

**STRATEGY NOT SCRIPTURE:**

**The dynamics of Religion and Politics in the George W. Bush campaign of 2000.**

**By**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Ever since George W. Bush came to power in January 2001 there has been a burgeoning interest in his religiosity and its political implications. This interest joined favourably with an already remarkable amount of attention given towards religion and politics in the United States. But to many, George W. Bush added a new dimension and a fresh anxiety to an area perpetually fraught with concern for the religious-political union. The common inference was that Bush, unlike any other president, with his seemingly overt display religiosity was in complete accord with the agenda of Conservative Christians, most notably the Religious Right. In conjunction with one another it was deemed that American democracy was under threat. From the erosion of social policy to the broader risk of a theocratic takeover it had been argued that George W. Bush was in a sense at its core. In keeping with what had arguably been an unpopular presidency the arguments were consistently pejorative and predominantly concerned in extremes. So pervasive was this approach that it was clear that the field of study required, not an antithesis but, a more balanced perspective. To assist in reclaiming a more objective analysis, examination of the 2000 presidential campaign found that contrary to current argument there were strong indications that what had been mistaken for a theocratic agenda and a religious framework was actually rooted firmly in the secular. Examination of certain events, relationships and circumstances offer a new insight into the relationship. From this it is possible to see that what had occurred was political expediency and not necessarily religious purpose.

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## **TABLE OF CONTENTS.**

|  |      |
|--|------|
| <b>INTRODUCTION</b>  | p.1  |
| <b>CHAPTER ONE: SOUTH CAROLINA: A Turning Point in Strategy</b>      | p.8  |
| The Catalyst: Iowa and the New Hampshire                             | p.9  |
| South Carolina: a turning point in strategy.                         | p.18 |
| The political character of the South Carolina primary                | p.25 |
| Bob Jones University: a strategic necessity                          | p.28 |
| Beyond Bob Jones   | p.34 |
| <b>CHAPTER TWO: RALPH REED: a pragmatic addition to the campaign</b> | p.49 |
| <b>CHAPTER THREE: STRATEGY NOT SCRIPTURE</b>                         | p.88 |
| Bush's Religious rhetoric  | p.92 |

|                           |       |
|---------------------------|-------|
| Religious Identity        | p.98  |
| Conversionism             | p.100 |
| Crucicentrism             | p.102 |
| Biblicism                 | p.104 |
| Activism                  | p.109 |
| The Notion of a Theocracy | p.114 |
| The Electoral grouping    | p.124 |
| <b>CONCLUSION</b>         | p.140 |
| <b>APPENDICES A</b>       | p.144 |
| <b>APPENDICES B</b>       | p.148 |
| <b>APPENDICES C</b>       | p.155 |
| <b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>       | p.157 |

## LIST OF TABLES

|         |   |      |
|---------|---|------|
| TABLE 1 | IOWA CAUCUS. Monday, January 24, 2000               | p.9  |
| TABLE 2 | NEW HAMPSHIRE: Republican Primary.                  | p.12 |
| TABLE 3 | VOTER REGISTRATION TOTALS.                          | p.14 |
| TABLE 4 | SOUTH CAROLINA: Primary Election: March 2, 1996     | p.38 |
| TABLE 5 | SOUTH CAROLINA: Primary Election: February 19, 2000 | p.39 |

## INTRODUCTION

The relationship between religion and politics has always been a tense one in American civic culture. From its inception the American republic was distinguished by an attempt to separate the two spheres by constitutional framers who feared sectarianism in a religiously pluralistic society. This separation, however, was not a rejection or subjugation of either religion or politics but a recognition of the influence that each would continue to have as the United States developed. Therefore, there was an ongoing attempt, from the passage of the constitution through the political and legal development of the Republic, to restrain religion's role in the state and conversely government's power over religion.

In practice the interaction could not be halted. For both the individual and the community, religion was too important to be a marginal force. Shaping both individual and civic character religion's moral teachings, laws and traditions inevitably "influence public affairs albeit in an indirect way".<sup>1</sup> Equally, politics would have to assert its own dominion as religious constituencies were organised and political relationships between the government and other institutions, between the government and individuals expanded. The two spheres could never be fully separate, as the Constitution envisaged there would always be an uneasy cohabitation.

Encounters over this dynamic between religion and politics could be testing, as with the Scopes trial in 1926 over the teaching of evolution and the decades-long battle over temperance and Prohibition. Other interchanges could be more positive, as in the civil rights movement of the 1960s when the church became the centre of the movement as a meeting place, a symbol of freedom and expression, and a location of communal strength that lay beyond the reach of the white power structure.

However, it was in the 1970s and 1980s that a more cohesive religious movement, seeking to reshape American politics, emerged. Chiefly a revolt against the excesses and permissiveness of the 1960s counterculture, the Religious Right deliberately focused upon becoming political as a way of combating the assault upon American moral values that they perceived. In 1976 Southern evangelicals in particular made their political influence known in their support for the openly devout Southern Baptist Jimmy Carter. In 1980 the steady shift of the religious voter from Democrat to Republican, prompted in part by Carter's refusal to back a constitutional ban on abortion, resulted in the Religious Right accounting for "two-thirds of [Ronald Reagan's popular vote] lead over Jimmy Carter".<sup>2</sup>

The Religious Right was distinguished from other politicised movements in religion by the breadth of the issues that it was willing to undertake and the strength with which it could do so. The Religious Right had the grass roots organisation, structure and facilities for an unprecedented potential to influence politics, seeking to "take back" America from the "secular humanists that ran the government".<sup>3</sup> Intellectual think tanks, political lobbies, media institutions, and key media and political figures, in addition to burgeoning finances, established links with and offered outlets for the new political activism of the religious movement.

Inevitably, this expansion would be challenged by others who were critical of strong religious influence. Inevitably, given the breadth of the Religious Right's concerns, this response was also on a wide range of issues. Abortion, education, school prayer, pornography, and welfare were all viewed as potential battlegrounds for a "conservative" enemy whose political action was motivated on the basis of religious and not secular belief. There was also criticism from within the religious community, with the Religious Left offering an alternative moral vision to the agenda

of the Religious Right; however, this was restricted - perhaps ironically - by a self-limiting conception of religion and politics that the Religious Right had shattered: “Most religious liberals were Democrats, which meant they were members of a party reluctant to promote any religious movement that could be defined as exclusive, or that could be accused of trying to create a religious establishment”.<sup>4</sup>

To examine the complexity of this relationship, where religion and politics intersected and crossed over one another, this thesis will take the narrative up to the 21<sup>st</sup> century, focusing on the George W. Bush Presidential campaign of 2000. This focus has emerged because of several distinctive features of both candidate and campaign. One of the most discussed aspects of the Bush Presidency was his relationship with religious forces, in particular the Religious Right. To a burgeoning body of critics it was clear that Bush’s perceived rhetorical petitioning, strong voter support, and a number of ties to key religious figures went beyond a shared faith. Observers including Esther Kaplan, Kevin Philips, David Domke, Stephen Mansfield, and Barbara Victor asserted that there was a new political framework, in some cases, going as far as to allege that a “theocracy” was being established. “An elected leader who believes himself in some way to speak to God, a ruling political party that represents religious true believers and seeks to mobilize the churches, the conviction of many voters in that Republican Party that government should be guided by religion, and on top of it all, White House implementation of domestic and international agendas that seem to be driven by religious motivations and biblical world views.”<sup>5</sup> This, according to Kevin Philips was the fulfilment of the criteria for a theocracy.

While there might be variations in the expression of this hypothesis, the underlying premise was consistent: this particular fusion of religion and politics was a

threat to American democracy. Bush's dedication to "maintaining fealty with religious Conservatives" was, according to Kaplan, a "first principle".<sup>6</sup> The "cost of this collaboration",<sup>7</sup> was the "corrosive effects on [American] democracy",<sup>8</sup> that would return America to the dark ages. Kevin Philips went further. He spoke of a "potent change in [America's] domestic and foreign policy making", shaped by "religion's new political prowess"<sup>9</sup> in the Bush administration. Stephen Mansfield stated that the "stage was already set" and that Bush came "armed with an understanding of church and state that the Reagan revolution and thinkers on the Religious Right had taught him". There is no evidence specifically for this allegation, but Mansfield is clear upon one point: "Bush [let] faith frame his presidency".<sup>10</sup> Viewed by and describe in various outlets as a right-wing, fundamentalist, evangelical Christian George W. Bush would escort and promote the causes of religion in the American political and social system.

This work takes exception with these notions. It was the campaign that defined the place of the religious relationship in the politics of George W. Bush. On some level, Bush's personal faith was a guiding principle, as it had been for previous presidents, but this was not an unconditional determinant of action. Contrary to the portrayal of a theocracy, there was never a complete accord in which religious aims and political endeavors were incontrovertibly aligned. The context of this far more pragmatic, secular relationship is too complex to be described in the narrow terms used by Kaplan and others. The intricate interplay of history, political expediency, personality, and group identity, as well as the varying motivations and aspirations of actors, led to a new, specific relationship between religion and politics.

Chapter One, "South Carolina: a Turning Point in Strategy", focuses upon the early part of the 2000 Presidential primaries. This was the catalyst for the

Bush/Religious Right alliance. Suffering an early and comprehensive defeat in the preceding New Hampshire primary, the campaign had to get back on course at all cost raising the significance of the contest in South Carolina. This demand meant aligning with and appealing to one of the state's strongest and most active political constituencies, the Religious Right. Their strength and political activism offered Bush a lifeline which, guided principally by events and political necessity, Bush seized through his advantages of religious observance and proclamation. Bush the compassionate moderate had to re-align and accept a perpetual association, in image if not political reality, with the Religious Right.

Chapter Two, "Ralph Reed: a Pragmatic Addition to the Campaign", focuses on a key figure in the Bush/Religious Right alliance. Reed's pivotal role in shoring up religious support offers a valuable insight into the pragmatic nature of the campaign. The campaign activity of Reed, former executive director of the Christian Coalition, is the best example of the method used by the Bush campaign to obtain and use the support of the Religious Right. The approach was, however, one of stealth, and there was a palpable distance between the campaign and the Religious Right. Reed's involvement enables us to recognize the deliberate employment and targeting of religious forces for political gain, rather than the elevation of religion for religion's sake.

Chapter Three, "Strategy not Scripture", looks at the broader, fundamental aspects of Bush's religious identity. Under scrutiny, Bush fits few of the religious descriptions applied to him. Detached from the rightist and fundamentalist labels he emerges as a more moderate and secular individual. Even the elementary description of evangelical is open to discussion. Bush's religiosity cannot be denied but the claim that he promoted religion with a view to alter policy and promote the aims of a

specific religious faction is erroneous. In addition to this the wider body of evangelical, conservative Christians is briefly considered. By expanding upon narrower terms like the Religious Right we can better challenge the notion of Bush's apparent command of the faith base.

This thesis adds a sense of balance to the debate over religious belief and political representation through the vital case study of the campaign of George W. Bush in 2000. Without the comprehensive approach advocated in this work, certain conceptions merely furnish the polemics for deriding an arguably unpopular president. Ultimately we are prevented from seeing the intricacy involved in these relationships. Whatever we may think of George W. Bush as an individual, a more nuanced, less polemical critique deserves attention. This is a matter of strategy not scripture.

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<sup>1</sup> Frank Lambert. *Religion in American Politics. A Short History*. Princeton University Press. (2008) p.2

<sup>2</sup> Sara Diamond. *Not by Politics Alone. The Enduring Influence of the Christian Right*. The Guilford Press. (1998) p.69

<sup>3</sup> Frank Lambert. Op. Cit. p.3

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. p.218

<sup>5</sup> Kevin Philips. *American Theocracy. The Peril and Politics of Radical Religion, Oil and Borrowed Money in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. Viking ( 2006) p.ix

<sup>6</sup> Esther Kaplan. *With God on Their Side. How Christian Fundamentalists Trampled Science, Policy and Democracy in George W. Bush's White House*. The New Press. (2004) p.3

<sup>7</sup> Ibid. p.7

<sup>8</sup> Ibid. p.277

<sup>9</sup> Kevin Philips. *American Theocracy. The Peril and Politics of Radical Religion, Oil and Borrowed Money in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. Viking ( 2006) p.viii

<sup>10</sup> Stephen Mansfield. *The faith Of George W. Bush*. Charisma House. (2004) p.172-3

## CHAPTER ONE

### **SOUTH CAROLINA: A Turning Point in Strategy**

The state of South Carolina had seen a long history of strong religious activism as organised religion rooted itself into the states political machine.<sup>i</sup> Republican conventions and precinct meetings were dominated by religious factions. Local chapters of the Christian Coalition as well as other conservative Protestant organisations and pro-life groups provided a solid grass roots body of activists. As a result, operational control was often in the hands of the religious base. Whether for state primary or gubernatorial races the Religious Right was a visible and dynamic force vital to a Republican candidate's success. Consequently the state of South Carolina had become a firm footing for candidates who proffered a religious approach.

In 2000 George W. Bush made such an approach. However, the circumstances and details surrounding Bush's petitioning of the Religious Right's support require a carefully nuanced approach. In 2000 there was a sense of urgency added to the requirement of placating the state's Religious Right. For George W. Bush South Carolina was a turning point in strategy, a turning point whose actions and outcomes identifies Bush as a pragmatic politician who successfully courted the states religious base. The dynamics of religion and politics at this salient point in the 2000 election help demonstrate Bush's political use of religion.

## **The Catalyst: Iowa and the New Hampshire Republican presidential primaries**

For Texas Governor George W. Bush the 2000 presidential election campaign began with success. Victory in the opening round of the Iowa Caucus on 24, January with 41%<sup>ii</sup> of the vote was a substantial result, the greatest margin of victory since Bob Dole's victory over Pat Robertson in 1988 (See Table 1). For most observers, Iowa was nothing more than affirmation that George W. Bush was the most credible Republican front runner. To state governors, Republican senators, the Party leadership in Congress and the Republican majority within the House of Representatives, the result was an encouraging indication that they had chosen correctly and Bush would progress quite comfortably through the primary season.

**Table 1.**<sup>iii</sup>

### **IOWA CAUCUS Monday, January 24, 2000**

| <i>Republican Candidates</i> | <i>Votes</i> | <i>Percentage</i> |
|------------------------------|--------------|-------------------|
| George W. Bush (R-TX)        | 35,384       | 41.0%             |
| Steve Forbes (R-NJ)          | 26,338       | 30.5%             |
| Alan Keyes (R-MD)            | 12,329       | 14.3%             |
| Gary Bauer (R-VA)            | 7,367        | 8.5%              |
| John McCain (R-AZ)           | 4,035        | 4.7%              |
| Orrin Hatch (R-UT)           | 888          | 1.0%              |

This rise to power had been assumed much earlier, long before Bush effectively joined the presidential race on March 2, 1999 with the announcement of his exploratory committee; his rating was in the ascendancy. As early as 1994 the idea

for his running for office had been considered; actual planning starting in 1996-7.<sup>iv</sup> This had been aided by “two decades of Bush candidacies and incumbencies” from which the “GOP political and financial leadership was closely intertwined with the family and its chief fund-raisers and advisors”.<sup>v</sup> Bush’s real force came from his campaign finances, which observers saw as his major strength. This was evident on July 15, 1999, when Bush chose to abstain from campaign finance limitations due to the burgeoning weight of his assets. It took just three months for Bush to amass some \$25 million, a figure that would eventually increase to \$191 million.<sup>vi</sup> This amount of capital dwarfed those in competition with him, giving Bush a less restricted approach to the campaign. In addition to the campaign finances Bush was bolstered by endorsements by former New Hampshire governor John Sununu; Jack Kemp, former vice presidential candidate and congressman; Elizabeth Dole, wife of Senator Robert Dole and not surprisingly Bush’s father; former president George H. W. Bush.

The accumulative effect of these elements led to the strong feeling amongst Republicans and observers of a coronation for George W. Bush. This notion assisted and fed into Bush’s general election strategy, in which everything was self-confidently tailored for the November general elections. This became known as the “fifty state approach”. The caucuses and primaries were the foreground for the wider horizon of success for the Bush campaign. Buoyed by the Iowa victory, Bush moved to New Hampshire for the second round of the nomination process in confident mood.

