He declared the ERA to be an issue of "basic human rights," and announced "Today the United States speaks out on behalf of human rights for all the people of the world. We must be no less vigilant in our defence of human rights at home."[116] In 1980 he told a leadership conference on civil rights "We've got to get the Equal Rights Amendment passed."[117] He told a town meeting at Temple University that he was "strongly in favour of the ratification of the ERA."[118] In May 1980 he told a meeting of the League of Women voters of his strong desire to see "the Equal Rights Amendment applicable throughout the Nation."[119] The President "constantly emphasised it in speeches he gave around the country," recalled Weddington.[120] She remembered one instance when Carter

> Gave a speech for the ERA in Abilene, Texas, which is not your prime audience. But they responded well. We had a series of briefings for business leaders, civics leaders, so on and so forth, here in the White House. The President himself came up with the idea of sponsoring [an] ERA fundraiser to raise money, and he was the principal guest at the event which raised...about $115,000 clear, net, and was the largest single event to benefit the ERA that anyone has ever had." [121]

His support for ERA was not only public but was also personally reiterated within his own administration. Carter himself wrote a memorandum to heads of departments outlining guidelines for department heads because of his unequivocal support for ERA. "I have made clear," he wrote "that ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment is and will remain a priority with this administration." He directed the head of each White House department and agency to take the following actions:

> -- Make the most of public appearance opportunities to demonstrate the Administration's commitment to the ERA.
> -- Include in public speeches...language emphasising the importance of the Equal Rights Amendment and assure that similar language is included in the speeches made by officials of their agency or department.

Carter also told his staff that he had tasked Midge Costanza to "focus her efforts on women's issues," with "particular emphasis on the Equal Rights Amendment." He told her to "meet regularly with department and agency heads, [and] their staffs, and representatives of women's interests to assure full and immediate implementation of this directive."[122] Carter himself often met with representatives of women's organisations to discuss how he could support ERA. For example in September 1979 Carter sponsored a "Presidential Salute to the ERA," inviting more than 800 supporters to the White House, followed by ERA strategy meetings with leaders in December 1979 and January 1980.[123] In February 1980 he personally addressed a White House ERA briefing and met with the Presidents of women's organisations in support of the ratification effort.[124] Sarah Weddington recalled that "The President met monthly with the Presidents of national women's organisations" often "discussing ERA." Overall, the White House was "very active." Carter "did try to use the influence, the persuasive ability, and the platform that being President gives one for the benefit of the Equal Rights Amendment."[125]

In spite of Carter's advocacy, the strength of the anti-ERA movement made the prospect for its ratification, once seemingly inevitable, appear highly precarious. In order to give themselves more time, ERA advocates were forced to focus their energies in support of an extension to the deadline for ratification from March 1979 to June 1982. Senior members of Carter's own staff warned the President of the political risks of supporting the extension application which Phyllis Schlafly branded a "fraudulent proposal prompted by a little bunch of military radicals."[126] Once again Carter's aides advised the President to take a course of action because of the need to win the support of women, despite acknowledging that there would be a backlash from conservative opposition, and again underestimating the level of the evangelical reaction. In March 1978 Stuart Eizenstat wrote to the President. Firstly, he noted "There is not unanimity in favour of extension" and that "There is little apparent support in Congress for the extension." He warned that should President choose to support extension the "political benefit is decidedly marginal." Therefore Carter should procrastinate. "An announcement might be better timed six months from now" wrote Eizenstat. Noting "Mrs Carter has publicly supported the extension," Eizenstat advised the President that he might want to ask her to play down this support, writing "You might talk with her about the tradeoffs of an

announcement." However, Eizenstat then went on to urge Carter to recognise the more pressing need to retain the support of feminist groups, noting that an "announcement today would please some women's leaders."[127] He advised Carter to use the extension plan to shore up feminist support by writing to key members of the Subcommittee on Civil Rights to "make clear your position in favour of an extension." "Perhaps of equal importance" he wrote, this "should blunt some of the criticism we have been feeling from women's groups on you lack of visibility on the issue."[128] On the same day Carter's stridently feminist adviser Midge Costanza wrote to the President to inform him "ERA is at an extremely critical point on the hill." She warned that a planned House Judiciary Committee vote on the extension had been postponed because of "lack of sufficient support" and that the "chances of postponing a vote beyond that date are nil." Clearly aware of the criticism from feminist groups that Carter was not expending the necessary political capital to achieve ratification she told Carter "There is a consensus that a final push must come from the White House to obtain the additional votes needed." Costanza listed a number of Congressmen who opposed the extension but "may be susceptible to an appeal from the President." Some of these would require "a hard sell" from Carter, but Costanza was insistent. "All [of the calls]" she said, "were critical."[129]

Once again Carter ignored religious conservative opposition and instead chose to please feminist leaders by publicly supporting the extension of the time period for ERA ratification. Acceding to the request of Eizenstat and Costanza he wrote to a number of the high-profile members of the Judiciary Committee personally, including the Committee chairman, Peter Rodino, declaring his "strong support for an extension of the deadline." He wrote "I am concerned that the current deadline may be an unnecessary barrier toward ensuring more than a hundred million Americans their constitutional rights." Clearly aware that ERA opponents like Schlafly questioned the constitutional legality of the extension proposal, Carter took time to outline his position:

> There is no constitutional requirement that ratification occur within a seven-year period, nor within the period originally established for ratification. Under the Constitution, in the opinion of the Justice Department, Congress is empowered to determine the period of ratification and can change, by resolution, any previously established ratification period.[130]

Evangelicals wrote to the White House to protest Carter's support of the time extension. "It is extremely unfair to extend the date of ratification" wrote one, "This is a democracy – we are allowed to say 'No.'" Another evangelical wrote "I do hope that the proposed extension for ratifying...ERA will be dropped...enough time, energy and money have already been wasted." She wrote, "I am proud and grateful to be a wife, mother and homemaker in this free land. Please, help protect my rights to remain free." One evangelical alerted Carter as to the increasingly organised nature of religious opposition to ERA. "There are several large religious bodies in the United States opposed to ERA and we belong to one of these," she wrote. Her letter was revealing of the types of concerns that evangelicals had about the ERA. "It would (if passed) repeal abortion laws...decency laws...concerning adultery...would be struck down." It was un-Christian because American women had been "endowed by her creator with feminine rights." Finally, she observed, "Religious institutions whose doctrines designate different roles for the sexes would be discriminated against under ERA." "This country was founded on the idea of belief in almighty God and religious liberty was a part of it," she wrote.[131]

Carter ignored their pleas. His lobbying was vital in convincing Congress to extend the period of ratification by 30 months. Weddington observed that Carter's actions "changed about seven no votes to yes votes, which did make the difference in the final passage [of the extension application]" and that "the President and Vice-President played a key role in turning some crucial votes, particularly at the last minute."[132] Carter publicly signed the Congressional resolution that extended the ratification deadline. Although a Presidential signature was not required on such a resolution, he declared "I particularly wanted to add my signature to demonstrate as strongly as I can my full support for the Equal Rights Amendment."[133]

An interrogation of the Carter administration's archival papers reveals a picture of a President time and again proactively seeking ratification of the ERA. It indicates numerous occasions when Carter and his family personally intervened in an attempt to influence debates in state legislatures regarding ratification. For example, when a memorandum from Congressional Liaison Frank Moore's office, this time warning that the support of the entire Carter family was necessary to achieve ratification, he again acted. Moore's aides noted that Betty Ford "has been working hard for ERA,"

and there is "a growing perception among women that the Fords care much more about equal rights than do the incumbent First Family." This, they warned, "was especially embarrassing for Democratic women," and could "cause embarrassment for the Democratic Party." This could result in "a substantial fall-out" if the White House did not "come out of the woodwork now, and strongly." Failure to do so was "not worth the risk" they said.[134] Once again Carter headed the advice. Both the First Lady and Judy Carter were enlisted in support of ratification. Indeed, Rosalynn Carter recalled having just two key objectives for her time in White House, the first being to promote care of the mentally sick, the second the passage of the ERA.[135] After her husband left office the former First Lady recalled, "I did just about anything I could for the cause."[136] She held pro-ERA events and meetings, delivered speeches and wrote letters in support of the amendment. She made one particularly strong appeal in support of the ERA to a group of prominent female leaders in April 1979. With one eye clearly on the conservative pro-family lobby she described herself as "a relatively traditional person" but went to say, "I am not threatened by the Equal Rights Amendment. I feel freed by it."[137] In her memoirs she recalls being asked to be auctioned off as a dance partner to raise funds for the ERA campaign. "My staff was wondering if it would be appropriate for a First Lady to be auctioned off" she said, but her husband told her "Well, it's better than being a wallflower!" so "I danced for the ERA."[138]

Another example of the First Lady's involvement was a memorandum sent to the President by his Congressional Liaison Frank Moore entitled "Phone Calls on ERA." Moore's memo told Carter that the House Judiciary Committee was preparing to vote on ERA and that support was two votes short of the 18 required. Moore listed a number of Congressmen who had yet to decide how to vote and he urged the need to call them to win their support. Moore noted of one Republican from New York "Privately says he will vote for the amendment," but "We need to get a firm commitment from him." Another, from North Carolina "was still 50-50." These calls, Moore stressed "could make all the difference." Carter himself forwarded the memorandum to his wife, personally writing on the memorandum, "Rosalynn – make all of them." In return the First Lady personally confirmed that she had done so.[139] Later she recalled that "Jimmy and I made dozens of calls to state legislators."[140] Other administration family members were also involved. Joan Mondale, the wife of

the Vice-President met the wives of Senators in key states and asked them to encourage their husbands to support the amendment.[141]

In response Schlafly personally charged the First Lady with "improper" use of "White House pressure" that "violated Article V of the Constitution" which reserved ratification power to the Congress and state legislatures. Schlafly led demonstrators to the gates of the White House brandishing signs declaring "Mrs Carter, you have no right to lobby for ERA," and "Mrs Carter: Please Obey Article 5!" Schlafly declared "Rosalynn Carter is a part of the Executive branch. She wakes up every morning on an Executive branch bed. She made calls to a number of state legislators on an Executive branch telephone."[142] Schlafly charged that one North Carolina Congressman had cast a key vote in favour of the extension only after the White House pledged $1.6 million in federal funding for a local airport.[143] According to Schlafly, Rosalynn also played a key role in winning ERA ratification in Indiana. Democratic Senator Birch Bayh had called the White House with the news that the Indiana Senate was deadlocked 25-25 on the issue.[144] When the tie was broken and Indiana became the thirty-fifth (and last) state to ratify, Schlafly told a rally of supporters in Springfield, "The only way they got ERA through Indiana was by telephone calls from Rosalynn Carter," who had "turned on her southern charm and told one undecided Senator 'I'll campaign for you if you vote for ERA.'"[145] Judy Carter received similar treatment from Schlafly and her supporters. When the President's daughter in-law travelled to Nevada to lobby state legislators, pickets greeted her with signs reading "Go Home, Mrs Carter. You are wasting taxpayers' money!"[146]

Yet when religious conservatives accused the Carter White House of improper use of the Presidential office in support of ERA, the President himself completely denied it. During a radio phone-in question and answer session, one caller attacked Carter for "violating the states' rights when you call into the different states and lobby for the ERA."[147] In response Carter asserted, "The final decision [on ERA] is with the state legislatures." Admitting only to having "made a few telephone calls" and having "talked to...some Governors about the passage of ERA," he declared "I haven't tried to interfere or put pressure on them. I respect very well and very consistently the right of individual state legislators to vote the way they choose." He claimed "I

don't have any way to make a legislator vote against his or her wishes...I haven't tried to interfere or put pressure on them," and furthermore "I don't want any influence on them."[148]

This was clearly not the case, and predictably, the White House was once again inundated with letters from evangelicals who proclaimed their opposition to both the ERA and Carter's lobbying. One wrote "I feel very strongly that much more harm than good, for all concerned, will come if this amendment is passed. The ERA "could do more to undermine the American home and family than any other piece of legislation." "This resolution is anti-family" wrote Mrs Gary B. Opperman, "Women already have equal rights and this amendment would be redundantory [sic.] allowing for no restrictions." "After reviewing the E.A.R amendment [sic.] I most decidedly would not vote for it" wrote Mrs Mary L. Hall to the President, and she warned, "I hope that you too are not in favour of it."[149]

Time and again the Carter White House lobbied state legislatures to support the ERA and time and again Schlafly and pro-family activists defeated them. One such state was Nevada. White House aide Mark Siegel wrote to the President to urge him to call several members of the Nevada Senate to ask them to vote in favour of ratification. He wrote, "I want to impress upon you how critical Nevada is." The memorandum made clear the political crystallisation of religious opposition to the ERA. Although Siegel observed that Senator Eugene Echols of Las Vegas was a Democrat whose "District is very pro-ERA," Echols publicly opposed ERA because he was "a fundamentalist" with "religious problems with ERA." Siegel advised Carter to take advantage of his "shared religious background" with the Senator in order to elicit support, advising him to talk about the need for "Christian equality and egalitarianism" when lobbying Echols. Carter should also telephone another opposition Senator, Norman Glazer, who Siegel observed was having dinner with Judy Carter that evening. For extra effect the President should time his call to interrupt the dinner. "A phone call from you to Glazer during the dinner might turn around the vote." A third call should be made to Senator Floyd Lamb, a Mormon, who again had "religious objections to ERA."[150] Despite Carter's lobbying efforts the ERA was rejected in Nevada. Carter was again frustrated by religious conservatives, especially Mormons legislators who held sway over important state

committees. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints took an official doctrinal position against the ERA on the grounds that God had ordained different roles according to gender. They declared "We recognise men and women as equally important before the Lord, but with differences biologically, emotionally, and in other ways."[151] ERA would "stifle any God-given feminine instincts."[152] Mormon opposition also contributed to the amendment's defeat in Virginia and Georgia. They were highly active amongst antifeminist groups in Hawaii, Washington, Montana, Idaho and Utah. When one Mormon woman spoke publicly in favour of the amendment, she was excommunicated on the grounds that she was "not in harmony with Church doctrine concerning the nature of God."[153]

Undeterred, the Carter White House continued to aggravate religious conservatives. A Spring 1979 memorandum from Sarah Weddington to fellow White House staff is typical in that it reveals clearly the extent of the lobbying campaign in Florida, targeting one possible "changeable vote," that of a Democratic Senator from Miami, Vernon Holloway. When Holloway had visited the White House for an unrelated meeting, the First Lady, Judy Carter, and Hamilton Jordan had all taken the opportunity to meet with him regarding the ERA. Weddington wrote, "He loved it."[154] The White House also co-ordinated with Florida Governor Bob Graham to lobby the Florida Senate. *The Chicago Tribune* reported, "The governor tried to entice key senators off the floor so he and White House aides ...could try to persuade them to change their votes."[155] Democratic Senator Dempsey Barron complained, "Senators are being pulled out of the Senate and being threatened by the White House."[156] In response members of STOP-ERA sent bottles of glue to the Senators with a note, "please stay glued to your seat." The White House was again thwarted and Florida rejected ERA for the fourth time.[157]

The White House launched a similar lobbying effort in Oklahoma. In February 1979, Carter invited Oklahoma Governor George Nigh and key Democratic members of the Oklahoma legislature to the White House to plan strategy for the passage of the ERA. *The Tulsa-Oklahoma World* observed that this was unusual given that "The President seldom entertains individual governors, and even more infrequently entertains state legislative leaders."[158] However, the ERA was clearly considered by the White House to be a priority and a report from Weddington revealed that the

"President and Mrs. Carter had the Governor, Speaker, President Pro Tempore and Majority Leaders of the [Oklahoma] House and Senate to lunch at the private residence."[159] According to reporters, the Carter's used the dinner to pledge to "lend whatever support they could to ratification of the ERA in Oklahoma."[160] Carter even tried to specifically address the concerns of religious conservatives that the ERA "will destroy families," declaring "If I felt that the Equal Rights Amendment would destroy a single family I would not support it." He addressed the fear that the ERA would herald a massive expansion in federal power, conceding that this concern was "a very real factor" but declaring that "with a uniform application of the law under the U.S. Constitution, it is highly likely that existing laws and regulations can be administered much more efficiently, much more simply and with less bureaucracy."[161] Carter's pleas had little impact. A letter from Mary King to Sarah Weddington gloomily observed that opposition to the ERA "is based on little commitment to the issue; it is almost entirely political," and that grounds for opposition by many legislatures were "based on Phyllis Schlafly's organisation."[162] Again Schlafly mobilised her religious conservatives and once again the amendment, and the White House, was defeated.

After Florida and Oklahoma, Illinois became a key battleground state for the ERA. As the only remaining northern industrial state yet to ratify, ERA strategists predicted that it would hold the key to the future of the amendment. Recognising this importance Weddington urged Carter to use his influence in the Illinois State Senate. She wrote, "Several Carter delegates who are Senators or Representatives are active in the anti-ERA stand." The President should contact them "to see if their votes are moveable."[163] Weddington and fellow White House aide Jack Watson then circulated a memorandum in April 1980 to cabinet agency heads. Regarding the vital importance of the pending vote in the Illinois legislature, they wrote, "The political season focuses special attention upon it." The memorandum asked "all administration spokespersons" to:

- Raise ERA in speeches and press conferences in the unratified states.
- Reiterate the strong support of the President and the Administration in all press opportunities.

- Speak on ERA in addresses to national conventions of a broad range of organisations to show this issue as a domestic policy initiative of importance.

The memorandum went further by listing a number of rebuttals to complaints likely to be raised by Christian ERA opponents. If challenged on abortion, members of the administration were advised to declare "The ERA has absolutely nothing to do with abortion." Similarly, if asked whether the ERA would legalise single-sex marriages, their answer should be an emphatic "Absolutely not." In answer to religious conservative claims that the ERA would lead to a blurring of gender boundaries, the memorandum cautions "the basic principle of the ERA is not that men and women are the same."[164] Another memorandum, this time from Barbara Haugen to Bill Albers in May 1980 again revealed the extent of administration activity in Illinois, including that of the President himself. It also revealed the need for the Carter White House to retain the appearance of non-intervention for fear of a religious conservative backlash. Haugen wrote that although "The Administration has poured a considerable amount of effort into Illinois," it is "difficult to blow our own horn on this." The White House was keen to appear disinterested, at least publicly, for fear that Carter's unpopularity with opposition activists would hamper the efforts of what Haugen calls the amendment's "delicate coalition of supporters," consisting of [Mayor] Jane Byrne, [Republican] Governor Thompson, and us." Although Haugen advised that the "Battle [was] becoming increasingly partisan," the memorandum noted that "The President and Vice-President are making calls to legislators" and that "Illinois legislators met with the President" in a concerted White House effort to convince them to support the amendment. The "President also meets monthly with Presidents of major women's groups. Much of their meeting focus is on ERA strategy, especially Illinois." The White House sent Deputy Undersecretary of the Defence Department Kathleen Carpenter to testify at the Illinois House of Representatives regarding the implications for the armed force of the ratification of the ERA. Haugen recorded that "ERA supporters were delighted with her testimony, and credit her with turning "no" votes to one "absent" and one "present."" The black feminist leader Eleanor Holmes Norton was also sent to Illinois to represent the administration. Haugen also noted the importance of a White House briefing for leaders from unratified states, including religious figures, in an "effort to build stronger coalitions of supporters."[165] However Carter's image amongst the Christian

community was further damaged when a group of Illinois prostitutes threatened to reveal the names of legislator clients if they did not follow Carter's lead and vote in favour of ERA.[166]

Once again religious conservatives were outraged with Carter's intervention in Illinois. Schlafly charged the President with "blatant blackmail" convening a press conference to declare, "During the week Iran was going down the tube, President Carter was sitting in the Oval Office telephoning [legislatures] begging them to vote for the ERA."[167] She claimed Carter and his supporters in the state were bribing the Chicago legislators, offering them "federal housing projects in their districts if they would vote yes." "Governor Thompson was calling the Republicans, offering them dams, roads, [and] bridges in their districts if they would vote yes. Mayor Byrne was calling the ones who were from the Chicago [Democratic Party] machine and threatening to fire their relatives from the payroll unless they voted yes." However, their efforts had little effect.[168] "Legislators preferred to have Carter mad at them than Mayor Daley," recalled one pro-ERA activist.[169] Most commentators had predicted that the ERA would pass in Illinois, but once again anti-ERA activists were successful. Recalling the victory Schlafly declared "I didn't know we had the votes [but] God found a couple of votes for us."[170] Midge Costanza responded by declaring that Schlafly and fundamentalist Christian anti-gay rights activist Anita Bryant would make "a fine set of bookends for *Mein Kampf*."[171]

Another key event in the breakdown of the relationship between the Carter White House and the evangelical community because of the President's stance on the ERA took place in January 1980 with the breakfast meeting at the White House between the President and evangelical leaders, an event Robert Maddox recalled as "our famous Jerry Falwell meeting."[172] At the meeting Tim LaHaye asked the President "why he as a Christian and pro-family man, as he protested to be, was in favour of the Equal Rights Amendment in view of the fact that it would be so harmful to the family." LaHaye recalls that Carter "gave some 'off–the-wall' answer that the Equal Rights Amendment was good for the family." The pro-family evangelist recalls this was the moment when he realised that Carter was, as he put it, "out to lunch." It was clear, thought LaHaye, that Carter was a President "who professed to be a Christian, but didn't understand how un-Christian his administration was." Waiting

for a limousine to take him back to his hotel afterwards, LaHaye prayed, "God, we have got to get this man out of the White House." The other evangelicals joined LaHaye in the limousine. "They were stone silent." A "depression had settled on us all." Together, they "made a commitment to God that, for the first time in our lives, we were going to get involved in the political process and do everything we could to wake up the Christians to be participating citizens instead of sitting back and letting other people decide who will be our government leaders."[173]

After the disastrous breakfast meeting Robert Maddox attempted to convince Carter to play-down his support for the ERA, telling the President that his association with the amendment risked jeopardising his support amongst the religious community in the upcoming 1980 Presidential election. In a memorandum entitled "Religious Aspects of the Campaign" Maddox estimated that there were "at least 100 million conservative Christians in the nation. This strong base gives the President the support to make even clearer calls to moral and spiritual responsibility." Many of these evangelicals "deeply believed that Jimmy Carter has been," in the evangelical parlance "raised up for such a time as this." He can "capitalise on their feelings and convictions to make emphatic statements calling the country to greater moral responsibility." To win their support, however, Carter had to downplay his support of the ERA. Maddox wrote, "I would urge that ERA be kept at a low profile" because the amendment "remains a deeply divisive issue." What Carter needed to do was be less assertive in his support for ERA. Maddox wrote that many religious conservatives "will not hold his stand against him" as long as "he does not push ratification of the amendment."[174] Weddington too wrote to the President warning that opposition to the ERA was strongest in "the South and rural areas, adults over sixty-five, political conservatives, and adults in households where the female head is describes as a housewife" a profile largely analogous with pro-family religious conservatives. She also noted the effectiveness of the conservative campaign regarding the likely effects of the amendment. Weddington reported findings of a poll that showed 46% believed the ERA "will have a negative effect on families," 54 % believed "Abortions will be more common," and 54% believed "Employers will hire admitted homosexuals."[175]

Carter did not heed these warnings and instead a pivotal blow for the ERA came with the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan on Christmas day 1979. This raised the possibility of the registration of women for military service. Opponents of the ERA argued that if the amendment had been ratified, the drafting of women would have been mandated by law. Weddington wrote to Carter, "Opponents of ERA will undoubtedly again use the registration issue as a reason to oppose the Amendment." Drafting women she said was "a ready-made weapon to the anti-ERA people" and could become "a cause celebre to defeat ERA." She also urged the need for President to effectively combat the activities of Schlafly who had "started a petition drive to stop registration for the drafting of women."[176] Undeterred, in February 1980 Carter sought the authority to register both men and women, without conscription, under the Selective Service Act of 1948 and in accordance with Presidential Review Memorandum/ NSC – 47 that recommended "registration and/or induction of women."[177] Again the President made his attitude to gender equality publicly clear. "My decision to register women is recognition of the reality that both women and men are working members of our society," Carter said. "There is no distinction possible, on the basis of ability or performance that would allow me to exclude women from an obligation to register."[178] The 1980 Democratic Platform was "committed to ensuring equal opportunity and full voluntary participation in the military regardless of sex," and declared "we do not favour the exclusion of women from registration."[179] The reaction of religious conservatives was predictable. One Florida Senator declared the use of women in the military to be in defiance of God's laws. "Man has the physical strength," he said. "Man has got it. God decreed that. I didn't, you didn't. And God decreed that women would have children."[180] Robert Maddox wrote to Anne Wexler warning that registration would create "a major crisis in the conservative religious community." Maddox told her he was "getting braced for the onslaught."[181] Schlafly recalled that the issue of military equality was decisive in the defeat of the ERA. It "put the nails in ERA's coffin."[182] In contrast to the Democrats the Republican Party took the opportunity to further strengthen its support amongst the religious conservative Christian community. "We support equal rights and equal opportunities for women" the 1980 party platform declared, "without taking away traditional rights of women such as exemption from the military draft."[183]

Carter's strident attempts to lobby state legislators in favour of ERA failed. Just one state successfully ratified the amendment during his term of office. Two years after he left office the ERA ratification effort finally ended, falling three states short of the thirty-eight necessary for ratification. Weddington recalled, "State legislators are simply not the natural constituency of the President;

> And those state legislators felt far more a sense of concern about what the people in their district thought than they did the President of the United States. And, if fact, a couple of times after the President made phone calls, some of those legislators went out on the floor of their respective Houses and said, "I got a call from the President of the United States, but he doesn't live in my district and I'm voting for my people."[184]

Judy Carter concurred, saying "We didn't do our homework." The President "would make calls at the last minute trying to sway some legislator, and then the guy would publicly announce, "Ha, ha, the President didn't make me change my vote."[185] Many legislators refused to support the ERA because of pressure placed upon them from religious conservatives in their constituencies. One legislator from North Carolina revealed that he received a call from the President during the debate over ratification in his state. "The whole world will be watching," Carter warned him. "I put my head down and cried," recalled the Senator who refused to bow to the Presidential pressure. "My people are two to one against it," he told Carter.[186] In her biography of Phyllis Schlafly, Felsenthal attributed the failure of the Carter administration's efforts wholly to her subject. She wrote, "For every one Washington lobbyist dispatched to the provinces by Jimmy Carter, Phyllis Schlafly dispatched a hundred Stop-ERAers." Inevitably they were "housewives from the legislator's own district who could make or break him in the next election."[187] In her memoirs Rosalynn Carter recalled the failure to ratify ERA the "greatest disappointment" of all the projects that she worked on during her time in the White House.[188] The First Lady specifically blamed the political activism of Christian conservatives. One of the difficulties of the ratification campaign she said was "the fervour and organisation of the opposition," that was "so vocal and so powerful at the polls that local legislators, who are the ones who must vote for ratification, were reluctant to do so." The opposition spread the image of the ERA supporters as

"demanding and strident man haters" who "Nice women" did not wish to be identified with.[189] She recalls that her realisation of the overwhelming faith-based opposition to the ERA came on a 1980 campaign trip to a Texas shopping centre. "All along the path the police had cleared for me were women holding their hands up with printed cards pasted in their palms that read: YOU DON'T LOVE JESUS. "I do love Jesus I said to some of them. "If you loved Jesus, you wouldn't support the ERA," they replied.[190]

Jimmy Carter's strained relationship with key constituencies of the New Deal Democratic coalition, including feminist women, was inevitably fractious, writes Leuchtenburg, because of the "high expectations with which liberals contemplated the return of the Democrats to power in 1977, when, after eight years of frustration under Nixon and Ford, they could, they thought, pick up where they had left off in the Great society era."[191] Carter had specifically raised feminist expectations during his 1976 Presidential campaign, but regarding women, as Stuart Eizenstat put it, "Whatever we tried to do was never enough."[192] Landon Butler agreed and observed that a state of "almost total paralysis" developed between Carter and feminist groups. "We found ourselves not only trying to take care of our own politics, but their politics as well," he said.[193] At one White House meeting with representatives of women's groups a plainly frustrated Carter complained that despite having achieved "double or triple what has been done with the previous Presidents, even Lyndon Johnson, even John Kennedy," in regards to women's equality his administration "never get anything but criticism."[194] After he left office Carter confessed to the tension that existed between feminists and his administration, saying "for some reason I was never quite compatible...[their] support was equivocal at best."[195] He confided in his diary that "In many cases I feel more at home with the Conservative Democratic and Republican members of Congress than I do with the others."[196] Feminists, both within and outside of the administration demanded that Carter constantly expend his political energy on ratification of the ERA. This is not to say that Carter did not personally support the ERA. Its ratification was a key aspect of the domestic application of his human rights policy, and unlike many of his fellow evangelicals, gender equality was central to his understanding of Holy Scripture. However, the need to publicly be seen to address the feminist agenda and shore up support amongst feminist women led himself, his family, and senior members of his

White House staff to undertake to an increasingly highly public, strident and politically risky lobbying of state legislators in its favour. In effect, Carter was forced to over compensate in his relationship with the feminist movement.

