

RELIGION

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Religious Fundamentalism and the New Right



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The symbiosis of religious fundamentalism and the political New Right must be viewed as a major feature of the 1980 election year in the United States. Perhaps, no other feature in American politics during that election year attracted more attention from the electronic media or elicited more coverage in the press throughout the nation. According to Wesley McCune, who is head of Group Research, Inc., which for two decades has been monitoring radical political thought in the United States, "It is the most important development on the right since 1964." Aided particularly by fundamentalist Christian evangelists with vast television audiences and orchestrated primarily by quasi-religious organizations with an avowed political purpose, the movement has sought to unite right-wing conservative faith with right-wing conservative politics, largely around a dozen or so key issues. While the impact of this movement on the elections in 1980 may not be measurable for some time to come, the alliance of religious fundamentalism with the political New Right during the past year is a phenomenon not to

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be taken lightly. Clearly, fundamentalist Christians are forming a burgeoning new force in American politics and are shifting away from their traditional view that "religion and politics don't mix."



I



Many Americans, particularly those who do not identify with the right wing of religion or politics, have viewed with alarm the incursion of fundamentalist religion into the political arena and have denounced it as incompatible with the American way in church and state. Some persons, including some members of the secular press and some public officials, have challenged even the constitutionality of such intrusion of religion into politics. Such negative judgments need to be examined in the light of the United States as a free society, the character of American politics, and the American tradition of church and state.

Americans would do well to remember that the right of organized religion to engage in political action and to make political pronouncements has been vigorously challenged from the beginning of this nation's history by both those without and within the religious community. However, while church-state separation has been both a constitutional and political reality in the United States, it would be difficult to conceive of a nation in which there has been closer interpenetration of religion and society. One would need to be unacquainted with American history, or without a first-hand knowledge of American life, to maintain that religion in the United States has been, or is to be, in some way isolated from the body politic and that churches and synagogues, as well as religion in general, are relegated to the purely personal and private concerns of American citizens.

Admittedly, the involvement of churches and synagogues in the body politic is viewed by many as

incongruous with the American principle of the institutional separation of church and state. Interestingly enough, nineteenth-century European visitors to America were impressed with the fact that here they found on the one hand church-state separation and on the other hand the unmistakable influence of religion on the total life of the Republic. Indeed, it was this apparent paradox that prompted Alexis de Tocqueville, a French Catholic, "to inquire how it happened that the real authority of religion was increased by a state of things which diminished its apparent force." Tocqueville came to see that church-state separation had a direct relationship to the influence of religion in American national life. The paradox of church-state separation and interaction was perhaps never more succinctly stated than when Tocqueville wrote, "Religion in America takes no direct part in the government of society, but it must be regarded as the first of their political institutions."

The paradox of church-state separation and interaction was perhaps never more succinctly stated than when Tocqueville wrote, "Religion in America takes no direct part in the government of society, but it must be regarded as the first of their political institutions."

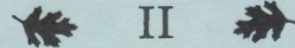
While the U.S. Supreme Court has repeatedly declared that the First Amendment is to be interpreted as meaning the separation of church and state, it is not without significance that in church-state relations the Constitution explicitly places prohibitions on the state and not on religion or the churches. This is not to suggest that institutional independence of both church and state is not clearly the intention of the Constitution, but it does indicate that organized religion is indeed legally free to operate in the political sphere and, so far as the Constitution is concerned, is guaranteed through "the free exercise of religion" to engage in political action and witness in public affairs. This the churches and synagogues have done throughout the history of this nation, from the colonial period down to the present. To be sure, the political actions and activity of organized religion in America have not always been in the spirit of the Constitution or even compatible with the principle of religious freedom or America's religious pluralism; nevertheless, churches and synagogues of the widest variety have freely operated as political pressure groups, even directly in the body politic, without legal discrimination or restraint.

While the debate concerning the mixing of religion and politics continues, and with considerable intensity in the 1980s, the fact remains that churches and synagogues have been, and are now, a very important part of the political arena in the United States. Not only churches, but clergymen in politics, as in the case of the Ninety-sixth Congress,

have been a familiar feature of American life.