But the overall strategy was flawed. The shift away from the more closed, party member dominated Iowa caucus to the less restrictive, open nature of the New Hampshire primary should have featured more prominently in any projected strategy, but this was not the case. In part, self assurance, though natural following victory, seemed to be dismissive of the fundamental idea that these elections were individual

states of affairs. Therefore, the subsequent primary in New Hampshire instead of being acknowledged as presenting a completely different prospect was less considered.

To add to this the Republican field was not seen as significant competition for Bush, a view held in particular by Bush's political strategist Karl Rove. Most of the candidates were viewed as "damaged goods, having attempted the race before".<sup>vii</sup> This was not the case, however, for Republican Senator John McCain of Arizona. McCain had a proven political track record and a credible public appeal based largely on his experiences as a POW in Vietnam. McCain had opted to miss the Iowa caucus focusing instead on New Hampshire. Unlike Bush, with his sizable campaign war chest, McCain had to focus more narrowly his resources; Bush's fifty state approach financially inconceivable for McCain. Karl Rove predicted McCain would not be able to keep pace in New Hampshire. This was a curious projection, not only because of some polls<sup>viii</sup> which had Bush trailing but because of history.<sup>ix</sup> For these reasons the New Hampshire primary should also have been viewed as Bush's first real confrontation; the curtain raiser for the Republican contest. It was not. In short, there was little or no consideration for Bush achieving anything other than success, both in the short and long term. Although premature, Iowa appeared to confirm this.

It was highly unanticipated then that on February 1, 2000 George W. Bush lost the New Hampshire primary to Senator John McCain by a margin of 49% to 31%<sup>x</sup> (see table 2.). Despite Bush's advantages, none were sufficient to carry the state. The result was the worst for a front runner in modern New Hampshire history and it appeared that the "Bush juggernaut had sprung a leak".<sup>xi</sup> Bush's failure to win what was considered one of the bellwether states shattered the notion of a coronation for

Bush and altered the dynamics of the election. The incident was brief, but it sent shock waves throughout the Bush campaign.

**Table 2.**<sup>xii</sup>

**NEW HAMPSHIRE: Republican Primary**

| <i>Candidates</i> | <i>votes</i> | <i>percentage</i> |
|-------------------|--------------|-------------------|
| John McCain       | 115,490      | 49%               |
| George W. Bush    | 72,262       | 31%               |
| Steve Forbes      | 30,197       | 13%               |
| Alan Keyes        | 15,196       | 6%                |
| Gary Bauer        | 1,656        | 1%                |
| Others            | 2,001        | 1%                |

Almost all demographic groups chose Senator McCain over George W. Bush. Even establishment elements thought to be aligned to Bush were absent. Registered Republicans voted 44% for McCain, 35% for Bush. Those describing themselves as Conservative voted to 37 to 35% and evangelicals 32 to 31%; part observant Christians 47 to 33% and high income voters 49 to 33%<sup>xiii</sup>, voted overwhelmingly against Bush in favour of McCain.

The New Hampshire primary was an open (modified) primary, offering an advantage to the candidate who has the greatest appeal across party lines. This means that candidates can draw on extra votes from other Party's. Conversely, the

disadvantage is that opposing party affiliates can throw votes over to their opposing party's worst candidate, bolstering anyone other than the front runner. The defining electorate in the New Hampshire primary, however, was neither Republican nor Democrat in its voters. Instead it was the independent voter, a constituent with "indifference to party" and who are open to suitable "identification"<sup>xiv</sup> at the appropriate time. It was this bloc that was crucial to McCain's win.

By looking at the figures for the voter registration totals in New Hampshire for January 2000, it was possible to construct a more detailed picture by turning the percentages into numbers. From this we are able to see what impact this particular bloc had. Firstly, it is worth noting the rise in the independent voter. Table 3 illustrates this increase between 1998 and just prior to the New Hampshire primary in January 2000. This saw the independent vote increase by 2793 votes over this period. These figures also showed that independents were ahead of registered Republican Party voters by 3.8% with 9248 votes going into the primary.

Almost 237,000 people voted in the Republican primary.<sup>xv</sup> John McCain won with 115,490 (49%) and Bush came second with 72,262 (30%). Now according to CNN exit polling 63%<sup>xvi</sup> of those who voted in the primary were registered Republicans. This would equate to 149,185 votes. Of this number Bush took 35% (53,214) and McCain took 44% (65,641). But of those who were able to cast their vote in the GOP primary were independents. According to CNN it was those whose Party identification was independent that accounted for 41% of the GOP vote. This means 97,088 votes came from this group. More importantly 61% (59,224) went for McCain and only 19% (18,431) went for Bush. This means that 51% of McCain's winning vote in New Hampshire came from the independent voter. This was the swing vote for McCain.

**Table 3.** <sup>xvii</sup>

**VOTER REGISTRATION TOTALS**

|                | <i>Republican</i> | <i>Democrat</i> | <i>Independent</i> |
|----------------|-------------------|-----------------|--------------------|
| 1998           | 272,217           | 203,257         | 272,134            |
| 2000 (January) | 265,679           | 197,816         | 274,927            |
| CHANGE         | -6538             | -5441           | +2793              |

Although significant in establishing where McCain’s victory came from these figures do not account for the reasons for shift in the voting pattern. Registration totals actually show the increases for the independent to be slight when viewed against the drop in voter registration for Republicans. This shows a decrease of 6538 voters for Republicans compared to 2793 of an increase for Independents in the same period. Voter apathy and/or disappointment in the Party may account for the growth of the independent voter<sup>xviii</sup> and a decline in those willing to register in the Party. But evidently the reasons ran deeper than this. Clearly there was some movement within the core Republican base that contributed to Bush’s loss.

While notably diminished by the independent voting bloc, these other dimensions to the Republican vote are worthy of merit. Despite the view that New Hampshire is sometimes perceived as a “red” state; solidly Republican in its voting, it is actually configured more like a “purple” state. From this perspective it is seen as

more closely divided and arguably more moderate. Ideological voter identification amongst Republicans recorded in exit polling showed that New Hampshire was “liberal to moderate” in its Republican persuasion. Even so, there was enough data available both historically and from ground level sources, for instance from grass roots Republican activists and commentators, to at least have hinted at the idea that the state of New Hampshire had several shades, variations and political anomalies to warrant caution. The voter registration totals, illustrated above, would have been another source to have demonstrated this. As a consequence New Hampshire should not have been taken for granted as a Republican bastion from which Bush was assured Republican support. Although Bush did in fact attempt to approach the state as a moderate, it was obvious he was still perceived to be too conservative. In New Hampshire, the contrast between Bush and McCain was, on the surface, sharply distinctive. To position himself as a moderate, Bush asserted that he was a “compassionate conservative”. The phrase had a number of connotations and was open to interpretation. On the one hand it gave a softer tone to the image of being a conservative, while at the same time not diminishing his conservative credentials.

The phrase was first presented in his 1994 race for the governorship of Texas and was the theme to be carried in to the campaign for the presidency. Based on the policies of limiting government, reducing taxes, and encouraging private companies and, more controversially, religious associations to support welfare and educational initiatives, the ideology of compassionate conservatism proved popular. According to Bush, this was the “the philosophy ingrained in his heart”.<sup>xix</sup> In 1998, Bush won the re-election campaign for governor with 69% of the vote,<sup>xx</sup> making him the first governor of Texas to be re-elected for two consecutive terms. It was a solid foundation, at least at state level. Winning by 53 to 46% (the largest margin in twenty

years),<sup>xxi</sup> Bush defeated the seemingly steadfast incumbent governor of Texas, Ann Richards.

The environment preceding the run for the presidency had been both nurturing and successful for the ideas of compassionate conservatism. Not all Republicans, conservatives or the Religious Right favourably shared its notions or practices; nevertheless, it remained a strong element to the springboard for Bush's presidential ambitions. Even so, the new campaign mantra still ran alongside a conventional Republican message of tax cuts, opposition to abortion, and gun control. These were seen as the way to success. The compassionate conservative slogan gave a new dimension to the Bush image; a representation that toned down what Bush saw as the "bullying image of conservatism", which Bush thought of as "mean".<sup>xxii</sup> This was not to suggest that this was a soft image, because promoted alongside the idea of the "Responsibility Era" it still endorsed strong conservative ideas of individualism. The question was could these images or more specifically the delivery of these images win over New Hampshire?

Analysing strings of commentaries and post-election interviews through Nexus Lexus, it was apparent that delivery mixed with message was a key factor in McCain's winning the Republican vote. This was also found to be the defining factor for the independent voter too. McCain's delivery with his readiness to drop barriers and open himself up to both the media and voters won him their attention and then their support. "New Hampshire cherished – demanded – being won over one vote at a time". There they wanted "face time; they wanted to be wooed".<sup>xxiii</sup> The unprecedented levels of access, particularly by the media won McCain support. McCain's idiosyncratic approach to the media, offered them the opportunity to accompany him on the "Straight Talk Express" campaign bus. This was access the

media and therefore the public were unaccustomed to. Bush on the other hand was often absent, missing debates due to family circumstances that took him back home to Texas. When he was present, the meetings and interviews were clearly choreographed and well staged. Questions from the press were not allowed to stray and there was a brusque succinctness to Bush's responses. For more moderate, Republican voters this detached manner mixed with a routine message did not advance Bush's campaign. Fundamentally, McCain worked the state of New Hampshire harder and on a more personal level than Bush was either willing or able to do. In short, there was a palpable distance between Bush, McCain and the New Hampshire voter. Apprehension about Bush arose because in New Hampshire the "Bush campaign was not about charming the folks of the state; it was about George W. Bush becoming president of the United States". Erroneously the "make it look presidential"<sup>xxiv</sup> approach was not brought by the New Hampshire voter.

In sharp contrast to Bush, McCain presented his personality as passionately as his issues. In addition to his political history in office,<sup>xxv</sup> McCain pushed the strength of his character and in particular his war record. McCain could strongly trade a distinguished military career. The recipient of the Purple Heart and a prisoner of war in Vietnam meant McCain could portray himself as an honourable man of experience who had served his country. These were highly valuable assets; things Bush could not buy.<sup>xxvi</sup>

McCain also positioned himself as a far from average Republican, one who did not toe the Party line. Portraying himself as the "Washington Outsider" and as a "maverick" against "special interests", McCain's signature issue for the campaign was campaign finance reform.<sup>xxvii</sup> McCain attacked the soft money donations by large corporations and asserted that he would break the bond between special interests and

government. Frequently he referred to the “iron triangle” comprised of money, lobbyists and legislation; an attack that included both the Republican and Democrat Party’s. This was a clear challenge to the extremely well-financed Bush, who was seen firmly as an establishment insider.<sup>xxviii</sup>

Ultimately, McCain was allowed to frame the issues in New Hampshire; present a more amiable character, tap independent voters and aided by Bush’s clumsy approach win the primary. McCain thus entered South Carolina self assured seeing comparable advantages similar to that of New Hampshire. Also a modified, open primary, McCain’s appeal across party lines could once more absorb non-party members. Growing financial support and the added dimension of the veteran and service personnel broadening the voting base for McCain even further proffered nothing but confidence and strength. So although a conservative state, South Carolina seemed ripe to be taken. What was clear from New Hampshire was nothing could be taken for granted. Entering as a moderate, compassionate conservative with a broad, fifty state approach suddenly hit a wall. The Bush campaign needed to redress the damage in New Hampshire.

### **South Carolina: a turning point in strategy**

Leaving New Hampshire, it was essential that Bush re-establishes himself and the McCain insurgency brought to a halt. With McCain favourite to take Michigan and his own state of Arizona on 22, February<sup>xxix</sup>, a triumph in South Carolina could turn into an unstoppable momentum. The new approach, if it recognised the specific dimensions of the electoral map, could benefit from a basic rule in primaries: no two states are the same; a point heavily lost on New Hampshire.

Fortunately for the Bush campaign there were advantages in the markedly different environment of South Carolina. As a result much of the revision needed by the campaign was already encoded into the political environment. The most important feature for Bush was that the make-up of the Republican Party was different. The base was socially conservative and although there was a very real threat from some quarters there were also some distinct groups on whom Bush could focus, namely the Religious Right. McCain on the other hand continued to focus upon courting the Independent, veteran and floating votes of the Democrat. To encourage these voters McCain continued to strongly promote his own image. However, in comparison Bush required a more noticeable shift in his position. Forced into moving closer to the Religious Right and more conservative elements Bush took a political gamble departing from his original, moderate pose. However, the priority had altered. My contention from this point onwards is that the political gain from securing South Carolina by appealing to a more religious audience simply outweighed the risks. What began as a broad church approach now saw Bush having to narrowly focus to help swing the state. The wider challenge was to find support with those necessary to help secure victory while at the same time not be seen abandoning the views of his moderate support. Quite often the rush by observers to place Bush in harmonious union with the Religious Right mistakenly omits political convenience as well as political necessity as an answer.

As already noted, South Carolina was a different environment. In addition to the urgency required of the Bush campaign to stabilise itself here the conditions were a dissimilar proposition. Two areas are noteworthy: firstly, the historical importance that South Carolina had come to play in the GOP nomination process and secondly the necessary alignment, procured through that history, to religious forces needed to

secure the state. In South Carolina the Bush campaign used religion because they had to.

In contrast to the general election, when little time and effort is spent there, South Carolina has a special position in the Republican nomination process. Historically, the state had a record of blocking early momentum gained in New Hampshire by a Republican challenger to the establishment front runner. This was not accidental. Republican political consultant and strategist Lee Atwater gave considerable importance to South Carolina for Republicans by placing the primary between the New Hampshire primary and Super Tuesday. In 1988, Atwater moved the primary forward to help deliver the state for George H. W. Bush. Until then, it was Super Tuesday that held the attention. By frontloading the state, Atwater gave South Carolina Republicans the opening southern vote, placing the state at the foundation of the campaign. Leaning heavily towards the more traditional, establishment orientated character of the Republican Party; South Carolina presented a foundation for a comparable candidate. This gave the state the opportunity to bestow a form of its own approval on the establishment choice. This became increasingly relevant as candidates stumbled in New Hampshire giving South Carolina a burgeoning role in its capacity as king maker for Republican front runners.

This boosted the credentials of the state. The term firewall is commonly used to express the preventative role South Carolina has come to play in this trend. Following New Hampshire, Bush's political strategist Karl Rove used the term when speaking to the Washington Post saying that South Carolina, "will provide a firewall of protection for [Bush]", as it had done in previous elections.<sup>xxx</sup> This endorsement has thus far never failed in seeing the front runner lose the nomination. In 1988, South Carolina saw George H. W. Bush stop the impetus gained in New Hampshire

by challenger Bob Dole and Pat Robertson. In 1992 President George H. W. Bush did the same in South Carolina, stopping Pat Buchanan and in 1996 Bob Dole blocked Pat Buchanan after Buchanan's success in New Hampshire (See Appendices A).

As a guide Bush had something of a historical precedence with which to enter South Carolina. But this was still no guarantee. However, with a proven record of delivery in these matters it was the Religious Right who were needed to add to the assurances. As a particular part of the Republican state machine they had shown the ability to marshal solid, grassroots organisational support. It had become an important feature of the South Carolina firewall. Arguably the Clinton years had seen an element of dormancy mixed with uncertainty but by the time of the 2000 presidential primary their presence was such that only a small amount of reinvigoration was needed to rouse them. The role and character of religion in New Hampshire was something in sharp contrast to South Carolina. According to polling by CNN, the religious right (as it was termed in the polling) only accounted for 8% of GOP primary voters in New Hampshire. This was a significant drop compared to what would conclude with 34%<sup>xxx1</sup> in South Carolina. These figures are post-election, but they do give a sense of variation between states and mark the value of making this body inclusive.

What New Hampshire did offer was a potential pointer to this being a future condition. Of few notable exceptions amidst Bush's loss, the religious right were strongly in favour of Bush with 36 to 26%,<sup>xxxii</sup> against McCain. As the primaries moved south, where the Religious Right are more commonly active and certainly pro-Republican, they had built for themselves an indispensable function. Although fluid, their influence within the state Republican Party's was analysed as being generally strong; witnessing "gains in 15 states and declines in 8"<sup>xxxiii</sup> with South Carolina,

Alabama, Oklahoma, Texas and Virginia seeing no change from 1994 to 2000.<sup>xxxiv</sup>

These figures are contrary to the view some held that the Religious Right were in terminal decline. As South Carolina was about to show this certainly was not the case at state and local levels.