In turn, this deeply aggravated religious conservatives fearful of the impact of an amendment they perceived as wholly incompatible with their Biblically ordained concept of gender and greatly concerned by what they saw as undue federal intervention into the affairs of their families, churches and local government. Caught between the two Carter, writes Critchlow, "found himself in an ideological riptide from which there was no natural escape."[197] In the same way that feminists felt betrayed, Carter's overt identification with the values of the Southern Baptist church during the 1976 election campaign only added to the sense of Christian alienation with his advocacy of ERA. Furthermore, Carter's assertive, high-profile Presidential support for the ERA helped make prevention of its ratification a question of national political importance for religious conservatives, encouraging them to see politics as a valid and potentially advantageous avenue in which to channel their opposition. Phyllis Schlafly in particular was hugely influential in generating mass grass roots opposition to the amendment amongst conservative religious congregations that counteracted the efforts of the White House. In one 1980 election strategy meeting Carter had predicted "I am afraid the anti-ERAers will defeat me." Unfortunately for the President his premonition proved correct.[198]

Footnotes

[1] A constitutional amendment seeking to end gender discrimination, the Equal Rights Amendment states that "Equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any state on account of sex" and awards Congress "the power to enforce, by appropriate legislation, the provisions of this article." ERA advocates argued that it was necessary to make real the legal protection that the United States Constitution was already meant to guarantee women, but that gender discrimination in a patriarchal society had denied them. The civil rights reforms of the 1960s had successfully challenged the legal discrimination of blacks and other minorities: an end to sexual discrimination appeared to be a manifest progression.

[2] Steven F. Hayward, *The Real Jimmy Carter* (Washington D.C.: Regnery, 2004); Michael G. Krukones, "The Campaign Promises of Jimmy Carter: Accomplishments and Failures," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 15. (1985): 136-44; Stephen Graubard, *The Presidents: The Transformation of the American Presidency from Theodore Roosevelt to George W. Bush* (London: Penguin, 2004).

[3] Burton I. Kaufman, *The Presidency of James Earl Carter* (Lawrence, University of Kansas Press, 1993), 210.

[4] Richard E. Neustadt, *Presidential Power: The Politics of Leadership from FDR to Carter* (New York: Wiley, 1980), 27.

[5] Barbara Kellerman, *The Political Presidency: The Practice of Leadership from Kennedy to Reagan* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984), 215; Graubard, *The Presidents*, 536, 546.

[6] Charles O. Jones, *The Trusteeship Presidency: Jimmy Carter and the United States Congress* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1998), xxiii.

[7] Walter Mondale, "The Perspective of the Vice Presidency," in *The Carter Presidency: Fourteen Intimate Perspectives*, ed. Kenneth Thompson (Lanham: University Press of America, 1990), 241.

[8] Tip O'Neill, *Man of the House* (New York: St Martin's Press), 355.

[9] John Dumbrell, *The Carter Presidency: A Re-evaluation* (Manchester: University of Manchester Press, 1995) 75.

[10] Victor Lasky, *Jimmy Carter: The Man & The Myth* (New York: Richard Marek, 1979), 257.

[11] M. Glenn Abernathy, Dilys M. Hill, and Phil Williams, ed. *The Carter Years: The President and Policy Making* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1984), 106.

[12] Sanford J. Unger, "How Jimmy Carter Does it," *Atlantic Monthly, July 1976*, 34.

[13] Martin Schram, *Running for President, 1976: The Carter Campaign* (New York: Stein and Day, 1977), 53.

[14] Jimmy Carter Library (cited hereafter as JCL), Memorandum, from Hamilton Jordan to Governor Jimmy Carter, August 4, 1974. Special Assistant to the President – Bourne. Box: 1 Folder "Campaign 74 Sourcebook, DNC 8/4/78".

[15] Morris B Abram, "An Appraisal of Carter's Religion," *Boston Globe*, September 13, 1976.

[16] Patrick Anderson, *Electing Jimmy Carter: The Campaign of 1976* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana University Press, 1994), 163-4.

[17] Douglas Brinkley, *The Unfinished Presidency: Jimmy Carter's Journey Beyond the White House* (New York: Viking, 1998), 10.

[18] Jimmy Carter, *Our Endangered Values: America's Moral Crisis* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2005), 34.

[19] Judith Martin, "Bella's Appeal," *New Republic*, July 31, 1976, 10.

[20] Schram, *Running for President*, 334.

[21] Wesley Pippert, *The Spiritual Journey of Jimmy Carter* (New York: Macmillan, 1978), 16-17.

[22] Jimmy Carter, *Faith and Freedom: The Christian Challenge for the World* (London: Duckworth, 2006), 89.

[23] Jimmy Carter, *An Hour Before Daylight: Memories of a Rural Boyhood* (New York. Simon & Schuster, 2001), 267.

[24] Jimmy Carter, *Why Not the Best* (Nashville: Broadman, 1975), 17, 72.

[25] Kandy Stroud, *How Jimmy Won: The Victory Campaign from Plains to the White House* (New York: William Morrow, 1977), 84.

[26] Anderson, *Electing Jimmy Carter*, 165.

27 Carter, *An Hour Before Daylight*, 110.

28 Barbara Kellerman, *All the President's Kin* (London: Robson, 1981), 91.

29 Stroud, *How Jimmy Won*, 84; Richard G. Hutcheson, *God in the White House: How Religion has Changed the Modern Presidency* (New York: Macmillan, 1988), 107.

30 Kellerman, *All the President's Kin*, 92.

31 Carter, *Why Not The Best?*, 69-70.

32 Carter, *An Hour Before Daylight*, 54-5.

33 Carter, *Why Not The Best?*, 21.

34 JCL, Remarks by Jimmy Carter to Women's Agenda Conference, Washington D.C., October 2, 1976; Chief of Staff Files: Jordan. Box: 1. Folder "[Campaign Speeches – Carter, 5/4/74-11/3/67 [O/A 10, 619]". Carter's program included appointments of women to high government positions, a federal day care program, better enforcement of antidiscrimination policy, opportunities for women business owners and support for the ratification of the ERA.

35 Anderson, *Electing Jimmy Carter*, 10.

36 Jimmy Carter, *A Government as Good as Its People.* Fayetteville: The University of Arkansas Press, 1996), 108.

37 Susan M. Hartmann, "Feminism, Public Policy and the Carter Administration," in *The Carter Presidency: Policy Choices in the Post-New Deal Era*, ed. Gary Fink and Hugh Davis Graham (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1998), 224-25.

38 Stroud, *How Jimmy Won*, 326-27.

39 JCL, Memorandum, from Patrick H. Caddell, December 10, 1976. Jody Powell's Files. Box: 4. Folder "Memoranda – Pat Caddell 12/10/76-12/21/76".

40 In 1972 the United States Congress had passed both Title IX of the Higher Education Act and the Equal Opportunity Act. The same year saw the legal authority and jurisdiction of the Equal Employment Opportunities Commission increased. In 1974 female clerical workers in Boston and Chicago formed organisations that rebelled against gender-specific discrimination by employers. Throughout the decade the number of women attending institutions of higher education increased and as a result female graduates advanced into the traditionally male dominated legal, medical and business fields. In 1973 the Supreme Court established statutory reproductive freedom for women by guaranteeing the right to abortion in its *Roe v. Wade* ruling. Progress was made in the religious establishment when in 1974 a group of female Episcopal deacons were ordained as priests. Still women were not satisfied. Rallies and demonstrations in support of women's rights grew year on year throughout the first half of the decade with more than three hundred nationally reported feminist events in 1975 alone.

41 Hartmann, *Feminism, Public Policy,* 226. The women's movement had clear reason for their optimism. In 1972 the United States Senate approved the ERA by an overwhelming eighty-four votes to eight. The amendment was endorsed by President Nixon and passed to the state legislatures for ratification with a clause attached that set a time limit of seven years for ratification by the necessary three-quarters of the states. The ERA enjoyed unprecedented success in the nation's legislatures. Within hours of the Senate's approval Hawaii voted in favour of ERA without any debate. Nebraska did likewise the next day, without a single dissenting vote. Such was their rush to ratify that the Nebraska legislature passed only Section I of the three-section Amendment and was forced to repeat ratification six days later. Alaska passed Section I but forgot Sections II and III. Just twelve months after its passage through Congress it had been ratified by thirty states. Moreover, Support for the ERA was not a partisan political affair. Whilst the Democratic National Convention did not endorse the ERA until 1972 the Republican Party had endorsed an amendment promising equal rights for women since 1944 and did so again in 1976. Politicians as ideologically incompatible as liberal Birch Bayh and white supremacist Strom Thurmond supported the amendment. Ted Kennedy spoke in its favour, as did George Wallace. Presidents Nixon and Ford both professed their support for ratification. Polls showed consistent support across the population in favour of the amendment. A diverse cross-section of women's groups rallied behind the campaign for ratification ranging from explicitly feminist groups like NOW (National Organisation of Women) and the NWPC (National Women's Political Caucus) to mainstream organisations including the League of Women Voters, the American Association of University Women and the National Council of Jewish Women. Even the Girl Scouts organisation announced its support.

[42] Robert Shogan, *War Without End: Cultural Conflict and the Struggle for America's Political Future* (Boulder, Col.: Westview, 2002), 165.

[43] Sharon Whitney, *The Equal Rights Amendment: The History and the Movement* (New York: Franklin Watts, 1984), 31.

[44] Sarah M. Evans, *Born to Liberty: A History of Women in America* (New York: The Free Press, 1989), 291.

[45] Leo P. Ribuffo, "God and Jimmy Carter," in *Transforming Faith: The Sacred and the Secular in Modern American History*, ed. Myles Bradbury and James B. Gilbert (Westport: Greenwood, 1989), 262.

[46] James Wooten, *Dasher: The Roots and Rising of Jimmy Carter* (New York: Summit Books, 1978), 33.; Dan F. Hahn, "The Rhetoric of Jimmy Carter, 1976-1980," in *Essays in Presidential Rhetoric*, ed. Theodore Windt and Beth Ingold (Dubuque: Kendall/Hunt, 1992), 333.

[47] JCL, Bert Lance Interview, May 12, 1982. Miller Centre, University of Virginia, Jimmy Carter Presidential Oral History Project, 10.

[48] Janet K. Boles, *The Politics of the Equal Rights Amendment* (New York: Longman, 1979), 90.

[49] Rosalynn Carter, *First Lady from Plains* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1984), 95.

[50] Abernathy, Hill and Williams, ed. *The Carter Years*, 116; Boles, *The Politics of the Equal Rights Amendment*, 107.

[51] Anderson, *Electing Jimmy Carter*, 119.

[52] The Southern Baptist Faith and Message declares that "A wife is to submit herself graciously to the servant leadership of her husband even as the church willingly submits to the headship of Christ." The Southern Baptist Convention, "The Baptist Faith and Message XVIII – The Family," http://www.sbc.net/bfm/bfm2000.asp#xviii (accessed December 18, 2004).

[53] Burton Yale Pines, *Back to Basics: The Traditionalist Movement that is sweeping Grass-Roots America* (New York: William Morrow, 1982), 172.

[54] Pippert, *The Spiritual Journey of Jimmy Carter*, 28.

[55] Boles, *The Politics of the Equal Rights Amendment*, 91.

[56] Carol Felsenthal, *The Sweetheart of the Silent Majority: The Biography of Phyllis Schlafly* (New York: Doubleday, 1981), 247.

[57] Jimmy Carter, *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Jimmy Carter*, 1977, no. 1 (Washington D.C.: US Government Printing Office, 1978), 50.

[58] David Frum, *How We Got Here. The '70s: The Decade That Brought You Modern Life (For Better or Worse)* (New York: Basic Books, 2000), 247-8.

[59] Pamela Conover and Virginia Gray, *Feminism and the New Right: Conflict over the American Family* (New York: Praeger, 1985), 85.

[60] Ibid. 74.

[61] Felsenthal, *The Sweetheart of the Silent Majority*, title page.

[62] Kathleen C. Berkeley, *The Women's Liberation Movement in America* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1999), 83.

[63] Schlafly argued that the ERA would alter gender relationships within the home and workplace, denuding the rights of wives, widows and mothers. It would create a unisex society that ignored the vital differences between genders. Women were meant to be different, she argued. For example, women were meant to be child raisers and home-keepers. Coercion of women into the workplace would reduce the status of women who wanted to stay at home and adhere to their role as homemakers. The ERA would mandate the registration of women into the armed forces on an equal basis as male combatants. In divorce cases it would deny women the right to alimony and curtail the rights of women from receiving custody of children. Once women were forced to join the labour force, the ERA would end state laws that protected women from compulsory overtime, having to perform dangerous tasks or carry out heavy manual work. It would force all schools and colleges, including collegiate athletics programs, to be fully sex-integrated. As a result young students would be forced to share locker room facilities with members of the opposite sex. The enforced closure of single-sex schools would leave girls vulnerable to the rapacious advances of predatory males. Single-sex fraternities or sororities, traditional organisations like the Boy Scouts, the YMCA and YWCA would all be forcibly integrated. Mother-daughter and father-son school events would be made illegal on the grounds of discrimination. Single-sex

marriages would be legalised. It would not, she argued, guarantee that women received equal pay for equal work. The traditional nobility of full-time motherhood would be eliminated and the women's status as the primary child-raiser would be destroyed. It would remove their right to be a full time wife and mother and be supported by their husband. Furthermore, if the wife's income exceeded that of the husband, it would be she who would be forced into the role of the primary breadwinner. With mothers unable to stay at home their children would be forced into federally run day-care centres. By invalidating state laws that required a husband to support his wife, the ERA would make women equally liable as men for family provision.

64 Shogan, *War Without End*, 166.

65 Phyllis Schlafly Interview, "In the Spotlight," Interview Transcript, http://www.'Illinoisleader.com/new/newsview' (accessed November 12, 2004).

66 Conover and Gray, *Feminism and the New Right*, 74.

67 Joanne Omang, "Carter, Kennedy Ignoring ERA Foes, Schlafly says," *Washington Post*, October 14, 1979.

68 Jerry Falwell, *Listen America!*, (New York: Doubleday – Galilee, 1980), 153.

69 Yale Pines, *Back to* Basics, 158.

70 Ibid.

71 Whitney, *The Equal Rights Amendment*, 60.

72 Bruce Schulman, *The Seventies: The Great Shift in American Culture, Society, and Politics* (New York: The Free Press, 2001), 170.

73 Linda Kerber and Jane De Hart Matthews, *Women's America: Refocusing the Past* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 99.

74 Berkeley, *The Women's Liberation*, 88.

75 Wade Clark-Roof, *A Generation of Seekers: The Spiritual Journeys of the Baby Boom Generation* (New York: HarperCollins, 1993), 221.

76 Ibid., 222.

77 Ibid. In this worldview the church is the subject of Christ (Eph. 5:24); the Son was a subject to the Father (1 Cor. 15:28); servants were the subjects of masters (1 Peter 2:18); believers were subject to one another (1 Peter 5:5).

78 Peter N. Carroll, *It Seemed Like Nothing Happened: America In The 1970s* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1990), 330.

79 Rebecca Klatch, *Women of the New Right* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1987), 136.

80 Falwell, *Listen America!*, 150.

81 Falwell, *The Fundamentalist Phenomenon*, 205-6; Frances Fitzgerald, *Cities on a Hill* (New York: Sands, 1981), 128, 164.

82 Ibid, 185.

83 Frye Gaillard, "PTL Moves Cautiously Among Vocal, Political Evangelists," *Charlotte Observer*, September 1, 1980.

84 Tim LaHaye, *The Battle for the Family* (New Jersey: Fleming H. Revell, 1982), 139.

85 Ibid.

86 Conover and Gray, *Feminism and the New Right*, 71-72.

87 Boles, *The Politics of the Equal Rights Amendment*, 109.

88 Falwell, *Listen America!*, 155.

89 Whitney, *The Equal Rights Amendment*, 60.

90 Ruth Murray Brown, *For a Christian America: A History of the Religious Right* (New York: Prometheus Books, 2002), 42.

91 Jeffrey K. Hadden and Anson Shupe, *Televangelism: Power and Politics on God's Frontier* (New York: Henry Holt, 1988), 62.

92 Bruce Nesmith, *The New Republican Coalition: The Reagan Campaigns and White Evangelicals* (New York: P. Lang, 1994), 62.

93 JCL, Memorandum, from Pat Caddell to Governor Carter, December 21, 1976. Jody Powell's Files. Box: 4. Folder "Memorandum – Pat Caddell 12/10/76-12/21/76".

94 JCL, Stuart Eizenstat Interview, January 29-30, 1982. Miller Centre, University of Virginia, Jimmy Carter Presidential Oral History Project, 67.

95 JCL, Interview with Hamilton Jordan (Including Landon Butler), November 6, 1981. Miller Centre, University of Virginia, Jimmy Carter Presidential Oral History Project, 3-7.

96 Ibid., 5.

97 JCL, Memorandum, from Patrick H. Caddell, December 10, 1976. Jody Powell's Files. Box: 4. Folder "Memoranda – Pat Caddell 12/10/76-12/21/76".

98 JCL, Letter, from Bella Abzug and Carmen Delgado Votaw to President Carter, November 21, 1978. Domestic Policy Staff Eizenstat. Box: 323. Folder "Women's Issues [CF, OA 23]".; Martin Schram, "The Story Behind Bella's Departure," *Washington Post*, January 17, 1979.

99 JCL, Robert Lipshutz, Interview, 29 September 1979, White House Staff Exit Interviews, 23.

100 *New York Post*, "White House to women's aide: Get out!," June 30, 1980.

101 JCL, Letter, from Mary E. King to President-Elect Carter, November 2, 1976. Counsels/Margaret McKenna Files. Box: 145. Folder "Weddington Sarah 1-3/79".

102 JCL, Ad Hoc Coalition of Women "Summary of Priority Requests," March 10, 1977. Martha "Bunny" Mitchell Files. Box: 25. Folder "Women 10/76-7/78".; Memorandum, from Midge Costanza to the President and Vice President, March 10 1977. Domestic Policy Staff Eizenstat. Box: 323. Folder "Women's Issues [CF, OA 23]".

103 JCL, National ERA Campaign "Call To Action", January 29, 1979. Domestic Policy Staff: Weddington. Box: Weddington 36. Folder "NOW".

104 JCL, Letter, from Sheila Greenwald to Sarah Weddington, February 12, 1979. Domestic Policy Staff: Weddington. Box: Weddington 36. Folder "NOW".

105 Berkeley, *The Women's Liberation*, 83.

106 JCL, Memorandum, from Jack Watson to President Carter, February 1, 1977. White House Central File (WHCF): Subject File "Human Rights". Box: HU-14. Folder "HU 1-6 1/20/77-2/28/77".

107 JCL, Memorandum, from Mary E. King to Sarah Weddington, April 10, 1980. Staff Offices: Cabinet Secretary and Intergovernmental Affairs. Box: 34. Folder "ERA".

108 JCL, Memorandum, from Ky P. Ewing, Jr. to Elizabeth Abramowitz., August 25, 1978; Memorandum, from Beth Abramowitz to Stuart Eizenstat, August 29, 1978. Domestic Policy Staff: Eizenstat. Box: 323. Folder "Women's Issues [6348] [1]".

109 JCL, Letter, Catherine East to Rosalynn Carter, January 29, 1979. Sarah Weddington's Files. Box: 13. Folder "(NACW) Historical Predecessor".

110 Jimmy Carter, *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Jimmy Carter*, 1979, no. 1 (Washington D.C.: US Government Printing Office, 1980), 108.

111 JCL, Staff Offices: Domestic Policy Staff Eizenstat. Box: 323. Folder "Women's Issues [CF, O/A 23]".

112 JCL, Presidential Statement on ERA, June 27, 1979. Sarah Weddington's Files. Box: 36 Folder "Presidential Statement on ERA".

113 Jimmy Carter, *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Jimmy Carter*, 1978, no. 1 (Washington D.C.: US Government Printing Office, 1979), 92.

114 Jimmy Carter, *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Jimmy Carter*, 1979, no. 1 (Washington D.C.: US Government Printing Office, 1980), 108.

115 Jimmy Carter, *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Jimmy Carter*, 1980, no. 1 (Washington D.C.: US Government Printing Office, 1981), 154.

116 JCL, Presidential Statement 'The ERA: Full Partnership for Women'. Sarah Weddington's Files. Box: 36. Folder "Press Statement on ERA, dated June 27, 1979".

117 Carter, *Public Papers of the Presidents 1980*, no. 1, 224.

118 Ibid., 880.

119 Ibid., 830.

120 JCL, Sarah Weddington Interview, 8.

121 Ibid.

122 JCL, Memorandum, from President Carter to "Heads of Departments and Agencies", July 20, 1978. Staff Offices: Domestic Policy Staff Eizenstat. Box: 323. Folder "Women's Issues [O/A 6348] [1]".

123 JCL, Newsletter, "White House News on Women" vol. I, Issue V, November-December 1979. Sarah Weddington's Files. Box: 49. Folder "[Planks]-11 "ERA".; Memorandum, from Sarah Weddington to President Carter, January 30, 1980. Presidential Handwriting File. Box: 168. Folder "1/20/80 [1]".

124 JCL, Remarks by President Jimmy Carter, White House ERA briefing, February 12, 1980. Sarah Weddington's Files. Box: 36. Folder "Presidents February 12 ERA Remarks".; Memorandum, from Sarah Weddington to President Carter, February 28, 1980. Sarah Weddington's Files. Box: 58. Folder "ERA [1]".

[125] JCL, Sarah Weddington Interview, 15.
[126] Carroll, *It Seemed Like Nothing Happened*, 179.
[127] JCL, Memorandum, from Stuart Eizenstat to President Carter, March 22, 1978, Staff Offices: Domestic Policy Staff Eizenstat. Box: 323. Folder "Women's Issues [O/A 6348] [5]".
[128] JCL, Memorandum, from Stuart Eizenstat to President Carter, July 12, 1978. Staff Offices: Domestic Policy Staff Eizenstat. Box: 323. Folder "Women's Issues [O/A 6348] [5]".
[129] JCL, Memorandum from Midge Costanza to President Carter, July 12, 1978. WHCF: Subject File Human Rights. Box: HU-14. Folder "HU 1-6, 1/20/77-1/20/81".
[130] JCL, Memorandum, from Stuart Eizenstat to President Carter, July 12, 1978; Letter, President Carter to Chairman Peter Rodino, undated. Staff Offices: Domestic Policy Staff Eizenstat. Box: 323. Folder "Women's Issues [O/A 6348] [1]".
[131] JCL, Letter, from Mrs Phyllis Rice to President Carter, February 21, 1978; Letter from Mrs Michael Mills to President Carter, February 16, 1978; Letter, from Pamela Klefriet to President Carter, February 18, 1978; Letter, from Mrs Lana Hall to President Carter, February 23, 1978. White House Name File: Jesse Helms. Folder "Helms, Jesse 1/1/78-6/30/80".
[132] JCL, Sarah Weddington Interview, January 2, 1981, White House Staff Exit Interviews, 7.
[133] Donald T. *Phyllis Schlafly and Grassroots Conservatism: A Women's Crusade* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 254.
[134] JCL, Memorandum from Valerie Pinson and Mari Forbes to Frank Moore, July 12, 1978. WHCF Subject File: Human Rights. Box: HU-14. Folder "HU-16, /20/77-1/20/81".
[135] Rosalynn Carter, "The Perspective of the First Lady," in Thompson, *The Carter Presidency*, 218.
[136] R. Carter, *First Lady*, 286.
[137] Kellerman, *All the President's Kin*, 204.
[138] R. Carter, *First Lady*, 271.
[139] JCL, Memorandum, from Frank Moore to President Carter, July 12, 1980. WHCF: Subject File Human Rights. Box: HU-14. Folder "Hu-16, 1/20/77-1/20/81".
[140] R. Carter, *First Lady*, 286.
[141] JCL, Sarah Weddington Interview, 13.
[142] "Anti-ERA Protest Aimed at First Lady," *The Washington Post*, February 5, 1977.
[143] Felsenthal, *Sweetheart of the Silent Majority*, 247.
[144] Donald T. Critchlow, Phyllis *Schlafly and Grassroots Conservatism: A Women's Crusade* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 244.
[145] Felsenthal, *Sweetheart of the Silent Majority*, 245.
[146] Judy Klemsrud, "Judy Carter Emerges as Unofficial Trouble-Shooter for ERA," *New York Times*, November 8, 1977.
[147] Carter, *Public Papers of the Presidents*, 1977, no. 1, 300.
[148] Ibid.
[149] JCL, Letter, from Mrs Ronald K. Clark to President Carter, February 22, 1978; Letter, from Mrs. Gary B. Opperman to President Carter, February 3, 1978. Name File: Jesse Helms. Folder "Helms, Jesse 1/1/78-6/30/80".
[150] JCL, Memorandum, from Mark Siegel to President Carter, February 8, 1977. Domestic Policy Staff Eizenstat. Box: 323. Folder "Women's Issues [O/A 6348] [5]".
[151] Carroll, *It Seemed Like Nothing Happened*, 271.
[152] Jack Nelson, "ERA Test Case Puts Carter in Dilemma,"*Los Angeles Times*, December 5, 1979.
[153] Carroll, *It Seemed Like Nothing Happened*, 271. The Mormon Church was highly active in opposition to the ERA. For example, in Florida, the Church contributed financially to an anti-ERA organisation and funded four anti-ERA candidates in the 1978 congressional elections.
[154] JCL, Memorandum, from Sarah Weddington to White House Staff, February 20, 1979. Sarah Weddington's Files. Box: 34. Folder "ERA 2/79".
[155] "Florida Senate rejects ERA fourth time 21-19," *Chicago Tribune*, May 25, 1979.
[156] Ibid.
[157] Felsenthal, *Sweetheart of the Silent Majority*, 246-7.
[158] Mike Flanagan, "Carters Offer Aid to State ERA Push," *Tulsa-Oklahoma World*, February 2, 1979.
[159] JCL, Memorandum, from Sarah Weddington to White House Staff, February 20, 1979.

Sarah Weddington's Files. Box: 34. Folder "ERA 2/79".

160 Flanagan, *Carters Offer Aid.*

161 JCL, Remarks, Jimmy Carter, White House ERA Briefing, February 12, 1980. Staff Files Weddington. Box: 36. Folder "Presidents Feb.12 ERA remarks".

162 JCL, Memorandum, from Mary E. King to Sarah Weddington, April 10, 1980. Staff Offices: Cabinet Secretary and Intergovernmental Affairs. Box: 34. Folder "ERA".

163 JCL, Briefing, Meeting with Presidents of Women's Organisations, from Sarah Weddington to unspecified, 28 February, 1980. Sarah Weddington's Files. Box: 58. Folder "ERA [1]".

164 JCL, Memorandum, from Jack Watson and Sarah Weddington to Members of the Cabinet and Agency Heads, April 30, 1980. Domestic Policy Staff: Aging (Richard Comm). Box: 2. Folder "ERA 1/8/80-4/30/80".

165 JCL, Memorandum, from Bill Albers to Barbara Haugen, May 12, 1980. Sarah Weddington's Files. Box: 58. Folder "ERA [1]". According to one report, Carter's lobbying in favour of the ERA in Illinois included convincing two black legislators who were threatening to abstain to vote in favour by inviting them to the White House and setting up meetings with federal housing and job officials. Schlafly charged that they were bribed by a promise from the President to fund housing projects in their districts. See Felsenthal, *Sweetheart of the Silent Majority*, 251.

166 Timothy McNulty, "Prostitutes Target anti-ERA states," *Dallas Times Herald*, May 12, 1979.

167 Felsenthal, *Sweetheart of the Silent Majority*, 247.

168 Phyllis Schlafly Interview, "In the Spotlight," Interview Transcript, http://www.'Illinoisleader.com/new/newsview' (accessed November 12, 2004).

169 Sue Dinges, "Will the 80th Assembly Ratify?" Illinois Issues, March 1977. http://www.lib.niu.edu/ipo/1977/ii770322.html (accessed 24, August 2006).

170 Phyllis Schlafly Interview (accessed November 12, 2004).

171 Felsenthal, *Sweetheart of the Silent Majority*, 6.

172 JCL, Robert Maddox, Interview, Dec. 8 1980, White House Staff Exit Interviews, Audiotape.

173 William Martin, *With God on our side: The Rise of the Religious Right in America* (New York: Broadway Books, 1996), 189.

174 JCL, Letter, Robert Maddox to Jody Powell, undated. White House Press Office: Records of the White House Press Office. Box: 3. Folder: "Religious Broadcasters 1980".

175 JCL, Report on 'Meeting with President's of Women's Organisations', from S. Weddington, 30 January 1980. Presidential Handwriting File. Box: 168. Folder, "1/30/80 (1)".

176 JCL, 'Meeting with President's of Women's Organisations', Report from S. Weddington, 30 January 1980. Presidential Handwriting File. Box: 168. Folder, "1/30/80 (1)".

177 Brzezinski, Zbigniew, "Presidential Review Memorandum/ National Security Council – 47." Jimmy Carter Library and Museum. October 12, 1979, http://www.jimmycarterlibrary.gov/documents/prmemorandums/prm47.pdf (accessed 10 January 2005).

178 Carter, *Public Papers of the Presidents*, 1980, no. 1, 290.

179 JCL, Mail Release, 1980 Democratic Platform Issues of Special Interest to Women. Staff Files Weddington. Box: 58. Folder "ERA [2]".

180 Whitney, *The Equal Rights Amendment*, 61.

181 JCL, Memorandum, Robert Maddox to Anne Wexler, February 7, 1980. Robert Maddox Files. Box: 13. Folder "Weekly Reports".