Any American who is inclined summarily to reject the right of organized religion, fundamentalist or otherwise, to be involved in the body politic would do well to review the role played historically by religion in American politics and to examine the relevance of the guarantees of the First Amendment to the participation of organized religion in public affairs. The beginning of the churches' involvement in American politics antedates the founding of this nation. It was religion, at least in part, which gave birth to America. "Religious considerations," as Charles A. Beard observed, "entered in the founding of every colony from New England to Georgia." From the nation's beginning, religion played an important part in the election of public officials—local, state, and national. Religion figured prominently in presidential nominations and campaigns almost from the beginning of our history, as evidenced in the first campaign of Thomas Jefferson. In at least one-third of the presidential campaigns themselves, religion has played a conspicuous role.

At no time was organized religion in the United States more active politically than in the twenty years prior to the Civil War. The slavery controversy, for example, readily recognized as a great moral issue, became the major cause in the nineteenth century for political action on the part of organized religion. In the twentieth century, the political activities of the mainline churches became more organized and institutionalized, at both state and national levels, on behalf of such issues as civil rights, economic and social justice, war and peace, and a wide variety of other social concerns espoused in public affairs. Numerous adversaries notwithstanding, the involvement of the churches in the body politic is well established in America and shows no sign of diminishing. This right of involvement on the part of organized religion is undeniable in the light of the American experience, one which the American churches generally regard as integral to "the free exercise of religion" and an inevitable result of the prophetic role of religion.



The recent emergence of Christian fundamentalism as a new political force in American life, however, both as to its extent and its character, is significantly unlike earlier examples of the role played by organized religion in American politics. Primarily spearheaded by television evangelists, largely without denominational identity or denominational support, the New Religious Right generally identifies its adherents as "ultraconservative evangelical Christians." Whether as fundamentalists or ultraconservative evangelicals, they see themselves as reacting against the "liberalism" of the mainline religious denominations, the National Council of Churches, and the World Council of Churches, particularly in the areas of social concerns and public affairs. This stance is, in turn, transferred to one of reaction against the "liberalism" to be found also in the political establishment,

particularly in areas of public policy bearing on civil liberties and civil rights, national defense, and foreign affairs. While lacking formal support from even traditionally conservative religious denominations, the political arm of fundamentalism has found a growing and devoted constituency from among virtually all denominations. Almost overnight a large constituency has been built by means of access to and skillful use of the mass media, sophisticated mass mailing lists, highly developed public relations techniques, and well-organized lobbies in Washington, in state capitals, and in city halls. Fundamentalists are clearly being led out of the pews and into the polls.

Impetus for the New Religious Right movement may be attributable to a variety of causes, all of which have had a cumulative effect of mounting concern within fundamentalism, principally the outlawing of prayer in the public schools, the legalization of abortion, the spread of pornography, and the 1978 attempt by the Internal Revenue Service to deny tax-exempt status to church schools which failed to meet the agency's racial guidelines.

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Meanwhile, Richard A. Viguerie, direct mail fund raiser and reputed founder of the New Right, has credited veteran political organizers of the political far-right with taking the initiative in recruiting fundamentalist leaders, such as television evangelists Jerry Falwell and James Robison, to support right-wing political causes and the election of Ronald Reagan as President.

Early in 1980, plans were laid for a "Washington for Jesus Day," 29 April 1980. Organized largely by fundamentalist, politically conservative religious leaders, it was officially sponsored by a nonprofit organization called "One Nation Under God." The event was co-chaired by Pat Robertson, president of the Christian Broadcasting Network, and Bill Bright, president of Campus Crusade for Christ. The rally aimed at an attendance of 1 million persons, but official estimates placed the attendance at two hundred thousand. While officially declaring that the gathering was nonpolitical, a "series of plagues" on the nation were recited, including the Supreme Court decisions with respect to prayer in the public schools, the growth of humanism as "the new God of America," the spread of pornography, and the absence of God from public life. Throughout the day, America was

repeatedly equated by the co-chairmen with biblical Israel. "This is God's land," Robertson declared, "This land belongs to God Almighty." In an interfaith statement released that day, executives of nineteen denominational offices in Washington challenged the political dimensions of the rally. "It is unnecessary and wrong," they said, "for any religious group or individual to seek to 'Christianize' the government or to label political views of members of Congress as 'Christian' or 'religious.'"