The role of religion in modern, South Carolina politics accompanied the growing GOP of the 1950s and 1960s when the party was actively “dominated by religiously traditional upper and middle status mainline Protestants”.<sup>xxxv</sup> But this was a part of a broader trend. Following the gravitation of many Southern Democrat leaders towards the support of the Civil Rights movement, the solid south as it was termed, became increasingly unstable. As a result, the Republican Party witnessed dissatisfaction and more southerners willing to embrace the Party. But this transition towards the likes of Barry Goldwater, George Wallace, Richard Nixon and Ronald Reagan, as examples, added a strong, conservative essence to the southern evolution of the Republican Party. Gradually, the inclusion of white, more observant, evangelicals into their ranks began to change the Southern political dynamic even further. The picture is of course far more complex than this, but essentially the foundations were in place for the Religious Right to become more pro-active in southern party politics. This rapidly increasing influence would soon be referred to as the “southernization of U.S. politics” based upon the “re-organization of the Republican Party around religion”.<sup>xxxvi</sup> For South Carolina this was particularly so. Added to this was the growing civil rights movement. This helped alienate white South Carolinians and deliver the state to Barry Goldwater in 1964. From which point a continued Republican presence carried on to dominated the state.

It was in the 1987 Republican precinct meetings before the 1988 presidential primary that the foundations for organized religious activity were laid. Pat Robertson,

the Charismatic Southern Baptist organized the Carolina Conservative Coalition (CCC) and almost succeeded in winning the state Republican convention against incumbent Vice President George H. W. Bush. In the 1988 presidential primaries Robertson was unsuccessful but reorganized in 1989 as a branch of the Christian Coalition would prove a political force. Ironically, the grass roots activism of its members would help George H. W. Bush in the 1992 presidential race when he won the state primary. As a vehicle of faith for assisting those who wished to shape government the Christian Coalition helped draw in Southern Baptists and other conservative protestant groups particularly those with a pro-life agenda. With Republicans like born again Southern Baptist David Beasley running in 1994 for the South Carolina governorship, the anti-abortion platform he ran on benefiting from the states religious support. Over the decades, sometimes with mixed results, there had been a systemic influence of Religious Right forces within the state. It was to this that George W. Bush looked to strengthen his own campaign.

Advantageously, Bush was familiar with the special political circumstances in South Carolina having campaigned there in 1988 for his father's own presidential campaign. One of Bush's functions little noticed at the time or thereafter, was as the liaison to evangelical Christians within the state, again, most notably to the Religious Right. It was a valuable introduction. The task of aligning to and hopefully mobilising the Religious Right in favour of his father was against a man who was arguably one of the group's main protagonists, Pat Robertson. In the main, the Religious Right were unsure about Bush Senior, the softly spoken candidate from the north-eastern states who offered only "uncertain rhetoric and [an] inability to articulate his faith".<sup>xxxvii</sup> This geographical configuration, however, aided Bush junior. Although born in New Haven, Connecticut, Bush was viewed as an "authentic cultural Texan" and as

someone who had “absorbed the folk culture of Texas along with the worldview of members of the native white Protestant”.<sup>xxxviii</sup> As a result, Bush was far more at ease amongst the network of the Religious Right than his father. More importantly, he spoke their language. To the religious base there was genuineness about his communication, a sincerity that they could accept.

This was the new Bush, the Bush who had redeemed himself and who no longer coveted the malevolent ways of an alcoholic, philandering past. To give this a seal of approval Bush had the endorsement of Billy Graham, the reverend who had “saved” Bush. This helped him reach out to those his father required. But this application of personal faith for the purpose of political achievement was precisely this and should be interpreted as nothing more than a politically motivated manoeuvre. Whatever the personal religious convictions George W. Bush may have had it was utilised for his father for political and not religious gain. Bush’s father was simply unable to align in the same way as his son. For these reasons Bush was placed in charge of coalitions, the coded language for evangelicals. Bush did two things to promote this. Firstly, he met with all the key Religious Right figures; secondly he learnt the correct way to align, pacify and mobilise them, often implicitly, away from the public’s gaze.

Nevertheless, forging these links to religious forces could not be done by George W. Bush alone. Despite his own religious advantages, Bush had to be driven further into evangelical circles by other Party’s. The assumption that these relationships were a given was not the case. Bush needed direction and connecting. To do this George H. W. Bush’s assistant Doug Wead was used. Wead, an ordained minister of the Assemblies of God Church, offered entry into the religious power base. A motivational speaker and a promoter of Amway products, Wead’s political

influence came largely through his publishing. In February 1988 and as a part of the broader strategy for the nomination, Bush senior released his campaign biography, co-written with Doug Wead entitled “A Man of Integrity”. This was one of a number of attempts to bridge the gap and reach out to evangelicals and Conservatives.

Nevertheless, it was the stealthy background work by George W. Bush and Doug Wead that would eventually rally evangelical support, most notably in the South, needed by his father. In addition to Wead was another actor vital for Bush’s introduction to the Religious Right. This was spiritual leader James Robinson.

Robinson had been instrumental in making the connections for Ronald Reagan to the then burgeoning Religious Right and was adept at making the politician feel at ease with the religious constituency and vice versa. As late as 1999 Robinson was introducing Bush to key religious figures and soothing those on the Religious Right who thought Bush too moderate. James Dobson, of Focus on the Family was one of them. Dobson had “publicly chastised Bush for not supporting a pro-life amendment to the Constitution”. Intervening Robinson “called Dobson and pleaded with him not to be a political kingmaker”.<sup>xxxix</sup>

It proved successful. Importantly for Bush, this journey through the powerhouses of the still rising constituency of the Religious Right would become the foundation for his own political aspirations twelve years later. There were strong lessons to be learnt from the 1988 campaign, lessons Bush could carry forward for his own political ambition.

### **The political character of the South Carolina primary**

By the time of the South Carolina primary only Allan Keyes remained in

contention for the religious vote. In Iowa and New Hampshire the Conservative/religious character of the Republican running field was of similar measure.<sup>xi</sup> The presence of figures like Gary Bauer, Allan Keyes and Steve Forbes meant that there were those in contention who may perceivably draw from the same valuable constituency. Advantageously this diminished early on in the campaign for Bush. In truth, each of these candidates had varying difficulties that would have made their appeal to religious forces in South Carolina problematic had they have proceeded.

Steve Forbes position had residual baggage from his 1996 campaign when he was critical about social conservatives being in the Republican Party and had courted pro-choice groups, not to mention attacking Pat Robertson in the 1988 presidential campaign. Gary Bauer, having resigned his position with the Family Research Council to make his run, had done poorly in both Iowa and New Hampshire and his campaign never really got underway. This witnessed the race for the GOP nomination abridged to three: Bush, McCain and Allen Keyes.<sup>xli</sup> At a disadvantage Allan Keyes was Catholic and one could argue had the question of his race as a factor. Although he stayed the course, Keyes only polled 6% of the vote in New Hampshire behind Steve Forbes who carried 13%.

However, all these candidates, including Bush, could be considered something of a second choice for the Religious Right. The “preferred option”,<sup>xlii</sup> had been Senator John Ashcroft (R-Missouri). On January 5<sup>th</sup> 1999, Ashcroft, a member of the Assemblies of God, announced that he was declining to make a bid for the White House. Only then could Bush be moved into a prime position as first choice for the Religious Right. Despite his early, exploratory travels into the key states of Iowa and New Hampshire to gauge the feeling for a Presidential bid, Ashcroft eventually

proclaimed his desire to remain concentrated on securing his Senate seat due to concern that the seat could be lost to a Democrat. Even so, Ashcroft's value is still noteworthy.

Very early on Ashcroft had been seen as a force that could energise the Religious Right and as a figure behind which they could unite. How far Ashcroft could have gone in a Presidential Race is questionable. His acceptability to the religious base was one thing, but to the wider electorate was something else. There is little doubt, however, that the vocal, pro-active evangelical John Ashcroft had the broad support of the Religious Right.<sup>xliii</sup> Once Ashcroft decided not to run, the key for other candidates was to attempt to harness that support. When one considers that the links between Ashcroft and Bush were initially not that close and yet within a short period of time the president elect would place Ashcroft into the highest position ever attained by a Religious Right figure (attorney General), the initial value of his support cannot be ruled out. Support like Ashcroft's was vital. It reinforced the idea for the Religious Right that Bush was "their man". What remained was for this support to help spoil the McCain campaign. There were several ways of doing this. To begin with Bush had to make political manoeuvres suitable to the conservative base.

To begin with Bush drew attention away from McCain by revealing his new slogan, "a reformer with results". It was the Presbyterian elder Karen Hughes<sup>xliv</sup> who coined the term and it signalled a significant shift in Bush's position. Unlike New Hampshire, Bush was no longer willing to be defined as a "Washington insider". Bush stated "those days are over", and that he was "going to make it very clear to the voters of this state who Mr. Outsider is and who Mr. Insider is". In one way McCain viewed this shift as not necessarily bad news because although it was an obvious attempt to detract from McCain's own platform, it was bringing into the arena

McCain's own issue of reform. Although Bush's shift was viewed cynically, Bush really did have a record of reform on the issues of taxes, education and welfare. From then on the watchword of "Compassionate Conservatism" was absent. When asked what had happened to the campaign slogan, Bush replied that a "reformer with results is a conservative who's had compassionate results in the state of Texas".<sup>xlv</sup> The reply appeared weak and muddled; clearly there had been a change. In reality there was little room for moderation in South Carolina, particularly if, as we have seen, Bush was to marshal the more conservative elements that mattered in his favour. In the words of Robert Draper the "fifty-state campaign had come down to South Carolina".<sup>xlvi</sup>

### **Bob Jones University, a strategic necessity**

To commence the South Carolina primary, Bush undertook one of his most controversial steps on the campaign trail. On the morning of February 2, 2000, the day after the New Hampshire primary, Bush ventured to speak at the Conservative Christian<sup>xlvii</sup> Bob Jones University in Greenville, South Carolina.<sup>xlviii</sup>

Almost immediately the visit developed into one of the most frequently referred events for those attempting to establish Bush's right-wing, fundamentalist Christian qualifications. In an article for the *Washington Post*, Colbert I. King commented that in speaking there "Bush caters to the bigotry of Bob Jones".<sup>xlix</sup> Even some Republicans were critical. "The message", said Congressman Peter King of Long Island (Rep) "is he was willing to look the other way at a bigoted institution to get the votes of hard core fundamentalists in South Carolina who could be anti-black, anti-Catholic".<sup>1</sup> Fellow conservatives were critical too. "It is one thing to lurch to the

right. It is another thing to lurch back 60 years,” said Bill Kristol, editor and publisher of the conservative *Weekly Standard*. “You could make the case that compassionate conservatism died February 2 when Bush appeared at Bob Jones University.”<sup>li</sup> For those critical of Bush, the willingness to attend the University demonstrated a clear solidarity with the most extremist elements of the faith. From their outlook, this was proof enough. But once more, the rush to attack Bush has not questioned what possible value there could be in aligning to this establishment, particularly at such a critical time.

Viewed as a bastion of ultra-conservative views, the Universities notoriety came largely from its separatist policies, stringent adherence to scripture and an open denigration of other faiths. Not until 1971, for example, did Bob Jones University enrol black students and between 1971 and 1975 this was for married couples only. These policies have understandably led to fierce criticism and where possible various attempts at reproach have been made against the University. In 1983, following a Federal Justice Department legal challenge, the United States Supreme Court voted 8 to 1<sup>lii</sup> in favour of the IRS to the Universities tax-exemption status,<sup>liii</sup> a ruling that simultaneously saw the removal of the same status from North Carolina’s Goldsboro Christian School.

The potential disadvantages of an appearance at Bob Jones, begs the question: why did the Bush campaign take the risk? Firstly, and despite its notoriety for its emphasis on race we can confidently assume that Bush’s posturing was political and not racial.<sup>liv</sup> There was nothing to be gained from this, but there was gain to be made from appealing to the values of a university that had some political leverage with the state. Even so, controversy over Bush’s visit continued. Under scrutiny, however, the picture is more detailed.

There are three possible explanations. Firstly, this was a simple miscalculation an event that had no forethought or particular motivation. Secondly, this was indeed a blatant show of Bush's true position in relation to the Religious Right, no matter how extreme. Or thirdly, this was a necessary, unavoidable political manoeuvre the negatives of which were outweighed by potential gains.

It is inconceivable that Bush's visit can be attributed solely to pure folly. Post New Hampshire there had to be keener vigilance, an air of caution to the campaign ahead. If complacency had ruled in New Hampshire, it did not in South Carolina. Even accrediting blame for the visit solely to Bush, we cannot dismiss the idea that those surrounding and guiding him were completely oblivious to the political dangers that such an appointment could afford. In any case, given Bush's personal acquaintance with the state twelve years earlier it is difficult to imagine that he too would have been ignorant or reckless. On some level, Bush had to be conscious of the history, policies, and stance of the University. An absolute lack of unawareness is therefore unlikely. In defence of Bush, however, there was no prima facie of antipathy from which to take guidance for attending. Until that time, Ronald Reagan, Dan Quayle, Pat Buchanan and Robert J. Dole and John Ashcroft amongst others, had all made the University a stopover in the process of their campaigns. It follows then that there had to be a value in the action.

Upon the second point, Bush's alignment to the Religious Right was no secret, his openness at times politically questionable, but always unashamedly made known. The uniqueness of the Bob Jones visit, it is argued, lies not in Bush attending a religious establishment, but one deemed to be so fundamental. To suggest that as a result of his attendance he himself is a fundamentalist is stretching the argument. Bush may, as all politicians are, be apt to making miscalculations but an unconcealed

protestation to fundamentalism for the sake of doing so is nonsense, not to mention politically perilous. George W. Bush was not in the business of endangering his political aspirations. As we will discover later, Bush was all too aware following his religious rhetoric in Iowa how cautious he should be in publicly aligning to religion.

Thirdly, we have the argument for an indispensable visit whose undertaking was calculatingly worthwhile. Rejecting the visit as a mistake or a form of religious swagger leaves a visit with purpose. This purpose soon becomes clear when we understand something of the influence the University had within the state and as a function of the Republican Party. The key is that Bob Jones University is not on the fringes, although some of its attitudes and policies maybe, but is an institution within a part of South Carolina society.

From 1927 the Bob Jones University, or College as it was then known, had a Republican bias. Amidst a solidly Democrat affiliated South many of the schools faculty and students were initially from the North, hence their Republican persuasion. Even its founder Bob Jones Senior voted Republican at one time in the primacy of the school, campaigning for Republican Herbert Hoover against Democrat Al Smith in 1928. With the increasing alienation of white southern Democrats from their Party establishment on the issue of race, especially over the 1964 Civil Rights Act, the appeal of the Republican Party grew and so did the influence of the University. The foundation for this political interest came from all the leading Bob Jones figures, each one having keen political as well as religious interests.

A turning point that bonded the University even further to the Republican Party and bolstered its pro-active role in state politics was the switch of South Carolina governor Strom Thurmond from the Democrat to the Republican Party. Thurmond, angry at what he saw as an attack on States Rights by his own party, but

more specifically by those in Washington, helped cement South Carolina Republican Party. As a feature of this the University increasingly took a more active role in local and State-wide Republican politics. This was accomplished by faculty members either entering or endorsing fellow alumni candidates for political office, these positions giving a deepening function and a growing political influence within the States party.

It was then prudent to seek endorsement from Bob Jones. Despite the controversy that Bush's visit attracted it did not prevent either Alan Keyes on February 14, or Steve Forbes on February 17, from speaking there. It could be argued that an attendance there was almost ritualistic, its purpose to help win over not only those elements within the state Republican Party but the core political constituency of the Religious Right.

Although condemnation of Bush's visit took many forms and came from many quarters, one in particular stands out. In an attempt at electoral impetus, McCain quickly picked up on the universities anti-Catholic sentiment and sanctioned a phone banking tactic aimed at Catholic voters in Michigan, whose primary was on 22, February. Given the strong position of the Catholic vote in key, battleground states like New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Ohio and Illinois, it appeared a good line of attack.