182 Jane Mansbridge, *Why we lost the ERA* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 86.

183 Bruce Johnson, *National Policy Platforms of 1980* (Urbana: University of Illinois, 1982), 181.

184 JCL, Sarah Weddington Interview, January 2, 1981, White House Staff Exit Interviews, 8.

185 Klemsrud, *Judy Carter.*

186 Martin Donsky, "Carter plea fails, ERA loses again in North Carolina," *The Washington Post*, March, 1977.

187 Felsenthal, *Sweetheart of the Silent Majority*, 246.

188 R. Carter, *First Lady*, 271.

189 Ibid., 272.

190 Ibid., 317.

191 William Leuchtenburg, "Jimmy Carter and the Post-New Deal Presidency," in *The Carter Presidency: Policy Choices in the Post-New Deal Era*, ed. Gary M. Fink and Hugh Davis Graham (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1998), 11.

192 JCL, Stuart Eizenstat Interview, January 29-30, 1982. Miller Centre, University of Virginia, Jimmy Carter Presidential Oral History Project, 65.

193 JCL, Interview with Hamilton Jordan (Including Landon Butler). November 6, 1981. Miller Centre, University of Virginia, Jimmy Carter Presidential Oral History Project, 71.

194 Jimmy Carter, *Public Papers of the Presidents,* 1977, no. 1, 356.

195 Jimmy Carter Interview, November 29, 1982. Miller Centre, University of Virginia, Jimmy Carter Presidential Oral History Project, 28.

196 Jimmy Carter, *Keeping Faith: Memoirs of a President* (New York: Bantam, 1982), 102.

197 Critchlow, *Phyllis Schlafly*, 244.

198 Ibid., 268.

GAY RIGHTS AND THE CARTER PRESIDENCY

Jimmy Carter's opposition to homosexual discrimination derived directly from both his call for a renewal of the nation's commitment to human rights and the influence of his Baptist Christian religiosity. Combined with his need to retain the support of a key Democratic Party constituency, namely the homosexual community, it led to the open courting of gay and lesbian electoral support, his refusal to support legislation that discriminated against the homosexuality and an unprecedented level of open contact between his White House staff and gay rights activists. Unfortunately for Carter, it also led Christian conservatives to believe that the President had abandoned the defining precepts of his Baptist faith. Conservative Christendom interpreted Carter's apparently secular humanist attitude as both emblematic of the rise of an intrusive centralised government bureaucracy into the private affairs of their church and family and culpable in America's precipitous moral decline. In January 1977 Christian conservative leaders emerged to contest the advances made by the gay rights movement during Carter's Presidency, part of what Glazer terms a "defensive offensive" against the increasing acceptance of homosexuality as a valid alternative lifestyle.[1] The most famous of these was fundamentalist Christian entertainer and former beauty queen Anita Bryant. Joining forces with more established evangelical figures like Jerry Falwell, James Robison and Pat Robertson, Bryant inspired the evangelical community into political opposition to homosexual equality, and in turn the Carter White House. Carter's refusal to adhere to what conservative Christians believed to be the Biblically ordained principles of his Southern Baptist faith regarding the sinful nature of homosexuality contributed greatly to their decision to abandon support of his Presidency in favour of Ronald Reagan in 1980.

Carter's pledge to renew American devotion to the upholding of human rights was consistently articulated throughout both his 1976 election campaign and his Presidency. This principle, Carter believed, was rooted in traditional and time-honoured national values. The "basic thrust of human affairs points towards a more universal demand for human rights" he announced, declaring this to be a trend that

the United States had a "historical birthright" to be associated with because, as he put it, "human rights invented America."[2] Human rights infused "the soul" of American nationhood," he said.[3] Appraisals of this key aspect of Carter's Presidency have largely focused upon his characterisation of human rights as a "fundamental tenet" of American foreign policy.[4] In comparison, the domestic application of Carter's commitment to human rights has received less scholarly recognition. In fact, Carter was equally consistent in seeking to address issues of domestic human rights. During the 1976 Presidential campaign he spoke of the need "to seek out basic human rights and basic civil rights" a commitment, he said, that had been abandoned "when Lyndon Johnson left the White House and Richard Nixon came in."[5] Once in office he admitted that his "international emphasis on human rights would be undercut and fruitless" if his administration "didn't set an example in our country."[6] In his 1978 State of the Union address he told Congress "The very heart of our identity as a nation is our firm commitment to human rights" and this was both "true in our foreign policy" but also "true in our domestic policy."[7] Carter clearly saw this policy as applicable to domestic issues such as gender discrimination and sexual inequality. As he wrote in his post-Presidential memoirs "Human rights was not merely a matter of reducing the incidence of summary executions or torture of political prisoners" but included "protection against discrimination based on sex."[8] As Dumbrell puts it, Carter's approach to human rights clearly "was not designed to begin at the water's edge."[9]

Although Carter saw his human rights policy as an effective political tool with which to invoke the memory of his Democratic forebears and to draw a distinction between himself and his disgraced Republican predecessors, it would be wrong to assume that Carter's personal commitment to combating injustice and inequality was superficial. Carter's policy on gay rights was shaped by a sincere and profound sense of Christian responsibility to use, as he put it, God's transformative 'love' to shape government. "Love in isolation doesn't mean anything," he told the congregation of Plains Baptist Church in July 1976. "But love, applied to other people can change their lives for the better through simple justice – fairness, equality, concern, compassion [and] the elimination of inequalities."[10] For Carter this impulse was firmly rooted in his understanding of Biblical Scripture. In November 1977 he told the World Jewish Congress

> In large measure, the beginnings of the modern concept of human rights go back to the laws and the prophets of the Judeo-Christian traditions. I have been steeped in the Bible since early childhood, and I believe that anyone who reads the ancient words of the Old Testament will find...the idea of equality before the law and the supremacy of law...the idea of the dignity of the individual human being and the individual conscience; the ideas of service to the poor and to the oppressed. [11]

In his attitude to applying Biblical precepts through secular government Carter was greatly influenced by the work of Reinhold Niebuhr, a liberal theologian who sought to understand the constraints on morality that governed Christian interaction within the political arena. Niebuhr argued that the primary goal for individual Christians was the achievement of complete *agape* – the sacrificial love inspired by Christ. However, as a 'Christian Realist' Niebuhr cautioned that this Biblical love was not a practicable political objective since society could not reflect the morality of the individual but rather a collective selfish impulse. Instead the highest ideal that a Christian could expect from democratic society was the institution of justice. To translate Christian love into justice, Niebuhr emphasised the need for Christian involvement in politics. "Theology and politics are not really separate fields" he wrote, "but two perspectives on a single reality, each helping to illumine the data of the other."[12] Carter first began reading Niebuhr in the 1960s when a friend gave him a compilation of the theologian's writing entitled *Reinhold Niebuhr on Politics*. He was profoundly influenced by Niebuhr's writings on the political harnessing of Christian love in the service of social justice and Niebuhr's conception of justice as a political objective compelled Carter to express compassionate Christian impulses through his political career. Although during the 1976 campaign commentators questioned Carter's understanding of Niebuhr, the affinity between his understanding of the relationship between political power and his religion derived from Niebuhr's work was authentic.[13] In a 1976 campaign interview Carter clearly paraphrased Niebuhr in announcing that if he were elected one of his major responsibilities would be the "elimination of injustice." This, he said revealingly, "applies to a broad gamut of things" not only international affairs but also "equality."[14] Whilst Carter had been governor of Georgia, Niebuhr's widow Ursula had sent him a taped copy of her husband's sermons.[15] Carter was so moved that he took time to write to her personally to tell her of the influence that her husband had had upon his political

philosophy.[16] Once in office Mrs Niebuhr and her son were invited to meet with the President in the Oval Office, where she presented him with recordings of her husband's sermons for use at Carter's church.[17] Throughout his term in office Carter continued to make clear the importance of Niebuhr's work in shaping his philosophy as to the political applicability of Christianity. In a 1978 address on the role, limits and responsibilities of the government regarding human rights made before the Southern Baptist Convention he again consciously mirrored the theologian's words. He announced, "A person should have as a goal complete agape love." However, the most that could be expected from a secular government was "to institute simple justice."[18] Carter called Niebuhr's writings "the amazing thing he had ever read" and described them as his "political Bible."[19] He later declared, "I live with Niebuhr's work, on a continuing basis."[20] In an important re-evaluation of the Carter Presidency John Dumbrell described Carter's religious position to be "a kind of optimistic Niebuhrism."[21] Carter was moved to apply Niebuhr's concepts of social justice in regards to homosexual inequality.

Clearly Carter saw the realisation of equality, one of the defining tenets of Christian doctrine, as fundamentally distinct from advocating legislation based upon specific Biblical passages that were themselves open to differing human interpretations, as was the case with abortion. For Carter, activism in favour of gender equality and against discrimination on the basis of sexual preference did not violate church-state separation. Furthermore, Carter's attitude to discrimination against homosexuals was completely compatible with the specific precepts of his Southern Baptist faith and the history of Roger Williams' fight for religious freedom in Colonial America, a time when Baptists had suffered severe persecution.[22] As Hefley and Hefley observe, when Carter launched his crusade for human rights, "Nobody familiar with Baptist history was surprised" because he was merely "acting in the finest tradition of his early American Baptist heroes."[23] Morris B. Abram, writing in the *New York Times* agreed. Although "I never heard him mention that Roger Williams was the founder of the Baptist church in the United States," he wrote of Carter, "in his bones he has absorbed the essence of Baptist Christianity."[24] Press Secretary Jody Powell also observed Carter's human rights policy to be a consequence of his Baptist background. "His concern for human rights and his concern about the less fortunate in society, and the obligation of those who are more fortunate," said Powell, "was an

outgrowth of his faith."[25] Speaking after Carter left office, fellow evangelical James Wall observed that Carter "views the world compassionately" as a consequence of his Baptist faith. Everything that Carter did, said Wall, was "grounded in his religion" because Carter "possesses a religious sensibility."[26] Nowhere did Carter's faith imprint on his policies as much as in his efforts to defend human rights and they were clearly discernable in his attitude to homosexual discrimination. "My Christian faith is just like breathing to me or like being a Southerner or an American" he said, "It's all part of the same thing – the sharing, the compassion, the understanding, the dealing with the poor and the destitute and the outcasts."[27] Unfortunately for Carter, conservative Christians took a very different attitude to the applicability of Biblical precepts and the demands of their faith in regards to homosexual discrimination.

The 1976 Carter Campaign and the Gay Rights Movement

Gay and lesbian activism first emerged as a cohesive political movement at the end of the 1960s, inspired both by the success of the Black civil rights, antiwar and women's movement of the same decade and the riot at the Stonewall Inn in New York City in 1969.[28] Explicitly comparing their plight to that of Southern Blacks, the newly politically conscious gay and lesbian community demanded an end to legal discrimination on the basis of sexual preference. And similarly, just as younger, more militant Blacks challenged the older established leadership of the Civil Rights movement at the end of the 1960s, so a new generation of more aggressive gay rights advocates emerged in the 1970s. They were extremely successful, winning greater public acceptance, political recognition and legal equality for their homosexual lifestyle.[29] An affluent, politically literate and well-organised gay community was centred upon the traditionally Democratic cities of San Francisco and New York, and they overwhelmingly voted Democratic. In 1972 the Democratic Party platform endorsed freedom of "lifestyle and private habits without being subject to discrimination or persecution," the first time such language had been written into the platform of a national political party.[30] "It seemed as if gays were everywhere"

observed Heineman, "but especially in the Democratic Party."[31] By the time Jimmy Carter ran for the White House the gay community had became a key Democratic Party constituency, and one Carter could ill-afford to ignore, either as a candidate or later as President.

The Presidential campaign of 1976 was the first in which issues of gay and lesbian discrimination entered the national political discourse. Whilst President Gerald Ford remained uncommitted, the Carter campaign consciously courted the vote of the newly activated Democratic constituency through a well co-ordinated campaign in support of homosexual rights. In April 1976 a Carter campaign memorandum, from Dick Ellis entitled 'Gay Rights and the Carter candidacy' outlined the pressing need for Carter to make contact with representatives of the gay community. However, the memorandum also revealed the difficulty posed to a candidate like Carter in associating with the homosexual community. Ellis admitted that the question of sodomy would "bring nervous grins to the faces of the Carter people." In a political context, the campaign had to be careful of not appearing to taking a position "for sodomy." Despite this danger, Ellis argued that the political risk was one worth taking. He strongly urged that "Carter people" make contact with a number of homosexual political groups. One, "The Gay Activists Alliance," was a national organisation that was "well organised, articulate and vocal" as well as "heavily Democratic" and "respected within Democratic circles." He called for active involvement with the Alliance and detailed the key issues of concern to the gay community that Carter should publicly address including discrimination in the civil service, the military, in immigration, in the taxation of gay couples and in anti-sodomy legislation. As a "political footnote" Ellis observed, "Gay people have been estimated as comprising at least six percent of the electorate." Carter's engagement with gay activists had to be serious: lukewarm efforts had already "managed to make both Gerald Ford and Scoop Jackson look foolish." Carter needed to take a "sophisticated" view on gay rights. He had to "be able to pass something" to the gay community. For example, regarding lesbian discrimination he advised Carter to take a "stand similar to our position on equal rights for women." On immigration Ellis advised, "We can easily support reform on the grounds that we should treat everybody the same." The political advantage of winning the gay vote was clear. "If we do this right, we ought to be able to get good mileage out of it," he wrote.[32]

Subsequently other campaign staff reinforced the political advantages to be gained by Carter's contact with gay voters. The Carter campaign was especially focused upon San Francisco where the gay community was well organised politically. A memorandum from Charlie Graham, a Carter staff member from San Francisco to David Moran, a member of the domestic issues staff back in Georgia concerned an upcoming campaign visit by Carter to the West Coast. Warning that San Francisco's gay electorate was "endorsing Jerry Brown," Graham advised that Carter must work to "win as many gay votes as possible with an assertive pro-gay rights stand." A strong pro-gay rights statement by Carter would "loosen Brown's influence in San Francisco considerably." Observing that, "a conservative estimate in the primary is that 500,000 of the 3.5 million votes are from gay people," the gay community's "dollars, endorsements and volunteer time can come to Carter." Again however a member of the Carter staff warned that this might be problematic for Carter because of his faith. "Religion is a contentious issue for gay voters" he said, because "The Bible and church involvement are rejected outright by gay people." He urged Carter to "admit that Old Testament sexual theory doesn't have to be everyone's way of life, and it is possible to reject religion and Christianity altogether and still be a complete person." It may be difficult for Carter to adopt this either-or-approach to faith," but "I'm convinced he can be damaged severely with gay people...unless he does." Carter was also hurt by the actions of his faith-healing sister, Ruth Stapleton Carter who claimed she "cures homosexuality with religion." Graham warned, "so-called cures are very contentious among gay people who don't believe they are sick to begin with."[33]

Heeding the advice of staff like Ellis and Graham, the Carter campaign team worked overtime in an effort to make clear their support of the homosexual community. The candidate himself appeared on the NBC's *Tomorrow Show* and declared, "I favour the end of harassment, abuse or discrimination against homosexuals."[34] In an open letter to the *Philadelphia Gay News* he wrote, "I oppose all forms of discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation." During a press conference in San Francisco he was asked if he supported a bill sponsored by then Democratic Congresswomen Bella Abzug that would extend the coverage of all federal civil rights legislation to sexual orientation. "I will certainly sign it" said Carter, "because I don't think it is right to single out homosexuals for special abuse or special harassment." Moreover,

were he to be elected President "all the policies of the Federal government will reflect this commitment." Robert Havely, the Carter campaign's National Issues and Policy advisor wrote personally to Jean O'Leary, co-executive of the influential National Gay Task Force (NGTF), a homosexual rights advocacy group, to reiterate that Carter supported Abzug's bill and "although not entirely comfortable with homosexuality for personal reasons," he would "sign the bill if it reaches his desk" because of his "feeling that gay people should not be singled out for special harassment, abuse or discrimination."[35]

Just as the evangelical community saw a Carter Presidency as a way to have their views heard in government, so a key concern of the gay community was that they should be represented politically through appointments to positions of authority. They were particularly concerned that sexual preference should not be a discriminatory factor in political appointments. The Carter campaign again sought to convince them that their candidate would deliver on both counts. One Carter press release claimed that "Avowed gay people hold staff positions in the Carter campaign."[36] Another explicitly appealed to the lesbian community. It announced the appointment of three openly gay women to a committee tasked with advising Carter on the appointment of women to federal positions. The appointments, it declared, were "the first time that known gay people have been appointed to an important national advisory committee."[37] The Carter campaign funded an organisation entitled 'California Gay People For Carter' a press release from whom announced "Jimmy Carter speaks out on Gay Rights." Charles Cabot III, a member of the Carter campaign issues staff wrote personally to one gay voter to declare, "Governor Carter is opposed to discrimination in all its forms."[38] In particular, Carter acted on the advice of his staff and specifically sought to quiet the gay community's apprehension that as a Southern Baptist Christian he would seek to legislate against homosexuality. "I don't consider myself one iota better than anyone else because I happen to be a Christian" he said, "and I have never done anything other than keep strictly separate my political life and my religious beliefs."[39] When asked about his attitude to the legislation of sodomy and homosexuality he said, "You can't legislate morality" and advised those concerned to examine his record as governor of Georgia. If they did, they would see "I didn't run around breaking down people's doors to see if they were fornicating."[40] Indeed, rather than dictating a

disapproving attitude, Carter believed his faith guaranteed his respect for homosexual lifestyles. "A true Christian loves everybody" he said later, "Blacks, Mexicans, gays, you must feel compassion for everybody."[41]

Carter's campaign raised the expectations of many gay voters and led key leadership within the gay community to strongly support the Carter campaign. Reverend Troy Perry of the predominantly gay Metropolitan Community Church in San Francisco announced publicly "I am strongly supporting Jimmy Carter because of his commitment to civil rights." Lesbian leaders Del Martin and Phyllis Lyon, Chairperson of the San Francisco Commission on the Status of Women and Commissioner of the San Francisco Human Rights Commission respectively announced their support for Carter specifically "because he supports gay civil rights." Another gay activist said "I am convinced that the Carter-Mondale administration will place in key positions hundreds of persons in a new administration," and would "assist us in realising our goals of Federal legislation in the areas of law reform and discrimination." Referring to the social conservatism of previous Republican administration he said, "Those of us who have had to deal with the federal bureaucracy under the Nixon-Ford administration" would "recognise the benefits of a Carter-Mondale victory." The homosexual press lauded Carter for being "consistently upfront on gay rights." Unlike other politicians, they wrote, he "makes no hesitation in speaking out on the subject at all times."[42] Subsequently an advertisement ran in the gay press that declared "Jimmy Carter will deliver for California's Gay people," and in return urged the homosexual community "Let's deliver for Jimmy Carter."[43]

As a Southern Baptist Christian Carter's advocacy of homosexual rights was clearly a political gamble. Were he to be too overt in his lobbying amongst the gay community he risked jeopardising his support amongst what in 1976 appeared to be his most natural constituency, namely the evangelical and fundamentalist Christian community. Bible-believing Christians saw a clear link between America's moral decline and the advances of the gay rights campaign made during the previous decade. Their opposition to homosexuality was grounded in the Scriptures that declared the act of homosexuality to be sinful. "Thou shalt not lie with mankind, as with womankind: it is an abomination" warned Leviticus 18:22, "If man also lies

with mankind, as he lieth with a woman, both of them hath committed an abomination." The acceptance of homosexuality as a valid alternative lifestyle, a key demand of the gay rights campaign, risked incurring the apocalyptic wrath of God and threatened America's providential status as His chosen nation. Jerry Falwell warned that the Almighty had "destroyed the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah because of their involvement in this sin."[44] The "homosexual movement [was] an indictment against America and is contributing to its ultimate downfall," he said.[45] Falwell cited the warning of Psalm 9:17, "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forgot God."[46] Only by reversing its decline into moral degradation could America once more reclaim its place as the Lord's prime agent of worldly redemption. As Hill and Owen put it, evangelicals wanted a return to a nation based upon the "vision of what God wills for American society – which is a far cry from the way things are now! An aroused, purged, redeemed and redirected America will be a refreshed America."[47] James Robison scoffed at the "men who want to make love to men," whilst Falwell pondered whether the death penalty might be instituted as the standard punishment for being homosexual.[48]

Despite the risks of promising to address the agenda of gay voters Carter's campaign staff clearly believed that their candidate's obvious religious identity would be enough to guarantee the continued support of conservative Christians. They gambled that Carter could convince homosexuals of his support for their lifestyle whilst equally convincing Christians that he shared their Biblical attitude to gay rights. Overwhelmingly secular, the Carter staff's underestimation of the strength of feeling amongst the evangelical community on this issue was once again revealed in another campaign memorandum from Charlie Graham. It made explicit the expectation that Carter could support gay rights without jeopardising his support amongst the conservative Christians. Graham wrote to David Moran regarding a Christian organisation called The Family Lobby organised through Californian fundamentalist congregations. Greatly concerned by the advances made by the homosexual community towards acceptance of their lifestyle in the first half of the decade, in 1975 The Family Lobby had formed a petition to reverse a consensual sex law that legalised homosexual acts between consenting adults. Graham wrote that they had "stopped their referendum effort when gay groups moved against them." Now in the election year the Lobby was trying again, seeking to raise enough signatures to place

a gay "sexual offences" initiative on the California general election ballot. Graham believed that Carter should avoid speaking out either in support or opposition to the referendum because "Public opinion itself may defeat the Family Lobby bill" and "may split painfully over the fundamentalist/civil libertarian issue and I don't think Carter wants to get caught in this bind." Instead, Graham advised Carter only to "speak out modesty" in favour of "privacy in relationships between consenting adults," a code-phrase for the acceptance of a homosexual lifestyle. In this way, said Graham, Carter could win the support of both the Christian and homosexual communities because gay people would "remember his support" on the issue, but Carter's identity as a born-again Christian meant that "the fundamentalists will know that he supports them in other ways."[49]

The "other ways" that Graham suggested Carter could retain his Christian support included a number of statements on homosexuality made during the campaign that hinted that Carter shared their theologically conservative attitude. He told *U.S. News and World Report* that same-sex sexuality was "contrary to Biblical teaching"[50] and asked in a television interview about his attitude to homosexuals serving in the military Carter admitted "I do have a hang-up about that particular thing." Carter explained his fear that active homosexuals in the military would be "susceptible to blackmail" because of the "highly secret...nature" of homosexual relationships. When the interviewer pointed out that the same would be true of an adulterous affair carried out by a heterosexual husband with children, Carter denied that a heterosexual act could possibly be as much of "an embarrassment" as a homosexual one. Blackmail attempts would therefore be "much more successful in the case of homosexual acts."[51] He told *Playboy* magazine that his Christianity lent him a sense of "nervousness" about the issue of homosexuality. He also made his opposition to consummation of a gay relationship absolutely clear. To engage in "homosexual activities" was the same as to engage in "adultery" or "for us to steal, for us to lie" because, according to his Southern Baptist faith, "all of these are sins." As he often did during the campaign he invoked the traditional image created by his small-town Southern background. In Plains, he recalled,

> We've had homosexuals in our community, our church. There's never been any sort of discrimination - some embarrassment but no animosity, no

> harassment. But to inject it into a public discussion on politics and how it conflicts with morality is a new experience for me. I've thought about it a lot, but don't see how to handle it differently from the way I look on other sexual acts outside marriage.[52]

Carter also appeared to suggest that he possessed a conservative Christian attitude to the legislation of homosexuality. He told *Playboy* that legislation controlling homosexuality and sodomy "were on the books quite often because of their relationship to the Bible." Early in the nation's history the Judeo-Christian moral standards had been "accepted as a basis for civil law...I don't think it hurts to have this kind of standard maintained as a goal," he said.[53] This, combined with Carter's assertion that "we should try to assure that secular law is compatible with God's laws" and that "If there is a conflict between God's law and civil law, we should honour God's law" suggested to conservative Christians Carter's agreement with laws based on Biblical precepts, including religious principles with regards to homosexuality.[54] Carter portrayed his views as compatible with those of his fellow Southern Baptists, a denomination that declared homosexuality to be "not a valid alternative lifestyle" because "The Bible condemns it as sin."[55] The Southern Baptist's conservative interpretation of divine revelation led many believers to be moralistic in doctrine and life-style. Dr Duke McCall, President of Southern Seminary in Louisville admitted that this puritan tone was still to be found in the Southern Baptist Church.

> We have a more puritan ethic in our official pronouncements, if not in our personal practices, than many other religious bodies. Paint us purple with passion if a public official advocates any form of gambling. Colour us absent in the ecumenical meetings. Paint us red with rage if one of our leaders takes a stand on a public issue with which individually we do not agree.[56]

McCall conceded that Southern Baptists often appeared disengaged from mainstream culture as a result. Baptists "regularly make our collective statements about alcoholic beverages, pornography and dancing. Whatever these sound like to us, they sound like voices out of the past to modern Americans. Southern Baptists really are different" he said. "We cannot make ourselves look like the main line church bodies in America."[57] E. Brooks Holifield, professor of American religious history

at Emory University, called the Southern Baptist Convention "one of the last great repositories of the Puritan tradition in America," and he wrote "Carter embodies a Calvinist piety filtered through Puritan introspection."[58] Carter's obvious aversion to homosexuality was clearly founded in the Southern Baptist faith. When challenged during the 1976 campaign about his "puritanical tone" he simply declared, "I can't change the teachings of Christ" and, what is more, he added, "I believe in them, and a lot of people in this country do as well." [59]

The Carter Presidency and Homosexual Discrimination

Jimmy Carter was the first Democratic President elected since the 1969 Stonewall riots and the founding of the National Gay Task Force in 1973. Furthermore, he was the first Democrat elected since the passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act and the 1965 Voting Rights Act. These factors, coupled with Carter's focus on human rights and its obvious implications for discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, meant that the homosexual community had extremely high expectations of the new President.[60] A key tenet of Carter's campaign victory had been his personal integrity and trustworthiness. His victory had been built upon a long list of promises.[61] Once he was elected Carter was faced with the challenge of delivering on these ambitious electoral vows, none more so than his pledges regarding human rights. In July 1977 White House staff secretary Rick Hutcheson wrote to the new President observing "People have seized the words 'human rights' and are applying them to every argument, cause and issue imaginable." These included "Domestic concerns, including gay rights." These had "taken precedence over foreign affairs in many peoples minds. They ask 'If you [the President] are so concerned about the violation of human rights in other countries, why don't you do anything about the human rights here [In the U.S.]?"[62]

The attitude of the Carter White House to the gay community became an issue of national focus in January 1977 when commissioners in Dade County, Florida sought

to end discrimination against homosexuals. They voted to extend a local antidiscrimination ordinance to protect gays, banning discrimination in housing, public accommodations and employment, including educational institutions, on the basis of affectional or sexual preference. Violators would be subject to up to 60 days in jail. Gay activists compared the law to Lyndon Johnson's Civil Rights Acts against racial discrimination. In doing so they were clearly inspired by the new President's rhetoric in support of human rights. As Florida gay activist Robert Kunst declared in support of the ordinance, "I believe that human rights are absolute, as President Carter said."[63]

Conservative Christians in Dade County challenged the anti-discrimination ordinance and the debate developed from a state issue into an early demonstration of the Christian community's willingness and ability to engage in political activism on a national scale. Anita Bryant, a former Miss Oklahoma, singer and devout fundamentalist Christian, started a campaign to overturn the new anti-discrimination law in Florida. It was, writes Brown, "the first shot in what became a major battle for Christian conservative organisations."[64] Believing that the ordinance represented official endorsement of homosexuality as "an acceptable alternative lifestyle," she declared herself to be "not only aflame but on fire" in disgust.[65] Bryant claimed "Gay activists are joined in a disguised attack on God."[66] She called homosexuality, "a cancer on the soul of society" and warned, "I am not the only one who feels this strongly."[67] "Before I yield to this insidious attack on God and His laws" she pledged to "lead such a crusade to stop it as this country has not seen before." [68] Bryant believed that God had chosen her to lead the struggle against immorality, seeing her fight as mirroring that of Esther and Deborah, two Old Testament Biblical heroines who had saved the people of Israel. The strength of this conviction was further reinforced when she discovered that Deborah had also been a singer.[69] Inspired, she formed an organisation entitled 'Save our Children' and called on conservative Christians to mobilise their dormant political strength. Political apathy, born of Christian separatism, was no longer an option she warned. "The day of the comfortable Christian is over," she said.[70] In a full page advertisement in the *Miami News* entitled "The Civil Rights of Parents: to save their children from homosexual influence" Bryant bemoaned the fact that, "American society largely has developed an attitude of tolerance toward homosexuality." This mistake had been "based on the

understanding that homosexuals keep their deviate activity to themselves." This acceptance been "destroyed" in Florida because of the attempt to "legitimise homosexuals presence in our society," for example "by forcing our private and religious schools to accept them as teachers...no matter how blatant and perverted their lives might be." Bryant feared that allowing homosexuals to teach in schools would create gay "role models for the impressionable." It would allow homosexuals' access to children, an act that was "absolutely necessary for the survival and growth of homosexuality" because "since homosexuals cannot reproduce, they must recruit!" The most likely victims were "a teenage boy or girl who is surging with sexual awareness." The advertisement warned that police in Los Angeles had reported that "25,000 boys 17 years old or younger had been recruited into a homosexual ring to provide sex for adult male customers."[71] She called homosexuals "human garbage" and warned that the Dade County ordinance would "protect the right to have intercourse with beasts."[72]

Bryant's campaign was hugely successful and other Christian leaders quickly joined her. Clear links developed between her campaign and those evangelists who would go on to form the Christian Right. In late January 1977 she appeared on Jim Bakker's top-rated 'The PTL (Praise the Lord) Club' television show to tell viewers "We are in the middle of a battle that the Lord opened my eyes to...Homosexuals want to come out of the closet. When I first heard about what they were attempting to do in Dade County, the Lord took hold of my heart."[73] She warned that America faced dire consequences if the gay liberation movement succeeded. "When society deliberately rejects God," she told the Pentecostal Bakker, "the Bible tells us God will give them up to uncleanness."[74] After the interview Bakker called Bryant's performance "the bombshell that exploded over America."[75] A month later she was a guest on Pat Robertson's 'The 700 Club.' "We believe in the Word of God, and there it says that homosexuality is an abomination" she said.[76] She also appeared on Jerry Falwell's 'Old Time Gospel Hour' and in return Falwell staged an anti-gay rally in Miami alongside Bryant. Falwell yearned for a return to pre-1960s attitudes to homosexuality. "Less than a decade ago" he wrote wistfully "the word 'homosexual'...was disdained by most Americans." It represented "the nadir of human indecency" and was utilised "as a word of contempt." Now "all of this has changed." Now gays were openly demanding recognition of their deviant lifestyle.