The politicization of Christian fundamentalism is a very recent phenomenon. It has found institutional expression in a variety of organizations, but three are particularly worthy of note during this election year: Christian Voice, Moral Majority, and The Roundtable (formerly Religious Roundtable). Each was organized only a few years ago, in 1979, and each has become an important political force of the New Right during the past year. While each was organized on avowedly ultraconservative religious principles, each existed to serve a political purpose in the 1980 elections and beyond, through the mobilization of the New Religious Right. Each is passionately and unswervingly dedicated to advance the New Right in American politics, and each is aligned in one way or another through its leaders with right-wing political groups, such as the Committee for the Survival of a Free Congress, Conservative Caucus, Heritage Foundation, and National Conservative Political Action. Neither Christian Voice nor Moral Majority, both of which are action-oriented for the implementation of a political agenda, is tax-exempt. Although by law no more than \$5,000 may be contributed to a candidate's campaign for any single election, independent groups such as Christian Voice and Moral Majority may spend unlimited funds for a political candidate since they are not officially a part of the candidate's campaign organization.

In the vanguard of the fundamentalist organizations dedicated to the New Right is Christian Voice, with national headquarters in Pasadena, California. Formed in January 1979 as a national political lobby, it claims to represent the Christian community—to have enlisted more than thirty-seven thousand ministers, both Catholic and Protestant, and to have enrolled more than one hundred eighty-seven thousand members. It had an annual budget in 1980 of \$3 million and maintains a registered lobby in Washington, D.C., with Gary Jarmin as legislative director. Ultraconservative members of Congress, all of whom are viewed as members of the New Right, serve on the organization's advisory committee. These include the following: Senators Orrin G. Hatch, Gordon Humphrey, Roger Jepsen, and James McClure, and Representatives Daniel Crane, Robert K. Dornan, George Hansen, Marvin Leath, Trent Lott, Larry McDonald, Ronald Paul, and Floyd Spence.

The purpose of Christian Voice is to mobilize "evangelical Christians" into effective political action. The head of Christian Voice, Robert Grant, a tourist agent and veteran activist against gay rights, declared earlier this year in a meeting held in

the Russell Senate Office Building in Washington, "If Christians unite, we can do anything. We can pass any law or any amendment. And that is exactly what we intend to do." Meanwhile, issues such as school busing, the ban on public school prayers, the right of choice in abortion, and the civil rights of homosexuals are viewed, according to Grant, as "just a fraction of a master plan to destroy everything that is good and moral here in America."

The organization implements its program through a political action committee which provides funds and trained volunteers to elect candidates for public office and by mass distribution of congressional voting records with respect to the organization's special list of "moral issues." Early in 1980, Christian Voice launched a nationwide campaign, which included state primaries, to elect Ronald Reagan and other candidates for public office identified with the New Right and to sweep approximately fifty "liberal" members of the Ninety-sixth Congress out of office. Through the Christian Communications Network, much free time has been given Christian Voice by Pat Robertson, television host of "The 700 Club."

A major part of Christian Voice's strategy is to rate all members of Congress on a "morality scale." Those members of Congress who fail to pass the ratings test are then targeted for defeat by a network of ministers and lay members of Christian Voice. In 1980 it released its congressional "Report Card," with the results of its "morality ratings" for the 1979 session of Congress. According to Christian Voice, the ratings were based on "14 key House and Senate votes which have important, moral significance to the Christian community." These issues included the elimination of forced school busing, opposition to the creation of the Department of Education, termination of sanctions against Zimbabwe Rhodesia, prohibition of federal funds for abortion, support of prayer in public schools, support of military defense of Taiwan, opposition to SALT II, and opposition to racial and sexual quotas in education and employment, all of which required a "moral" or Christian vote of "yes." As would be expected, 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 to the New Right. Congressmen Paul Simon (D-Ill.), a devout Lutheran, Robert F. Drinan (D-Mass.), an ordained Jesuit priest, and William Gray (D-Pa.), an ordained Baptist minister, received grades of "0," while Congressmen Richard Kelly (R-Fla.), who was indicted in the Abscam scandal, and Robert E. Bauman (R-Md.), who was charged with soliciting sex from a sixteen-year-old boy, received grades of "100." The narrow and strident political base of Christian Voice is hardly representative of conservative evangelicals, let alone the larger Christian community it professes to represent in politics.