Initially Bush appeared to try to ride out the storm but the McCain camp kept up the pressure. Eventually Bush was forced to make a statement. For three weeks Bush evaded the issue and then on 25<sup>th</sup> February sought to resolve the matter. To help curb the negative attention the visit was gaining, Bush wrote a letter to Cardinal John O'Connor, Roman Catholic archbishop of New York. The letter expressed Bush's regret, his disappointment at not having seized the opportunity at the time to detach himself from University policy. He also stressed yet again that he was "a uniter not a

divider”.<sup>lv</sup> Bush then pointed out in his defence the conversion to Catholicism of his sister-in-law and brother, Florida Governor Jeb Bush.

Contrary to the impression that the McCain campaign tried to present regarding Bush’s willingness to align with those of an anti-Catholic nature, the Bush campaign had initially taken the Catholic vote quite seriously. In fact it is arguable that the approach to this voting bloc and the number of Catholics supporting and advising Bush was not only comparable but potentially greater than the presence or the wooing of protestant evangelicals.<sup>lvi</sup> But this was not new. The Bush focus on aligning to Conservative Catholics<sup>lvii</sup> was part of an ongoing and very concerted process. In various forms, the attempts at a trilateral bonding between Conservative Catholics, Republicans and the Religious Right had been an endeavour for several decades. There were tensions, particularly when it was perceived that Catholicism was maybe “seeking to impose Catholic teaching on those outside the faith”.<sup>lviii</sup> However, the role of Catholics on the rise and influence of Conservative religion in the United States and in influencing Bush is vastly underestimated. To define Bush’s position there are two particular areas to be noted.

Firstly, in February 1999 the Republican National Committee created the Catholic Task Force with a view to attracting the Catholic vote and aiding the Bush campaign. Representing the largest Christian denomination in America with an estimated 24% of the population describing themselves as Catholic,<sup>lix</sup> it was reasonable to attempt to bring them into the fold. Politically, however, the Catholic vote had historically leaned Democrat with momentary swings towards the Republican Party, most notably for Ronald Reagan in 1980 and again in 1984. But it was not the mainstay for the Republican Party that evangelical Christians in general had come to represent. Even so, its power as a bloc had not gone un-heeded. As a

result it was certainly not to be put off-side.

Secondly, Karl Rove was especially in tune with the prospective power of Catholic swing voters providing added force to Bush's margins of victory. Following an article in June 1999 in the conservative Catholic magazine *Crisis*,<sup>lx</sup> Deal Hudson,<sup>lxi</sup> its publisher, distributed its findings to all presidential candidates. The article, by pollster and analyst Steve Wagner entitled "The Heart of the Catholic Voter", proposed the identification of two distinct types of Catholic: the "Social Justice Catholic" and the "Social Renewal Catholic". The latter, Wagner suggested, was more conservative, more observant and more likely to lean Republican. It seemed tenuous, but it was enough, according to conservative strategist Grover Norquist to detail that Rove invited Hudson to take part in meetings designed to forge additional and stronger Catholic alliances.<sup>lxii</sup> At the same time the Republican National Committee, citing the same research, followed suite, expanding its Catholic outreach programme. The Catholic dimension was only a part of the religious element which in turn is only a part of the political dimension. The apparently constricted approach to Bob Jones had several valuable layers worthy of its visit.

It is clear then that Bush's visit to the Bob Jones University was a necessary venture. Always a risk, the rational, guided partly by history, was political pragmatics and political motivation in action. Given the position of the University within the state Republican Party and the support by the Religious Right both within and beyond the University made it an unavoidable visit. What the Bob Jones visit was not, was an alignment to the Religious Right for a display of religious nepotism.

## **Beyond Bob Jones**

If we charge that Bush had misread New Hampshire, then McCain misunderstood South Carolina. In fact, the poor manner in which McCain approached South Carolina was a major feature in handing Bush his victory. While Bush adjusted accordingly to the political landscape McCain stuck with the strategy which had brought him success in New Hampshire. McCain's hope of attracting the same constituency of voters was feasible and with the expectancy of a high turnout amongst the tens of thousands of independent, Democrat and veteran voters likely to take part in the primary it may not have seemed misguided. But McCain's failure came from never attempting to attract the states core constituencies that Bush looked to. Instead McCain antagonised them.

For example: a serious issue in South Carolina was the presence of the Confederate flag flying above the South Carolina statehouse. It had been since 1962. Whatever arguments may have been on the campaign table, health care, taxes et cetera it shows the narrow, idiosyncratic nature of the state. Some viewed it as a symbol of legacy, a memorial to Confederate forces during the Civil War. To others it was a clear symbol of states rights and slavery. The NAACP in particular undertook pro-active action on the issue, seeking its removal. This issue should not be underestimated. South Carolina's prominence in the civil war was the lead in seceding from the Union; the home of Andrew Jackson and John C. Calhoun and where the first shots of the war were fired made this a highly contentious point.

Both candidates attempted to avoid the issue but were unavoidably drawn in. Bush stated that it was for the people of South Carolina to decide, whilst McCain after originally stating that it was "offensive" and a "symbol of racism and slavery",

changed to calling it a symbol of “heritage”.<sup>lxiii</sup> McCain’s original comments would not evaporate. From the candidate who spoke of “straight talking” his wavering over the issue was deeply damaging. This divisive issue called for a clear statement.

To add to the uncertainty, McCain’s campaign strategist was the pro-flag, neo-Confederate Richard Quinn of the *Southern Partisan Quarterly Review*.

Embarrassingly, an article in the *Wall Street Journal* saw pointed out that Richard Hines, managing editor and contributor to the same magazine managed to add additional damage to the McCain Campaign upon this issue.<sup>lxiv</sup> Hines, a political consultant and neo-Confederate activist used his PAC Company to finance and distribute 250,000 letters to targeted conservatives criticising McCain and promoting Bush as the only candidate worthy of not denigrating the Confederate Flag. As a result Bush managed to undermine McCain. It is worth noting that in a poll taken later Bush won 61% of the vote over McCain’s 35%<sup>lxv</sup> on this very issue.

On February 3, at a rally in Columbia, South Carolina, Bush, surrounded by veterans and soldiers witnessed one of the most controversial and savage attacks of the campaign. Taking the stand, Army Veteran Thomas Burch, Chairman of the National Vietnam & Gulf War Veterans Coalition, said of McCain: “Senator McCain has abandoned the veterans. He came home from Vietnam and forgot us”.<sup>lxvi</sup> The remarks were a reference to McCain opposing measures and legislation to help families of Agent Orange poisoning, one of the coalition’s central issues. Understandably these remarks were wounding to McCain who had traded so heavily on his military career.

But the political damage as a result of these remarks was done by McCain. On Tuesday, February 8, air time was secured for an advertisement in which McCain commented that “I guess it was bound to happen. Governor Bush’s campaign is

getting desperate, with a negative ad about me.... His ad twists the truth like Bill Clinton. We're all pretty tired of that".<sup>lxvii</sup> For Bush the McCain advertisement was a blessing, a political Godsend. McCain's ad completely alienated the Republican base. To make comparisons to Clinton by one Republican against another was indefensible. Bush seized the opportunity, running a counter-advertisement which said, "Politics is tough. But when John McCain compared me to Bill Clinton and said I was untrustworthy, that is over the line. Disagree with me fine. But do not challenge my integrity". The use of the C - word was pivotal in turning voters against McCain.

From then on the advertisement was run almost on a loop, pressing home the message not only to South Carolinians but to the broader Republican electorate too. The advertisement was aired in other states, without the spectator aware of what had led to it.<sup>lxviii</sup> From then on Bush was able to place McCain in a bad light for his negative campaigning while at the same time drawing attention away from his own negative campaign tactics. These crucial areas of the early campaign saw McCain falter in the public's view.

In a relatively short space of time McCain had succeeded in turning many of South Carolina's core voters over to Bush. It was one thing to not target them it was another to alienate them. The returns were revealing. Compared to 1996 the overall state voter totals were significantly up, showing 276,741 in 1996 to 573,101 in 2000. Interest in the primary stimulated voter turnout. (See tables 4 & 5). Ideologically McCain fared well amongst those he was expected to. The veteran vote was won but narrowly. McCain took the vote 48% with Bush on 47%. McCain won the liberal and moderate vote with 63% and 59% compared to Bush with 34 % and 37% respectively. As expected, the Democrat vote swung significantly for McCain with 79% compared to 18% for Bush. Similarly the Independent vote was also captured by McCain 60%

to Bush's 34%.

Similarly Bush managed to capture those votes thought most likely to favour him. Those described as Conservative and very conservative voted 59% and 74% for Bush contrasted to McCain with 37% and 16%. Those described as the religious right voted for Bush with 68% while 24% went for McCain. Amongst the issues Bush drew 67% of the anti-abortion vote compared to McCain's 19%. On taxes and moral values Bush won 78% and 55% to McCain with 20% and 36% correspondingly. Party identification saw Bush take 69% compared to McCain's 26%. Regarding their

**TABLE 4.**<sup>lxix</sup>

**SOUTH CAROLINA: Primary Election: March 2, 1996**

| <i>Republican Candidates</i> | <i>Votes</i> | <i>Percentage</i> |
|------------------------------|--------------|-------------------|
| Dole, Bob                    | 124,904      | 45.13             |
| Buchanan, Pat                | 80,824       | 29.20             |
| Forbes, Steve                | 35,039       | 12.66             |
| Alexander, Lamar             | 28,647       | 10.35             |
| Keyes, Alan                  | 5,752        | 2.08              |
| Lugar, Richard               | 1,017        | .37               |
| Gramm, Phil                  | 467          | .17               |
| Taylor, Morry                | 91           | .03               |
| Total Party Votes:           | 276,741      |                   |
| Total State Votes:           | 276,741      |                   |

**TABLE 5.**<sup>lxx</sup>**SOUTH CAROLINA: Primary Election: February 19, 2000**

| <i>Republican Candidate</i> | <i>Votes</i>        | <i>Percentages</i> |
|-----------------------------|---------------------|--------------------|
| Bush, George W.             | 305.998             | 53.39              |
| McCain, John                | 239.964             | 41.87              |
| Keyes, Alan                 | 25.996              | 4.54               |
| Bauer, Gary                 | 618                 | 0.11               |
| Forbes, Steve               | 449                 | 0.08               |
| Hatch, Orrin G.             | 76                  | 0.01               |
|                             | Total Party Votes:  | 573.101            |
|                             | Total States Votes: | 573.101            |

campaign messages Bush came out on top as a “reformer with results” by 95% to McCain with only 3%. On McCain’s slogan of “campaign finance” McCain came out on top with 67% (see appendices B for all data regarding exit polling).<sup>lxxi</sup>

Political necessity required Bush to indulge in certain characteristics of the political map in South Carolina. Becoming more conservative and with some unexpected help from McCain, Bush was able to place his political ambitions back on track. But there was a cost. The damage inflicted on McCain was such that it did not just remain within the confines of South Carolina, it effectively dented his whole presidential ambition. But McCain was not the only one scathed from the encounter. Having moved from, “Bush the moderate” to Bush the Conservative, dropping the

“compassionate” and visiting establishments like the Bob Jones University helped Bush pick-up a number of his rightist labels. These tags remained and much of the thinking surrounding George W. Bush and his association with the Religious Right as well as the smear campaign raged against McCain emanates from this period. Conversely, the Religious Right having previously failed to rescue David Beasley (former South Carolina Governor) for his second term now felt empowered in having delivered for Bush. The South Carolina firewall had been re-kindled and there was the potential to see a religiously favourable candidate go all the way. Briefly the Religious Right machine had worked, but there was a price. As Robert Draper has pointed out after the “Machiavellian triumph on February 19 [Bush] found himself with a lot of explaining to do”. Shifts from the centre to the right, key religious associations and changes in slogans required Bush re-locate to the middle ground. This was not a pure-bred religiously orientated man moving forward regardless; this was a politician making political modifications. All of a sudden there was a reversion to Bush the “compassionate, all over again”. <sup>lxxii</sup>

What Bush discovered in the early primaries was a formula. Whether it was prudent to stick with this method is contentious, but the decision to embrace religion in politics was nevertheless a means of achieving power. Religion could be a guide, an influence, and, most importantly as it would turn out, a valuable asset. The Religious Right had had years of developing involvement to know that the art of politics was negotiation; the relatively brief period of the South Carolina primary showed is that the convergence in this negotiation between religion and politics was about opportunities for and arbitration by both sides. Shaped by practical circumstance the Religious Right saw the opportunity to advance its many causes and actors in what may have appeared a pro-friendly presidential candidate. Conversely,

George W. Bush utilised his own faith, experience and contacts for his own development.

This union is not licence, however, to call religion and politics, Religious Right and Presidential campaign one and the same. There were many variables in the opportunities envisaged by each side, but it was arguably Bush who, through strategy and not scripture, was more proficient in achieving his goal.

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i Along with race, gender and socio economic status religion is one of the defining factors underlying political behaviour in the United States. In the South this is an especially prominent feature. Once the primacy of east coast New England; religion in the South has become central to their common view and political practice. This distinctiveness arose from a number of factors. As the South developed and grew in urbanization and industrialization so did a sense of strong religious tradition and commitment. Unlike the melting pot of the north evangelical Protestantism in the South did not face the same challenges from other denominations like the Jewish or Catholic faiths. To aid this, the largely rural backdrop to the developing South saw evangelical Protestants find favour amongst the regions conservative character. Calling the individual to return to traditional mores and wholesome moral observance deepened their hold. Dominated by a white evangelical Protestant alliance the region became known politically as the “solid South”. Voting nationally on bloc the “solid South” was firmly allied to the Democrat Party. However, once the “peculiar institutions” of the South were challenged and Southern traditions and states rights were seen as under threat political allegiance shifted. As national leaders of the Democrat Party responded in favour of civil rights, Southern white evangelical Protestants abandoned the Party. Aided by progressive religion and social forces outside of the South black churches were able to end *de jure* segregation. While the “solid South” split the Republican Party took up the challenge of countering the growing constituency of black protestant support for the Democrat Party by seeking to include white Protestants in to their own coalitions. Race remained at the hub of the divide but the core concerns of Christian morality, social policy and social change like the arrival of the sexual revolution and changes in attitudes to abortion and drugs helped focus the concerns of the Southern white protestant. These were the foundations to the Religious Right. Galvanised by the successes of secular and liberal forces the Religious Right set out to make inroads into local and where possible national politics. Organisations like the Moral Majority and the Christian Voice led the way. These would become a major force in the conservative attack against President Carter in support of the Republican nominee, Ronald Reagan. Organisations like the Christian Coalition and Focus on the Family soon followed and became increasingly active in political issues. What mattered was that these groups had a deep reach in to the Party’s grass roots at state level. Amongst the states of the “Bible belt” where socially conservative Christian evangelical Protestantism is a pervasive and dominant part of the culture, South Carolina is the personification of the above. Already conservative in its outlook the 1950s and 1960s saw the emerging GOP ruled by white evangelical Protestants.

ii Politics1. Iowa Caucus. 2000 presidential primaries. <<http://www.politics1.com/vote-ia.htm>> 1/03/07

iii Politics1. Iowa Caucus. 2000 presidential primaries. <<http://www.politics1.com/vote-ia.htm>> 1/03/07

iv Karl Rove, Bush’s political strategist acknowledges these dates for the contemplation of

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Bush's run.