"Today thousands of men and women in America flaunt their sin openly."[77] Christians denied that the issue was one of homophobia, but one of Biblically based moral instruction. "I love the homosexual enough not to allow him to assert himself a life-style the Bible teachers is a perversion," Reverend William Chapman, a Baptist, told the *Miami Herald*, "I love him enough to take a stand and say, 'No, that ought not to be. You don't break God's laws." According to Scripture, he added, "a gay person is a pervert."[78] Sufficiently agitated, Miami voters rejected the anti-discrimination ordinance, voting by 71-per cent to 29 percent for its repeal in June 1977. The *Miami Herald* reported that the fervour over the ordinance brought hundreds of opponents to the County courthouse and the Metro Commission chamber in protest, and noted with interest that most "appeared to have been brought in by fundamentalist Christian churches arriving in church school buses."[79] They wore signs reading "God says no, who are you to be different?"[80] After the defeat of the ordinance triumphant conservative Pat Buchanan declared, "the gay rights movement has been routed" in its "collision with Christian fundamentalists."[81] Bryant announced, "The 'normal majority' have said, 'Enough! Enough! Enough!" She promised to continue her crusade nationwide to "repeal similar laws...which attempt to legitimise a life-style that is both perverse and dangerous." Her campaign would "slow down the forces that are attempting to destroy the foundations of this country."[82] "It was like watching the Scopes Monkey Trial," said one bemused Miami reporter.[83]

After her victory in Miami, Bryant won further successes against anti-gay discrimination ordinances in Minnesota and Oregon. In doing so she also made her political persuasion clear and her campaign became increasingly partisan. At one rally she appeared on stage with future Republican Presidential hopeful Ronald Reagan. Another Republican, Senator Jesse Helms circulated a report to his constituents in support of Bryant. It described her as "a deeply committed Christian" and "a concerned American" who had "dared to speak out." It encouraged readers to write to Bryant in support. "She is fighting for decency and morality in America and that makes her, in my book, an All-American lady," said Helms.[84] When she continued to win further successes against gay rights, Bryant declared, now with one eye firmly on the Carter administration, "Hopefully the White House will be challenged...to take a more consistent stand for those values that made America a

great nation."[85] "America's political leaders" she warned "will not be permitted to impose on the people a standard that legitimises sexually abnormality."[86] She also attacked Carter for staying silent during the Dade County debate and derided him for his failure to live up to his Southern Baptist principles. Specifically referring to Carter, she told conservative Christians that he had "refused to take a stand on the issue of gay teachers," and she threatened "before the next election, millions of fellow born-again Christians will demand to know if our President is in favour of known practicing homosexuals teaching in public, private and religious schools." Bryant promised to "continue to pray for President and Mrs. Carter" in "hopes that they will take a stand against this issue of morality."[87] As a result of her campaign, Bryant was named "Most admired Woman in America" in a poll in Good Housekeeping magazine.

Bryant's campaign led conservative Christians into conflict with the Carter White House. His failure to support discriminatory legislation against homosexuals and his open lobbying of gay electoral support appalled them. Equally, they were dismayed by his failure to appoint conservative Christians to influential posts in his administration, choosing instead a number of staff members with openly liberal attitudes to homosexual rights. The liberal and feminist Presidential appointments made by Carter in an effort to placate feminist and gay rights organisations, like Bella Abzug, Marilyn Haft and Midge Costanza caused him the most problems. As chairwomen of the International Women's Year Commission Abzug had upheld the rights of lesbians. Haft had a long legal background of working in support of gay causes, including a period of time sitting on the board of directors for both the Gay Rights National Lobby and the National Gay Task Force (NGTF).[88] Conservative Christians were especially disillusioned with the appointment of Costanza as Director of Public Liaison. She strongly supported the Dade County gay rights ordinance and publicly attacked Anita Bryant, by now a genuine heroine for evangelicals, for having "visions of grandeur."[89]

Evangelicals and fundamentalists were aggravated when in March 1977 Costanza agreed to meet with representatives of the NGTF, the first gay lobbyist organisation to ever receive an invitation to the White House. The NGTF used the three-hour White House meeting to protest against what they perceived as the wide ranging

discriminatory practices of a number of federal agencies.[90] Co-Executive Director of the NGTF, Jean O'Leary, recalled the huge significance of the White House meeting for the gay community, saying "I think this meeting meant a lot for the whole community. It was history." O'Leary had no doubts as to who was the most forceful advocate of gay rights at the White House. "The meeting came about through Midge. The people we met with often didn't want to be there, but when Midge called...they knew they had better show up and listen to what we had to say," said O'Leary.[91] After the meeting Costanza wrote to the President requesting action on a number of issues. These included gays being "refused entry into the Armed Forces and dishonourably discharged if discovered," the IRS "unofficial policy" that denied tax exempt status to non-profit Gay organisations" that was "financially crippling the gay rights movement," the need for gay groups to receive "a higher proportion of Health, Education and Welfare money for gay counselling and health programs," and the immigration policy that meant gays were "refused entry into this country for visits" and "denied permanent residency or naturalisation based on homosexuality." Furthermore, the U.S Commission on Civil Rights had "declined to expand their jurisdiction to include discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation," and in the State Department "Gays are being denied security clearance." Costanza told the President that during the meeting she had "agreed to help" set up meetings with the Justice Department, the Department of Defence, the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights and the H.E.W. She had also arranged for the NGTF to "return for another White House meeting with me in six months to report on their progress."[92] Once again the high expectations amongst the gay activists that Carter would act to eliminate discriminatory practices were linked to Carter's campaign pledge to uphold human rights. One gay activist who attended the meeting noted that were Carter to meet their concerns it would be perceived as "a significant human rights action by the President."[93]

The papers held at the Carter Presidential Library reveal the extent to which the federal government acted upon the grievances outlined by Costanza to the President. After a meeting between the NGTF and the Immigration and Naturalisation Service (INS), the INS had "agreed to survey and reassess its policies and procedures affecting gays," a memorandum from Marilyn Haft to Costanza reported. The INS "acknowledged that a double standard exists in the application of...the law"

confirming that "in many instances homosexuals are required to meet higher standards for establishing "good moral character" (a key requirement for aliens) than are demanded of heterosexuals." They had been unfairly denied on the basis that they were "sexual deviants." Similarly, the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights reported that from hereafter, "gays were being included in the Commission's jurisdiction under the language 'unequal administration of justice.'"[94] A memorandum from Haft to Costanza described how after "much pressure" the Civil Service Commission had agreed to include gay rights under its jurisdiction.[95] The Defence Department revised its regulations to prevent homosexuals from receiving dishonourable discharges.[96] Haft moved to intervene on a gay prisoner's behalf in a lawsuit against the Bureau of Prisons.[97] New regulations permitted gay ministers and gay literature into federal prisons. The IRS gave tax-exempt and tax deductible status to gay organisations. The Federal Communications Commission approved regulations which required broadcasting stations to include the gay community in determining community broadcast needs. The Office of Personnel Management circulated guidelines that specifically cited sexual orientation as a protected area of an employee's private life.[98] Further meetings between federal agencies and the NGTF were scheduled.[99] Costanza publicly recommended that the President himself should meet personally with gay community leaders.[100] "There was solid follow through on all the issues we raised at the White House," O'Leary recalled of the administration's response. "We had meetings with all the heads of departments. Gay people had never done this before."[101]

Evangelicals who were already alienated by their lack of access to the Carter White House were horrified. Pat Buchanan warned that the NGTF "seeks to unfurl and elevate a banner of homosexuality – and force the rest of us to fire a 21-gun salute."[102] *Human Events* magazine warned, "What the Carter people will do now in pushing the counterculture is unclear."[103] Despite the controversy the White House publicly supported Costanza over the March meeting. Questioned on CBS News 'Face the Nation' Jody Powell described Costanza's "primary function" as to make "sure that there is a window to the White House for groups that want to put before the President, and in a way, before the American public in the process, their concerns about our society." Giving gay activists the opportunity to say "we're not getting a fair shake" was, said Powell, "the essence of what America is all about."[104] Costanza

herself was forced to answer stinging criticism. A reader's poll in the supermarket tabloid *National Enquirer* asked: "Should [the] White House have met with [a] homosexual group?" In an open letter to its readers Costanza answered yes and, typically, refused to apologise for her actions. "The White House, the government – belongs to all of the people" she wrote, "When people come to the White House, we do not ask them what their sexual preference is," just as "we do not ask them what their religious preference is." This equation of sexual preference to religious belief was guaranteed to only further anger evangelicals and reveals the White House's fundamental misunderstanding of the breadth of the Christian community's estrangement from the administration. Furthermore, she totally underestimated the numerical growth of the conservative Christian community by declaring, "We cannot allow one or two people in this nation to decide who participates with their government and who doesn't." She concluded,

> I will never apologise for allowing people the right to petition their government, to participate in their government. Nor will I ever apologise for listening to the problems that are being experienced by the people of this nation. There are 20 million Americans who are simply saying: "Look, I want the right to love whomever I choose."

On the same question Reverend L. Duane Brown, President of the American Council of Churches, answered "no" to the *Enquirer*. Claiming to represent "a viewpoint shared by millions of Bible-believing Americans who totally disagree with the motives and morals of this gay liberation movement," Brown denounced the meeting because it "gives them [the homosexual community] publicity, recognition and power. If the White House is going to meet with homosexuals, why not meet with exhibitionists, prostitutes and panderers? Are they not being discriminated against?" He "commended Anita Bryant" for her warning regarding the 'recruitment' of homosexuals. "The history of homosexuality" he observed, "is that they never practice homosexuality alone. They prey on people. That is why we have laws in our communities to protect us from people like them...when the White House indicates public acceptance of these people, and lends dignity to them, it is offensive to the American people." He strongly advised the Carter White House to "stay clear of this issue."[105] After the NTGF White House meeting Anita Bryant herself

publicly denounced the White House claiming homosexuals were being "blessed in their abnormal lifestyle by the office of the President of the United States."[106] Unlike Costanza, she said, "I do not favour the granting of special privileges which violate the constitutional rights of normal Americans."[107] In the face of such criticism gay rights advocates within the Carter administration attempted to convince the President of the political advantage to be gained from association with their cause. One memorandum, from Jane Simpson to Hugh Carter, tallied the number and purpose of telephone calls to the White House. It claimed that the issue had stimulated 1,438 calls, every one of which was made in support of gay rights.[108] However, this is certainly not borne out by the records of written correspondence received by the Carter White House, the vast majority of which registered opposition to the NGTF meeting, nor by the results of the *National Enquirer* poll that showed almost 80 percent of readers opposed the White House meeting.[109]

Dismissing the overwhelmingly public criticism of the contact between the White House and the gay activists Costanza continued to advocate the needs of the gay community to the President. One issue upon which she attempted to elicit Carter's support was the inclusion of anti-discrimination clauses in civil service employment legislation. In February 1978 Seymour Wishman wrote to Costanza that proposed civil service legislation for consideration by Congress "contains a series of specific categories such as women, race and religion," but "does not include sexual preference as a category for special protection." Urging Costanza to talk to the President, Wishman admitted that should Carter support a change to civil service criteria he would be "directly confronted with the necessity of making an outright endorsement of gay rights." If the President "includes the category in his proposed legislation, he will be subjected to...enormous criticism...for defending the constitutional rights of gays." However, she warned that "if he does not make any reference to protecting gays, the gay community will attack him for insensitivity."[110] Two days later Costanza told the President that the inclusion of sexual preference as a protected category in the bill

> Would be of symbolic importance to the gays and if Congress passed the legislation, it would be viewed by the gays and probably by others, as the first

step toward passage of a more comprehensive bill which would protect against employment discrimination throughout the federal government.

To further convince Carter Costanza told him that it would "be consistent with your human rights stand."[111] Less than a week later she wrote again, reminding the President of the political advantages of speaking out on gay rights. "Not to include the provision might make likely a confrontation with the gay community" she warned, but "Inclusion would be very supportive of gay people in their campaign for equal rights." Their support would be valuable: "The gay community estimates its membership at 20,000,000" she said.[112] Conservative Christians bitterly opposed any moves to extend the provision of civil rights to homosexuals. Religious Liaison Robert Maddox later met Bob Jones III and Bill Billings of the Moral Majority and received petitions dedicated to preventing such an extension. The meeting, Maddox told Anne Wexler was "brief" because of the intransigence of the evangelists, particular Jones. "Any attempts at compromise with the ultraconservative fundamentalist were "hopeless" he said.[113] Tom Laney later reported that, "upon hearing upon the meeting with Bob Jones and his crew" gay Christian representatives "requested equal time" with Maddox so that he could "become acquainted with the size, extent, work and leaders of the gay churches." In a decision guaranteed to further aggravate evangelicals, their request was accepted.[114] Although Carter subsequently did not include sexual orientation as a category on the Civil Service Reform Act, staff memoranda showed that during Carter's Presidency civil service rules explicitly included "sexual orientation" in a list of factors that should not be taken into account when considering employment, a point that was repeatedly publicised in correspondence with gay activists.[115]

Carter clearly sympathised with the discrimination faced by homosexuals. He also understood the need to secure his somewhat shaky support amongst a Democratic constituency not entirely reconciled to the edicts of his Southern Baptist Christianity. However, pressure from Costanza, both private and public, became an embarrassment to the President amongst the conservative religious community. Her views were not always wholly compatible with those of the President. One speechwriter noted after Carter had left office, "Every speech [Costanza]

made...would start off, 'You know what my boss thinks? He thinks this, this and this. Of course, I don't think that. This is what I think."[116] Some members of the administration attempted to make light of the increasing tension between the Catholic Costanza and the Southern Baptist President. One Presidential speechwriter wrote jokes for Costanza. They revealed the clear incompatibility between the feminist assistant and the born-again President. "It doesn't bother me being a Catholic in the Carter White House" went one, "although I admit I was surprised right at first by the job application I had to fill out. Where it said, "Date of Birth" there were two blanks." The joke would have done little to endear Costanza to the born-again evangelical community. Another joke poked fun of the President's apparent lack of interest in gender equality and the Georgian's perceived chauvinism, two key sources of tension between the White House and Costanza's liberal constituents. "Just recently the President invited me to one of those grand state dinners. A wonderful experience for me: It was the first time I ever had the opportunity to cook for 500 people." A third joke made fun of Carter's marginalisation of Costanza and his rejection of her feminist constituents. "Not only am I in the inner circle, but I am closer to the President than Ham, [Jordan] or Jody [Powell] or Stu, [Eizenstat] or the Vice-President. Just look at the floor plan of the White House. The President calls me in frequently for advice, "Midge, what do you think of this colour for the drapes?"[117] Behind the jokes, the administration's exasperation with Costanza was real. At one point she publicly criticised the President for not supporting the ERA to the same degree as he had the Panama Canal Treaties. Robert Bickel, a White House aide tasked with building support for the Treaties was appalled. He recalled "Midge Costanza was in the middle of God knows what" but it was "some constituency of left-handed Nicaraguan refugees or something." Costanza was "not helpful to us" he said.[118] Costanza undoubtedly cost Carter support amongst the evangelical community. She was first ostracised by the administration and then finally forced to resign in September 1978.

Carter's choice of liberal staff and his efforts to build support amongst the gay community fuelled the sense amongst the conservative Christian community that Carter had abandoned his faith in favour of secular humanism. Carter was clearly uneasy in regards to homosexuality. However, he steadfastly adhered to the Baptist principle of church-state separation in refusing to concede to evangelical demands

that he support legislation that discriminated against homosexuals based on Biblical authority. One fundamentalist preacher from Colorado compared Carter's promise to be bound by church-state separation to the appeasement of the Nazi's by England in the 1930s. Warning "the hour is late" to stop the "homosexual revolution" he wrote

> ...If we make homosexuality as respectable as England did in the twenties and thirties, we surely will be swept away with the previous nations of the world who believed they could defile the laws of God...We must publicly and privately stand for spiritual and moral values as revealed by God in the Bible...or we, too, will die.[119]

Homosexuality, he warned was "a kind of national death wish" that seeks to "change the natural order created by God himself."[120] Opposition to the gay rights movement was a central motivating factor in the growth of key organisations of the Christian Right. For example, Jerry Falwell successfully used the fear of homosexuality to raise funds for his Moral Majority organisation. One direct mail pamphlet declared "We are losing the war against homosexuals." As proof Falwell cited the news that "gays were recently given permission to lay a wreath on the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier at Arlington Cemetery to honour any sexual deviants who served in the military. That's right," he said "gays were allowed to turn our Tomb of the Unknown Soldier into: THE TOMB OF THE UNKNOWN SODOMITE! [121]

Another early Christian Right organisation to be inspired to oppose the gay rights movement was the aggressively anti-Carter Christian Voice. This organisation clearly signalled the political coming of age of the conservative Christian community as a new, and lasting religious force in the American political discourse. In 1978 Anita Bryant joined with sponsors of a California state ballot initiative that sought to ban homosexuals from teaching in public schools. Though the initiative, 'Proposition 6' was defeated its, a year later supporters formed a new organisation, Christian Voice, that protested against an attempt by the Internal Revenue Service to remove the tax-exempt status of churches whose ministers were campaigning against gay rights laws. From its inception it was overtly political and strongly partisan. "Moral decadence is a very serious problem today" said Gary Jarmin, the organisation's President, "and politics is a big reason for these problems."[122]

Christian Voice was also notable for the size of its political ambitions. Many Christian Right organisations were organised on a local or state level but Christian Voice proclaimed national goals. Jarmin declared organisations like the Roundtable and Moral Majority to be "a full step behind" Christian Voice. "They said they are not going to endorse candidates. We in Christian Voice are going to endorse [candidates] and target others for defeat," he said.[123] "If Christians unite, we can do anything," said chairman Robert Grant, "We can pass any law or any amendment. And that is exactly what we intend to do."[124] Christian Voice issued "moral report cards" to rate the voting record of politicians on evangelical 'hot-button' issues such as abortion, the ERA and gay rights as a means to "restore traditional Christian values throughout the United States."[125] The report cards made absolutely no pretence at political neutrality. The issues listed included Carter's decision to create a Department of Education, his refusal to ban abortion, his failure to support prayer in public schools and his advocacy of the SALT II treaty. Unsurprisingly, noted *Journal of Church and State* the "results were far from a morality rating, as claimed by Christian Voice, but rather a rating of members of Congress according to their political leanings."[126] For example, two Democrat Congressmen, one a devout Lutheran, the other an ordained Baptist minister, received grades of '0.' A Republican, who had been charged with soliciting sex from a sixteen-year old boy, received the maximum grade of '100.' Christian Voice was also significant in its pioneering use of extensive direct mail solicitations as a means to stimulate evangelical political activism. One typical example warned readers "The Children in your neighbourhood are in danger," and described the existence of "a master plan to destroy everything that is good and moral here in America."[127] Another announced,

THIS LETTER WILL MAKE YOU ANGRY!
But I'm Going To Tell
You The Truth About...

...Militant gays
...Liberal Educators
...Cruel Atheists
...And Godless Politicians. [128]

Early in 1980, Christian Voice and Moral Majority launched campaigns to remove Carter from office in large part because of his lenient stance on gay rights. Although Jerry Falwell's manifesto for his Moral Majority organisation claimed, "we are not a political party...we do not endorse political candidates," the public statements and literature of the organisations made their opposition to the incumbent President clear. The California Director of Moral Majority, Tim LaHaye, warned that homosexuals were "already are far too influential to assure the moral sanity of the next generation," and openly blamed "the lenient government policies of the Carter administration."[129] LaHaye urged conservative Christians to abandon the born-again President, declaring that Carter's Presidency had "resulted in a humanist takeover of the American government." He pondered whether Carter was "a Christian who is naïve about humanism" or "a humanist who masqueraded as a Christian to get elected and then showed his contempt for the 60 million 'born agains' by excluding them from his government."[130] *The Christian News* reported that during a meeting with gay activists to discuss the 1980 Democratic Party platform one member of the Carter administration had announced "The President stands fully for civil and humans rights for all Americans and I'm glad to say that includes homosexuals."[131] Conservative Pat Buchanan made light of Carter's professed born-again status and observed,

> Our born again Southern Baptist President has undergone another conversion. The government of the United States, he now contends, should provide a special protected status in law for individuals who profess and practice a life style that Carter's church teaches is aberrant, sinful and immoral...The President is not the sort of simpleton to allow Biblical beliefs to get in the way of carrying San Francisco.[132]

Evangelicals wrote to the Carter White House to register their disgust. One pastor, B.J. Willhite, wrote directly to the President. He made clear that Carter's gay rights policies would have damaging political consequences. He told Carter that "a representative of either your office or your election campaign" had campaigned alongside a "Gay Activist" and "stated that there would be a 'plank' in your campaign platform supporting the "gay liberation movement and gay rights." Willhite warned, "This position is inconsistent with a Biblical understanding of

homosexuality and inconsistent with a Christian perspective." Support for this sinful practice was comparable "with conditions which existed in Sodom and Gomorrah, not a nation which claims Christianity." Willhite was a typical evangelical. He had supported Carter in 1976 because of "my belief that you were a committed Christian," but he wrote "I am sorry to say that I will no longer be able to do so unless your position in this matter can be clarified and brought into conformity with the preservation of order in our society."[133]

Dismissive of the growing anti-Carter sentiment amongst evangelicals and pressured by gay rights activists the Carter White House largely ignored the warnings of Christians like Willhite. Instead they listened to pressure from the gay community and sought their electoral support. Again this pressure was focused upon Carter's human rights policy. As San Francisco Mayor Harvey Milk put it in one speech on the need for gay equality, "I'm tired of the silence from the White House. Jimmy Carter you talk about human rights a lot...you want to be the world's leader for human rights. Well, damn it, lead!" Carter, he said, talked often about his faith, but Milk asked "When are you going to talk about that most important part: Love thy neighbour? After all, she may be gay."[134] A number of letters from gay activists to the White House made it clear that Carter's faith was still an issue of concern for them, and urged the President to do more to earn their trust.[135] In December 1979, one gay organisation, 'Lesbian/Gay Democrats of Texas' wrote to the President to remind him of the need to support their agenda. They warned Carter that the gay community was now "politically astute" and "constitute a very significant body of voters." Because of "major gay/lesbian voter registration efforts during recent years" as well as "massive get out the vote projects planned for next year" it was "likely that the number of lesbians and gay men who actually go to the polls will exceed that of several other minority groups." They warned Carter to "pay attention to gay/lesbian issues." Ignoring them would be "neither just nor politically wise in 1980."[136] The National Gay Task Force also wrote to Carter to warn that it was "surveying current and prospective Presidential candidates for their positions which concern lesbian and gay voters." These issues "must be addressed at the Federal level and in particular by the President."[137] The Mayors of San Francisco and Seattle wrote to Carter personally urging him to sign an executive order prohibiting discrimination in Federal employment and Federal programs and services on the basis of sexual

orientation. One Democratic Senator wrote to ask the President to end the "harassment of gay tourists and aliens" by the Immigration and Naturalisation Service.[138]

In reply the Carter White House strongly re-iterated the President's support for the gay and lesbian community. Writing to the NGTF, Robert Strauss, the Carter re-election campaign manager, told them that because of Carter "In the area of public policy decisions, gay concerns now have an equal opportunity to be heard and have been made part of the public process." He reminded the NGTF, "For too long the doors of the federal government were closed to too many Americans." In contrast, "Jimmy Carter has opened those doors and he intends to see that they remain open." The President was personally committed "to continuing his policy of appointing qualified individuals without discrimination based on...sexual orientation."[139] Gay representatives contacted Robert Maddox to register their concerns that the President might speak at the Christian 'Washington for Jesus rally' scheduled for April 1980 alongside openly anti-gay evangelists like James Robison and Pat Robertson. Although the rally presented Carter with the opportunity to address the evangelical community, Maddox "assured them...President Carter will not attend the rally."[140]

Carter's need to address the demands of the gay community in his bid for re-election was once again clear in 1980. As in 1976, the gay and lesbian community represented a vital Democratic Party constituency for Carter. Gay activists sent 37 openly gay representatives to the Democratic Party convention in 1980. "We're taking advantage of the most powerful closet we have," declared Jean O'Leary of the NGTF, that is the "the voting booth."[141] The difference between the Democratic and Republican Party attitudes towards homosexual rights was clear in their respective electoral platforms for 1980. The Democratic Party platform declared "We must affirm the dignity of all people and protect all groups from discrimination based on colour, religion, national origin, sex or sexual orientation."[142] The party declared its support of the family "in all its diverse forms," considered a code-phrase to include single-sex marriages.[143] In response to the Democratic platform Gary Jarmin organised a lobby group entitled 'Christians for Reagan' becoming the first organisation of the Christian Right to publicly join Reagan's Presidential campaign. The group aired a number of television advertisements that attacked Carter in key

states, mostly southern, where, they admitted, "there exists a large number of fundamental, evangelical Christian votes."[144] The advertisements accused Carter of supporting homosexual rights and featured footage of radical gay rights activists demonstrating in Washington and New York. They warned viewers "Now the march has reached Washington. And President Carter's platform carries his pledge to cater to homosexual demands." In defending the action Jarmin announced, "If there is any reason at all they [evangelicals] should oppose Carter, this is it."[145] Jody Powell recalls his shock at the advertisements "run by Reagan supporters charging the President with being in favour of putting homosexuals in the classrooms of elementary schools across the land," and declaring Carter to be an "enemy of the American family."[146] Maddox wrote to Anne Wexler to report that Christian Voice "had shown its true colours." He had been trying to tell his "rightest, conservative politically active Christian friends that they were being used," but despite this he warned "These religious lobby groups are proliferating."[147] The influence upon the Republican Party of groups like Christian Voice also became clear for the first time in 1980, a relationship that continues today. Unlike the Democrats, the Republican platform referred to "our belief in the traditional roles and values of the family in our society" and declared that "The importance of support of the mother and homemaker in maintaining the values of his country can not be over-emphasized." Clearly this "traditional" family did not include homosexuals.[148]

In an effort to repair his links with Christian conservatives Carter finally agreed to talk to prominent evangelists including Jerry Falwell, Bob Jones, James Robison, Oral Roberts and James Bakker at a short White House breakfast on January 22nd 1980. The breakfast meeting was arranged by Maddox as part what he called a "cluster of three events," the others being an address by the President to the National Religious Broadcasters and a television interview in which Carter would talk about his religious faith. These three events, cautioned Maddox in a memorandum to Anne Wexler, were "important" for evangelicals because they would "let them feel his identification with them as a Christian believer while still communicating that he is President of all people." As such these events "must be carefully coordinated" because they "could well become the keystone of [the] future Presidential relationship with this vast segment of the Nation." The breakfast meeting was particularly pivotal. "If a feeling of intimacy and trust can be created" he wrote, "the

leaders will be inclined to interpret accurately the President and his views to their constituencies." Maddox was keenly aware of the possible political advantages to be gleaned if the meeting was carefully managed. He told Wexler, "By selecting just the right leaders and by helping them ask the most crucial questions, the President's views can be more fully stated and more carefully interpreted."[149]

Far from building ties the meeting only reinforced the depth of estrangement between the President and Christian conservatives and any political benefits that did accrue for the Carter White House were overshadowed by the controversy that flared soon after. Jerry Falwell publicly attacked Carter for his stance on gay rights, accusing him of attempting to woo homosexual voters by giving public approval of their 'sinful' lifestyle. At a Moral Majority rally in Alaska soon after the White House breakfast meeting, Falwell fabricated a conversation with Carter he claimed had taken place there. He said he had asked the President, "Sir, why do you have practising homosexuals on your senior staff at the White House?" According to Falwell, Carter had replied, "I am the President of all the American people and I believe I should represent everyone." Falwell said, "I said why don't you have some murderers and bank robbers and so forth to represent?"[150] Carter aide Gerald Rafshoon recalled "Jerry Falwell really took out after him, saying that he was not a good Christian" because "he's had homosexuals in the White House."[151] The actual transcript of the meeting reveals that the conversation never took place. Falwell had actually asked Carter "Is it fair to say that your definition of a family would not include the marriage of homosexual men or lesbians?" The President's response was not recorded, but Falwell replied, "Thank you – thank you very much." When the White House protested over Falwell's misrepresentation, the fundamentalist preacher suggested that the whole affair had been planned by the administration "as an attempt to discredit evangelical ministers who disagree with him [Carter]."[152] Confronted by reporters he admitted to having "fabricated" the tale. Maddox blamed the increasingly popular evangelist's desire for political power, noting that at this time "Falwell was on his celebrity jag."[153] An infuriated Carter recorded in his personal diary, "Falwell has lied. I have never had any such conservation."[154] The President was particularly angered by Falwell's accusation that he was guilty of falsely "claiming" to be a Christian.[155] "Nonetheless" Carter recalls, "one of the 'religious' television spots aired during the general election campaign depicted a concerned

mother telling her child that I was a bad man because I encouraged homosexuality."[156] Indeed, after he left office Carter himself admitted in his memoirs that the criticism of his administration from "bitter" conservative Christians was "a serious problem we could not overcome."[157] Nor did Carter forget Falwell's deception. After an address at the Baptist Meredith College in Raleigh in 1986 Carter was asked by a student to comment on the influence of religious fundamentalists like Falwell on government. "In a very Christian way," Carter replied, "as far as I'm concerned, he can go to hell."[158]

The affair further damaged Carter's standing with evangelicals. Despite Maddox's denials, rumours spread among evangelicals in regard to the breakfast meeting. One angry evangelical wrote to Carter demanding clarification of the exchange between Falwell and the President. "It appears that Satan has us right where he wants us – Christians against Christians," he wrote.[159] Maddox was forced to explain in reply, "The President in no way condones homosexuality as a proper, Biblical life-style" although he "believes that the civil rights of all Americans, homosexuals included, should be protected." Maddox made it clear "Neither the President nor I want to fight against Dr. Falwell. He has every right and responsibility to preach the Gospel." However Maddox ended by remarking, "When [Falwell] comments about the President, he should endeavour to be accurate in his statements. In the highly charged atmosphere of an election year, we all must be careful to speak factually."[160] Another evangelical wrote to Anne Wexler, claiming to have heard from leaders of the Southern Baptist Convention that Carter had treated Falwell rudely during the breakfast meeting. "He said that men like Jerry Falwell and others had tried to, in Christian love, share some concerns of the majority of people in this country with President Carter." In return "he had become cold and would not discuss the matter further." The writer also accused Maddox of telling the SBC that "President Carter wanted nothing to do with James Robison + preachers like him." The evangelical ended with a threat. "Everybody I talk to is voting for Reagan + most of them voted for Pres Carter before...In the last election 70% of evangelicals didn't vote. *This* time they are. The black vote won't win it for him – The Christian vote is bigger."[161] Wexler wrote back in reply that the meeting had been "very cordial and frank. While those present may have disagreed with some of the President's positions, I would characterise them as very appreciative of the time they had with the President." She

also dismissed the accusations regarding Maddox, who had told her "he never said the President wants nothing to do with James Robison." However, she candidly conceded "that President's Carter's views on certain issues differ from those held by Rev. Robison" and that "a meeting between the President and Reverend Robison would not be productive."[162]

Jimmy Carter's White House brought issues of gay and lesbian rights into the national discourse to an unprecedented degree. Turner comments upon "the remarkable amount of energy" that the White House poured into tackling the issue of discrimination based on sexual orientation," whilst Marcus calls the contact between the gay activists and the White House "a wonderful breakthrough" for the gay community.[163] The Carter Presidency heralded an unprecedented level of federal government engagement with the gay community. In a letter to the leadership of the National Gay Task Force, Robert Strauss claimed that the President had done nothing less than "taken steps, in his first three years in office, to address most of the public issues articulated historically within the gay community."[164] After he left office Carter openly defended gay civil rights and attacked what he called "extreme religious activists" who he blamed for "emphasising vicious attacks on gay men and women ostensibly based on the teachings of Jesus Christ." His opposition to discrimination was grounded in great part in his Baptist faith and his human rights agenda, observing that Christ himself had had encounters with those suffering from condemnation. "Christ set an example for us by reaching out to them, loving and healing them."[165] However, his open support of gay rights during his term in office, coupled with the high-profile activities of his White House staff who sought to end discrimination based on sexual orientation contributed to Carter's rejection by the evangelical community in the 1980.