Organized in June 1979 and with headquarters in Washington, D.C., Moral Majority has become the largest of the fundamentalist organizations dedicated to the New Right. Moral Majority was co-founded by Jerry Falwell, who also serves as

president, a television evangelist with a weekly audience of more than 25 million and an annual budget of almost \$60 million. It boasts of a network of seventy-two thousand pastors and four hundred thousand lay members. Twice a month, the organization publishes a sixteen-page newspaper, *Moral Majority Report*. Robert Billings, cofounder and former executive director, recently resigned in order to serve in the Reagan campaign as coordinator for Christian interest groups. As in the case of Christian Voice, Moral Majority vigorously opposes ERA and civil rights for homosexuals and strongly supports government prohibition of abortion, prayer in the public schools, a strong national defense, and, as Falwell says, "anything else that relates to the sovereignty of this country."

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In addition to mobilizing evangelicals to vote as a bloc on the issues espoused by Moral Majority, the organization seeks to recruit and to train people to run for public office who will implement those positions by working for the right candidate and against the opponent(s). A notable example of this strategy occurred in November 1980 in a congressional race in Birmingham, Alabama. The incumbent, John Buchanan, an eight-term congressional representative and an ordained Southern Baptist minister, was targeted for defeat by the Moral Majority because of a voting record at variance with the positions of the New Right. His opponent, formerly active in the John Birch Society, was provided with twenty-five hundred volunteers who handed out literature, manned telephone banks, visited homes throughout the district, registered new voters, and used church buses to carry voters to the polls. The result was a stunning defeat of Buchanan, in spite of the polls in his district which showed him to be the favorite. His defeat was claimed as a political victory by the Birmingham Moral Majority. In Alaska, Moral Majority took

over the entire state delegation to the Republican Convention.

While many critics of Moral Majority, both from pulpits and in the mass media, have been unwilling to concede that the organization represents either morality or a majority, its gains in membership and its impact on local elections and the Republican Party platform have certainly been impressive. Whatever its political impact, whether lasting or not, Moral Majority is permeated with a triumphalism in its crusade for the soul of the nation. The political takeover, it is believed, will inevitably come through the mobilization of fundamentalists who are committed to vote pro-God, pro-family, and pro-America in politics. As Pat Robertson expressed it, "We have enough votes to run the country. And when the people say, 'We've had enough,' we are going to take over." The mix of religion and politics has been well expressed by Jerry Falwell in outlining the three goals of Moral Majority: "First, get them converted; second, get them baptized; and third, get them registered to vote." It remains to be seen whether the dream of Moral Majority represents any sort of wave of the future in view of the increasingly pluralistic character of American society and the growing complexities in national and international affairs requiring highly sophisticated political decisions. In the meantime, Moral Majority shows little awareness of the disparity between religious vision and political reality in a democratic society.

The Roundtable, with headquarters in Arlington, Virginia, was founded in September 1979 by Ed McAteer, a Southern Baptist layman who also serves as national field director of the Conservative Caucus. Comprised of a select group of fundamentalist leaders and virtually every political leader of the New Right, The Roundtable is primarily a think tank for political action. It meets four times a year for two days principally to explore issues which require political action or strategy to advance the New Right.

Chaired by James Robison, a television evangelist from Texas, The Roundtable sponsored a National Affairs Briefing in Dallas, 21-23 August 1980, attended by more than eighteen thousand persons, at a cost estimated to be between \$350,000 and \$400,000. Keynote speakers included W. A. Criswell, Congressman Philip Crane, Jerry Falwell, Senator Jesse Helms, Ronald Reagan, Adrian Rogers, Phyllis Schlafly, and Paul Weyrich. During the "Briefing," both its sponsors and the participants showed their unmistakable and enthusiastic support for Ronald Reagan as *the* presidential candidate. Weyrich, who directs the Committee for the Survival of a Free Congress, declared at the Briefing, "This is not partisanship. This is Godliness." Throughout the Briefing, Christian Voice maintained a "Christians for Reagan" booth.