Kevin Philips. *American Dynasty. How the Bush Clan Became the Worlds Most Powerful and Dangerous Family.* (2004) Penguin. p. 84

v Ibid. p. 85

vi John Micklethwait. & Adrian Wooldridge. *The Right Nation. Why America is different.* Penguin. (2005) p.142.

vii Lou Dubose, Jan Reid & Carl M. Cannon. *Boy Genius. Karl Rove, The Brains Behind The Remarkable Political Triumph Of George W. Bush.* Public Affairs Reports.(2003) p.135

viii Going into New Hampshire some polls placed Bush and McCain neck and neck, but as already stated, other forecasts were far more favourable towards McCain and several entrance and tracking polls placed McCain ahead by as much as 12% amongst likely GOP primary participants. An added possibility deflecting attention away from any possible threat coming from McCain was that the Iowa caucus results, at that time, only showed contention from millionaire publisher Steve Forbes. In actual voting terms Senator John McCain was still an unknown, if popular, entity. While polls may have given possible indicators, they were not of course compensatory for actual results. With Iowa having only registered McCain in fifth position with just 5% of the vote, comparable to that of Steve Forbes with 30%, this was not data from which the Bush campaign team could obtain solid information relating to McCain's potential strength.

ix Victory in Iowa had only ever resulted in a following success in New Hampshire when, in 1976, Jimmy Carter collected both states. Since then, only incumbent presidents have succeeded in achieving a dual gain in both Iowa and New Hampshire, although they ran as uncontested in each state.

x CNN. Election 2000.  
<<http://www.cnn.com/ELECTION/2000/primaries/NH/results.html> >16/08/2006

xi Lou Dubose, Jan Reid & Carl M. Cannon. *Boy Genius. Karl Rove, The Brains Behind The Remarkable Political Triumph Of George W. Bush.* Public Affairs Reports. (2003) p.140

xii CNN. GOP Primaries: New Hampshire.  
<<http://www.cnn.com/ELECTION/2000/primaries/NH/results.html>> 16/08/2006

xiii CNN. GOP Primary: New Hampshire  
<<http://www.cnn.com/ELECTION/2000/primaries/NH/poll.rep.html>> 16/08/2006

xiv H. G. Nicholas. *The Nature of American Politics.* Oxford University Press. (1986) p.57

xv CNN Election 2000. GOP Primaries: New Hampshire. EXIT POLL Results.  
<<http://www.cnn.com/ELECTION/2000/primaries/NH/poll.rep.html>> 16/08/06

xvi CNN. Election 2000. GOP primary: New Hampshire.  
<<http://www.cnn.com/ELECTION/2000/primaries/NH/poll.rep.html>> 21/06/06

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- xvii       Independents Become Largest Voting Bloc In New Hampshire.  
<<http://www.pbbs.org/newshour/bb/election/iowa-newhampshire/independent.html>> 9/01/08
- xviii       A record 393, 245 people cast their vote in the New Hampshire primary. 2000: A Record Turnout Sends Message.  
< <http://unionleader.com/article.aspx?articleId=1882db41-d340-49cb-ab0f-f1acac5f395f>> 21/11/06
- xix         George W. Bush. *A Charge To Keep. My Journey To The White House*. Perrenial. (2001) P.234
- xx         John Micklethwaite and Adrian Wooldridge. *The Right Nation. Why America is Different*. Penguin Books. (2005) p.39
- xxi         John Micklethwaite and Adrian Wooldridge. *The Right Nation. Why America is Different*. Penguin Books. (2005) p.38
- xxii         Robert Draper. (2007) *Dead Certain. The Presidency of George W. Bush*. Free Press. (2007) p.6
- xxiii        Ibid. p.8
- xxiv        Ibid. p.8
- xxv         First elected to the United States House of Representatives in 1982 McCain then won election to the United States Senate in 1986 following the retirement of Barry Golwater. In 1996 he was National Security Adviser to the Dole/Kemp Presidential campaign.
- xxvi         To promote this, McCain's autobiography *Faith of My Fathers* which was heavily centered around his incarceration in Vietnam was released to coincide with the campaign. Politically, this too presented a potentially difficult future for Bush, namely McCain's appeal to the strong contingent of veterans that resided in the next primary in South Carolina. In fact, more veterans and active duty service personnel per-capita than any other state resided there. Veteran census data show 14.2% of the civilian population in South Carolina available as votes to the war hero candidate. Acknowledgement of the status of the veteran vote would have been known and targeted. On September 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1999 Bush attended the Citadel Military College in Charleston, to give a speech on renewing the bond of trust between the president and the military. Even so, this was in advance of the primaries and the urgency then would not have been the same.
- xxvii        Salon Politics 2000. How Dubyah got his groove back.  
<<http://archive.salon.com/politics2000/feature/2000/02/10/bush.html>> 01/09/06
- xxviii       For McCain, this was undoubtedly a risk because in truth McCain was arguably as much a Washington insider as Bush could have been perceived to be. A glance at McCain's campaign sponsors demonstrates this; for instance: Motorola, Viacom, Bank of America, AT & T, Boeing and Phelps Dodge, did not completely detach McCain from the corporate interests he espoused to attack. Neither should it be forgotten that McCain was one of five Senators on whom the United States Department of

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Justice and the Senate Ethics Committee focused their attention when looking into the Keating Five Scandal in the 1980's. Centred on the collapse of a large number of Savings and Loans institutions, McCain, along with others were judged to be the beneficiaries of large sums in campaign contributions from Keating after having requested that there be an easing off of the investigation. It was from that point on that McCain began to promote campaign finance reform. Curiously, even when the campaign become far more vicious in its exchanges, this issue was never raised, at least not by Bush.

Incidentally, the platform of campaign finance reform was a significant obstacle between McCain and the Religious Right to whom Bush would soon turn. If successful, campaign finance reform would impact upon their political leverage, just as it would upon any other interest group. For Conservative Christians it was one of the indicators that McCain was not their man. But McCain was no stranger to going against the grain of the Republican Party establishment a feature that often set the establishment against him and was an undoubted factor in the establishment's support of Bush and not McCain. Even so, the opposition one may have expected from the more rigid, Republican establishment in New Hampshire was at a ground level, absent. Instead, the states moderate, Republican tone finally aided McCain, not Bush. To reinforce all of this, McCain's victory in New Hampshire had seen an upsurge in his campaign contributions. Within 48 hours McCain's web site: McCain2000.com, saw pledges and donations increase, rising to \$1,275,000 in online contributions. This gave an overall air that popular support and not big donators were at the heart of his campaign.

xxix McCain did indeed win these states, taking Michigan with 51% and Arizona with 60%.

xxx Election 2000. On Line News hour. South Carolina. After Strong Win McCain Faces Tough Challenge in South Carolina.  
<[http://www.pbs.org/newshour/election2000/states/south\\_carolina/update\\_2-4.html](http://www.pbs.org/newshour/election2000/states/south_carolina/update_2-4.html)>

xxxi CNN. Election 2000. GOP Primary: South Carolina. Exit Poll.  
<<http://www.cnn.com/ELECTION/2000/primaries/SC/poll.re.html>> 21/06/06

xxxii CNN. GOP Primary: New Hampshire  
<<http://www.cnn.com/ELECTION/2000/primaries/NH/poll.rep.html>> 16/08/2006

xxxiii Kimberly H. Conger. & John Green. (Feb. 2002). 'Spreading out and Digging in'. Campaigns and Elections, Inc. Campaigns & Elections Feb. 2002  
<[http://www.theocracywatch.org/campaigns\\_elections\\_study.htm](http://www.theocracywatch.org/campaigns_elections_study.htm)> 23/06/2006

xxxiv The influence within each state was based upon the percentage of Conservative Christians in each state Party committee.

Conger. Kimberly H., & Green. John., (Feb. 2002). 'Spreading out and Digging in'. Campaigns and Elections, Inc. Campaigns & Elections  
<[http://www.theocracywatch.org/campaigns\\_elections\\_study.htm](http://www.theocracywatch.org/campaigns_elections_study.htm)> 23/06/2006

xxxv James L. Guth. Political Science and Politics, Vol 28, No. 1. 1995. pp. 8-11. South Carolina: The Christian Right Wins One. 1/10/06.

xxxvi Kevin Phillips. *American theocracy. The Peril and Politics of Radical Religion, Oil, and Borrowed Money in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.* Viking. (2006) p.172

xxxvii Stephen Mansfield. *The Faith Of George W. Bush.* Charisma House. (2004) p.82-83

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- xxxviii Michael Lind. *Made In Texas. George W. Bush and the Southern Takeover of American Politics*. New American Books. (2004) p.2
- xxxix Stephen Mansfield. *The Faith Of George W. Bush*. Charisma House. (2004) p.112
- xi Religious Affiliation of Candidates:  
Baptist: Gary Bauer & Al Gore  
Episcopalian: Steve Forbes & John McCain  
Methodist: George W. Bush  
Roman Catholic: Alan Keyes  
Presbyterian: Bill Bradley
- xli Gary Bauer dropped out of contention on February 4<sup>th</sup>, Bauer only scoring 1% in New Hampshire. Steve Forbes stepped down from the running on the 10<sup>th</sup> February, scoring only 13%. Allan Keyes despite scoring only 6%<sup>□</sup> in New Hampshire remained in opposition.  
CNN. GOP Primary: New Hampshire  
<<http://www.cnn.com/ELECTION/2000/primaries/NH/poll.rep.html>> 16/08/2006
- xlii Martin Durham. *The Christian Right, the Far Right and the Boundaries of American Conservatism*. Manchester University Press. (2000) p. 18
- xliii Never shy from weaving his faith into his politics, Ashcroft received a 100% rating on all issues like abortion and education on the Christian Coalition score card. Putting forward his proposal to run, Ashcroft's financial backing had come from individuals like Pat Robertson; in fact, Ashcroft received more money from religious sources than any other candidate.
- xliv Karen Hughes, Bush's former secretary in Texas and before long presidential council who, like Karl Rove was once one of Bush's most influential guiding lights.
- xlvi Jack Tapper. Salon.Com. How Dubyah got his groove back.  
<<http://archive.salon.com/politics2000/feature/2000/02/10/bush/>> 31/05/07
- xlvi Robert Draper. (2007) *Dead Certain. The Presidency of George W. Bush*. Free Press. (2007) p.62
- xlvi The University is not regionally accredited as a Christian establishment.
- xlvi The University did not locate in Greenville, South Carolina until 1947. Before then the Bob Jones College was near Panama City, on the Florida panhandle. From there it was relocated to Cleveland, Tennessee in 1933.
- xlvi Colbert I. King. 'Bush caters to the bigotry of Bob Jones University'. The Washington Post. February 28, 2000
- <sup>1</sup> CBSNews.com. Bush Regrets Bob Jones University Visit. NEW YORK, Feb. 27, 2000  
<<http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2000/02/27/politics/main165529.shtml>> 12/08/07

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- li Jake Tapper. Salon.Com. Politics2000. *Jonesing for votes*.  
<[http://archive.salon.com/politics2000/feature/2000/02/03/bob\\_jones/](http://archive.salon.com/politics2000/feature/2000/02/03/bob_jones/)> 17/09/07
- lii Bob Jones University v. United States, 1983.  
<[http://www.phschool.com/atschool/supreme\\_court\\_cases/bob\\_jones\\_university.html](http://www.phschool.com/atschool/supreme_court_cases/bob_jones_university.html)> 17/9/06
- liii Bob Jones University v. U. S. 461 U.S. 574 (1983).  
<<http://www.oyez.org/oyez/resource/case/39/>> 15/09/06
- liv Clearly, the engagement was at odds with the actions of a compassionate conservative and a candidate whose political refrain had been one of inclusion. At variance with photo ops of Bush with black school children and his numerous addresses in Spanish concerning anti-immigration policy to Hispanic and Catholic audiences, the appointment looked contrite. At a cursory glance this was not the actions of a centrist Republican who claimed to be expanding the Party's appeal.
- lv Bush's letter of apology to Cardinal John O'Connor. February 25<sup>th</sup> 2000.  
<[http://www.vdare.com/letters/w\\_letter.html](http://www.vdare.com/letters/w_letter.html)> 11/04/07
- lvi It is strongly recommended that further investigation be undertaken in this area. Just beyond our period of consideration with Bush in office, it has become clear that the alignment to conservative Catholics, their assignment to key posts and their implementation into prime advisory roles are worthy of significant concentration. It would appear that unlike the relationship with Bush's relationship to the Religious Right, this was a relationship not held at arms length.
- lvii We define Conservative Catholics here as being those who strictly uphold traditional, historical Catholic teachings. These concern: the sanctity of marriage, prohibition of divorce and homosexuality, the importance of male-only clergy and the restriction of birth control. They are also found to be more observant in church attendance.
- lviii Martin Durham. *The Christian Right, the Far Right and the Boundaries of American Conservatism*. Manchester University press. (2000) p. 48
- lix Grover Norquist. "The Catholic Vote". The American Spectator. October 2000.
- lx Crisis: founded in 1982 by Catholic neoconservative intellectuals Michael Novak of the American Enterprise Institute and Ralph McInerny, professor of philosophy and director of the Jacques Maritain Center at the University of Notre Dame.
- lxi Deal Hudson was hired by Michael Novak and Ralph McInerny and made senior editor of Crisis. In 1995 Hudson was made editor and publisher of the magazine.
- lxii Results obtained from the Barna survey, conducted from January 2000 through June 2001. Largest Religious Groups in the United States of America.  
<[http://www.adherents.com/rel\\_USA.html#families](http://www.adherents.com/rel_USA.html#families)> 3/05.07
- lxiii Todd S. Purdum. Vanity Fair. February 2007.  
<<http://www.vanityfair.com/politics/features/2007/02/mccain200702?currentPage=1>> 10/05/07

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- lxiv David Rogers, 'Lobbyist Funded Mailing That Hurt McCain Campaign'. Wall Street Journal. Tuesday, July, 11<sup>th</sup>. 2000.  
<<http://www.confederate.org/publish/legal/missing/dh17cma.jpg>> 8/05/07
- lxv Federal Election Committee.  
<<http://www.fec.gov/pubrec/fe1996/presprim.htm#sc>> 3/10/07
- lxvi <http://forum.signonsandiego.com/archive/index.php/t-46091.html> 5/29/2005
- lxvii Lou Dubos, Jan Reid.& Carl M. Cannon. *Boy Genius. Karl Rove, The Brains Behind The Remarkable Political Triumph Of George W. Bush*. Public Affairs Reports. (2003) p.141.
- lxviii Robert Draper. *Dead Certain. The Presidency of George W. Bush*. Free Press. (2007) p.70
- lxix Federal Election Committee.  
<<http://www.fec.gov/pubrec/fe1996/presprim.htm#sc>> 3/10/07
- lxx Federal Election Committee.  
<<http://www.fec.gov/pubrec/fe2000/2000presprim.htm#SC>> 3/10/07
- lxxi GOP Primary: South Carolina 2000. Results. CNN.Com  
<<http://www.cnn.com/ELECTION/2000/primaries/SC/poll.rep.html>> 3/04/08
- lxxii Robert Draper. (2007) *Dead Certain. The Presidency of George W. Bush*. Free Press. (2007)  
p.80

## CHAPTER TWO

### **RALPH REED: The pragmatic addition to the campaign**

For those asserting that George W. Bush and the Religious Right shared a theocratic agenda the role of Ralph Reed, former head of the Christian Coalition, has been a valuable part of the argument. Reed, one of the leading lights within the Religious Right movement and his involvement with the Bush campaign supported their idea that there was a natural and likeminded religious alliance. But contrary to this opinion this was a relationship firmly embedded in the secular. Analysis of this union clearly indicates this went beyond a simple religious affiliation. Indeed, this association is indicative of a bond forged for political and not religious interests.

Following the devastating results in New Hampshire, Bush's ambition was simply to win. In South Carolina's the Religious Right were seen as both willing and capable of negating John McCain's advantages. But despite the proclivity for referring to Bush as the "new leader" and a "moral center"<sup>1</sup> for the Religious Right, the candidate's qualities were not enough to mobilise the bloc. South Carolina had provided warnings that contrary to popular consensus, the Religious Right and Conservative Christians in general might not be assumed to be solely pro-Bush.<sup>2</sup> Just as Doug Wead helped to reach out and navigate for George W. Bush in support of his father's presidential bid, there was a similar need in this campaign.

To marshal the faith base and their support, Ralph Reed was considered ideal. He was not just a religious figure but one who could move between the religious, political, and the corporate worlds. He did so with such ease that observers questioned

whether he was a preacher, politician, or businessman. In short, he was all of these: a “committed Christian and a committed politician”.<sup>3</sup> Reed’s attributes are best described, however, as those of an activist, a campaigner who could transform his image and guide his energies when and where required.

The inclusion of Ralph Reed was a pragmatic choice by Bush’s senior political advisor Karl Rove who had been “thinking about the campaign for five years and planning for three”.<sup>4</sup> Until defeat in New Hampshire religious aspects were features of the political landscape. After that defeat, Ralph Reed and religion became a necessity for the campaign. It was a subtle but nevertheless important shift. So why employ Ralph Reed and what factors contributed to his importance? More specifically how does this shape our understanding of religion and politics in the 2000 campaign?