The day that Reagan won the Presidency in 1980, Pat Robertson identified the reasons for the Republican victory on his Christian Broadcasting Network show. No longer required by political expediency to denounce Carter, he reversed his usual withering criticism of the President and instead commended Carter's display of "Christian virtue" in defeat. "He has been magnificent" said Robertson, asking his audience to pray with him for the defeated President. However, he singled out Carter's White House staff for attack. He accused Carter aides Peter Bourne of

"dispensing drugs illegally" and Tim Kraft of using cocaine. He commented upon Hamilton Jordan's "escapades" and referred to the "alienation" of evangelicals who "had not been welcomed into the Carter administration as they had hoped." As a result, evangelicals had said, "we just don't think this is quite right and we're not being included [in the administration]." He was most scornful of Midge Costanza, who, observed Robertson "had opened her arms...to some of the people of the homosexual persuasion" which, he declared "is repugnant to Christians." Because of Costanza and her ilk there had been, Robertson said, "a definite defection from a group that would have been 100% for Mr Carter" if only "he had played it differently. In contrast, Robertson did not hide his delight at the news of Reagan's victory.[166]

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JIMMY CARTER, CONSERVATIVE CHRISTIANITY AND THE POLITICS OF THE FAMILY

In 1976 Jimmy Carter's Southern Baptist faith led religious conservatives to believe that his election might herald a re-awakening of traditional Christian family values in America. They were drawn into support for Carter's campaign for the Presidency in part by his promise to address the plight of the nation's families, a pledge that Carter himself tied explicitly to a renewal of Biblical morality and his own personal old-time religious principles. As a fellow evangelical, conservative Christians believed that Carter would support the same family agenda that they espoused, namely one grounded in their inerrant interpretation of Holy Scripture and aimed at halting what they perceived as the precipitous decline in the nation's moral standards. This chapter will show that Carter did not meet their expectations.

In particular, two national conferences irrevocably destroyed Carter's image as a champion of the traditional family and led instead to his portrayal within the evangelical community as an 'anti-family' secular humanist. The first of these was the 1977 International Women's Year (IWY) conference composed of a series of state conferences mandated to address the needs of the American women and culminating in a national conference, held in Houston, Texas. The second was the 1980 White House Conference on Families (WHCF), a series of state and regional conferences convened to discuss issues of concern to American families. Even before these conferences took place conservative Christians were dismayed by Carter's appointment of liberal and feminist delegates to their respective organising committees. This contrasted greatly with his refusal to appoint Bible-believing Christians to key posts in his administration, in spite of the pleas of evangelical leaders, most notably the Pentecostal evangelist Pat Robertson. The IWY Houston conference endorsed a National Plan of Action that contained liberal planks on key issues including abortion, the Equal Rights Amendment, and homosexual discrimination. It was strongly supported by the Carter White House and funded by federal authority. In the eyes of conservative Christians this government

involvement represented nothing less than a Presidential legitimisation of the feminist humanist agenda. Disagreements over the WHCF centred on the correct definition of what constituted a family, with evangelicals favouring one based on Biblical law. Combined with Presidential commitments to address the agendas drawn up by the delegates, both conferences exemplified precisely the unwarranted intervention into Christian family relationships that evangelicals and fundamentalists abhorred, once again exacerbating conservative Christian disappointment with the Carter Presidency.

The 1976 Carter Campaign and the American Family

Jimmy Carter consistently placed a concern for the American family at the centre of his 1976 Presidential election campaign. He dramatised the importance of family issues to his campaign by making them the focus of the very first speech he made after winning the Democratic Party Presidential nomination. "I have campaigned all over America," he told an audience in New Hampshire in August 1976, "and everywhere I go I find people deeply concerned about the loss of values in our lives." Carter identified the "root problem" to be "the steady erosion and weakening of our families," and warned "The American family is in trouble." Carter pledged a return to a time when "The family was the first church. The family was the first school. The family was the first government." He would use his Presidential authority to "reverse the trend that we've experienced in the past that has destroyed the American family," because "the family unit is the best way for men and women to live their lives, the best way to raise children." It was the "only solid foundation upon which to build a strong nation." He declared "There can be no more urgent priority for the next administration than to see that every decision our government makes is designed to honour and support and strengthen the American family."[1] Two months later Carter again publicly promised to place family issues at the centre of his political agenda, this time specifically addressing the religious community. He told the National Conference of Catholic Charities that the family was "the cornerstone of

American life," but admitted to being troubled "by the deterioration of [families] in recent years, and by the fact that our elected leaders and our government agencies and programs have...pursued policies that have damaged families, rather than supporting and strengthening them." Moreover, conservative Christians could not fail to be heartened when he declared that, rather than using federal intervention, he wanted to "strengthen the system of private voluntarism" that was imperative for the realisation of "basic social justice." He declared, "If we want less government, and many of us do, then we must work for strong families. For when the family structure is weak," he said, "our government will tend to fill the vacuum, often unsatisfactorily." He blamed unwarranted and misguided government intervention for creating, rather than solving problems for the family. "Because of confusion or insensitivity, our government's policies have often actually weakened our families, or even destroyed them" he said, "We don't need new bureaucracy."[2] Carter's attitude to government further appeared in line with that of conservative Christians when he announced that "on strengthening individual liberties and local levels of government, I consider myself a conservative."[3]

Carter's concern for the family was emblematic of the central theme of his 1976 Presidential campaign, namely a renewal of trust in government and a return to old-fashioned Christian moral values. Carter openly attributed many of his values, character and much of his political philosophy to his rural boyhood, close knit family and his devout religious faith. For Carter, the image of small-town rural life in his tiny hometown of Plains, Georgia was central in building his appeal amongst conservative Christians who feared the impact of modernity, particularly upon their families. He placed great emphasis on the link between his small town upbringing and his traditional principles nurtured by his Southern Baptist beliefs. In *Why Not the Best?* Carter made great play of his old-fashioned upbringing in sleepy Plains and his traditional values forged through hard work and adversity. "My life on the farm during the Great Depression more nearly resembled farm life of fully 2,000 years ago than farm life today," he wrote. "For years we used an outdoor privy in the backyard for sanitation and hand pump for water."[4] He called Plains "one of the poorest parts of the country. In my county we didn't have a doctor, we don't have a pharmacist, a dentist."[5] When he travelled to Georgia to meet Carter during the campaign Norman Mailer remarked upon Plains "unmistakable well-ordered patina" that held a promise

that the mysterious gentility of American life" was present. Plains had retained the feeling of "an old-fashioned town" that America had "all but lost to the Interstates and the ranch houses, the mobile homes and the condominiums, the neon strips...truck stops [and] shopping centres."[6] During his childhood, said Carter "Our lives then were centred almost completely around our family and our home," and in adulthood his family life centred in Plains "remained a source of his inner strength."[7] He told Bill Moyers in May 1976, "You know, when things started going wrong in my own life, my mother and father were there...There was something around which I built my life."[8] "Jimmy Carter believed that one can go home again," wrote Leslie Wheeler during the campaign, because "he always has."[9] Carter's home, wrote Peter Bourne, was "a place of retreat, renewal and replenishment."[10]

Carter's portrayal of a down-home image that promised of a return to time-honoured American values rooted in the stability of traditional family life and Christian piety was not empty political rhetoric. His mother, Miss Lillian, explained, "The church is the centre of everything in a small town. Plains didn't even have a beer joint at that time. A church and a school – that's all there was."[11] Carter told voters that his childhood in Plains had been one "steeped in the Bible" centred upon and shaped by the Baptist church.[12] He recalled "We felt close to nature, close to the members of our family, and close to God." As a boy he had considered the peanuts that provided his family's livelihood to be "one of the great Gifts of God to mankind."[13] Carter had, observed Baptist historians Hefley and Hefley, "gone to a Baptist church almost every Sunday of his life."[14] Hutcheson observes that the Church occupied such a central place in the life of Baptists "socially, educationally, and culturally as well as religiously," that its "formative influence [upon Carter] would be hard to overestimate."[15] At the age of eleven he had reached what Baptists deem "the age of accountability" and was formally accepted as a member of the Plains church. Carter recalled of this event simply that he "accepted Jesus into my heart."[16] Carter himself said of this simple church centred life "I never knew anything except going to church. My wife and I were born and raised in innocent times. The normal thing to do was to go to church."[17] Carter's focus upon the importance of his own family life, interwoven as it was with his modest background and religious faith, helped him, observes Hutcheson, to exude "an aura of moral rectitude that exemplified all the traditional... values."[18] In recalling the electoral appeal of Carter's religion and

family in the campaign, Stuart Eizenstat observed, "the notion of a man grounded in solid family and religious values gave a certain amount of confidence that this was the kind of person who could do the healing the American people expected."[19] Another example was Carter's marriage. Carter spoke openly about the depth of his love for Rosalynn, a local girl that he declared to be "the best thing that ever happened to me." Much of this strength derived from their shared Christian faith. During the campaign he admitted that when they had suffered difficulties in their relationship, it had been this religious faith that "sustained our marriage and helped us overcome our difficulty."[20] Mailer confirmed as much on his visit to Plains. He predicted Carter would make good on his campaign promise to "restore the family" in part because Carter had been "Faithful, by public admission, to his wife for thirty years." He was "in every way a sexual conservative."[21] Carter's values led Mailer to conclude him to be "within range of the very good and very decent man he presented himself to be." Mailer would be happy to vote for him, he said, after all, "it was not everyday that you could pull the lever for a man whose favourite song was Amazing Grace."[22]

No one group found Carter's presentation of a life centred on family and church more appealing than conservative Christians. Evangelicals' upheld the traditional, monogamous and male-headed family, as pre-scribed by Scripture, as the fundamental unit of society. The family was absolutely central to the evangelical worldview. In his study of American spirituality Roof contends, "Families are the arenas where rules of Biblical authority are instituted and the Christian life lived out."[23] Similarly Oldfield notes that the family unit was primary to evangelicals because it was "a realm of nurturance" for their Biblically based belief system. The family existed as the organisation through which the teachings of the Christian church were to be instilled, disseminated and perpetuated. It was "the transmitter of threatened values in a hostile modern world." Evangelicals strongly believed that the family must remain "a private realm" through which they could promote "values threatened by the world outside," a means for "the transmission of evangelical values."[24] This vision of the family was "closely intertwined with evangelical religious doctrine."[25] Smith also observes that in the evangelical mindset there was "a strong connection between the family and faith." They viewed the family as "the basic social unit of society, the foundation of its survival and health."[26] Thus a

weakening of the family endangered the moral ties that bound Christian society together.

The desire to return to a golden age of family values was a key organising principle of many Christian Right organisations. Falwell openly called for a "return to where America was fifty years ago," in order to restore "America back to moral sanity."[27] Oldfield observes the mobilisation of the Christian Right as "an attempt to fight the trends of modernity."[28] Clecak also interpreted the resurgence of the old-time religion as representing a "flight from modernity."[29] Evangelicals felt "more and more marginalised and estranged by the modern world" that, observes Foner, "seemed to trivialise religion and exalt immorality."[30] Similarly, Hunter observes "Modernity creates the conditions in which "immorality" from the evangelical perspective is structurally engendered" and modernity therefore "fosters sin." The Christian Right arose specifically in "resistance to modernity."[31] Cox points out that during the 1970s evangelicals began to see the modern era to be "a *uniquely* fallen or deranged age." Cox admits that this is nothing new: "The vocation of religious teachers and exemplars - especially in the Biblical tradition [has always] been to call nations to righteousness, to expose sin and folly, to uphold the law." He calls fundamentalist Christianity "an offshoot of the tradition of anti-modernism which has fought against the modern world since its inception."[32] But what was new was evangelists' "apocalyptic tone," their suggestion that America was "worse off...than anyone else has ever been, that the modern world is peculiarly cursed and damned." As a result of the increasingly secular, pluralistic nature of American public discourse, Christian conservatives have felt "besieged by every touch of modernism."[33] A. James Reichley of the Brookings Institution observed that the political resurgence of evangelicalism was nothing less than an anti-modernist "revolt" against the "erosion of the moral foundations of American society."[34] Clearly central to this was a defence of the Christian family. It was no coincidence that Pat Robertson's cable network was entitled "The Family Channel" whilst the most popular conservative Christian radio show was James Dobson's "Focus on the Family."

By placing his promise to protect the traditional family household at the very centre of his electoral agenda, Carter guaranteed the support of many evangelicals in 1976. In a press release forwarded to President Ford during the 1976 Presidential campaign, UPI Religion writer David Anderson observed that Carter benefited from "one of us syndrome" amongst the evangelical community. Evangelicals "tended to perceive Carter as a moderate conservative, taking on Big Government and the Federal Bureaucracy in ways familiar and dear to the hearts of conservative evangelical voters."[35] Once he took office they were initially impressed with the Christian, pro-family tone of the Carter White House. For example, early in his administration Carter told co-habiting members of his staff "Those of you who are living in sin, I hope you'll get married. Those of you who have left your spouses, go home. Those of you who have forgotten your children's names, go home and get reacquainted. I don't want your families breaking up because of your loyalty to me." When asked about allegations of sexual impropriety by members of his staff he declared that he would not punish, but rather "pray for them."[36] These sentiments seemed mawkish to much of the secular press, yet indicated to conservative Christians that the new President shared the sense of value that they themselves placed on family life.

The 1977 International Women's Year Conference

Conservative Christian expectations of the Carter Presidency were soon dashed by the National Women's Conference that took place in Houston in November 1977. Jointly called by Congress and the Carter White House, the four-day convention was the culmination of a two year series of conferences held in each of the 50 states to mark United Nations International Women's Year in 1975. Significantly, it was the first national women's conference to receive the support of the federal government. Evangelical disillusionment with the Carter White House began to grow even before the conference took place. Although it had been Gerald Ford who had appointed the National Commission for the Observance of International Women's Year to organise

the convention, as soon as he took office Carter replaced his predecessor's conservative choice as chairwomen, Elizabeth Athanasakos, with a feminist, Bella Abzug. Carter's appointment of the controversial Abzug aggravated evangelicals who saw feminists as advocating an anti-Christian lifestyle. Although the appointment of Abzug seemed an unlikely choice for Carter, it represented an opportunity for Carter to satisfy feminist women, a vital Democratic Party constituency. Carter's need to do so translated into explicit White House policy. Presidential Counsel Robert Lipshutz recalled that the President himself told him to actively seek out candidates with "a diversity of background," including the use of gender as a criteria as a form of indirect affirmative action when making appointments.[37] Similarly, Health, Education, and Welfare chief Joseph Califano recalls that Carter "made persistent and determined efforts to place minorities, particularly women...in top federal jobs."[38] He recalls a note from Carter, dated May 10, 1979, after the President had approved Califano's choice of Dick Beattie as General Counsel of HEW. "I've approved Beattie" affirmed Carter, but he had written the words 'white male' alongside his name and noted "This can't go on. It is embarrassing to me. I do not want to handle it one (woman) appointment at a time."[39] The appointment of Abzug was an example of the awarding of political posts to shore up support for Carter amongst feminists. Three senior members of the administration lobbied the President strongly in favour of her appointment to the IWY commission. In April 1978 they sent a memorandum to Carter declaring,

> If we appoint her, we will have a strong card to play in 1980 when we need the support of the group she represents. Although she is a controversial person, she understands politics and the nature of such commitments. Her leadership on your behalf in 1980 will be significant since she represents an activist constituency who can be counted on for strong grass roots support.

The staff clearly advised the appointment of Abzug with one eye on the feminist movement. In doing so they greatly underestimated the level of conservative Christian resentment that an outspoken feminist like Abzug would provoke. "If Bella did not have a role to play there would be considerable vocal outrage" they wrote, but "If she does play a role, there will be not much fanfare."[40] Carter acted as his staff suggested but the appointment of Abzug was a political disaster.

Furthermore, Carter named other feminists to the National Commission for the Observance of International Women's Year. These included Liz Carpenter, co-chair of ERAmerica, an ERA advocacy organisation; Ruth Abram, a former program director of the American Civil Liberties Union; Gloria Steinem, founder of the National Women's Political Caucus and Jean O' Leary, co-executive director of the National Gay Task Force and a high profile lesbian rights activist.

In the eyes of evangelical and fundamentalist Christians, Carter's appointments reinforced the domination of the institutions of government by secular humanism. Recalling that he had "done everything this side of breaking FCC (Federal Communications Commission) regulations" to help Carter win in 1976, Pat Robertson charged the President with betrayal. "I wouldn't let Bella Abzug scrub the floor of any organisation I was head of but Carter put her in charge of all the women in America" said an exasperated Robertson.[41] One conservative Senator agreed, and declared "When the good Lord created the earth, he didn't have the advice of Bella Abzug."[42] Warning about the dangers of secular humanism in government, Tim LaHaye pointed out that Abzug had won the 'Humanist of the Year award in 1975.[43]

The suspicion that Carter had taken advantage of them during the 1976 election campaign only exacerbated the evangelical sense of betrayal. One evangelist who felt particularly let down was the Pentecostal Robertson. A supporter of Carter in 1976, the televangelist recalled of his election victory, "I was personally thrilled to think that a born-again Christian might gain the White House."[44] Looking forward to Carter's Presidency he said "I thought it would be wonderful." Robertson even claimed a measure of credit for Carter's election, recalling that he gave "some quiet help behind the scenes in the Democratic primary that may have been responsible for winning Pennsylvania for him."[45] Early in his Presidency Robertson regularly corresponded with Carter and his staff. For example he wrote to Carter in December 1976, asking him to meet with Dr. Charles Malik, former President of the United Nations General Assembly because he was "a warm hearted evangelical" who wanted to share his insights with Carter, a fellow "Christian brother."[46] A month before Carter's inaugural Robertson launched a "geopolitical newsletter" intending,

according to Robertson biographer David Harrell, "to track the progress of world events under the Presidency of a Christian."[47]

Robertson's subsequent high-profile activism in opposition to Carter derived in part from Carter's failure to reciprocate Robertson's repeated overtures, and especially his failure to deliver on assurances as to the religious background of Presidential appointments that Robertson believed had been made during the 1976 election. One example came when Rosalynn Carter was asked, "Will religion be a factor in his [Jimmy's] appointments as President?" She had replied, "I am sure it will be. By looking into their backgrounds, he will check not only to see that they are qualified for the job, but that they are also honest, respectable people. And I am sure he will ask God for guidance."[48] Of even greater irritation was a promise made by the candidate himself in a personal interview with Robertson on the evangelists' Christian Broadcasting Network. Robertson had asked Carter, "Would you anticipate as President that you would bring godly men into your inner councils or into the cabinet to advise you?" Carter's answer appeared unequivocal. He replied that

> a commitment to the principles expressed to us by God would certainly be an important prerequisite [of service]. The ethical commitments of our lives – unselfishness, truthfulness, honour, a sense of compassion and understanding of other people, a sense of integrity, those principles given to us by God....would be prerequisites of my selection of anyone to service in government."[49]

Robertson was convinced. After the interview he promised his viewers that Carter's election meant "in the next five years we have an unprecedented opportunity for America to fulfil the dream of the early settlers who came right here to Virginia in 1607, that this land would be used to glorify God."[50] Crucially, Robertson asked Carter after the interview whether he would accept some advice on his Presidential appointments and the President-elect again agreed. Robertson recalls:

> I spoke to President-Elect Carter during a three-way telephone conversation along with pro-family activist Lou Sheldon of California. I suggested to

> Governor Carter that he, as a strong evangelical, might want to include some evangelical Christians among his appointments.

According to Robertson, Carter "greeted the idea with enthusiasm." He asked Robertson and Sheldon to deliver a list of likely candidates "within two weeks" to his transition headquarters in Plains. The two evangelists "worked night and day" to put together a list of resumes which, Robertson recalls, "was outstanding. All were highly distinguished in government, business, or education."[51] The list included a number of highly educated, philosophically fundamentalist scholars and professors, women and minority candidates. It "looked like what Jesse Jackson sometime later called the Rainbow Coalition," said Robertson. In a letter attached to the list Robertson told Carter "I deeply appreciate your gracious invitation to furnish you with a list for your personal consideration of key evangelicals who would be supportive of your programs during the next four years." Those on the list he said "warrant your careful consideration" as they represent the "joint input of many evangelical leaders from across the length and breadth of America." Robertson also made clear his support of the President-elect. He wrote,

> As you know, the 50 million evangelicals in the United States of America are highly supportive of you as their future President. We want to support you and to marshal this enormous reservoir of prayer and good will on your behalf....Let me assure you that the evangelicals of America will stand behind you when difficult times arise for your administration.

Robertson denied any political or self-interest on his and Sheldon's behalf. "Our major concern in relation to government service is not one of individual or group self-seeking" he wrote, but rather "Our sole concern is for the betterment of our beloved country." However, Robertson made clear that "In return, we feel that there should be significant representation in the Federal Government on behalf of a group of people who unfortunately have been sadly lacking in representation in past administrations." He singled out "four areas of national life" regarding which conservative Christians were "particularly concerned" and to which he asked that suitable candidates be named. These included Carter's White House staff, that Robertson called "The official family which will surround you in the White House

and be your window to the American people." Robertson also asked for evangelicals to be named to posts in the "compassionate agencies of the United States" including the Peace Corps and the Agency for International Development. Concerned with the "press and broadcasting systems" that "portray our land as totally secular and humanistic," he asked for Christians to be named to the Federal Communications Commission, the United States Information Agency and Voice of America. Worried that "far too much of the American taxpayers money has been spent on humanistic endeavours," he asked for "key evangelicals" to be placed in the Department of Housing, Education and Welfare to oversee "a return to the theistic concept of education and welfare which would be found in the historic nature of our nation as reflected in its Declaration of Independence."[52] The names on the list reveal a sophisticated depth of understanding on the part of Robertson and Sheldon of the need for Carter to build cross-partisan political support not often associated with fundamentalist Christians. It also suggests that Robertson's political affiliation with the Republican Party, whose Presidential nomination he would seek some years later, was far from fully formed. For example, on the list were Dr Betsy Ancker-Johnson, a Presbyterian nuclear physicist; Owen Cooper, described by Robertson as "one of the South's outstanding businessmen," John Grayson, a coloured Presbyterian with "Deep roots in the black community," J. Hammond, the Governor of Alaska, suggested as Secretary of the Interior and who "would have significant appeal to conservationist groups because of his sensitivity to the environment," William K. Brehm for National Security Assistant, described as "one of the young whiz kids brought in by Secretary McNamara," and an "outstanding expert on all aspects of defence." Robertson even suggested Morgan Maxfield for Assistant for Economic Affairs, an unsuccessful Democratic Congressional candidate from Missouri who had lost his election only because of what Robertson called "an untrue smear campaign by his Republican opponent."[53] Robertson recalled in a letter to Robert Maddox that the evangelicals considered the list to be of such significance that they refused to allow it to "go through an intermediary" and instead ensured that it was "hand delivered to his [Carter's] home in Plains."[54] Robertson continues,

> When the document was ready, I chartered a small aircraft to take Lou Sheldon to the grassy strip in Georgia we laughingly called 'Plains International.' Sheldon arrived at the Carter residence to find the next

> President barefoot and in blue jeans. They greeted each other warmly, and Sheldon proudly presented the booklet. Carter took it, read it, and began to cry.