In its own way, The Roundtable complements the work of Christian Voice and Moral Majority by serving as a fundamentalist coalition of sorts for the New Right. Its commitments and constituencies are essentially shared in common with other fundamentalist organizations which are wedded to the New

Right and with whom The Roundtable seeks to cooperate and to coordinate their joint efforts. Thereby, The Roundtable, as a political arm of fundamentalism, reflects the same religious vision and singleness of purpose as Christian Voice and Moral Majority.

III

As noted earlier, the involvement of organized religion in politics is by no means new to the American experience, but has long been an important dimension of the nation's political and religious history. There are, however, certain basic differences to be found in the present configuration of the fundamentalist political movement from earlier patterns of religion and politics. First and foremost is the politicization of fundamentalism, which is itself a new and significant phenomenon. It is, of course, much too early to tell how widespread or how lasting this political movement will be within fundamentalism, let alone in the nation. To be sure, there have been earlier political expressions of fundamentalism, such as its vigorous opposition to the teaching of evolution in the public schools during the twenties (and now recently revived), but such isolated excursions by fundamentalism were narrowly confined to single issue politics and were not a part of a comprehensive political agenda for action. Rather, in the past fundamentalism has been fond of arguing, especially against the political and social concerns of the mainline religious denominations, that a moral society could not be created by legislation, but only by changing the hearts of individuals. Therefore, political involvement was traditionally viewed as incompatible with the primary task of fundamentalist religion.

Finally, the massive attempt at political mobilization of one segment of organized religion, aimed at the implementation of a broad range of political objectives and, eventually, a political takeover, is on a scale unprecedented in the nation's history.

Second, the political crusade being conducted by fundamentalism is neither a call to mere single issue politics nor to Christians simply for political involvement, but rather a call to a political ideology, a political agenda, and to partisan political action. The partisan politics being advanced is the inevitable result of an alliance between religious fundamentalism and the New Right—the religious far-right joined with the political far-right. This has been translated into a particular brand of party politics, to be implemented at the local, state, and national levels. It has also meant, at the practical level, identification with the Republican Party in 1980—both its platform, which the political fundamentalists helped to formulate, and its politically

ultraconservative candidates. This development is in marked contrast to the tradition of mainline religious denominations—Catholic, Protestant, and Jewish—which have, by and large, generally seen their role in the political process to be one of advocacy of ideas in the formulation of public policy and not the advancement of partisan politics or the election of particular candidates. Again, in contrast to the general pattern of religion and politics, the fundamentalist political movement has transformed political issues into moral absolutes and thereby has sought to define *the* Christian position on a wide range of issues in domestic and international affairs.

Finally, the massive attempt at political mobilization of one segment of organized religion, aimed at the implementation of a broad range of political objectives and, eventually, a political takeover, is on a scale unprecedented in the nation's history. One must avoid, of course, the tendency to overestimate the political strength of the fundamentalist political movement, but one cannot ignore the enormous influence exerted by the movement through the mass media. Through a mass communications network of thirty-six religious television stations and thirteen hundred religious radio stations, fundamentalist preachers of the far-right now reach an estimated weekly audience of 115 million. Jerry Falwell alone is programmed weekly through almost four hundred television stations in the United States, which are available for viewing by 98 percent of all Americans. His organization pays \$300,000 per week to buy radio and television air time, far more than is available to political candidates or even to America's political parties on a week-by-week basis.

In 1980, the fundamentalist political movement gave widespread and active support to the "right" candidates and soundly denounced candidates whose political views on key issues failed to square with those of the movement. Being committed to a particular school of economic, social, and political thought, its adherents have found other political views in these areas to be incompatible with fundamentalist faith. As a result of their mobilization effort at direct political action to advance their political positions and their candidates, many conservative Christians, as well as citizens at large and Christians generally, have taken strong exception. One well-known Christian conservative, Senator Mark Hatfield (R-Oreg.), has branded the fundamentalist political movement as "the height of arrogance" and "a throwback to the Middle Ages, when church and state were wedded."