The ascendancy of the Christian Coalition,<sup>5</sup> formed in 1989 out of the political apparatus of Pat Robertson’s failed 1988 presidential bid, can be ascribed to the talents of Ralph Reed’s energies. Reed’s breakaway in 1997 from the Coalition into the world of political and corporate consultancy offer the potential for further success. Reed himself was keen to point out that he was a “seasoned political veteran” who had already worked “on Capital Hill and numerous state wide and congressional campaigns”.<sup>6</sup> Once again the political activist was on display.

In 1979 whilst a freshman at the University of Georgia, Reed set his sights on the Universities College Republican chapter. Only 18, Reed was politically astute and conscientious enough to be dismayed by the chapters lacklustre image and the self imposed isolation of elitist fraternity. Ideologically Reed “saw a vacuum, an opportunity to promote hard-core conservatives like himself”.<sup>7</sup> Reed’s creed at this early stage was uncomplicated: “to play to win”.<sup>8</sup> So encompassing was his political

activism that it took Reed six years to earn his undergraduate degree in 1985, during which time Reed elevated himself to national level leadership. Described as “relentless and determined”, the young activist was a “Godsend”<sup>9</sup> to the Universities youthful Republicans Assisted by the arrival of the Reagan years and the transformation of the Republican Party in the South, Reed established his first political base.

In 1981 Reed moved to Washington D.C. to intern for Jack Abramoff, the then Chairman of the College Republican National Committee (CNRC). Under the tutelage of Abramoff and conservative strategist Grover Norquist, Reed’s political character was moulded.<sup>10</sup> In 1983 Abramoff promoted Reed to Executive Director of the CNRC, succeeding the incumbent Norquist. The Abramoff-Norquist-Reed triumvirate consolidated their control by whatever means they could. During the 1980s it was the College Republicans who “had a plan to train a new generation of conservative activists by sending field teams to campuses to teach grass roots organising”. Eventually, this transpired into the “organisation and running of Republican campaigns, the building of activist groups and the lobbying of Congress”. Working on the principle that “personnel is policy”,<sup>11</sup> it was a straightforward political philosophy that worked on the acquisition of numbers. The College Republicans, although established outside the Republican National Committee (RNC) had become its systemic supply for mobilisation.

But in the same year as his promotion in Washington, Reed was accused of rigging the election for his successor as President for the College Republicans at the University of Georgia. Reed’s ally, unpopular amongst many in the College Republicans, was Sam Harben who triumphed when significant number of new recruits signed up for membership on the eve of the election. Eventually Harben

admitted that a “dirty election”<sup>12</sup> had been run. One of Reed's political allies later commented that “he is completely Machiavellian” and “will do anything to win”.<sup>13</sup> Reed himself once bragged that his “goal was to be the next Lee Atwater”, a political consultant and strategist and a “bare-knuckled, brass tacks practitioner of hard-ball politics”.<sup>14</sup>

As Reed was defining his inclination for adverse or underhand political manoeuvrings, the young activist was proclaiming another conversion. In 1983 Reed had a religious experience. Until 1983, the only trace of religion in Reed was his Methodist upbringing. Reed admitted that despite having been raised in a “devout Methodist home”, by an “active mother and father in church affairs”, he had “lost touch with his spiritual roots”.<sup>15</sup> However, in the same year that Reed rose to Executive Director of the CNRC, Reed proclaimed that “the holy spirit simply demanded me to come to Jesus”. In September, in a bar in Washington, Ralph Reed “decided to make a change”<sup>16</sup> after a “gentle tugging in [his] conscience”.<sup>17</sup> This episode seemed at odds with Reed the “hard-ball politico”. Biblical instruction states that “no one can serve two masters. You cannot serve God and Mammon”, (Mathew: 6-24). This religious conversion, however, was not so much of a transformation as an amalgamation. Reed’s embrace of the spiritual was not a move away from the secular world of politics but a welding of the two. It is a vitally important nexus in Reed’s political narrative.

Faith was soon turned into political action. In 1984 a political organisation for evangelicals called Students For America (SFA) emerged. This was Reed’s first venture for incorporating religion and politics. The SFA was a diluted version of the soon-to-be-formed Christian Coalition; a grassroots organisation designed to support religious conservatives in congressional and gubernatorial contests. It proved

successful. For the SFA's first national convention in Washington D.C. in 1985, Reed managed to attract a number of high-profile conservatives, including Newt Gingrich, Jack Kemp and Jesse Helms. Along with the College Republicans, the SFA made its mark, "shifting campus sentiment to the right during the Reagan years"<sup>18</sup> and stimulating grassroots activism at the base of the Republican Party. However, in comparison to other leading figures like Pat Robertson and Jerry Falwell, Reed is given little credit for his role in mobilising Religious Right forces.

In 1989 Reed's career altered significantly. As part of the festivities at the inaugural of George W. H. Bush, Pat Robertson was to receive the SFA's Man of the Year award. Reed found himself seated next to Robertson who recognized – if he was not already aware of - the potential in the young Ralph Reed. Reed "spoke to Robertson about how to maximise the defection of socially conservative Democrats to the Republican ranks". Impressed the evangelist asked Reed to develop his vision for a grassroots political organisation. He told the former Presidential candidate "if the Roman Catholics and the evangelicals could get together and agree on a shared agenda, they would be the most effective political force that the country [had] ever seen".<sup>19</sup> Impressed, Robertson offered Reed the lead in the construction. Even though he was working on his doctorate at Emory University Reed accepted.

Reed's proclivity for political expediency and practical opportunism can also be found at this meeting. It was thought that Reed "never intended to run for Robertson's group. He planed to become a college professor, not a Christian activist". According to Reed's wife, Jo Anne, "Robertson simply got to the finish line first, offering a pay check before the University had". Moreover, Reed "did not subscribe to Robertson's theology, nor was he a political supporter, Reed volunteering for Jack Kemp, not Robertson in the 1988 presidential race".<sup>20</sup> Reed's version of events is less

prosaic but neither is it opposing. What this tells us about Ralph Reed is that despite his own commitment to Christianity, he was willing to adjust and augment his own career.

The assembly of the political machine required labour and initiative. To do this Reed projected a different image for the Coalition, one at odds with the expectations of a Religious Right organisation. The single issues of abortion, homosexuality, and school prayer more commonly associated with the religious right were subsumed in what Reed preferred to term “pro-family” policy. It was a perceptive strategy. Referring to its policies as “pro-family” toned down the Coalition’s image. It proved effective. This way, Reed managed to diffuse what was often interpreted as an aggressive, narrow approach, more familiar to the Moral Majority of the 1980s. But this was not to dismiss them. On the contrary, Reed openly paid homage to Jerry Falwell and the Moral Majority for the “blazing trail” that “pro-family operatives walked”.<sup>21</sup>

Reed’s strategy was simple: “spread the net”,<sup>22</sup> configuring the Coalition to appeal to the broadest possible audience. In his political biography Reed quoted the apostle Paul to explain his approach: “I have become all things to all men that I may by all means save some”.<sup>23</sup> In an article for the *Weekly Standard* he stated that, “What we have in mind is not a Christian agenda or even a Republican agenda. It is not a special interest agenda of any kind. It is a pro-family agenda which restores autonomy to the two parent family”.<sup>24</sup>

For the wider audience this was a more acceptable platform; more importantly, it made the Christian Coalition central to grassroots American politics.<sup>25</sup> Posing himself the initial question, “what do religious conservatives really want”? Reed now answered: “They want a place at the table we call democracy”.<sup>26</sup> People of faith

should no longer be on the sidelines of political participation but an integral part of the process. This process, Reed believed, needed to find and speak a “similar language” of a “secular culture”, and the purpose was not to “dominate” but to “participate”. The “pro-family” Christian Coalition did not wish to “elect Billy Graham to the presidency” but wanted to “give our values a voice in the process”.<sup>27</sup> Devoid of the fire-and-brimstone evangelism that one would have expected from a religious conservative group came something different. Businesslike Reed presented a new face as well as a new style. His “media appearances” contributed significantly to “build and sustain the Christian Coalition”.<sup>28</sup> His presence and presentation proved a winning combination.

Tactically Reed understood that it was not Washington that directly needed the focus of the Christian community but the state. It was in the counties, neighbourhoods, school boards, and state legislatures that Reed correctly surmised were the battle grounds. From the ground up, not the top down change could be made. If the Coalitions mission of “reversing the moral decline and encroaching secularism”<sup>29</sup> were to be carried out then this was the method. Reed stated that “the Lord is going to give us this nation back one precinct at a time, one neighbourhood at a time, and one state at a time”.<sup>30</sup> Stealthily, the Coalition made steady progress into a “number of elections for city and county office” by “affiliated candidates running for a variety of posts”. The “customary campaign venues were sidestepped”, and by “cross-referencing membership lists of conservative churches with registered voters” the bloc was targeted more precisely. More importantly Reed sought to get the religious observant in general and not necessarily those who leaned Republican. For Reed it was a meticulous task.<sup>31</sup>

Similar to Karl Rove, the drive for Reed was in the detail. To many this type of political organisation and activism was hum-drum, removed from the exciting end of the political spectrum. For Reed it was essential; the organisation of state chapters was “the enfranchisement of one of the largest and most under-represented constituencies in the United States”; a body that would be a “national political organisation dedicated to mobilising, educating and activating Evangelicals and their Roman Catholic allies”.<sup>32</sup> Reed turned the Coalition into “more of an electoral machine than a lobby”, giving “spectacular success in turning out voters”, particularly in “closely run races”.<sup>33</sup> If the Coalition’s aims were to be fully realised, however, they had to make inroads into party politics at a higher level. The state-based strategy was its strength but it was in Congress that it needed to be effective.

Reed’s contributions to Newt Gingrich’s (R-Georgia) legislative programme in the mid-1990s, “The Contract with America”, went some way to achieving this. It was around the policies of the Contract with America that Republican candidates could hopefully campaign in the 1994 congressional elections. Reed was initially petitioned for his input by the chairman of the House Republican Conference Dick Armev.<sup>34</sup> The Contract with America, partly pushed, promoted and financed by the Coalition, offered an involvement that the grassroots voter could see as a tangible inroad into the political process. As Reed indicated, “political involvement is a dynamic process” that neither religion nor politics were exempt from changing each other.<sup>35</sup>

Reed’s approach, always leaning more towards the political strategist than the spiritual advisor, did not go unrecognised. Describing him as “a born again Christian with a fine sense of the secular mechanics of American politics”,<sup>36</sup> *Time* highlighted

an individual who appeared to be more infused with politics than religion. The question was how to utilise his flexibility, his attitude, presentation and tactics.

By 1996 the coalition claimed to have 1.7 million members.<sup>37</sup> This was a huge jump, compared to Reed and Robertson's proclamation that the Coalition had "twenty-five thousand members and twelve state chapters"<sup>38</sup> within its first year. Reed referred to this simply as "building up political capital".<sup>39</sup> Under Reed the Coalition was enthused, moving forward into the modern political arena. Over the course of the next eight years Robertson's initial assessment of Reed proved accurate as he cultivated a flourishing and influential organisation and a dominant force within the Republican Party. To those within the Coalition and the Religious Right grouping as a whole Reed appeared the figure of a triumphant.

It was with mixed emotions then that on April 23, 1997 Ralph Reed announced his departure from the Christian Coalition to pursue the role of a political consultant. The political consultancy firm Century Strategies based in Atlanta, Georgia was formed. Century Strategies was described as a consulting service for campaigns with "pro-life, pro-family and pro-free enterprise candidates at every level of government".<sup>40</sup> Although Reed did not rule out Century Strategies working for a Democrat, it was apparent that whilst a door had been left open to the Coalition the newly formed company was more suitably arranged for Republicans and in particular the Religious Right. The departure looked to be a complete transformation, a re-invention appearing to show Reed firmly embedded in the secular world of politics. However, the move from the Christian Coalition to Century Strategies was not a clean break.

Despite his projected departure from the Coalition on September 1, 1997, Reed remained on the board of the Coalition until December 1998.<sup>41</sup> In his farewell press conference, Reed stated that the reason for remaining connected to the Coalition was to help the organisation find a successor. In spite of Reed's proclivity as a political strategist it was not a renouncement of his religious ties. There were other practical reasons for remaining. In addition to "helping find a successor" Reed had residual interests such as the Samaritan Project, the Coalition outreach programme designed to help inner-city poor and he pledged ongoing support for other faith-based initiatives, ministries and organisations, in particular the American Compass.<sup>42</sup>

Reed's departure appeared timely, however. In fact, there was a strong argument that Reed had reason to court a degree of estrangement from the Coalition. It remains to be ascertained definitively but Reed's departure from the Coalition has been closely linked to the Coalition's demise. While it is possible to plot a rise in Reed's fortunes it was also possible to plot varying degrees of failure in the Coalition.

As early as 1996, Judy Liebert, the Coalitions chief financial officer, raised concerns about financial discrepancies for over-billing with Federal prosecutors. Liebert maintained Reed was implicated, as he had handed over the Coalition's mailing list free of charge to Ben Hart of Hart Conover, a direct mail vendor who had allegedly over-billed. No charges were ever brought but the wrangling and accusations were damaging. During 1996 the Federal Election Committee (FEC), (civil action No. 96-1781) "sued the Coalition for alleged violations of elections laws going back to 1992, including in-kind contributions for Republican candidates. The tax status of the Coalition allowed for funds to be channelled to political education projects but not directly to particular candidates".<sup>43</sup> The supplied voter guides were supposed to be non-partisan.

In 1998 the religious advocacy group Americans United, which promotes the separation of church and state, advised that the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) examine the Coalition. The following year the IRS revoked the Coalition's provisional tax-exemption status, in view of the Coalition's distribution of "voter guides" which they deemed had been partisan. Losing up to \$300,000 in back taxes and penalties the Coalition reorganized as the Christian Coalition of America, in both an effort to regain tax-exempt status and as a form of reinvigoration.<sup>44</sup>

Free from tax exempt status, however, the Coalition was able to focus fully upon politics in a more openly partisan manner. Financially there were short falls. Between 1996 and 1997 there had been a deficit of \$8 million, public tax forms showing that the Coalition's income in 1996 had been \$26 million but only \$18 million in 1997.<sup>45</sup> Several Churches linked to the Christian Coalition began to disassociate themselves, primarily for fear of losing their own tax-exempt status.<sup>46</sup> This exacerbated a decline in membership and resources that was now affecting the Coalition's image making the Coalition looking beleaguered. Critics maintained the membership numbers had been inflated all along, and had occasion to refer to the Coalition as a paper tiger.

It is still a matter of debate how much responsibility Reed carries for the Coalition's downfall. Some members of the Coalition maintained that the problems were post-Reed, others that it occurred on his watch. Whether or not he deserved blame, Reed's departure into political consultancy was judicious enabling him to move more freely amongst political circles without fear of been labelled as someone simply from the religious right. Reed's value was twofold. On the one hand he was useful as a political consultant whilst maintaining valuable ties with the religious grouping.

This dual positioning was the most understandable of reasons for including Reed into the Bush campaign. It was a double-edged sword that the Republican Party faced in its relationship to the religious right was no exception for Bush. The necessity to align at state level where the power base of the Religious Right lay was something that at a national level had to be mitigated. The perception of Bush as someone firmly tied with the Religious Right and as a promoter of their cause rarely acknowledges that politically the relationship had to have a sense of balance, at least publicly. If Religious Right kingpins like Robertson, Dobson and Falwell offered their endorsement and were willing to rally their troops in support of Bush, then so be it, so long as it appeared to be of their own volition. This arms length affiliation politically suited Bush. It was also the perfect role for Reed.

The timeline for asserting Reed's joining the Bush campaign is usually cited post-New Hampshire, specifically to help after the defeat there; this is incorrect. Reed's connection with the campaign was from as early as 1997. Reed claimed that, three years earlier, he met with Bush and said that if he ran for the presidency he would like to be a part of the team and would "help in what ever capacity"<sup>47</sup> he could. This timeframe corresponds to the one in which Karl Rove began his planning and assembly of personnel for Bush's presidential run. But the Bush campaigns use of Ralph Reed at that time raises several issues. Firstly, Ralph Reed was an untried political consultant. Secondly, Bush already possessed a very good, tried and tested consultant and strategist in the shape of Karl Rove. So what was the criterion for his addition?