Sheldon later told Robertson "Jimmy was so touched by all the work that we did that tears came to his eyes." Robertson replied, "Lou, you are wrong. The reason he cried is because the appointment process is out of his hands, and he is not going to appoint any of those people." Robertson's suspicion was well-founded. "My words were true," he writes. "Not one of our recommendations – men and women who on the surface shared every principle that Jimmy Carter espoused – was appointed to public office, or even seriously considered."[55] In an interview conducted at the end of Carter's Presidency, Maddox substantiates Robertson's story. Of the list of candidates he recalled, "That was the last that was heard of it," even though he admits, "There were some very good people on the list, not only Christians but well qualified." Robertson and Sheldon "didn't even get a "thank you" for sending the names down" said Maddox. They, and other evangelicals, felt "burnt up" that they had been taken advantage of for political gain.[56] Carter's unwillingness to name one single openly professed evangelical to a key post within his administration badly damaged the new President's standing with Robertson and his constituency of Bible-believing Protestants. Referring to the evangelical disillusionment with Carter Maddox recalls, "If the President had appointed a visible evangelical to the cabinet it could have made a difference."[57] When he did not do so, said Maddox, "It looked like they were being ignored" and that "Carter had used them to get elected."[58]

Instead of appointing Christian candidates, Carter exacerbated this tension by choosing to largely transplant his Georgian election campaign team into the White House. In an infamous article in *Atlantic Monthly*, James Fallows, a former Carter speechwriter, wrote that the White House staff "took office in profound ignorance of their jobs." They liked to see themselves as "cool guys...not trying too hard or taking it all too seriously."[59] Similarly, *Playboy* magazine called Carter's staff "as hard-drinking, fornicating, pot-smoking, freethinking a group as has been seen in higher politics."[60] Comparing Carter's staff to the hippy college students who had supported liberal George McGovern's Presidential campaign, one journalist observed that the President hired "every McGovernite not then employed by a rock band."[61]

This only exacerbated evangelical disenchantment and Carter was assailed with accusations from religious conservatives that his administration was encumbered by secular humanists. Recalling the Carter years evangelist Tim LaHaye wrote "Between 1976 and 1980 I watched a professing Christian become President of the United States and then surround himself with a host of humanistic cabinet members, assistants, judges and almost three thousand other humanist appointees. These people nearly destroyed our nation." Another four years of Carter in the White House "might have plunged us into another French Revolution, only this time on American soil." In particular, said LaHaye, Carter and his secular staff would have "destroyed the American home."[62] Robert Maddox observed the evangelical perception of the White House staff was "They were all like Hamilton Jordan," referring to Carter's Chief of Staff who had earned a reputation as a fast-living drinker and party lover, and had been accused of using illegal drugs. Maddox recalled that one of the most frequent evangelical complaints conveyed to him in his role as liaison with the religious community was "Why doesn't the PRESIDENT DO SOMETHING ABOUT Hamilton Jordan?"[63]

The abrasive Jordan was not the only Carter appointee to raise the hackles of Christian conservatives. Under Bella Abzug's guidance the IWY National Commission was tasked with producing a list of recommendations to be endorsed by the IWY conference and enacted by the President and the Congress, dedicated to improving the situation women. Liberal, feminist and gay activist groups including The National Gay Task Force, Lesbians for Wages for Housework and the National Organisation for Women were invited to attend the commission hearings. These groups guaranteed a liberal slant to the IWY National Plan of Action, a twenty-five point list of recommendations to be enacted by the Carter White House. For example it resolved that the federal government "should assume a major role in directly providing comprehensive, voluntary, flexible-hour, bias-free, non-sexist quality child care." It strongly supported abortion rights through the upholding of the "Supreme Court decisions which guarantee reproductive freedom to women," and demanded "Medicaid reimbursement for abortion." It also urged "all branches of the Federal, state and local government to give the highest priority to complying with [*Roe vs. Wade*] and to making available all methods of family planning to women unable to take advantage of private facilities." Family planning services should be available

"for all teenagers who request them," alongside "education in responsible sexuality." Sex education courses should be instituted in "all schools, including elementary schools." The Plan demanded an end to discrimination on the basis of "sexual and affectional orientation," in housing, employment, public facilities, government funding and the military. Penal codes and state laws restricting private sexual behaviour, including homosexual acts between consenting adults, were to be reformed or repealed. [64] It declared that "The Equal Rights Amendment should be ratified."[65]

The resolutions of the National Plan of Action made the IWY a key event in the development of the Christian "pro-family" movement, whose organisations were a key constituent of the Christian Right. For conservative Christians the National Plan was an affront to their cherished family-centred lifestyle and served to solidify evangelical opposition to the Carter White House.[66] In particular they attacked the perceived bias of the delegates who had produced the resolutions. During the state meetings that took place prior to the national conference, representatives from conservative Christian groups complained that only feminists were being appointed as delegates to attend and address the Houston conference. They denounced what they saw as irregularities in voting procedures that favoured those who espoused liberal views. The publishing of the commission resolutions in advance of the Houston conference suggested to conservatives that the conference had been organised to ensure the passage of a feminist and secular humanist agenda. Their anger was exacerbated when the federal government allocated five million dollars of federal funds to support the work of the commission. The channelling of millions of dollars of tax money by the federal government into sponsoring a conference that advanced a "radical" agenda greatly heightened the sense of dislocation between the evangelical community and the Carter White House. "No other event so politicised traditional homemakers" as the IWY, Yale Pines observed.[67]

Evangelical and fundamentalist Christians wrote directly to the President to register their concerns and demand action to reverse the feminist domination of the IWY procedures. One evangelical attendee of the Illinois IWY conference wrote "The people of Illinois do not want ERA, or any of the other IWY resolutions." The meeting and the resulting resolutions were "invalid, and do not represent the true

views of the people of Illinois." She pleaded to Carter "Please heed our words and INVESTIGATE this illegal set up."[68] Mrs. Thomas Hadfield of Massachusetts who had attended an IWY meeting in Boston called it "unforgettable experience." She wrote "The prejudice of those in charge, against those of conservative ideas was blatant," and complained "The room was divided in half and the votes counted by two teams. Those liberals on the border voted twice." Furthermore, "During the count of the conservative votes the liberals got up and milled around taking pictures, etc., in an effort to obstruct from view the voter cards." It was "utter chaos" said Hadfield, "I object to the tax money being provided for a meeting, and views used as input to effect federal legislation from that meeting, that was so lacking in representation of the conservative tax payer." In a curt reply Midge Costanza wrote only "to thank you for taking the time to express your views" and said that the queries would be referred to "other appropriate offices." She was more forthcoming with another correspondent who complained about the "radicalism" of the IWY commission and its support of the ERA. Typically, she went on the offensive, accusing the complainant of being "politically motivated." She wrote "Everyone has the right to have their own political view about anything going on this country....All are loyal to this country and certainly deserve to be respected for their views." Costanza also derided conservative Christian opposition to ERA. "The fact that more [women] may be for ERA than against makes sense" wrote Costanza, "since it was set up to bring women into an equal position in our society and to help eliminate barriers against them, thus, people who believe that women should accept their lot in life aren't likely to be on such a commission."[69]

Dismayed with the response of Costanza and the activities of the Carter administration, conservative Christians sought to convince their Congressmen to register their displeasure with the White House. In October 1977, Mrs Frank Filewicz wrote to her Congressman, C.W. Bill Young of Florida, declaring "Things are getting from bad to worse during this administration." She included in her letter a document written by Jean O'Leary, the gay rights activist appointed by Carter to the IWY Commission entitled 'Lesbians and the Schools.' The pamphlet outlined the need for homosexual issues and resources to be included in sex education courses, school counselling services and school libraries. Filewicz denounced O'Leary as "a pervert." She asked, "Are these the kinds of 'creatures' we need on

this commission?" She explicitly blamed President Carter for the political imbalance of IWY National Commission delegates. Carter had "included some of the most actively militant of the sexist radicals" on the commission she said. Filewicz also reported a number of bizarre sexual activities from the state conferences. In Virginia, she claimed, witches ran a workshop entitled "Women and Spirituality." In Vermont lesbian books that included sections entitled, "I fantasise to sleep with my brother" and "I fantasise sleeping with horses" were distributed. "Five hundred of these books were passed out...our tax dollars paid for them" she wrote. In Pennsylvania workshops promoted "bestiality and necrophilia as normal forms of sexual expression." In California, one of the workshops featured displays of "lesbian equipment" that included "masturbation wands, clitoral vibrators" and "vaginal speculums." A pregnant woman looking at the devices "was offered instruction on how to perform an abortion on herself." Women in Hawaii were "subjected to a dance program of such revolting filth" that it was "difficult to report it accurately and remain within the bounds of common decency." Aside from the highly sexualised nature of the proceedings, Filewicz reported their anti-patriotic and un-Godly temper. She warned that in Minnesota, the suggestion that the meeting begin with a pledge of allegiance and prayer was "actually booed, shouted down and declared out of order....In most states there was no evidence of an American flag anywhere." She wrote "It is impossible to even believe all this went on...are we supposed to pay our hard earned money for such filth?" She made the religious aspect of her complaint clear by quoting the book of Genesis: "God created man in his image, male and female. We are together to compliment each other. We are equal in Gods eyes, we need no other rules to make us equal." Filewicz also wrote to Griffin Bell, the Carter appointed Attorney General, to complain that the IWY was a "blatant misuse of tax-payers money." The Carter White House made little attempt to address the lurid claims of evangelicals like Filewicz. Again the White House's reply betrayed a dismissive attitude. Beth Abramowitz replied to Filewicz only that the issues "may seem moot" and pointed out that the IWY Commission "did operate within the law."[70]

However, by now Congressmen were moved to write to the President to complain. James Broyhill of North Carolina wrote to Carter, "It was clearly the intent of Congress that the Co-ordinating Committee reflect a broad range of philosophies,"

but "only one of ten members of the North Carolina Co-ordinating Committee is opposed to the Equal Rights Amendment." Broyhill was also concerned that "the North Carolina delegation to the Houston Conference is not a representative one but rather carefully selected to reflect a philosophical bias" and in particular the National Commission "reflects a decidedly one-sided viewpoint."[71] In reply, Midge Costanza dismissed Broyhill's complaints and once again defended the procedures of the IWY. She wrote that "legal challenges have been made" to the IWY activities and "everything was seen as in order."[72] Anti-abortion advocate Jeannette Dreisbach attended a Pennsylvania IWY meeting and wrote to her Congressman, Robert Walker, to warn of unfair feminist domination. She told Walker that she had asked one of the commission members how she was chosen and was told "My friend got a call from the National Organisation for Women." Dreisbach observed that "Several of the commissioners had their NOW buttons on. It is obvious that the decision makers were a selected, hand-picked group which represent the militant feminist philosophy." Walker forwarded her concerns to the White House and was infuriated when he received a dismissive 'Dear Sir' form letter in return. "Need I remind you that my constituents help pay the bill for this atrocious bureaucratic pomposity?" he replied.[73] Another Senator, Charles E. Bennett of Florida, wrote to Carter to ask, "Mr President...is there anyway in which the funds can be cut off for this IWY activity?" Again he singled out Jean O'Leary who, he said, did not represent "average American citizens" but rather "extreme liberals and proponents of homosexuality and lesbian activity." He warned Carter that the delegates at his state meeting had "desecrated the American flag and sang the Russian national anthem." In a second letter to archconservative Senator Jesse Helms, forwarded to Carter, Bennett warned that the meeting had been "rigged" by "people who represented extreme organisations" deliberately to "exclude people of ordinary points of view," who he called "clean minded citizens." Bennett declared, "I never voted to establish this useless and wasteful expenditure of Federal funds to begin with but I think most Members of Congress who did vote for it had no idea that it would get out of hand." In reply, Midge Costanza wrote "Jean O'Leary is a true professional and highly responsible person." Her appointment to the IWY was "entirely appropriate."[74] Vito Mazza, a member of the Connecticut State Assembly wrote to the President demanding an explanation as to activities of the IWY. He forwarded to Carter a pamphlet circulated by a pro-family organisation calling itself "The Connecticut

committee to rescind ERA" that warned readers about the "Federal Festivals of Female Radicals financed with your money!" It attacked Carter for his choice of IWY committee members. These included Bella Abzug who had "introduced a bill to give civil rights to homosexuals." It quoted Gloria Steinem as announcing that "Overthrowing capitalism is too small for us. We must overthrow the whole +$/&*[patriarchy!" Jean O'Leary was "another Carter appointee...remember, homosexuality is still illegal in most states yet the President appointed a nationally recognised lesbian." The pamphlet declared "Our nation is not embroiled primarily in a battle of the sexes, but a battle of philosophies – between those who hold the pro-family Biblical values upon which our nation was founded and those who embrace the humanist feminist philosophy."[75] Again Midge Costanza was moved to reply personally. She told Mazza that the pamphlet was an effort to "deliberately distort the procedures" of the IWY and she angrily accused pro-family activists of running an underhand campaign to discredit the conference:

> You might be interested to learn that in Kentucky a similar publication was released. There, the contents of a National Gay Task Force information packet were removed from the pamphlet cover. Pornographic material was then substituted in its place [and] the adjusted pamphlet was give to children to distribute to the State Legislators, and announcements made by the persons responsible criticising and reprimanding the National Gay Task Force as being responsible.[76]

Costanza's repeated efforts to defend the IWY completely failed to quell evangelical opposition. In response to the complaints of pro-family activists, Senator Helms convened a series of 'Ad Hoc' Congressional hearings into the federal funding of the IWY. Held over two days in July 1977 the hearings asked, "Who really represents the views of the majority of American women?" Helms cited discrimination by the IWY "against those women who do not agree with the narrow and negative ideology and partisan biases of the IWY organisers" including "rigged sessions, hand picked committees, stacked registration." He accused IWY of using federal funds to lobby for ERA and abortion. The IWY, he said, was "controlled by an elitist group of radical feminists who refuse to allow women with different viewpoints to participate." He held the President directly responsible, listing "11 Carter appointees that are militant feminists."[77] It was activities like the IWY that Helms clearly had in

mind when he later wrote that the "liberal approach to government" was like "a boulder gaining speed as it heads towards to the bottom of a mountain," its momentum "relentlessly escalated from offering small and fragile solutions to creating a pervasive reliance on the federal government." This inevitably created a government that "pushes its control into every segment of society."[78] Contact between pro-family groups and Congressmen like Helms played an important role in politicising Christian conservative women. One woman who later became a pro-family administrator within the Reagan administration recalled:

> There was the International Women's Year meeting back in '76...Jean Stapleton [President Carter's sister] was on television and said here was this grassroots meeting for women to go and talk about their concerns. So I went. I mean, I have voted in elections but that was it. So I went down to the IWY meeting and heard all sorts of talk about this issue and that issue and the other issue. I just didn't know anything. And I noticed that these people were very upset – I shouldn't say upset, but concerned. There was a whole slew of issues that people were just really – I hate to use the word 'violent' – very enthusiastic about...There was one group of women taking A,B, C, and D position and another group of women taking X, Y, and Z position and I thought, "Well, now, why all this discussion, why all this controversy? So then I started doing some studying.[79]

The White House was well aware that the IWY was in danger of provoking a conservative Christian backlash against the administration. As early as mid-September 1977, Presidential aide Jan Peterson wrote to Costanza warning her of the "anger from groups opposing the IWY." The issues of complaint were that "The Commission members were largely pro-ERA (49 to 1)"; "The state conferences were dominated by feminists who refused to allow others (housewives, religious women, anti-ERA women, abortion, lesbianism) in"; "The conferences were used to lobby for ERA"; and that "This was not proper use of federal monies." The conservative women wanted "the funding to be stopped and the conference in Houston stopped," and "The President not to see the women in Houston as representative of American Women." By now the White House was also clearly aware of the need to combat the activities of anti-ERA activist Phyllis Schlafly and her movement. Peterson warned Costanza, "Phyllis Schlafly told her readers of Eagle Forum ahead of time to find irregularities in how the state meetings were run."[80] Such was the concern with the

administration over opposition to the IWY that some aides warned against further Presidential involvement. Beth Abramowitz told Stuart Eizenstat that extreme factions such as "Right-to-Lifers, Gay liberation, Mormon Church, and anti-gay rights groups" were looking to force their views on the IWY conference in Houston. She noted that "several law suits have been filed against the state conventions" by conservative women's groups who felt discriminated against and also warned "The state delegates to the Houston convention may not be representative of women within the states." She wrote, for example, that Mississippi was to be represented in Houston by an "all-white delegation" that included "at least three acknowledged members of the Ku Klux Klan." Because of these facts she recommended that the President "Not get involved in the convention plans." A clearly concerned Eizenstat scrawled on her memorandum "I agree" that the IWY was a "can of worms." Taking note of Abramowitz's warning that the "President's participation may seem to condone the way in which delegates and issues [were] decided," Eizenstat wrote on the memorandum "It seems suicidal for him to go [to Houston]."[81]

The White House was aware that the religious make-up of the IWY delegates underrepresented the conservative Christian community, yet refused to get involved. Abramowitz wrote to Eizenstat concerning a briefing on the IWY by Commission members. She warned, "One matter which was disturbing and which may provoke some racial and religious minority backlash is the selection of delegates." Despite the guidelines on representation for Houston delegates stipulating that they should "reflect the racial and religious composition of the population" the Commission had concluded, "all racial minorities and Jewish women were over-represented among the delegates." The policy implications for Carter, wrote Abramowitz, were "very serious, especially in the light of Bakke."[82] She advised that the commission should "appoint three hundred delegates who were "white, Protestant, upper income women." Crucially however, given the sensitivity of the issue, Abramowitz warned that the White House should remain detached and "take no direct action ourselves." This time a clearly troubled Eizenstat wrote on the memorandum, "Beth, ok, but it appears everything about IWY is turning into a disaster."[83]

The National Conference of the IWY finally took place in Houston in November 1977. The first meeting of its type in the United States since the Women's Rights

Convention in Seneca Falls in 1848 it attracted over 20,000 women from across America. The conference was mandated by the federal government to "identify the barriers that prevent women from participating fully and equally in all aspects of national life." It declared its intention to speak for "American women who throughout our Nation's life have been denied the opportunities, rights, privileges and responsibilities accorded to men." To signal the Carter administration's support for the IWY and the proposals of the National Plan First Lady Rosalynn Carter attended the Houston conference. The IWY commission made clear their expectation that the demands would be addressed by the federal government. "We are entitled to and expect serious attention to our proposals" declared the National Plan.[84] One delegate from California demanded "more follow through on women's issues from our legislators."[85] As another delegate put it, "We are going to say to our elected officials that unless you listen to our demands we are going to get you out of office."[86] Janet Gray Hayes, the mayor of San Jose, California announced "The days of licking stamps and stuffing envelopes are over."[87] Midge Costanza, also attending the Houston conference to signal the Carter administration's support, declared, "I felt more important being a woman than being an assistant to the President."[88] She went on to publicly link the resolutions of the conference with the policies of the Carter White House. "Anyone who doesn't think the past four days were committed to political action is crazy," Costanza said.[89] She promised delegates, "The response from Jimmy Carter will be substantive. And to use his phrase, "you can depend on that.""[90] The passing of the liberal resolutions of the National Plan were widely cheered, especially those supporting lesbianism. Betty Friedan said, "I believe we must help the women who are lesbians to be protected in their own civil rights."[91] Feminists supporting lesbian rights wore badges proclaiming, "It is fine to be straight, but gay is great" and "Anita Bryant sucks oranges."[92] Others waved pro-lesbian placards. One read, "The Pope has Clitoris Envy – He Wears Skirts, Doesn't He?" [93] Another declared "Jesus was a homosexual."[94] When a resolution in support of lesbian rights was approved, pink and yellow balloons were released from the conference hall ceiling bearing the message "WE ARE EVERYWHERE."[95] The liberal women's magazine *Women's Agenda* declared "We Won!" on its front cover.[96] Whitney observed the Houston conference to be "a rite of passage...a ceremony signifying that women were coming of age in their quest for a share of the

nation's political power."[97] It was, writes Schulman, "the crest of the women's movement."[98]

Predictably, conservative Christians were appalled. For them, observe Kerber and Mathews, the Houston conference was "not a sign of achievement but of threat."[99] Conservative delegates from Indiana and Mississippi turned their backs on the podium in protest when the lesbian rights resolution was passed. A sign brandished by a Christian delegate read "Woman's libbers, ERA lesbians, REPENT Read the Bible while Your [sic] Able."[100] Protestors declaring themselves to belong to the Christian Defence League brandished signs reading, "Who needs Jews, Kikes, Abortian [sic.], Communism?"[101] Pro-family groups warned their delegates to vote against any resolution that was written in neutral gender words like "spouse" or "person" instead of "man" or "wife."[102] When resolutions passed in favour of abortion pro-family delegates waved giant photographs of aborted foetuses. They chanted, "all we are saying is give life a chance."[103] One wept, "I never thought they would come to this! It's murder!" Another said, "It will be old people next!" The *Washington Post* reported "sporadic" tussles between pro-life and pro-family delegates.[104] One pro-family evangelical delegate from Nebraska declared "Wake up America, to the forces at work to destroy your family life, the private enterprise system, and everything you hold dear as a Christian."[105] South Carolina Senator Norma Russell, a delegate at IWY, called it "the closest thing to hell I can imagine."[106]

In response to the National Plan of Action and the Houston meeting, conservative Christians organised their own counter-conference. Proposed by Lottie Beth Hobbs, founder of an anti-ERA organisation calling itself the Four Ws (Women Who Want to be Women), the 'National Pro-Family Rally' took place in Houston simultaneously with the IWY conference.[107] It was attended mainly by middle-aged, white women from fundamentalist and evangelical churches.[108] Addressing the 15,000 pro-family activists proudly wearing "Stop ERA" buttons who crammed in to the Houston Astro Arena the keynote speaker Phyllis Schlafly, by now a major celebratory of the movement, opened with her favourite punch-line, thanking her husband for letting her be away from the home that day: "I always like to say that, because it makes the libs [women's liberationists] so mad."[109] She assailed the

feminists who "want to reconstruct us into a gender-free society, so there's no difference between men and women."[110] She warned that feminists wanted "to give an equal right for women not to be pregnant, just like men...If you don't like the fact that women are the ones who have babies and nurse them, you will just have to take it up with God."[111] "I have enough civil rights to choke a hungry goat," raged Clay Smothers, a black pro-family representative from Texas. He told the conference "I ask for victory over the perverts of this country." Dismissing gay assertions that their struggle for equality was analogous to that of the black civil rights movement he declared, "I want the right to segregate my family from these misfits."[112] Delegates watched a film of a man who explained that he had been a homosexual for 26 years until he had finally saved: "The Lord Jesus Christ is the only one who can deliver you from homosexuality," he said.[113] Anita Bryant appeared by videotape, and the conference passed a resolution supporting her anti-gay rights campaign. Bryant blamed gay activists for the IWY debacle. She declared that it had been "run by a political powerhouse within the feminist movement largely comprised of lesbians." At both the state conventions and the national event in Houston she said,

> "Straight women were subjected to Lesbian outrages so bad that they could not even be described....lesbian sex gadgets were hawked everywhere. [It was] anti-white, antifamily, antichristian and anti-American from start to finish."[114]

Bryant was particularly angered by the support of the Carter White House for the IWY. Carter's decision to validate the conference by sending the First Lady to represent him was, according to Bryant, "tragic."[115] She warned "what happened in Houston proved that these revolutionary women have one aim: destroy the social structure on which America rests."[116] One fundamentalist preacher at the pro-family rally denounced the "moral rottenness of the [Houston] agenda," whilst conservative Congressman Robert Dornan urged those in attendance towards political involvement, telling them to "Let your voice be heard in Washington."[117] After the Houston conference evangelical Pastor Jim Brasher reported in his church bulletin,

> The IWY conference opened its session without any recognition of God, and proceeded to push through its socialist Plan of Action and to wildly and

> enthusiastically place its stamp of approval upon the killing of unborn children, lesbianism, ERA, and a host of other highly questionable resolutions...Moral rottenness filled the hall with the stench of death.[118]

The resolutions passed at the Houston conference also appeared to be emblematic of an increased intervention by the Carter White House into the private affairs of the family, a primary concern of the evangelical community, and an upholding of which Carter had declared to be central to his spiritual and political philosophy during the 1976 Presidential campaign. Evangelicals believed that the high cost of federal government programs, instituted by secular Democratic Party liberals, had violated the traditional family unit by making it impossible for women to stay at home and raise their children. The deficit spending and high taxation required to fund abortion programs, health and the welfare systems had necessitated two-income families, with drastic consequences for traditional family life. Children, they argued, were forced into federal child-care programs as their mothers re-entered the labour market to make ends meet. With one or more parent absent from the home, children were not receiving the correct gender role models. This was in direct violation of Proverbs 22:6 which declared, "[t]rain up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it." James Robison observed that this was exactly what the gay community wanted, because in the absence of correct parental supervision children "sought to satisfy [their] needs through a homosexual relationship."[119] After the conference one delegate from Carter's home-state of Georgia wrote to the President to protest,

> The thrust of the recommendations is towards greater dependence on government – primarily Federal...there is a trend towards transforming family relationships into employment relationships which would adapt to monetary equations for computing the Gross National Product! I urge you to look askance at proposals that place a dollar value on family relationships and on all recommendations which flow in the direction of governments restructuring society rather than society restructuring governments.[120]

Phyllis Schlafly foresaw an anti-feminist backlash against the resolutions passed at the Houston conference "because it showed the television audience that ERA and the feminist movement were outside the mainstream of America." She predicted that the IWY would "finish off the women's movement," because it would "show them off

for the radical, anti-family, pro-lesbian people they are."[121] Schlafly called the IWY the "boot camp" of the pro-family movement. Afterwards, Christian conservatives were, they said, "ready for the offensive in the battle for our families and our faith."[122]

Schlafly was correct. The ERA was not ratified by a single state in the period after the IWY conference in large part because its resolutions spurred evangelical activists into a concerted campaign against the feminist resolutions passed at Houston. As Klatch observes, the IWY conference "concretised the perception of Feminism as an anti-family force" and as a result "gave birth to a network of activists and organisations" that went on to play a key role in the Christian Right."[123] Similarly, Conover and Gray note that the IWY "first awoke many conservative women to the evils of feminism" and "invigorated the pro-family movement."[124] IWY was "the high-water mark of...radical feminism" wrote Yale Pines, whilst the pro-family counter conference was the "launching pad for a mass grass-roots traditionalist campaign...catalysed by what they saw as the horrors at IWY."[125] One conservative Christian activist declared that the IWY was simply "the best recruitment tool I've ever had. I just spend twenty minutes reading the Houston resolutions to them. That's all I have to do."[126]

Carter's difficulties over IWY did not end after the Houston conference. Costanza and Abzug pressured the President to extend the life of the National Commission for the Observance of International Women's Year beyond the originally scheduled date of March 1978 to enable it to supervise implementation of the National Plan. "The Commission's business can not possibly be completed," Costanza wrote to the President, "failure to reappoint the Commission would result in a historic and catastrophic discontinuity in Presidential commitment to the concerns of women."[127] Abzug also wrote to the President. She demanded that he "issue an Executive Order extending to the life of the National Commission, as President Ford routinely did." If he refused to do so, she said, "it would be the first time since 1961 that this Nation would be without a federally-sponsored, quasi-independent agency expressly devoted to the needs and status of women."[128] Other members of the White House staff vehemently opposed Costanza's and Abzug's plan. Beth Abramowitz wrote to Stuart Eizenstat "I strongly recommend we not support this effort." Eizenstat

scrawled a query on the memo: "Beth, Why not? Political downside?"[129] Abramowitz wrote again a week later. "The current commissioners have mounted a great deal of pressure to force the President to keep [the IWY commission] in its present form," she warned. They had gone so far as to bring "400 women into town, who believe that if the President does not sign the Executive Order, he will be reneging on his commitment to IWY." It was, she said, "a very messy situation."[130] Clearly agreeing with Abramowitz, Eizenstat wrote to Fran Voorde "I recommend that the President take no action to extend the IWY Commission." He added a personal note to Voorde: "We should talk about this a.s.a.p" and warned that "I think he [Carter] has to see Bella."[131] Mindful of the need to retain the already lukewarm support of feminist women's organisations, Carter chose to ignore the warnings of his staff and signed Executive Order 12135 that created the President's National Advisory Committee for Women.[132]

Perhaps one reason why the White House was so keen to retain the support of feminist women was Carter's failure to build support amongst other Democratic Party constituencies. One example of this was Carter's standing amongst Jewish voters, which remained low throughout his Presidency. One interviewee of the Miller Centre Carter Presidential Oral History Project recalled that Carter "wasn't all that popular at any point [during his Presidency] with the organised American Jewish lobby," whilst White House counsel Robert Lipshutz observed that Carter "had a lot of fire" from "the American Jewish community leadership."[133] Their feelings of disquiet regarding Carter had first become apparent during the 1976 Presidential campaign when Robert Shrum, a disgruntled speechwriter resigned from Carter's staff. According to Shrum Carter had ordered his speechwriter to ignore the Jewish vote and to focus on Christian voters, saying "I don't get over four percent of the Jewish vote, so forget it. We get all the Christians."[134] Carter's denial of Shrum's claim "If I said all the things he claimed I had said, I wouldn't vote for *myself*," did little to ease Jewish concerns.[135] Unfortunately for Carter, his attempts to win their support only led him into further conflict with the Christian Right. For example, Carter had a personal interest in the fate of the state of the Middle-East, a focus that derived from his Christian faith. "As a biblical scholar" said one aide, Carter "had a keen interest in the continuing disputes surrounding the state of Israel."[136] However, Jewish voters perceived Carter as critical of Israel and overly sympathetic to the

concerns of the Palestinians. During the 1976 Presidential campaign he told *U.S. News and World Report* that "Some resolution of the Palestinian question is certainly inevitable." There were "some very serious problems that would have to be addressed...One would be control of the Golan Heights and Jerusalem."[137] Once in office he observed that in order to achieve peace in the Middle-East there would have to be an adjustment of boundaries in the region to "satisfy the minimum requirements of [Israel's] Arab neighbours," and also a "solution to the question of the enormous numbers of Palestinian refugees who have been forced out of their homes and who want to have some fair treatment."[138] The perception of Carter as unsupportive of Israel was perpetuated by his negotiation of the Camp David peace accords between Israel and Egypt in 1978, his decision to sell F-15 fighter planes to Saudi Arabia and Egypt (the first time such a sale had been made to Arab nations), and a vote in the United Nations in which the United States called for the dismantling of Jewish settlements in occupied Arab territories. Once again this impacted upon his standing within the evangelical and fundamentalist Christian community for whom support of Israel was based upon Biblical covenant. Jerry Falwell told his supporters that the President "does not read Scripture carefully enough to understand the crucial place that Israel and the Jewish people have in God's plan."[139]

Carter was not helped in his efforts to reverse his anti-Israel public image by the activities of his family and his administration. Billy Carter's comment that the government should focus on winning the support of Arabs, because there were a "hell of a lot more Arabs than there is Jews" aroused claims that the President's brother was anti-Semitic. He also attacked the "Jewish media" which, he said, "tears up the Arab countries full time."[140] The remarks, recalled Hamilton Jordan, "bothered the hell out of [the President]."[141] Moreover, Carter's sister Ruth was linked to an organisation of Hebrew Christians who promoted the 'conversion' of Jews.[142] When it was revealed that United Nations Ambassador Andrew Young had met with representatives of the Palestine Liberation Organisation, Carter's popularity amongst the Jewish community fell even further. In 1979 Robert Maddox wrote to Carter concerning a meeting he had held with Rabbi Bernard Mandelbaum, a New York Jewish leader. The Rabbi was "Most concerned about [the] President's comments on Palestinians," and Maddox advised "Quick work needs to be done...direct work with Jewish leaders," because the President's "Jewish problem"

was a "pressing brushfire."[143] In another memorandum on the same subject Gerald Rafshoon wrote to the President to ask Carter to attend a dinner served at the National Conference of Christians and Jews. It would, he said, be "a good opportunity to make a strong denunciation of anti-Semitism," necessary because of "lingering resentment" about "Billy [Carter's] remarks."[144] In marked contrast to the response to Maddox's frequent pleas for the President to attend evangelical Christian functions, Carter acted on Rafshoon's advice, attending and addressing the conference.[145]

Carter's attempts to win Jewish support simply led him into further conflict with Christian Right leaders and added to the suspicion amongst Bible-believing Protestants that Carter had abandoned his Southern Baptist faith. Although strongly supportive of the state of Israel, American evangelicalism, particularly fundamentalism, had long harboured "strong ambivalence about Judaism."[146] Some fundamentalist Christians, particularly in the South, saw the meddling of intrusive secular government in private affairs of faith and family as a product of a modern and liberal 'cosmopolitan' culture they believed to be exemplified by northern Jews. Bailey Smith, President of the Southern Baptist Convention openly enunciated this anti-Semitism. At the height of the 1980 Presidential election campaign Smith announced "It is interesting at great political rallies how you have a Protestant to pray, a Catholic to pray and then you have a Jew to pray. With all due respect...God Almighty does not hear the prayer of a Jew." Smith asked "How in the world can God hear the prayer of a man who says that Jesus Christ is not the true Messiah? It is blasphemous. It may be politically expedient, but no one can pray unless he prays through the name of Jesus Christ."[147] Jerry Falwell subsequently added "I do not believe that God answers the prayer of any unredeemed Gentile or Jew."[148] David C. George, a more liberal Baptist pastor wrote to Maddox urging the President to respond.[149] Carter did so, attempting to use the evangelists' statements to scare Jewish voters into supporting him. At a campaign dinner in Chicago two days after Smith's speech he told voters "You'll determine whether or not this America will be unified, or, if I lose the election, whether Americans will be separated, black from white, Jew from Christian."[150] In contrast, Ronald Reagan increased his standing amongst the conservative Christian community by refusing to attack the evangelists' statements. When asked whether he agreed with Falwell he said "No, since both the

Christian and Judaic religions are based on the same God, the God of Moses, I'm quite sure those prayers are answered." But crucially he went on to say "I guess everyone can make his own interpretation of the Bible, and many individuals have been making differing interpretations for a long time."[151] By doing so Reagan was astutely distancing himself from Smith and Falwell's anti-Semitic message whilst simultaneously reaffirming the right of conservative Christians to interpret the Bible in whichever way they saw fit. Later, the Carter campaign aired a television commercial directly attacking Falwell and his organisation. It warned that "Dr Jerry Falwell has said that God doesn't hear the prayers of Jews," and that "if Reagan goes on to the White House, Falwell will come with him, and purify the land as someone else did some years ago."[152] Carter publicly declared that his Christian faith "was not that of the Jerry Falwells or the Gerald L. K. Smiths," openly linking Falwell with the depression era far-right evangelist once branded "the Dean of American Anti-Semitism."[153] The Moral Majority filed an $11 million lawsuit for slander against the Carter campaign, forcing the withdrawal of the commercial.