Fifteen religious leaders, representing fifteen major American church bodies, issued a formal statement, 20 October 1980, expressing their "strong theological objections" to the New Religious Right for its list of issues which constitute the nation's moral agenda, the moral criteria used to evaluate candidates for public office, the assumption that human beings can know with certainty the will of God on particular political issues, and the manner in which the movement engaged in political activity. At the same time, they readily affirmed their belief that church and religious leaders "have

every right to comment on political issues, mobilize their members in support or in opposition to legislation, and provide information on the voting records of office holders." Not surprisingly, the fundamentalist political movement sees itself basically in conflict with the public affairs offices of America's major religious denominations, which have been established in Washington for several decades. Through the Washington offices of Christian Voice and Moral Majority, the movement seeks to counter the influence exerted by the mainline denominations on a wide range of public affairs concerns of their church bodies. Basic to the fundamentalist political movement is the assumption that it, not the denominational offices on public affairs, represents the grass roots of the community of faith in political concerns.

The reasons behind the emergence of the fundamentalist political movement are not difficult to understand. Many ills attend American society, and the movement is no doubt meeting genuinely felt needs and frustrations of multitudes of people. Millions of Americans, having lost their political innocence in the sixties culminating in the tragedy of Watergate, have experienced growing distrust of government and the political establishment. Meanwhile, the social revolution of recent decades has resulted in placing a severe strain on moral and religious values and in posing severe threats to family life throughout the nation. The eroding patterns of authority and the growing permissiveness of an increasingly pluralistic society have had a frightening effect on millions of Americans. Understandably, there is a nativist longing for the certainties of the past that the New Religious Right readily seeks to fill, albeit with highly simplistic answers to extremely complex questions and through a mythologizing of America's past. These answers and this mythology have not been seen by the New Religious Right as forthcoming from the mainline religious denominations or the official voices of the religious community. As a consequence, the political arm of fundamentalism sees itself as offering the moral and political answers to the nation's ills, as furnishing a virtual blueprint for the reordering of American society.

The religious vision of the nation held by the New Right may be in harmony with America's theocrats, past and present, but it is out of character with the founding of this nation and the guarantees of the First Amendment.

If, however, the reasons for the New Religious Right are explainable, the dangers and defects of the movement should be equally evident. There is, of course, the danger of religion's simply being used by politicians and religionists alike for the accomplishment of political ends. History is replete with examples of this, whereby religion is profaned to

serve less than moral ends in the struggle for political power, the maintenance of the status quo, or the advance of nationalism—such as Iran and South Africa today or Shinto Japan earlier. As Martin Marty observed in this regard, “The echoes of the Iranian militants are loud and clear.” By confusing moral absolutes with public policy, anyone who dissents is identified with immorality and is in conflict with the will of God. The pluralism of America’s faiths, not to mention the almost 80 million persons who remain without any religious affiliation, is ignored as well as the essential safeguards of a free society. The religious vision of the nation held by the New Religious Right may be in harmony with America’s theocrats, past and present, but it is out of character with the founding of this nation and the guarantees of the First Amendment.

To identify any nation with God is to distort the prophetic role of religion and to deny the fundamental basis of a free and democratic society by making an idol of the state. Fortunately, many Americans have a strong bias, for both historical and theological reasons, against the blending of religion and politics. The temptation of religious leaders to use political means for the accomplishment of religious ends is no less dangerous than the temptation of public officials to use religion for political ends.