In the first instance, the little that was known of Reed as a political consultant had been unproductive. In 1997, Reed joined the campaign of the Fulton County Commission Chairman, Mitch Skandalakis, becoming his campaigns general

consultant. Skandalakis, a moderate Republican had previously and openly courted gay votes when running in the 1998 mid-term election cycle for Governor of Georgia. Skandalakis's closest opponent, Clint Day, a staunch conservative and devout Christian understandably looked to the faith-base for support. But to demonstrate Reed's unerring position for his client, Reed remained unmoved by his own affiliation, giving Skandalakis the conservative and religious support he needed. The Christian activist vote was perplexed. Ralph Reed, it was assumed, would show loyalty to his faith. Not so. Reed showed devotion to his client.<sup>48</sup> Skandalakis won the primary but the negative campaigning tarnished his run for the general election.

Skandalakis was not alone. In addition Reed's other clients fared badly too; for example: Pennsylvania Congressional candidate Bob Kilbanks, South Carolina state senator Mike Fair, former Republican Frank Cremeans, Republican Bob Zemel, Governor Fob James, Jr, Gary Hofmeister and Gex "Jay" Williams all lost. Reed was deemed complicit not only in the campaign tactics, but in their individual failures. Reed denied any involvement in any aspects of negative campaigning.<sup>49</sup> In all, an estimated 50% of Reed's clients were successful, however, according to some observers; these figures were arrived at by "counting the number of clients Reed was willing to identify".<sup>50</sup> The actual numbers are uncertain. Despite Reeds protestations of innocence Reed altered his representation from "campaign consultant" to a stronger emphasis on "advocacy and lobbying". Reed had changed, albeit subtly. Delicately this alteration gave advantages to Bush. Rather than being seen as someone with strong religious ties as a campaign consultant, Reed would be better thought of and thus presentable as advocating the campaign. This also meant that any lobbying of the faith base was moderated and moved into the background.

The second point that the Bush campaign was already in possession of a gifted and proven political strategist is a far more complex proposition. But not only does this allow us to see where Reed fitted into the campaign's plans, it also gives us a better idea of what mechanisms were at work within the campaign. This apparatus was politically, not religiously expedient.

Karl Rove and his company Karl Rove & Co.<sup>51</sup> formed in 1981 brought together a comprehensive and most sought after index of direct mailing lists. Over the following two decades the "response rates" from those targeted were seen as "spectacular".<sup>52</sup> This had been the financial making of Rove and was a highly valuable asset that Rove guarded carefully.

It was a surprise then that in March 1999, Bush told Rove to sell the company. According to Bush he "wanted 120% of his attention, he wanted him full-time, day and night".<sup>53</sup> The theory was that with his company out of the way there would be no distraction from the campaign. Those close to Rove found this a curious request especially given the effort Rove had invested in the company and the fruits it had provided. Plus, its existence aided, not hindered the campaign.

To a degree, Bush's request seemed reasonable and if accepted the vacuum left by the companies withdrawal had to be occupied. This could explain the reasoning behind employing Reed and Century Strategies. The question, was could Ralph Reed and Century Strategies fill this void? On the strength of early results and experience the answer was no. Therefore there has to be additional reasoning behind the employment of Reed.

This state of affairs becomes clearer once we understand that the divestiture of Karl Rove & Co was not, as Bush had requested, completely wholesale. In fact, there was a residual working presence of Karl Rove & Co. Rove was still listed as the

president of the company and remained part-owner until September 2000, a fact Rove omitted to disclose in his financial disclosure form.<sup>54</sup> In March, two former employees of Rove's, Ted Delisi (then press spokesman for Attorney General John Cornyn of Texas) and Tod Olsen (a registered lobbyist) bought, incrementally, the political consulting portion of the company<sup>55</sup> along with another auxiliary of Karl Rove & Co called Praxis List. Over the course of the campaign Robert Bryce of the Austin Chronicle, wrote on August 2, 1999 that the Bush campaign paid \$51,573 to the Praxis List Company, in addition to the Olsen & Delisi Company who received \$155,000 for direct mail work.<sup>56</sup> Clearly Rove was still closely tied to the companies and to some degree still in control.

But there were broader dimensions to this situation. Any monies involved remained it would appear in a form of loop, never moving too far away from the campaign. With the view that Rove's firm was no longer in play it gave a sense of legitimacy to Reed's inclusion while at the same time having no detrimental effect on the actual machinery of the campaign. What is remarkable about the establishment of the Bush/Reed alliance was that Reed's acquisition and presence was undertaken and carried out quite implicitly. This was not surprising given the reality of Karl Rove's lingering presence.

As an almost hidden feature, Ralph Reed and Century Strategies downplayed the potential for a harmful affiliation between Bush and religious forces. Having Reed's advocacy and lobbying was a bonus – any campaign was allowed more than one consultant - but the clearest link to success for Reed remained the narrow cast of the religious base. This would have provided an oblique link to the mobilisation of the evangelical vote under the guise of political consultancy. Tactically Reed was an inactive, but primed, link between Bush and the Religious Right. Should Reed's

services and/or loyalty be needed it was better to have him on the inside and standing by, rather than on the outside.

On 25, January 2000, a *New York Times* article by Richard L. Berke suggested that Reed's delivery into the Bush campaign was indeed to secure Reed's services so that no other candidate could.<sup>57</sup> The argument ran that Rove introduced Reed into the campaign by presenting Century Strategies with a lucrative consultancy contract with the Texas based energy corporation Enron. Enron, now firmly established as having had a deep reach into the Bush political machine was ideally placed to offer such a luring and anchoring role. As political analyst Kevin Phillips wrote "it is unclear whether the Bush family built Enron or vice versa." In fact, Enron was, according to the Centre for Responsive Politics, the most generous contributor to the Bush campaign with \$2.3 million between 1999 and 2000.<sup>58</sup> Karl Rove was one of a number of soon to be White House officials who were listed as share holders in Enron. Along with Dick Cheney, Lewis "Scooter" Libby and Nicholas E. Calio amongst others, Rove had a particularly large portfolio valued at between \$100,000 and \$200,000.<sup>59</sup> There was certainly scope for such a deal.

What is certain is that in September 1997 Century Strategies accepted<sup>60</sup> and the association continued until October 2001, when, according to Tim Phillips, Century Strategies Vice president, it ended "in mutual agreement".<sup>61</sup> During this time Ralph Reed was in receipt of between \$10,000 and \$20,000 a month.<sup>62</sup> In all, Enron paid \$300,000 in fees to Century Strategies.<sup>63</sup>

Prompted by the New York Times article the conservative watchdog, Judicial Watch, Inc.<sup>64</sup> called for a federal investigation. This was to examine whether the contract between Reed and Enron was to avoid Reed's fee coming from Bush campaign funds. Had Reed have been paid by Enron on behalf of the Bush campaign

in a form of “in-kind” payment, it would have violated the Federal Election Campaign Act [U.S.C. 441B] which Judicial Watch was adjudged it had. The suggestion was that Ralph Reed was brought into the fold via the contract with Enron. This was considered an “in kind” way of securing his services. It was speculated that it was Karl Rove in particular who made the offer to Reed. Reed denied that Rove had “put in a good word for him”<sup>65</sup> with Enron, advocating that the contract with Enron was completely separate.

In an interview on January 26, 2002 with CNN’s Judy Woodruff, Reed faced questions on the New York Times article. Reed denied the accusations but confirmed various points. Reed also confirmed that he did indeed join the Bush team and more specifically from “early 1999”<sup>66</sup> his firm was paid for its services by the Bush team and the Republican National Committee. Federal Election Commission filings do confirm this. Reed stated that the notion that sources telling the New York Times that “Enron took care of Reed”, were “untrue”.

However, Woodruff raised a problem. Century Strategies initial brief from Enron was to organise grassroots support for the de-regulation of electricity in the state of Pennsylvania. Enron’s overall aim was to win a central role in that particular states market. Nationally Enron aspired to the deregulation of the United States energy markets with a view to freeing up the market for its own manoeuvres. But “Pennsylvania politicians found it curious that Mr Reed would be enlisted in a state where he had little experience”.<sup>67</sup> Woodruff said that “CNN had done some checking” and had discovered that Enron “has no electricity customers in the state of Pennsylvania, so what exactly were you doing for them back in 97”? Reed’s answer was philanthropic and elusive. “We were organising customers; encouraging support for deregulation that would allow for more competition and more choice. It was a

great success. Implemented by the public service commission it became a model for the nation".<sup>68</sup> Woodruff then pointed out that it had indeed been implemented; and, signed into law in "December 96",<sup>69</sup> some ten months before Reed joined Enron.

In February 2003 the Federal Election Committee (FEC), prompted by the New York Times report, found that the decision by Enron to hire Reed was not an "in-kind" way of securing his services on behalf of the Bush-Cheney presidential campaign. The FEC did find, however, more money involved than had originally been estimated and did conclude that there was a lack of work for these sums. Whilst the FEC could only deal in hard facts it remained clear that whether through an "in-kind" payment or not Reed's services were not in the employment of other candidates and as a channel to the Religious Right the Bush campaign could remain aloof. Karl Rove, however, whose continued involvement was deflected by the involvement of Reed and Century Strategies. Furthermore, substantial amounts of campaign money remained within the confines of the campaign.

What emerged from this period was the lack of clarity to the Bush/Reed relationship. Overall there was a feeling of detachment, a disconnected and aloofness that harboured distrust. While this allowed for a separation to any negative aspects of the campaign that would follow, it also came at a price. In the fall of 1998 Ralph Reed signed on with Microsoft a contract not revealed to the Bush campaign. The undertaking of the contract was understandable, Microsoft paying \$20,000 a month for Reed's services;<sup>70</sup> nevertheless it appeared to be a conflict of interest. In April 2000 the *New York Times* reported that it was alleged that due to pressure from the Clinton Justice Department for supposed monopoly and anti-competitive practice, Microsoft needed to lobby for its own support to counter balance the accusations and any impending penalties that may ensue. The argument ran that through Reed

Microsoft hoped to find more targeted support with Republicans and Conservatives. It was thought that through those opposed to Clinton they would find more ideological favour for their laissez-faire and anti-regulatory approach.

In addition to this, the potential to lobby the candidate seen as most likely to win not only the nomination but the presidency suited Microsoft to winning future goodwill from the Bush campaign. But significantly there was no disclosure of the Microsoft contract to Bush. When an apology from both Reed and Century Strategies was eventually forthcoming it became apparent that Governor Bush was indeed unaware that “one of its senior consultants was lobbying the campaign behind the scenes”.<sup>71</sup> Scott McClelland, a spokesman for the Bush campaign stated that “Reed’s Microsoft contract was an unpleasant surprise for us”.<sup>72</sup>

Despite the negative press and the obvious embarrassment handed to the Bush Campaign, Reed denied any accusation of stealth lobbying on behalf of Microsoft towards the Bush campaign. Nevertheless, Reed remained a client to both Bush and Microsoft. Evidently, Reed had his own agenda and its guiding principles were far removed from the religious. But the failure to dismiss Reed demonstrated that he had potential value in other quarters. Although the story broke post-South Carolina the value of maintaining Reed’s services as a possible conduit to the Religious Right vote had already been demonstrated. Favourably, South Carolina also held any possible rewards for having placed the Bush campaign back on track. South Carolina was once more the focal point.

It is worth noting that similar to Bush, Reed did not go into South Carolina unaware of its character or political machinery, due to his work for Bob Dole’s 1996 presidential campaign four years earlier. When Bob Dole saw a heavy defeat to Pat Buchanan in New Hampshire and a late rally in the Republican primaries from Steve

Forbes, the South Carolina “firewall” came once more into life, partly through the involvement of the Christian Coalition who mobilised the states Religious Right base against Forbes and Buchanan. Reed, along with South Carolina Governor David Beasley was instrumental in uniting the faith base behind Dole.

The 1996 Republican primary was comparable to the contest in February 2000. Similarly, the religious right was not in agreement and whilst Reed supported Dole, Gary Bauer opted for Pat Buchanan. Whilst Gary Bauer was, like Reed, arguably as political as he was religious, his approach was far less pragmatic. Reed’s big tent strategy enabled him to take a more conciliatory approach to the running field. Bob Dole although viewed as the expected winner “needed the Coalition’s support and would thus be amenable to its demands”. Buchanan, although possessing a “base amongst Christian activists had the potential to threaten the Christian Coalition’s position as the dominant force for social Conservatism”. In short, the Christian Coalition was unhappy about some of Buchanan’s stances, namely his “attitudes towards Israel and protectionism”.<sup>73</sup> This matter-of-fact manner in which the religious right, or certainly Reed and Bauer were willing to take demonstrates their practical approach. Reed would not have been remiss about any lessons learnt from 1996. He certainly had more knowledge than Bush of South Carolina.

As a result Reed would have been acutely aware of several warning signs. Despite successes in 1996 there were also recent failures. In 1998 the incumbent Republican governor of South Carolina, David Beasley, himself helpful in the Religious Right’s mobilisation in 1996, was ousted by Democrat Jim Hodges, the former minority leader of the state House of Representatives. The so-called solid Republican South was hit hard that year with losses in both Alabama and Georgia.

The firewall, temporarily, had faltered for one of its main protagonists. The Religious Right base so strong in 1996 was deficient in its turn out that year.

But by 2000 the mood was mixed. As the nineties came to a close the Religious Right were in one of their many periods of apparent breakdown. Following the acquittal of President Clinton in 1999 social conservative and president of the Free Congress Foundation and co-founder of the Heritage Foundation Paul Weyrich's tried to sum up the mood. In an open letter to fellow conservative leaders Weyrich's February 16, declaration called for "quarantine", for Conservative Christians to "drop out of this culture, and find places where we can live godly, righteous and sober lives". There was, according to Weyrich "no longer a Moral Majority".<sup>74</sup> Had the concept that the religious right was one, monolithic element been true then it may well have expired through this period, but it was not and it did not.

Ironically, the apparent balkanisation of the Religious Right grouping following the Clinton years was given unity, particularly as the running field of potential suitors for to support in 2000 looked promising. As Clinton's final term in office came to a close and by using the anti-Clinton feeling as fuel, there now appeared a real chance for a pro-Christian candidate to succeed and promote their causes. Weyrich's letter may have highlighted the mood amongst some evangelical Christians but generally it was not heeded. The apparent fragmentation of the grouping allowed for evolution in some whilst others waned. Reed's step down from the Coalition seemed to add to the notion of a meltdown amongst the Religious Right, but Reed was one of those who managed to develop. Amidst the uncertainty, however, Reed's ensuing progress would add in some sense to a feeling of cohesion as he worked to unite the faith base behind Bush.

Reed's brief, we can assume, was uncomplicated: to convince the Religious Right that George W. Bush was preferable to the maverick McCain. Whereas there was little enthusiasm for Bob Dole in 1996 there was a very different feel to the candidates in 2000, particularly towards George W. Bush. To assist him Reed had several advantages. In addition to using his vast Rolodex, McCain could not or would not morph into anything else and was, as we have seen, largely complicit in his own demise. It was therefore best to let McCain be himself. Furthermore, the Religious Right were already tepid towards McCain. This came largely on the point of abortion where McCain was seen as inconsistent. But it was the actual mobilisation of the grass roots voter, the accumulation of numbers on the ground that were needed to swamp anything McCain could muster. To achieve this, the voter had to be turned away from McCain, put-off as completely as possible. Ralph Reed certainly seemed the best equipped to do this.