The White House Conference on Families

A further schism between pro-family conservatives and the Carter administration centred around the President's ill-conceived electoral pledge to convene a White House Conference on the Family (WHCF). This conference was created to address, as Carter put it, "specific ways that we can better support and strengthen our families."[154] The conference further solidified Carter's image amongst Christian conservatives' as a secular humanist, the philosophy evangelist Tim LaHaye dammed as "Family enemy number one."[155] New Right strategist Paul Weyrich, in particular notes that the WHCF was "very instrumental" in exacerbating anti-Carter feeling amongst the conservative Christian community. He recalls that Christians were "in total disbelief" that Carter could support the WHCF and as a result "it lent credibility to those of us who insisted Carter was a real problem."[156] Hutcheson calls it a "symbolic turning point," whilst Freedman notes that the conference became "a

cause celebre for the religious right."[157] Ribuffo also singled out the conference as of special importance in catalysing conservative Christian politicisation. As he puts it, the White House conference "provided a convenient reason for mobilisation."[158] As a result of the conference, conservative political activists, theologically conservative preachers and television evangelists actively sought to mould evangelical and fundamentalist Christians into a political voting bloc in opposition to the Carter White House.

Tasked by Carter to "help stimulate a national discussion on the state of American families," the WHCF derived directly from a pledge made by Carter during the 1976 Presidential campaign and from a need to win the support of faith-based voters, particularly Catholics perturbed by Carter's refusal to support their calls for a constitutional amendment restricting abortion.[159] During the campaign Carter and his staff understood the need to placate these voters. In an August 1976 memorandum written by his campaign staff to prepare the candidate for a forthcoming interview with the Catholic News Service, Carter scrawled a reminder to himself to "Repeat concerns for family" (along with a rather amusing note to remind himself to enunciate his "vowels" when pronouncing ethnic urban names that troubled his Georgian accent).[160] Two months later in an address to the National Conference of Catholic Charities he promised that, if elected, he would call a "White House Conference on the American Family." Carter told Catholic leaders that he proposed to "examine the strengths of American families, the difficulties they face and the ways in which family life is affected by public policies." He called the conference "an important first step" toward "restoring the public and private partnership that must exist if we are going to provide adequate social services to the American people."[161] Once in office Carter remained highly committed to a pro-active family policy. Asked by senior staff in May 1978 to list key areas of policy for the administration to focus upon during the second half of his Presidency Carter placed "Family" on a list his priorities equally alongside more obvious major policy matters as "Peace," "Strong Defence," "Inflation," and "Bureaucracy."[162] Carter subsequently referred to the conference as a "noble purpose."[163]

The family conference finally developed as a combination of White House sponsored state conferences scheduled for December 1979 (they did not take place until early

1980) and three regional conferences in June and July 1980. The state conferences drew up the agenda for the larger regional meetings. More than 100,000 people participated, the delegates meeting to discuss how to alleviate the economic stress upon families, the need for quality, affordable child-care, education and the need for government to be more responsive to the challenges of modern family life. They called upon the government to better understand the impact that its policies had upon the family and include this perspective within the decision making and legislative writing process. The decentralised regional conference format was a deliberate decision by the Carter White House, says Stuart Eizenstat, with one eye on the increasingly belligerent pro-family movement. Eizenstat explained that the White House wanted to avoid a single conference that would focus "all of the energy" of pro-family activists, leading to the event "blowing up in the administration's face rather than bringing some degree of honour to it for having brought these issues to the public fore."[164]

Eizenstat was right to be worried, and Carter soon had great cause to regret his campaign pledge. In particular, conservative Christian activists saw the conference as further evidence of Carter's betrayal of his religious principles. Already shocked both by the resolutions passed by the IWY Houston conference, and the support of the Carter White House for its National Plan, this time pro-family activists were neither prepared to concede resolutions to feminist activists, or indeed, as Eizenstat had hoped, award Carter with any political credit. "If the IWY gave birth to the pro-family movement," writes Klatch, the White House conference "solidified the movement, deepening the wrath of pro-family activists and drawing in further supporters."[165] The WHCF was another step towards the politicisation of pro-family groups against Carter. As one activist explained,

> The excesses of the feminist movement activated a lot of people who otherwise wouldn't have noticed that anything was going on – the IWY, et cetera. The White House Conference on Families activated a whole other group of people who had not been radicalised by IWY.... Most of the pro-family troops at the White House conference were new. That's fascinating because that got a whole new different segment of the population; those people are remaining active. [166]

Carter's conference campaign promise backfired spectacularly. The *Washington Post* recalled that at the time Carter had made the promise "the only foreseeable danger was that we might spend $3 million for an exercise in nostalgia and end with a report as meaningful as a Hallmark greeting card." The pro-family lobby had changed that. By the time the conference finally took place, the *Post* wrote, "family" had "become a fighting word."[167] By 1980, as columnist Richard Cohen observed, "Family of course, does not strictly speaking, mean family. It means no Equal Rights Amendment and no abortion. It means no gays and no living together and no smooching and worse before marriage and no married ladies with hyphenated names and the prefix Ms. before it."[168] These complications over the meaning of the word "family" meant, Steiner writes, "defining a family policy turned out to be more trouble than the Carter administration ever anticipated."[169] Brigette and Peter Berger wrote "The meetings and discussions to prepare the agenda of the White House Conference became a veritable battlefield of competing interests and philosophies."[170] What generated this battle? "Revenge" after IWY, said one liberal. "Experience," replied a conservative.[171] John Carr, the Carter appointed executive director of the conference warned that the pro-family groups "all see this [conference] as a forum to pull their little red wagons across the stage."[172] Pro-family activists resented the accusation and in turn accused the Carter administration of liberal bias. They pointed out that Carr had been a board member of the "ultraliberal" Americans for Democratic Action.[173] In organising opposition to the conference "We are doing exactly what the White House staff urged us to do" said Connaught Marshner, editor of the Christian conservative *Family Protection Report.*[174]

As with the IWY conference, evangelicals first began to oppose the WHCF at the state level. Indeed, conservative Christians questioned the right of the Carter White House to call a "family" conference in the first place. "We reject the propriety of government-sponsored conferences being called to decide what the government's policy should be towards the family," said V. Dallas Merrell, a Mormon.[175] Even Joseph Glordano, vice chairman of the White House's officially endorsed conference organisation, The National Coalition for the White House Conference on Families, admitted "The family is the last area of privacy, and people feel that the state is simply sticking its nose into their personal business."[176] Secondly, they strongly

objected to the Carter White House's choice of conference executive director. Once again displaying a total disregard for the sensibilities of 'pro-family' organisations the White House's first choice to head the conference was a divorcee, Health, Education and Welfare official Patsy Fleming. Pro-family groups immediately demanded an executive with an "intact family," the White House was forced to stand down, Fleming had no option but to resign, and Carr was appointed.[177] Thirdly, they objected to the change in the name of the forum, from White House Conference on the Family to the plural "Families." This change was made in part on the recommendation of HEW "Family Impact Group" which urged the White House to espouse an inclusive and "neutral" model of the family.[178] The definition of the family adopted by the conference and endorsed by liberal organisations including the National Organisation of Women declared the family to be "Two or more persons who share values and goals and have a commitment to one another over time...regardless of blood, legal ties, adoption or marriage."[179] The White House accepted this inclusive definition of the family, as Carter made clear in his proclamation announcing the three regional conferences that would constitute the WHCF. "This conference will clearly recognise the pluralism of family life in America" he said, and "will respect this diversity."[180] In a letter to Washington, D.C. Mayor Marion Barry, Carter re-iterated that "It is my intention that this conference recognises the pluralism of family life in America."[181] A memorandum from the White House appointed conference chair Jim Guy Tucker, a liberal Democrat, to the conference national advisory committee reinforced this recognition of the pluralistic nature of the modern family. Tucker announced the intention of the conference to "focus national attention on the needs and strengths of American families in all their diversity," and to "encourage diverse groups of families to work together." To develop a format for the conference that would meet these purposes, Tucker listed a number of criteria, explicitly noting the need to "Respect diversity."[182] With one eye clearly on the Christian conservative pro-family community Tucker told the National Press Club in April 1980 that although "there are fears that politics and ideological extremism could overwhelm" proceedings, "no single point of view will be able to steamroller the conference."[183]

Conservative Christians refused to adhere to Carter and Tucker's concept of a diverse and pluralistic family. They feared that the use of the plural "families" in the

conference title was a codeword intended to include unmarried partners living in sin, unwed mothers, illegitimate children and single-sex marriages. By doing so evangelicals accused the White House of abandoning the Biblical definition of the family. Recalling the dispute, Connie Marshner observed that bestowing the title "family" on a variant lifestyle demeaned the honour of the real Christian family. "Interesting living arrangements are just...interesting living arrangements. They are not families," she said. Government recognition of these as families "was an affront against the traditional family."[184] "There were two diametrically opposed definitions working at the family conference," recalled one pro-family activist. "One of them was the traditional family," but the other definition was "what I call the 'groupie' or 'roofers' definition...those people that think that the family is anyone living under the same roof...*regardless* of blood, marriage or adoption." These definitions were "irreconcilable."[185] For Christian conservatives defining what constituted a family was of central importance given that the definition would not only determine the direction of future family policy, but also eligibility for family focused government benefits.[186] "A family," said Paul Weyrich was not "couple of lesbians who are bringing up a child." Failure to define the family correctly, he said, "leads to the kind of perversion of thinking which has resulted in people trying to pass off as legitimate families, illegitimate lifestyles."[187] Of special concern was the fact that the pluralistic definition chosen by WHCF was, a Christian activist warned, one that "a lot of the gay community uses."[188] Dr Ronald Goodwin, the Vice-President of the Moral Majority denounced this association of "responsible, respectable kinds of families" with "homosexual families and the lesbian families and all the perverse pollutions of the definition."[189] Furthermore Christian conservatives saw that the acceptance of homosexuality clearly appeared to be a part of the WHCF agenda. "We came to realise that this White House Conference was really geared up towards changing the definition of the family," recalled Beverly LaHaye, wife of evangelist Tim LaHaye and a leader of Concerned Women for America. Carter's conference "wanted to include any two people who chose to live together, regardless of their sexual orientation." Homosexuals "wanted to be part of the whole definition of the family. And we objected to that." LaHaye was determined "to hold onto the real true meaning of the genuine family, as God intended it to be."[190] The conservative Christian community blamed the federal government. "You cannot recreate what God has established. God did not make a mistake when He created Adam and Eve

and brought them together to become one flesh," raged Jerry Falwell. "Now our government is spending three million dollars on these White House family conferences, which are headed by antifamily people seeking to redefine what a family is."[191] In the end, the conference had to agree not to produce an official definition of the family, a decision that evangelicals like Tim LaHaye again blamed on the federal government's "mental commitment to secular humanism."[192]

Angered by what they perceived as the unfair feminist domination of the 1977 IWY Houston Conference, this time pro-family groups strove to elect as many delegates who were sympathetic to their cause as possible to the White House Conference. A coalition of anti-ERA and Christian conservative groups formed the National Pro-Family Coalition as a rival to the official National Coalition for the WHCF. They were angered that membership of the latter organisation included such advocates of an un-Biblical lifestyle as the National Gay Task Force, Zero Population Growth and the American Association of Sex Educators, Counsellors and Therapists.[193] The Pro-Family Coalition presented their own conservative agenda to the conference commission, proposing a vastly more restrictive definition of a family as "persons who are related by heterosexual marriage, blood or adoption."[194] The Coalition went on to declare, "We believe that the rights of parents to rear their children according to their religious beliefs is a fundamental order of God and nature. It must not be undermined or counteracted, directly or indirectly, implicitly or explicitly, by any government action."[195] The Pro-family Coalition was highly successful in getting conservative candidates elected to the state and regional conferences. In Virginia pro-family forces captured twenty-two of twenty-four delegate posts. "The people of Virginia rose up and defended their families against the legions of social mechanics and tax-financed intervention professionals," said Congressman John Ashbrook. One frustrated liberal activist recalled of the Virginia conference,

> Evangelicals came by the busloads. They all wore blue dots. People from Lynchburg [home of Jerry Falwell's ministry] were very much involved. The buses had Lynchburg on them. They came in with their agenda and tried to 'X' out most of the things we had formulated. They didn't want anything about family planning, no family-life education in the schools. Their picture of the family was Mom, Dad, and kids, with Mom at home – the 'traditional family.' [196]

Jerry Falwell told his supporters that conference chair Jim Guy Tucker had been "visibly upset" by the outcome of the Virginia conference and accused him of attempting to change the conference regulations to prevent it happening again.[197] However, conservative Christians were similarly successful in other states. In Michigan, Eagle Forum, Concerned Women for America, Right to Life and, significantly, the Michigan office of Ronald Reagan's Presidential campaign helped organise pro-family delegates to counter feminist activists. They were committed absolutely to seizing control of the state conferences. For example, in Oklahoma they took all eight conference posts. "We beat them at their own game" recalled one conservative.[198] "When there's an ice storm," one frustrated liberal participant noted, "the liberals stay home," but evangelicals "rent a bus."[199] Robert Maddox wrote to Anne Wexler to warn that the conference had become "a battleground" because of "poor management on the state level."[200]

Congressmen across the country were inundated with mail from conservative Christian constituents asking them to pressure Carter to fire Jim Guy Tucker. Two pro-family activists from North Dakota wrote to their Senator "to urge you to write to the President asking him to dismiss Jim Tucker." They wrote, "Recently Tucker criticised pro-family people who wanted the traditional family unit defended." It was "tragic that people who want to defend the traditional family and to ward off attempts to redefine the family to include homosexual arrangements are criticised," they said. The conference should "redraw its guidelines." They pleaded, "We are striving to better our families. Please help us." One anti-abortion activist from Minnesota who signed her letter "for 500 Catholic Women" warned her Senator that Tucker "hates the pro-life groups and calls them every name in the book." It would be "better to cancel the whole conference" than have "pro-abortion delegates write polices governing American families, especially those detrimental to the rights and authority of parents over their children's education." It would be a "fiasco." Mrs Dennis Atkinson wrote directly to the President to complain, "None of the 45 members [on the Conference committee] represents the average American Judeo-Christian woman." Instead of Tucker, "Phyllis Schlafly would have been a good choice" she wrote, "I hope that you will place her and others like her on the commission soon."[201] Another activist from Florida wrote that Tucker had criticised pro-family groups for "attempting to dominate these conferences at state level." He

wrote, "These pro-life people are to be commended for blocking attempts to redefine the family to include homosexual arrangements," and he demanded that Carter postpone the conference and the guidelines be redrawn.[202]

Urged on by their constituents, Congressmen and state legislators joined in protesting against the conference. One New York state legislator threatened to block funding for his states' delegation if the governor did not include more "pro-family, pro-life" members. The Governor of Alabama went one step further and announced that his state would be boycotting the conference altogether. His wife wrote to Jim Guy Tucker to complain "Terminology used in the White House guidelines," namely the directive to choose delegates without regard to sexual preference, failed "to establish traditional Judeo-Christian values concerning the family," which she called "the foundation of our Nation under God."[203] As such, it was "offensive" and did not reflect "the basic concepts of most Alabamians." Robert Maddox contacted her to defend, as he put it, "at length" the administration's position and to convince her to support her state's conference. He failed and reported to Anne Wexler "she cannot tolerate the idea of diverse family forms" and selection of delegates "without regard to sexual orientation."[204] The Indiana state legislature joined Alabama in accusing the conference of "domination by those opposing traditional religious and family values."[205] In Arkansas, fundamentalist Christian groups organised prayer meetings to protest against the conference. Republican Senator Gordon Humphrey of New Hampshire wrote to his constituents to ask them to sign a national petition to "stop Jimmy Carter's assault on the American Family." Humphrey specifically blamed Carter for having invited "militant homosexual activists to help draw up the program that all American families should follow." As evidence he listed the appointments of Bella Abzug, Mrs. Andrew Young and Jean O'Leary to the conference organising committee. Abzug was described as an "ultra-liberal" who wanted to "push for job quotas for militant homosexuals and abortion on demand." Young had spent $1.7 million dollars of tax revenue on a national campaign to distribute contraceptives to minors." O'Leary, Humphrey warned, "in simple words" was "a homosexual." She was demanding "schools should set up lesbian study programs" and should "be provided with books that portray the joy of women loving women." Lesbian clubs "should be established in schools" to teach students that "lesbianism is a right to be enjoyed." "Imagine," he wrote "the Department of Education could force your child

or grandchild to sit in a classroom and hear that homosexuality is natural and decent." Humphrey asserted, "I believe that you know what is best for your family... And not Jean O'Leary, Bella Abzug or Mrs Andrew Young." The time had come he said, "for every believer in the American family to take a stand" and show "Jimmy Carter that your view of the American family is one shared by the majority of the American people." The petition attached to Humphrey's letter was addressed personally to the President. It declared,

> WHEREAS the American Family has been under constant attack by militant homosexuals, radical feminists and hard core pornographers, and WHEREAS, in the American Family love, compassion and sexual morality are taught and honoured, and WHEREAS the survival of the American Family is crucial to America's moral and spiritual well being: NOW, THEREFORE, the undersigned citizens of the United States petitions President Carter to reject any and all calls by the President's Commission on the Family to weaken traditional American Family values.[206]

Humphrey's letter and petition were distributed to evangelical and fundamentalist church congregations. Two churchgoers forwarded the letter to the White House. "It seems incredible" they wrote. "Will you please confirm this information?" They pleaded with Carter to "use all your influence to prevent such people being allowed to serve in this manner." In reply to the accusations, Frank Moore wrote that Abzug, Young and O' Leary "have no relationship to the Conference." Instead, Moore listed a number of Christians who were serving on the National Advisory Committee to the Conference. These included Barbara Smith, President of the Mormon Relief Society, and Reverend Harry Hollis, head of the family life ministry for the Southern Baptist Convention. Jim Guy Tucker wrote personally to Humphrey to complain that his letter "grossly distorts" and "misrepresents" the conference. Again re-iterating that Abzug, Young and O'Leary were not members of the conference committee, he wrote "Since our leaders do not seem like inviting targets, you have simply replaced them with people who have no relationship to the conference, but might be good fodder for a fundraising letter." This might be "good tactics for raising money" but "such distortion hardly brings credit on the organisation seeking funds." Tucker asked Humphrey "to seek an early opportunity to set the record straight on the false implications contained in your letter."[207] Jerry Falwell also contacted the White

House to register his discontent. Robert Maddox wrote to Anne Wexler to warn her that "Jerry Falwell talked to me about the...conference." The evangelist, he said, "is disturbed over what he perceived to be the leftward swing of the conference" and worryingly had "promised he would fight the conference if they continue their march to the left."[208] A month later Maddox again wrote to Wexler to warn "Fires continue to smoulder over the White House Conference."[209]

After the state conferences *Newsweek* reported that Carter's election pledge was in danger of becoming "a political powder keg" that might "turn into a major embarrassment" for the President."[210] In a letter to Phil Wise, Carter's Appointment Secretary, Tucker had to admit that the President had personally "taken some 'heat' for the Conference."[211] Beth Abramowitz wrote to Stuart Eizenstat to warn of the embarrassment caused "by the bad press the state meetings received, especially over fringe issues, such as homosexuality."[212] With controversy over the WHCF raging Carter himself grew increasingly reluctant to attend the opening session of the Baltimore regional conference scheduled for early June 1980. Despite the concerns of some of his staff, concerted efforts by White House aides to persuade Carter to attend once again reveal the administration's total underestimation of the strength of evangelical opposition to the conference. In November 1979, Stuart Eizenstat wrote to Fran Voorde confidently asserting that "after a flawed beginning" the conference was "turning out to be a successful venture." Moreover, Carter's attendance in Baltimore would be "an enormous plus for him."[213] Still receiving no commitment from the President, in April 1980 Eizenstat wrote again to Voorde, to say that the conference "Would be extremely beneficial for the President." He pointed out that Carter "has spoken at all the White House conferences held during his term – which were initiated either before he came [into office] or on the Hill." Certainly, "he should speak at this White House conference, which he initiated."[214] In May Eizenstat wrote again, this time directly to the President, and once more urged him to attend. "I gather that a tentative decision not to go has been made," he wrote. Although he admitted that by now conference had become "controversial" the failure to attend would be "widely noticed" and "taken as an indication of the Administration's backing away from its commitment to resolving a number of the difficult issues facing families." Eizenstat was concerned that non-attendance would hand initiative to the evangelicals. Carter should not abandon the conference

because "our opponents on the extreme right will be given a much desired victory. They will retain the values, traditions and code words which revolve around 'family' for their political use," and moreover "they may have stunted an important area of initiative for the Administration." Because, he said, "the focus of the conference is not abortion or gay rights," Eizenstat mistakenly dismissed the possibility of organised evangelical disruption because "extremists...have not been successful in their attempts to become delegates in significant numbers." He wrote

> In fact, demonstrators have been totally absent from the 13 days of hearings conducted by the Conference and its 2-day Research Forum on Capitol Hill. In the more than 200 State events, only two even had pickets. Whatever these risks may be, they could be minimised by effective planning.[215]

Similarly, Robert Maddox wrote to Jody Powell to try and ensure that the President did attend. "By not speaking it will look like he is trying to disassociate himself from the conference," said Maddox, "which he can not do at this stage of the game." However Maddox, with his understanding of the growth of evangelical politicisation, warned that the conference was "a potential time-bomb" and as such Carter should avoid further alienating them by not making a policy address in Baltimore. "Let him talk about his own experience as a father and husband rearing a family in a small town," he said, a key theme that had garnered him support from evangelicals in 1976.[216] Similarly, Sarah Weddington, with the forthcoming Presidential campaign clearly in mind, wrote to Fran Voorde and Phil Wise to warn that of the possible political fallout for Carter if he did not attend. "Some may try to indicate that we do not really care about the family" she warned, "but point out that Reagan does because of the various stands he has taken with the pro-family forces." This was "the ONLY conference that the President has called," she reminded them. Pro-family opponents would say "He's not going to that but he did go to the Libraries Conference." Her letter included an assurance from Jim Guy Tucker that "the conference will be a good one with no disasters." Tucker "feels they will have control and the voting will be fine."[217] Convinced by his staff, Carter decided to attend the Baltimore regional conference in person.

President Carter personally opened the Baltimore conference on June 5, 1980 with a pledge that his government would support the institution of the family as a sound basis for a just society. "We do not want government in our kitchens, bedrooms and living rooms, monitoring and controlling family life" he said, but "we know that government does touch our families through the tax system, through public education, through Social security and through a whole range of health, housing and human service programs."[218] He announced his hope that the conference would help "transform our nation into a place where the hopes and the ideals and the spirit and the commitment and the love of America will all be made stronger." Noting that "certain denominations, or certain religious faiths, concentrate specifically on families," he encouraged religious groups that "if they deal with family life their ultimate goals are much more likely to be realised." However, in a passage guaranteed to anger pro-family Christians, he described the traditional nuclear family as a standard that has been "held up by many traditions" of which the "Judeo-Christian tradition" was only one. "That same tradition" he said, "teaches us that there is really no such thing as a perfect family, or one that should be used as a standard for all other families." He asserted that "A loving family can be found...in many different circumstances." Directly contradicting the pro-family definition, he announced "Family ties are based on more than blood kinship. There are also kinships of shared experiences and shared dreams." Carter also belittled the level of evangelical anger, making light of the animosity at the state conferences. He opened his address by joking, "I'm very pleased to see that there's no violence in the audience."[219]

Carter's attempts at levity went unheeded by conservative Christians. Even as Carter attempted to reiterate his commitment to diversity, pro-family activists were picketing the convention centre. Connie Marshner damned the conference delegates as "a liberal stacked deck" and derided the "hidden – agenda" that had "been there all along: guaranteed income, guaranteed jobs, national health insurance, federal involvement in child care, federal involvement in housing, and so on." These all led to the "increase, increase, increase in federal programs, supposedly for families...and not helping families solve their own problems."[220] The conference, claimed one activist was "contaminated by the liberal Carter machine" and amounted to a "national pattern of secrecy, deception, and changing rules" directed against the pro-

family position.[221] Their fears were further confirmed when Phyllis Schlafly and her Eagle Forum were barred from taking part in the conference whilst Marian Wright Edelman of the liberal Children's Defence Fund was allowed to participate. Schlafly declared that the WHCF was discredited because "it refused to accept a traditional definition of the family, and then passed resolutions favouring abortion, homosexual lifestyles, and a long list of extravagant federal spending proposals."[222] She accused the state and regional conferences of the WHCF of being "run as forums promoting ERA and the feminist agenda."[223] In particular she attacked the "big government" ethos of the conference. "Pro-family groups don't think the federal government has the competence to deal with the family" she said, because "It aggravates problems rather than solves them."[224] Evangelicals charged Carter with seeking to use the conference for partisan political purposes. Addressing a press conference called to coincide with Carter's appearance in Baltimore, Paul Weyrich described Carter as having "the worst record for family issues of any President in history," and accused him of having "stacked the conference" with liberal delegates who favoured his government programs.[225] He predicted that the battle over family values would be "the most significant battle of the age-old conflict between good and evil, between the forces of God and the forces against God that we have seen in our country."[226] It would be, he said, "what the Vietnam War had been to the 1960s."[227]

The report produced from the proceedings of the WHCF endorsed a number of proposals, to be implemented by the federal government, to help support families. Once again evangelicals were angered by the passage of resolutions in support of abortion rights and the ERA and a declaration that there should be no legal discrimination against single-sex marriages. In contrast, an attempt by pro-family activists in Baltimore to declare that only heterosexual marriages were worthy of the title "families" was defeated. A feminist agenda was clearly upheld by the conference. One conservative columnist observed, "The Baltimore Conference has been stacked, packed and rigged" by the feminists. [228] The *Washington Star* reported that the Baltimore conference was a "gaudy exercise," a "charade" organised by "a gaggle of man eating females." The conference had predictably passed "a laundry list of liberal resolutions" that had "Orwellian overtones."[229] In protest against the Baltimore Conference's endorsement of pro-abortion, ERA and gay rights proposals Marshner led a walkout of pro-family delegates. She announced, "By walking out

now the point will be made that the conference does not have any credibility."[230] Martin notes that some liberal resolutions were only passed by the delegates at Baltimore by a single vote and had the pro-family activists remained the liberal resolutions would have been defeated.[231] But by then the passage of resolutions was no longer the key issue. Instead, as Freedman observes, the aim of the pro-family lobby was now to "humiliate Carter."[232] Outside the convention demonstrators waved placards asking "Why are Jimmy and Rosalynn supporting this attack on God's family plan?"[233] Robert Maddox recalled the anti-Carter sentiment of the conference. "What he intended for good was turned against him," he said, "and the very people that we invited to come and help with the conference pulled out their long knives and began to slash at him and the conference." They "had no compunction whatsoever about using every media outlet they could find, not only to trash the conference but to trash him, in a way that not only questioned his policy but," said Maddox, "questioned his faith."[234] The strength of pro-family opposition to federal programs was revealed when the subsequent regional conference in Minneapolis denounced the control of public institutions by "secular humanism."[235] The Minneapolis State conference voted to adopt the traditionalist Christian definition of the family. The Carter administration had, observed Heinemann, "yet again spun lead from straw."[236]