In the final analysis, it is not a question of the

right of fundamentalists to be involved in politics that is the real issue, either for the religious or the political community, but rather the *nature* of that involvement which is at issue. Not only does the New Religious Right presume to make political issues into moral absolutes and moral absolutes into political issues, but it holds forth a political agenda which must be ruled as both morally and politically deficient. With all of its espousal of morality in public policy, one looks in vain for the movement’s concerns with the sins of injustice, poverty, bigotry, racism, and war. Thus many religious leaders and civil libertarians have been profoundly, and rightly, concerned with the potentially far-reaching implications of this political phenomenon both with respect to religion and politics. The present resurgence of America’s theocrats, with their enculturation of a particular and strident form of religious faith, is an ominous sign of the times which does not bode well for the prophetic role of religion, the separation of church and state, or a pluralistic and free society. Reinhold Niebuhr perceptively warned some years ago, “The temper and integrity with which the political fight is waged is more important for the health of a society than any particular [public] policy.” The truth is one worth remembering for the future course of religion and politics in America.

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KSR Scholars

KSR Scholars for 1982-83 are:

Eleanor Cooley, graduate, *Horton*

James Houk, entering graduate, *Baton Rouge, Louisiana*

John Little, entering graduate, *Lawrence*

Oluwafemi Oyeyipo, graduate, *Ile-Ife, Nigeria*

Kelly Hart, undergraduate, *Fort Scott*

Isolde Kirshner, undergraduate, *Lawrence*

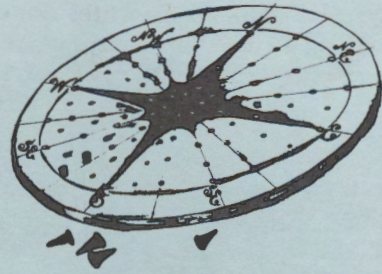
The scholars are named by the Kansas School of Religion upon vote by the Religious Studies faculty. Grants of \$1000 or \$1500 go with each designation.

Traveling Faculty Available

Leadership for study groups in the Kansas area can be provided by the faculty of the religious studies department. The **Traveling Faculty Program** is available for study groups wishing lecturers, panels or other forms of help with religious programs. The expenses for travel are underwritten by the Kansas School of Religion.

Fields of special interest by the faculty include a wide range of popular and historical subjects. The approach and the subject matter can be worked out for each particular program. Detailed information is available from the **Director of Outreach, Department of Religious Studies, University of Kansas, Lawrence, KS 66045.**

Traverse Log



A giant, economy-sized fear exists that the Almighty will lose out if we don't shore-up some props to save religion.

The recent hearing on the President's prayer amendment conducted by the Senate Judiciary committee indicates this, for it mustered two camps of major-league testifiers: the pros and the cons. That is all right. Moral Majority with the Reverend Falwell, the U.S. Catholic Conference, some Orthodox, and many Evangelical Protestants faced off against a new-idea collage of 72 organizations, including American Indians, Jews, Muslims, and some main-line Protestants from the National Council of Churches, with the Baptist Joint Committee's James Dunn. They were for real, not pot luck.

The debate is honest. Fine, that is America. Our concern here, in this row of history-watchers, lies deeper. Some of the testimony from each side mirrors a fear that "religion" has to be saved.

Turn off the siren, haul in the red flag. Religion need not suffer the assistance of nervous politicians. The religious experience—*mirabile dictu*—can stand on its own. It does not need a political nanny to assure its survival. The real thing, personally and socially, made it through some hot times of history with uncooperative governments. Religion never was a basket case.

A religion that needs to be saved, may not be worth saving. Faith saves me. Political aids to religious practice need not be shunned, but "religion," itself, is alive and well.

Sometimes extrinsic help raises questions about the helped. For example, some breakfast cereals are marketed with gadgets, such as a magic decoder ring; or it is packaged with a special free plastic baseball mug bonus. Did we ever wonder—if the breakfast food could make it on its own?

Did we ever hear: "Religion would be stronger if our congregations have air conditioning, or seat cushions, or stainless steel kitchens"? Nice as these things are, they are not the stuff of salvation.

The extra aids may be as welcome as an evangelist in a crap game, and less necessary.

Our plea here is, first, to look at the essence of faith; spiritually hungry people are easy prey.

Ruth Fiscella, in her seventh decade, has entered training for the professional ministry. On the threshold of seminary she wrote to clergy about spiritual starvation and asked, "Why aren't you feeding your sheep?"

Well, what does religion do? Try these suggestions:

- spiritual nourishment
- transforms life
- joy of daily living
- support and guidance

Here's where the action is!

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