The White House belatedly realised the damage that the conference had caused Carter amongst the pro-family movement and conservative Christian community. Phil Wise wrote to Jack Watson in late August 1980, "My sense is we managed to walk thru [sic] a minefield on this conference and survived." As far as the implementation of the conference proposals, "I would like to down play any more involvement by the P [resident]."[237] The sense of disenchantment with the conference amongst the evangelical community was made clear by the administration's own research. Sarah Weddington's office produced a chart that summarised the major concerns of the participants in the WHCF which revealed the depth of feeling on a number of issues central to the pro-family campaign. The most frequently expressed concern was the "Sensitivity of Government" to the family, including "religious differences," the "appropriate role of government," and "policies which hurt, help or ignore families." Another common concern was "traditional families," far outstripping concerns for single parent, extended or families listed as

"others." The "role of churches in child care," "moral concerns" in education, "religious institutions" and "concern about abortion" were all listed as frequent concerns by delegates. In contrast, the key issues of liberal and feminist groups were far less frequently raised as issues of concern. For example, discrimination in housing, adoption, welfare reform and social security were generally listed as low priorities.[238] The political consequences for Carter were clear, but it was too late. After the WHCF, evangelical groups did not cease in their activism against the Carter White House. The administration soon became aware of conservative Christian groups campaigning against the proposed White House Conference on Children and Youth for broadly similar reasons as had generated their opposition to WHCF.[239]

The WHCF also helped cement the partnership of conservative Christians and the Republican Party. The 1980 Republican platform specifically singled out the conference in a plank entitled "Family Protection." "In view of the continuing efforts of the present administration to define and influence the family through such federally funded conferences as the White House Conference on Families" the plank committed the Republican Party to "protecting and defending the traditional American family against the ongoing erosion of its base in our society."[240] Further echoing the anti-government sentiment of many conservative Christians the platform also declared "We oppose any move which would give the federal government more power over families."[241] The commitment signalled the development of Bible-believing Protestants as a major force in the Republican electoral coalition that continued through the 1980s and 1990s. Marshner recalls that the conference "really lit the fuse" for partisan pro-family political activism.[242] "It got our people involved in a process that they hadn't been involved in before" because they realised 'Wait a minute – we can't play by the old rules any more." Christian conservatives came to see "That's the way politics is played, and if you can't get in there and inflict consequences for wrong votes, etc., you are not taken seriously. And the consequences that a politician pays attention to is something that compromises his re-election."[243] Carter's old adversary, Republican Senator Jesse Helms, also singled out intrusive liberal government, exemplified by events like the IWY and WHCF, as a reason for Carter's election defeat. In answer to a post election poll taken to

analyse explanations for Carter's defeat Helms wrote that the Carter years were significant in that they marked

> the decline and fall of the public's faith in statist liberalism...the idea that the solution to all our problems as a nation and as individuals can be found in some sort of intervention by [the] federal government. The New Deal, the New Frontier, the Great Society, the War on Poverty, all these milestones on the road to the welfare state led to a sort of moment of truth in the Carter years when the public began to perceive the costs of accumulated debt and deficit.[244]

The clash between Helms and Carter revealed the degree to which, by 1980, Carter was unrepresentative of the majority of evangelicals, even Southern Baptists. By this time Carter was clearly atypical amongst his own faith. A fellow Southern Baptist, Helms recalled that many had assumed when Carter was elected "that two sons of the South would be mirror images" who "would do well together." Yet he and Carter "rarely found ourselves in agreement."[245] Calling their differences "profound" Helms recalled that he "disagreed with the Carter administration's policies as much as any man in public life."[246]

By summer 1980, Carter's stock amongst conservative faith-based voters was extremely low. In comparison, Ronald Reagan's was soaring. "All kinds of anti-Jimmy Carter, pro- Reagan pieces of literature were being cranked out and mailed all over the country" by religious groups, said Robert Maddox. They were "supposedly bipartisan...but always painting Reagan as the paragon of Christian virtue and Carter as a kind of antichrist." As a member of the administration, Maddox's ability to campaign was limited by federal regulations and as a result the White House "had no effective way to combat it." Finally, just one week before the election, the Carter campaign did manage to organise a mailing to some 250,000 ministers and layman. Once again, the newsletter betrayed a profound ignorance of the agenda of the evangelicals. It proclaimed that both Hamilton Jordan and Jody Powell were Southern Baptists who attended church, that Stuart Eizenstat regularly worshipped at a synagogue and that Vice-President Mondale was a Minister's son. This was not what the evangelicals wanted to hear. They wanted government policy to be based

upon specific Scriptural precepts and conservative evangelical or fundamentalist Christians to be named to high-ranking positions within the White House staff.[247] By contrast to his last minute pro-Carter mailing, Maddox recalled, "many slick, sophisticated and all too often slanted pieces were mailed by supporters of Mr Reagan in the conservative religious community."[248]

Over the course of his Presidency conservative Christians came to see that a Southern Baptist in the Oval Office was no longer enough to ensure realisation of their goals. They now believed that only a President who was willing to politically advance the conservative evangelical agenda could save America. In 1980 evangelical Christianity came of age politically and the WHCF had been pivotal in stimulating their involvement, and in turn, the formation of the Christian Right. Howard Philips, national director of one Christian Right organisation, the Conservative Caucus, observed that conservatives "owe President Carter a thank you for giving them such a good target."[249] As one Christian leader recalls, it was the "bizarre" suggestions of the conference that made it easy for evangelists to warn Christians that "government was desperately in need of repair."[250] Rosemary Thomson recalled the importance of the WHCF in convincing Christians that they were "engaged in a spiritual battle." She wrote, "Somehow it was to the organisers of the White House Conference on Families as if the Lord had never spoken."[251] Jerry Regier, a member of Bill Bright's Christian Embassy organisation explained that in the evangelical world,

> Family seminars, marriage seminars, children's seminars, parenting courses...were natural and normal, and speakers travelled all over and tapes were disseminated. It was just a natural part of our world. To see that a White House conference on the family was going to take place and that that these people weren't even a part of it created a feeling that "Something's wrong here."

According to Regier, this feeling of disquiet was heightened by the fact that Carter professed to be a born-again Christian. "We had a President who initiated this conference, who said he was 'born-again,' and yet that whole [conservative

Christian] world was being left out. Had it been a President that wasn't at all familiar with people in that world, it might have been a little different response."[252]

In 1976 Pat Robertson had supported the candidacy of Jimmy Carter in the spirit of Christian brotherhood. In contrast, during the 1980 Presidential election campaign he warned viewers of his Christian Broadcasting Network that unless Christians desired to see American society reordered by humanism, atheism and hedonism it was "absolutely vital that we take control of the United States government."[253] "We have enough votes to run the country" he threatened "and when people say 'We've had enough' we are going to take over."[254] The 1980 Presidential election was pivotal because, said Ed Dobson, the Vice-President of the Moral Majority, "for the first time the religious right bought into the idea that you can change values and culture beginning from the White House down."[255] In 1980, writes Tim LaHaye, "morality became the number-one burning issue in the hearts of millions of Americans," and they "went to the polls in enormous numbers to vote out of office those who had favoured abortion, pornography, homosexuality, [and] the ERA." In particular he singled out "government meddling in the family" as exemplified by the IWY and WHCF as reasons for "the rejection of the liberal (big government) administration of Jimmy Carter."[256] The election of Ronald Reagan over the "liberal humanist government" of Carter, he said, was "in part a fear that four more years of his socialist policies would make [George Orwell's] 1984" with its "stifling control" over "individuals and families, a reality."[257]

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IN CONCLUSION AND RECAPITULATION

Jimmy Carter was the first American President to place a forthright and sincere Biblical spirituality firmly at the centre of the political discourse. He was an unabashed believer in the salvation of the gospel, for he believed himself to have been 'saved' and 'born-again.' Carter placed his Southern Baptist spirituality at the very core of his personality. As Carter himself put it, "Religious faith has always been at the core of my existence."[1] Fellow Christians recognised Carter as an overtly religious leader. As Carter's own pastor Dan Arial put it, "you can never adequately grasp Jimmy Carter himself unless you see that his Christian faith" was "the framework on which the rest is built."[2] "If you don't understand the Bible, the Southern Baptist Convention and what it means to be saved by Jesus, you'll be hard pressed to understand Jimmy Carter," said Bill Lotz of the World Baptist Alliance."[3] One revealing anecdote, recalled by White House aide Patricia Bario as part of the Miller Centre's Oral History Project, touched on the primary role played in his Presidency by Carter's faith, the "manner of the man" and his "relationship to God."

> I remember the very first time going to church with him...It's the Sunday school that precedes the service and the teacher was asking some questions about why Christ didn't heal everybody. He had this power, now if he was a merciful God why didn't he heal everybody. Why did he leave some of these people still lame and all. And this fellow at the back put his hand up – the President of the United States, who thinks maybe he knows the answer to the question. And his answer, of course, seemed to be right.[4]

"Obviously" said Bario regarding Carter's religiosity, "you can't judge this man without looking at that part of him." It "set a moral tone in his own life" she said, and moreover, he "lived by it as President."[5] Another example of the centrality of the President's Christian faith in his life was his personal involvement in the planning of a visit to the United States by Pope John Paul II. Carter planned every detail of the Papal visit, to the point of deciding which musician should sing the Lord's Prayer in the Pope's honour.[6] National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski

recalls that, after the meeting, the Pope told him "After a couple of hours with President Carter I had the feeling that two religious leaders were conversing." According to Brzezinski, when he told Carter this the President was "immensely pleased." Brzezinski recalls, "I thought that this too was in itself quite revealing."[7] Carter subsequently confided in a letter to a Catholic friend that meeting the Pope was "one of the best days of my life."[8]

Although a devout member of a Christian denomination whose historical roots lay in an espousal of church-state separation, Carter's profound religious commitment, what he referred to as his "personal relationship to a living God," consciously moulded the core of his political philosophy.[9] No previous President has made it as clear that their faith was not only a dimension of their character but was so intimately married to their politics. Carter's own White House staff was well placed to witness the conscious link between the President's faith and his politics. Friend and adviser Peter Bourne wrote that Carter "conceptualised politics as a vehicle for advancing God's kingdom on earth."[10] He "believed that government should aspire to the noblest ideals," and for Carter, "that meant those taught by Jesus."[11] According to Bourne, Carter consciously sought the Presidency so as "to advance God's work."[12] Jody Powell was in agreement, declaring of Carter's Presidency, "Almost everything he did was in a major way affected by his religious faith" because "it is such an integral part of who he is."[13] Powell called his former employer "more devoutly religious than any modern President," whilst White House speechwriter Hendrik Hertzberg agreed that Carter's leadership was "more religious than political."[14] Carter himself openly admitted there "was no way to understand me and my political philosophy without understanding my faith."[15] Perhaps Carter himself best summed up his own attitude to the relationship between his faith and his politics with an anecdote from his campaign biography in which he recalled the "strong reaction" of a Baptist preacher who visited his family home after Carter had decided to run for his first political office in 1962. The evangelist was shocked that Carter would choose to enter what he called a "discredited profession." He asked Carter "How can you, as a Christian, a deacon, and a Sunday school teacher become involved in politics? If you want to be of service to other people, why don't you go into the ministry or into some honourable social service work?" After what Carter describes as a "heated argument" he asked the preacher, "I will have 75,000 people in my senate district.

How would you like to have a congregation that big?"[16] After he was elected to the White House Carter revealed the religious dimension to his concept of Presidential leadership when he publicly pondered the difficulty of translating the secular authority of the Presidency into that of a "genuine servant."[17] Clearly mindful of the Christian admonition to servitude, he told staff at the department of Health, Education and Welfare, "I'm no better than any of you."[18] The President's relationship to the American people, he said, ought not to be that of "First Boss" but "First Servant."[19]

In 1976 Carter's election was heralded with both excitement and expectation amongst the evangelical community. A number of books from evangelical presses predicted that Carter's Presidency would lead to the renewal of 'Christ-centred' government, with policy firmly grounded in the Christian principles of Holy Scripture. One, written by evangelicals, was entitled expectantly *The Miracle of Jimmy Carter*. Its authors announced the Georgian to be "one of the best things to happen to American evangelical Christianity in this century."[20] Evangelicals, they wrote, "sensed that the Baptist from Georgia might be moving under the direction of God himself."[21] One author called Carter the "Baptist in Babylon," another predicted that Carter would act as a "pastor" who, as President, would see America "in theological colours," whilst a third claimed that Carter "represented a new hope for the pious."[22] Pippert believed that "to Carter, politics [is] a ministry, and the voters a congregation,"[23] whilst Nielsen lauded Carter for his unwillingness to "secularise his faith," or "suppress his religious feelings," despite holding a secular office. In deriving his understanding of right or wrong, he wrote, Carter "takes his cue from Jesus."[24] Reverend Robert Maddox recalled that evangelicals "were very excited" about a President who "would so clearly state his faith." Christians, he declared, had "great hopes" that Carter would "leverage the country spiritually and morally in ways that we had not seen in a long time."[25] Kucharsky wrote that when Carter spoke fellow Christians "pinched themselves" because "many conservative Protestants had been praying all their lives for someone to speak up this way."[26] *Washington Post* reporter Michael Novak explained, "There is a hidden religious power base in American culture, which our secular biases prevent many of us of noticing." In 1976 "Jimmy Carter...found it." The "huge number" of evangelical Protestants were Carter's "natural constituency," he wrote.[27] "Carter's role for

evangelical Christians may be rather like John F. Kennedy's for Catholics," wrote Novak, "in his voice they heard their own accent, and in their hearts they saw themselves as they would like to be."[28]

Religion did far more than just inspire Carter's Presidential rhetoric; Biblical allegory and the metalanguage of born-again Christianity was fundamental to his speeches. Unsurprisingly, the most memorable speech of his Presidency was also the one where religion was most evident. Carter delivered his infamous "Crisis of Confidence" address in the midst of a catastrophic oil and inflation crisis. Carter's reaction to the urging of his staff to address both his faltering popularity and America's worsening oil crisis clearly revealed the influence of his evangelical faith upon his vision of Presidential authority. Carter reacted not as a secular politician but as a Southern Baptist Christian. In doing so he gave what political scientist Robert Strong recalls as "one of the most unusual speeches ever given in the history of the modern Presidency."[29]

In February 1979, White House communications director Gerald Rafshoon wrote to Carter regarding public concerns over his Presidency. "The perception among the public and the press is that you have so far failed to provide the country with the strong leadership necessary to overcome our major problems," he warned. "A President," Rafshoon wrote, "is not successful if he does not provide the country with strong, purposeful leadership. Unfortunately, that is, at this point, the public judgement on your Presidency."[30] In another memorandum written two months later Rafshoon again told Carter of the widespread perception that he had "failed the nation" and warned, "It's time to come through."[31] In June Stuart Eizenstat also wrote to the President again alerting Carter of the political necessity of dealing with the energy crisis. "I do not need to detail for you the political damage we are suffering from all of this," he wrote, "Nothing else has so frustrated, confused and angered the American people."[32]

Carter chose not to directly address the political concerns that vexed Rafshoon and Eizenstat. July 1979 saw him remove himself and his cabinet from Washington to the seclusion of the Presidential retreat at Camp David, Maryland. In doing so Carter

was motivated by another memorandum, this time from pollster Patrick Caddell. Entitled "Of Crisis and Opportunity," it warned that America was "a nation deep in crisis," a collective trauma that was "psychological more than material," but was so serious that it contained "the seeds of disintegration of America." This "crisis of confidence" was "marked by a dwindling faith in the future" that "threatens the social and political fabric of the nation." Yet it "cannot be seen in ordinary ways—there are no armies of the night, no street demonstrations, no powerful lobbies," but "it can be heard in the growing real despair of elites and ordinary citizens alike as they struggle to articulate in concepts the malaise which they themselves feel." Caddell noted American's "increasing cynicism, lack of belief in personal efficacy, and little belief or confidence in the motive or ability of government to address major problems." The American people "feel the political/government system is unwilling or unable to solve problems." The "natural result of historical forces and events which have been in motion for twenty years," including the Kennedy and King assassinations, Vietnam, Watergate, and now the energy crisis, was that "the entire value/attitude foundation of America" had been "overturned....Personal gratification has replaced national involvement everywhere." The ultimate issue for the American people, wrote Caddell, was "faith." "As faith is broken with them" he wrote, "they too break faith."[33] Caddell's thesis had been in part motivated by his reading of Christopher Lasch's Culture of Narcissism. In May Lasch had himself written to Jody Powell, who forwarded the correspondence on to the President. Carter read Lasch's letter and underlined three phrases – "decline of the work ethic," "lack of faith in the future" and "desire to enjoy life in the present."[34] He personally replied to Caddell with a note describing his memorandum as a "masterpiece."[35] Over the week in Camp David Carter invited leaders and advisers from a diverse cross-section of American society, including politicians, sociologists and economists, to discuss the issues raised by Caddell. Carter also met with religious leaders including Roman Catholic Cardinal Terrence Cooke, Rabbi Marc Tanenbaum, Claire Randall of the National Council of Churches and Reverend Jimmy Allen of the Southern Baptist Convention.[36] Carter began to formulate a speech to address Caddell's warning of a growing spiritual malaise.

Stuart Eizenstat recalled that the Caddell thesis "sparked the most acrimonious debate by far that occurred in the four years of the administration."[37] Top ranking

members of the administration urged the President to ignore Caddell's warnings. Greg Schneiders went so far as to call it "bullshit." In a memorandum marked strictly "EYES ONLY" he warned, "People don't want to hear Jimmy Carter talk about our problems and they certainly don't want to hear him whine about them." Caddell's memorandum was merely "an interesting academic treatise." At a time when the American people were crying out for strong leadership, Caddell's message, he said, "sends all the opposite signals."[38] Similarly, Eizenstat declared the problem to be caused not by any "spiritual shortcoming," but by the fact that people could not get "any damn gas."[39] Caddell had "miss [ed] the point," said Eizenstat. "People were not angry at themselves. They were angry at the government."[40] Most of all Vice-President Mondale strongly disagreed with Caddell's memo. As Carter himself put it Mondale "went into a tizzy" and "almost lost control of himself."[41] Even fellow evangelical Robert Maddox desperately tried to convince Carter from publicly addressing Caddell's warning. He wrote to the First Lady, emphatic in his opposition to the pessimistic tone of Carter's message. "I am very uncomfortable with the President saying he has "failed" he wrote, "There are more oblique, more redemptive ways to admit Presidential shortcomings without stabbing the country with those bitter-to-take words." Maddox even took time to write and present the President with an alternative speech, urging Carter to mirror the providential language of conservative Christendom. Carter, he said, should declare, "God and history are not done with us yet." The phrase "'In God we trust' has been a guiding beacon for Americans" wrote Maddox, a belief "that there is a God, and that he shows us the way." Carter should end the speech with an upbeat call of "May God Let it be!"[42]

Carter did not heed the advice. After ten days, he ended his soul-searching in the wilderness and addressed the nation, as one biographer put it, like Moses descending from Mount Sinai.[43] America's problem, Carter maintained, was not a shortage of fuel at all, but instead a failure of faith. Grim faced, he warned that the energy shortage was not the cause, only a symptom, of a "much deeper" problem: a paralysing "crisis of the American spirit." It was observable he said, in the "growing doubt about the meaning of our own lives," it crippled "the very heart and soul and spirit of our national will." Carter chastised the American people for their "mistaken idea of freedom" that meant "too many" self-centred Americans searched for instant

gratification "worshipping self-indulgence and consumption." Addressing the emptiness of modern consumer materialism he warned, "Identity is no longer defined by what one does, but by what one owns." However, "piling up material goods cannot fill the emptiness of lives which have no confidence or purpose." America was at a point of "moral and spiritual" crisis and only a rekindling of faith could surmount it. "With God's help...for the sake of our Nation, it is time for us to join hands in America...with our common faith we cannot fail." "We are at a turning point in our history," Carter said, and it was "time to stop cursing and start praying."[44] As Vice-President Mondale observed, he scolded the American people "like sinners in the hands of an angry God."[45] Revealingly, Carter called it "one of the best speeches...I've ever given."[46]

Carter's presentation of the energy crisis as a failure of the American spirit owed everything to his religious faith. The July 15th speech was an attempt to synthesise religion and Presidential leadership while his seclusion at Camp David signalled Carter's disillusionment with the secular political process in Washington. Gillon observed that for Carter, "the people" were his flock and he was the shepherd."[47] Windt called the address "more sermon than speech" whilst Ribuffo agreed that it was a "doleful lament" that "came as close to a call for a day of fasting and humiliation as any other modern Presidential speech."[48] According to Dan F. Hahn Carter's conduct represented "the typical sequence of the born-again experience: identification of the problem, retreat to meditation, decision to commit, announcement of rebirth."[49] Similarly, biographers Mazlish and Diamond have found an unequivocal connection between Carter's style of Presidential leadership and the perceptions of leadership typical of the Southern Baptist church where leadership "is built upon charismatic qualities that attract a following and win spontaneous support." Baptists consider it vitally important "that a leader be seen to be worthy of the people's trust and constantly reassure them of this."[50] It was this need for a revitalisation of trust in his Presidency that Carter was seeking to address. Motter concurs, observing that "Carter sought a symbiosis of people and leaders in which leaders drew strength from the organic goodness of people, and people demonstrated their goodness when leaders offered them ethical leadership."[51] During his election campaign Carter had promised a government "as good as its people."[52] In effect, he was promising not only a moral renewal of the Presidency

but also pledging to lead as a Baptist would, with a moral purity derived directly from those he led.[53]

Back in 1976, Carter's profile as a man of sincere and serious faith held great currency for the growing American evangelical community. His candidacy and Presidency had galvanised the political mobilisation of evangelical Christians through articulation of his own, deeply held religious faith and his interjection of openly spiritual themes into the body politic. He had tapped into the rapidly expanding evangelical constituency, acting as a catalyst for their widespread re-entry into politics for the first time since the 1920s. Unfortunately for Carter, after having drawn them into politics, he failed to retain evangelicals' support. Carter's brand of Christianity led him to be far more politically liberal than many of his fellow evangelicals. Although a man of devout Christian faith, his Southern Baptist convictions led him to believe that, as a secular office holder, it was not his constitutional prerogative to legislate according to his own interpretations of Scripture. Evangelicals felt badly let down by his failure to appoint high-profile conservative Christians to his White House staff and angered by the activities of the liberal appointments that he made in their stead. It became apparent that Carter's understanding of the relationship between Christianity and politics bore little resemblance to their own. By 1980 it was obvious to Christian conservatives that a Democratic President, whether a fellow evangelical or not, was not enough to ensure promotion of their agenda on the national political stage. The more the Carter administration had refused to reverse the liberal advances of the previous decade, the more the Christian Right as an organised force mustered political strength.

Conservative Christians fully embraced political activism in the 1980 Presidential election. Even Jerry Falwell declared his previous abstention from politics to be "false prophecy."[54] He announced "The American people had allowed a vocal minority of non-godly men and women to lead the nation to the brink of death."[55] Now it was time "for Fundamentalists and Evangelicals to return our nation to its spiritual and moral roots."[56] Pentecostal Pat Robertson also declared that the time had come for evangelicals to disavow their political separatism. "We used to think that if we stayed home and prayed it would be enough," said the evangelist. "Well, we are fed up" he said.[57] Electing a Southern Baptist in the Oval Office was no

longer enough, observed Robertson, it was now "absolutely vital that we take control of the United States government."[58] "Evangelicals" he said, were "on the move."[59] Robertson subsequently called the constitutional separation of church and state, the very principle that Carter vigorously upheld as central to his interpretation of the demands of his faith and his office, "a lie." As he put it, there was "no such thing in the Constitution."[60] Another conservative Christian leader who abandoned church-state separation was James Robison who called the 1980 Presidential election "the most important in the nation's history."[61] As he saw it, the right to vote was "God given," and he warned that a "Silent Majority" was "a lazy majority."[62] Failure to elect a Bible-believing man to the White House would mean, simply, "the death of America."[63] In mobilising faith-based voters, Christian Voice proclaimed "We Want Our Country Back."[64] Evangelical leaders energised their congregations against the Carter White House and the transformation of conservative religious groups into a key constituent of the Republican Party electoral constituency had begun. As a Democrat, Dinesh D'Souza writes, the conservative Christian community now viewed Carter as "a dangerous apostate."[65]

Most significant of all, whereas Carter admonished the American people for their lack of faith, Ronald Reagan did the opposite and rekindled American optimism in the moral certitude of its providential mission. Carter's religious philosophy mirrored that of theologian Paul Tillich who held that once man stopped searching for a greater commitment to Christ he lost his religion and became proud, self-satisfied and superior. Thus Carter focused on pride as the greatest sin and suggested that it led to American hubris and overconfidence. By comparison, Reagan displayed none of Carter's doubts over America's ordination as the New Jerusalem. Unlike Carter, he placed no emphasis upon the effort required from the American people to live up to God's message. It worked. In the 1980 election, a disaffected conservative evangelical community deserted Carter in droves, even in the South, once the home of his strongest support. As the *Washington Post* put it, he was "Belted in the Bible Belt."[66]

Reagan was not elected solely by the religious conservative vote and of course, no single reason cost the Democrats the White House in 1980. The faltering American

economy and Soviet aggression in Afghanistan hampered Carter's re-election campaign and Islamic fundamentalism in Iran and the ensuing hostage crisis were crucial to Carter's re-election failure. Yet the desertion of the Christian vote was a major factor in the Democrats defeat, and evangelicals knew it. They did not hide their glee. Falwell called the 1980 election "my finest hour," whilst James Dobson, another Moral Majority leader recalled that "Had we not been Baptists we would have danced in the streets."[67] Dionne points out that the same white born-again Christians who had supported Carter in 1976 went nearly two to one for Reagan in 1980.[68] Christian conservatives made "an enormous difference," according to Phillips, who cites pollster Louis Harris' estimate that white, fundamentalist, moral Majority-type voters accounted for two thirds of Reagan's surprise 10-point margin over Carter with the same thing happening with county-level electoral data.[69] Secondary analyses have suggested that such initial conclusions were over-estimates, however a third, extended round of analyses re-emphasised the importance of Christian conservatives in the 1980 election and prioritised their "unique impact."[70] Arguably, Reagan could have won in 1980 even if he had not had Christian conservative votes, but as William Martin in his recent analysis of the American Religious Right makes clear, "their enthusiastic support was part of the wave that bore him upward and moved other voters to take him seriously."[71] "If the evangelicals were really looking for a born-again Christian candidate in the 1980 campaign, they had only one choice" said *Christian Century* editor and evangelical James Wall. But, "If they were looking for ideology, their choice was Reagan."[72] One evangelical crowed "It was Jesus that gave us victory."[73]

Presidential politics today reflects the change in the American political discourse caused by Carter's unprecedented insertion of religiosity into the electoral process. Prior to 1976, Christian evangelicalism had been patronised as obscurantist and parochial. As Clecak observed, in 1976 political commentators critics had tried to explain Jimmy Carter's born-again religion to each other as if it "were as alien to American culture as a Balinese cockfight." They addressed it with "an almost anthropological detachment." Evangelicals like Carter were derided as "ignorant, anti-intellectual and uncultured" whose spirituality was "some kind of occult cipher."[74] The old-time faith was merely "the last cry of the still backwaters of the South against the modern world."[75] Similarly, Wolfe observed that "Ten years ago,

if anyone of wealth, power, or renown had publicly 'announced for Christ,' people would have looked at him as if his nose had been eaten away be weevils."[76] Back then, one campaign adviser had even warned that Carter's faith leant his candidacy a "weirdo factor" that risked alienating voters.[77] But today the opposite is true. By altering the secular political media's stereotype of evangelicalism, Carter has brought the vocabulary of born-again salvation permanently into America's political consciousness. Moreover, far from a political liability, a devout faith has become an asset to be exploited. A public profession of a sincere Christian faith has now become almost a requirement for public office. Hertzberg observes that after Carter, "every politician seems to feel obligated to talk about being born again, just as in decades past politicians seemed to feel obligated to have themselves photographed wearing an Indian chief's war bonnet."[78] For example, in 2000 George W. Bush unabashedly declared his favourite political philosopher to be Jesus Christ while his Democratic opponent Al Gore confided that he decided important policy questions by asking himself W.W.J.D? shorthand for "What would Jesus do?"'[79] It was as if, Ted Olsen reported in *Christianity Today*, the two candidates were trying to "out Jimmy Carter each other."[80] Since Carter's Presidency, the social agenda of the American evangelical Christian community has had to be addressed by successive Presidents. However, none of his successors have asked so much of the American people in Christian terms. Rather than simply invoking the rhetoric of evangelicalism, Carter actively confronted America with the fundamental demands at the heart of most interpretations of the Christian faith: demands for social justice, humility and moral action that require personal and collective sacrifice. Carter's successors have emphasised Christian rectitude and moral certainty but they have proved unwilling to impose or even articulate the humble and self-sacrificing demands at Christianity's core.

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