The Christian Coalition that Reed had appeared to move away from was now the link needed to help smooth the progress of his client Bush. It was Pat Robertson then whose assistance was needed. The Robertson endorsement came early on and was arguably a figure already in position. When Bush spoke to the Associated Press in March 1999 stating that "America is not ready to overturn Roe v. Wade because America's hearts are not right", it naturally caused a sense of unease amongst the social conservative pro-life base, so much so that Robertson came quickly to Bush's aid, proclaiming that Bush was "profoundly pro-life".<sup>75</sup> Later on into the campaign Robertson made his and the Religious Right's position that he believed he represented, very clear. Speaking in February with Wolf Blitzer on CNN's Late Edition Robertson said: "if he [McCain] becomes the Party's nominee the Coalition

would sit this vote out. We would not support him and you would see a lot of Christian support for the Republican Party go out of the door”.<sup>76</sup>

Politically and religiously Bush and Robertson had history. We should recall that Bush garnered support amongst the Religious Right base for his father against Robertson in 1988 and that he spiritually, as well as very publicly, rallied against Robertson during his Texas Governorship in the Karl Faye Tucker trial. Sentenced to death for the murder of two people Karla Faye Tucker “found Jesus and salvation”<sup>77</sup> and even went on to marry a prison chaplain. In looking to diminish her sentence she came to the attention of the Religious Right who rallied to help appeal against her sentence. Pat Robertson was one of those who led the charge. But whatever Bush’s own faith he was first and foremost the Governor of Texas with, as Bush termed it, “a charge to keep”. For Bush there was “no room for religion in public policy.”<sup>78</sup>

Whatever protestations were made to Bush by Robertson about Karla Faye Tucker Bush remained steadfast. To possibly explain no residual acrimony between them it is worth noting that Bush, as outlined in his political biography, saw Robertson a friend.<sup>79</sup> Viewed this way the alignment by Robertson to the establishment choice and as a channel for Reed gives us a personal as well as a political angle. It also emphasises that these men were guided by more than religion. This aspect of going beyond the religious was an important, if not overlooked element to the relationship.

Strategically, Bush was advantageously positioned to challenge McCain in South Carolina. What remained was for tactics to be implemented. One of the most important traits to emerge from the South Carolina primary, for all the infusion of religion, was its lack of religious virtue. In fact, the attempt to persuade the Religious Right and the broader electorate that Bush was “their man” witnessed the most un-

Christian of campaigns. Aimed directly at McCain was a savage, vituperative set of tactics. The question was, was their source religious?

Throughout South Carolina floods of e-mails, telephone calls, radio adverts and flyers circulated the pews of the states churches negatively targeting McCain. McCain was accused of “fathering illegitimate children to a North Vietnamese woman, which, it was said was why during his captivity he had received special treatment from the Viet Cong”. There were also references to their “adoption of a dark skinned daughter from Bangladesh”. Bob Jones University professor Richard Hand sent an e-mail to “fellow South Carolinians” stating that McCain had “chosen to sire children without marriage”.<sup>80</sup> They developed further. “McCain was gay, McCain voted for the largest tax increase ever, his wife stole prescription drugs from a charity and McCain was pro-abortion and he had left his first crippled wife”.<sup>81</sup> The personal turned political. Carol A. Campbell Jr., for example, former Governor of South Carolina was one of many to attack McCain’s appeal to the Democrat vote, Carol stating in one advert that “McCain was a tool of a Democratic plot”.<sup>82</sup> Michael Graham, conservative writer and a radio host in Charleston said, “I have worked on hundreds of campaigns in South Carolina and I’ve never seen anything as ugly as that campaign. It was 100% McCain sucks”.<sup>83</sup>

This form of vigorous, negative campaigning was promoted through pro-Bush hit and run political organisations that suddenly appeared and then disappeared in South Carolina. With an expenditure of millions of dollars they saturated the campaign with malign, almost unaccountable accusations; the more derogatory the better. But whereas McCain was the acknowledged recipient of the orchestrated negative campaign, Ralph Reed is often the acknowledged contributor. In fact, Ralph Reed has been almost completely credited for the uncomplimentary nature and tactics

that the campaign took. But despite the continued proclivity for naming him, it is difficult to pin down any action attributed directly to him. The difficulty, then and now was attempting to locate sources to censure for these activities.

In attempting to do so it became clear that although Reed may well have been a chief protagonist it was others who stood out more clearly. McCain's political director, John Weaver remarked post-election that it was the combined effort. "Ralph Reed, Pat Robertson and Jerry Falwell are to be congratulated,"<sup>84</sup> stated Weaver. "We lost to the religious right proudly – they overwhelmingly turned out for Bush".<sup>85</sup> Post-South Carolina McCain himself was highly critical of the same religious elements that he believed had seriously damaged his must win campaign there. On the day before the Virginian state primary on February 28, nine days after the South Carolina primary, McCain, still stinging from the manner of the defeat made a campaign address at Cox high School, Virginia Beach. McCain took the same line as Weaver and singled out evangelists Robertson and Falwell for the attacks. "They distort my pro-life message and smeared the reputations of my supporters because I don't pander to them".<sup>86</sup> Reed was not mentioned.

McCain's reference to the smearing of his supporters alluded to former Senator for New Hampshire Warren Rudman, the National Co-Chairman for the McCain campaign who was referred to as a "bigot".<sup>87</sup> This followed remarks Rudman made in his autobiography criticising the Religious Right's role in politics in which he said they were "anti-abortion zealots, homophobes and would-be censors".<sup>88</sup> Robertson, however, could not distance himself from the calls that McCain was referring to, it was his recorded voice, but he did detach his comments from the Bush campaign which they equally reciprocated.

But McCain did not stop there. As allies of Bush's McCain described the Christian right as "agents of intolerance" and denounced what he said were the tactics of "division and slander".<sup>89</sup> McCain's assertions were also in response not only to what took place in South Carolina but to Robertson's sponsored phone calls to voters in advance of the Michigan Republican primary on February 22. As a continuation of the smear campaign McCain's abortion record was in particular challenged. Robertson urged voters to "protect unborn babies and restore religious freedom by opposing Senator McCain".<sup>90</sup>

Once more, McCain seemed to miscalculate his attack, even if a response was warranted. Despite having Gary Bauer<sup>91</sup> by his side at the time McCain still had not learnt from his previous miscalculations. For one thing it was still early in the primaries to completely assail the Religious Right, and in particular key figures. But to do this on solid territory like the state of Virginia added hugely to the risk. The home of Pat Robertson's Christian Broadcasting Network, based in Virginia Beach and the base of Falwell's Moral Majority and Liberty University which he founded was a curious and dangerous choice for McCain. The proximity of these attacks may also account for Robertson's more high profile attacks on McCain. But it was in South Carolina the smear campaign's anatomy had its genesis and it is Pat Robertson and not Ralph Reed who is more conspicuous in the activities against John McCain. Accredited with actively and effectively contributing to what John Dickerson of *Slate Magazine* referred to as "a scorched-earth"<sup>92</sup> campaign against McCain in South Carolina, Robertson is certainly more in evidence.

Unlike Reed, Robertson was the one figure who was publicly open about his position and dislike of McCain as well as his open endorsement for Bush. Interviewed on February 13, on the Late Edition with Wolf Blitzer, Pat Robertson clearly spelled

out his, reaffirming as he perceived it, the Religious Right position on McCain. “I do believe that if he [McCain] became the nominee of the Republican Party, that the Christian Coalition, would not put out 75 million voter guides, would not urge its membership to vote for anybody in the general election, and I think there'll be a defection of Christian Conservatives in major waves. I'm talking about a large portion of the Republican base would walk away”.<sup>93</sup>

This was a powerful message. Given that the Christian Coalition had “proxies in all forty-six counties”<sup>94</sup> in South Carolina it had to be taken seriously. Mobilising Religious Right support was not, however, the same as going negative. Crucially Washington correspondent Adele Stan suggested that the role of Robertson who was indeed perceived to be a political tool, an instrument belonging to a broader mechanism. Stan cited Reed, saying that Pat Robertson was in 1999 “in reserve”, primed to go “negative on McCain”<sup>95</sup> should McCain prosper in those early rounds. This should be treated with caution, but if true, then Robertson was less autonomous than believed and controlled or prompted in some measure by Reed. This moves Reed into a completely different position in which Reed would appear to be orchestrating some elements of the negative campaign. What it does show is that Reed too had someone, a proxy in the forefront.

This inconspicuousness is important. Along with the propensity to mention Reed and Robertson, Jerry Falwell was even more unremarkable. Whereas Pat Robertson was the most visible Religious Right figure to support Bush and the most vocal against McCain, Jerry Falwell was the opposite. There is no available evidence to link Falwell with any smear campaign against McCain in South Carolina; in fact, other than the continued citing of Falwell's name no specifics, other than his general endorsement for Bush are visible. It can only be concluded that the collective

assumption that they were all involved simply broadened the argument that the Religious Right were responsible for attacking McCain. This is unfounded.

Similarly, this was the case for Ralph Reed. Critics of the negative campaign against McCain, including McCain himself, regularly blame him but always fall short of naming detail. It was understandable why Reed should be a prime suspect. The orchestration for such deeds had to come from somewhere and it was logical to assume based upon his reputation he was a source; the smothering of the states voters with derogatory phone calls and mailings were thought to be characteristic of him. The covert manner in which he was brought into the campaign did not help. But there is no evidence to corroborate anything levelled against him.

Reed distanced himself from the negative telemarketing along with the other tactics used. Reed stated that his work in South Carolina “did not encompass attacks on McCain but rather dealt with mainstream issues that were central to the campaign”.<sup>96</sup> The exact nature of these “mainstream issues” were not made clear, although there is evidence that Reed was involved in working in other areas. For example, he was part of the Bush Pioneer Group, one of Bush’s Rangers. Devised by Karl Rove, the groups aim was to raise money from friendly sources to put into the Bush-Cheney campaign coffers. The monies raised were substantial. Reed’s tie to the Bush campaign as one of Bush’s campaign strategists was in an official capacity. Beyond this Reed’s role remains elusive.

What is certain is that Century Strategies received in excess of “\$350,000 from the Bush Campaign during the 2000 primaries. Included in this was \$28,831 for telemarketing for South Carolina”. In the lead up to the Iowa primary monies totalling \$186,107<sup>97</sup> were paid for the October, November and December of 1999 to Reed. Examination of campaign fillings for Bush for President Inc. with the Federal

Election Commissions index also shows that monies involved for “telemarketing” were far in excess of other individuals or organisations throughout that same period. Logically the fees involved required results and we now know that these were acquired in the main through negative campaigning. Either way, Reed was at the forefront of the campaigns advocacy and lobbying plans and pivotal in putting into practice suitable strategies.

Regardless with whom he was dealing, Reed made clear his philosophy. Originally appearing in the *Washington Post* and later reported by the *Weekly Standard*, a memo sent by Reed in October 2000 to Enron executives stated, “in public policy it matters less who has the best argument and more who gets heard and by whom”.<sup>98</sup> This snap-shot of Ralph Reed’s operating creed lets us understand that whether he is appealing to the Religious Right, Enron or Microsoft executives, Reed’s rationale was simply to gain accordingly. Put succinctly these were clients, nothing else.

In the end it was a “matter of numbers”. To achieve those numbers Reed was paid handsomely to deliver. If the “cost of victory was high, so were its rewards”.<sup>99</sup> Whilst many believe Reed’s tactical fingerprints were all over the negative campaigning, there is no evidence to corroborate this. Invisible to the media and public scrutiny Reed’s get-out-the-evangelical-vote machine worked; the Religious Right bloc opting for Bush.

The best assessment is that Reed was part of a collective political machine. He certainly was not alone. The Party organisation erected by former Governor Carol A. Campbell that once aided Bush’s father and individual efforts from people like Pat Robertson and the alumni of the Bob Jones University were all key. Reed’s skill for targeting the narrow cast vote as well as his perceived political and not religious

standing allowed for a broad approach that arguably few others could offer. Contrary to common belief, Bush's religiosity was not enough to achieve this. Ultimately it was a constellation of individuals and apparatus that could build bridges, stimulate support, and deliver results.

To all appearances Bush remained aloof to the tactics involved and was able to remain non-apologetic for the character of the campaign and the damage McCain received. In fact, Bush's attitude was even-tempered. He neither condemned nor condoned his Religious Right support. Bush stated that they were "supporters of [his]", and that he had "all kinds of supporters. The Republican Party", he went on, "needs somebody who can unite our party, somebody who can bring people together".<sup>100</sup> Bush's inference that figures like Reed, Robertson and Falwell were part of an all inclusive Republican Party allowed him simultaneously to both align and distance himself from the main protagonists. Some were less guarded and cavalier. Karl Rove stated that in the "aftermath of the ugly South Carolina primary" came one of his "proudest moments"<sup>101</sup> when he was invited to answer to Warren Rudman (McCain's campaign chairman), who felt personally maligned by the Bush-Rove tactics.

The pragmatic addition to the campaign of Ralph Reed paid dividends,<sup>102</sup> but more importantly it was a clear expression of what the Bush strategy represented and like any other political campaign the aim was to win. The acquisition of the values voter was the objective, a means to an end. More needs to be said on Reed's actual activities within the campaign but clearly the strategy to use him worked. In South Carolina Bush regained his core voters.

Beyond South Carolina Reed's activities for the Bush-Cheney campaign become even scarcer. If Reed's activities were difficult to pin-down beforehand they

were imperceptible post-South Carolina. Reed continued to work for the Bush ticket, expounding the virtues of supporting Bush not only for the Religious Right but also economic conservatives, social conservatives, moderates, pro-life and pro-choice Republicans. Reed continued to spread the net. Eventually, Reed became chairman of his native Georgia Republican Party from 2001-2002. During this time he assisted in the election of U.S. Senator Saxby Chambliss and the election of Sonny Perdue. More importantly Reed would go onto become southeast regional campaign chairman for the Bush-Cheney 2004 campaign. The region included for Georgia, Alabama, Florida, Louisiana and Mississippi. Plainly, his inclusion had been deemed valuable and arguably successful enough to give him such a position.

Historically the decision of the Religious Right to join with “secular conservatives to oppose liberal policies” in the battle over “moral and family values”,<sup>103</sup> was just as pragmatic as the Republican Party’s embracing of the Religious Right to expand its voter base. The utilisation of this space where the two intercede was reeds speciality. As a major force in bringing this union together Reed’s inclusion into the Bush campaign was both understandable and as it would turn out; necessary. Few other individuals could alchemize religion and politics like Ralph Reed. The need to reach out to the religious base following Bush’s defeat in New Hampshire made Reed’s inclusion even timelier. What is clear is that Reed’s addition in the 2000 campaign was one of political expediency. Their positions were clear. George W. Bush the politician and Ralph Reed the political consultant reached into a constituency needed to further their aims. In South Carolina this worked, but not without coming at a cost. Despite the advantage of letting individuals like Reed enter into conflict at a distance, as far from the campaign as possible, the stigma of

association to the Religious Right and dirty tricks remained. In addition, the Religious Right may well have been effectively mobilised in Bush's favour but as we have seen John McCain was largely responsible for his own demise. Another factor was the ferocity in which the Bush campaign waged its ground war against McCain, demonstrating that even in theoretically "safe states" where Bush's core voters were believed to be, was not a complete certainty. The dynamics that informed Bush's victory were complex, going beyond a simple entreaty to the Religious Right for support. Ultimately Ralph Reed's insertion into the Bush campaign of 2000 can be called a success. Helping the Bush campaign to recover following its early faltering Reed's navigation of the religious and political tensions both in South Carolina and beyond demonstrated that pragmatics had prevailed.

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<sup>1</sup> Esther Kaplan. *With God on Their Side. How Christian Fundamentalists Trampled Science, Policy and Democracy in George Bush's White House.* The New Press. (2004) p. 270

<sup>2</sup> Only two years previously the Religious Right, although strong in evidence, had failed to mobilise for born-again Southern Baptist David Beasley. As a result, Beasley lost his bid for a second term as state Governor, losing in 1988 to Democrat Jim Hodges. The belief that the states faith base were fully pledged required vigorous work to make good the vote. It was not enough that Bush's appeal to the Religious Right on the premise of religious affiliation could solely be relied upon.

<sup>3</sup> John Micklethwait & Adrian Wooldridge. (2005) *The Right Nation. Why America Is Different.* Penguin Books. (2005) p.111

<sup>4</sup> Lou Dubose., Jan Reid and Carl M. Cannon. (2003) *Boy Genius. Karl Rove, the Brains Behind the Remarkable Political Triumph of George W. Bush.* Public Affairs. New York.(2003) p. 119

<sup>5</sup> The Christian Coalition is a US Christian political advocacy group, which includes Christian fundamentalists, Evangelicals, Pentecostals, Roman Catholics and members of mainline Protestant churches.

<sup>6</sup> Ralph Reed *.Politically Incorrect. The Emerging Faith Factor in American Politics.* Word Publishing. 1994) p. 25

<sup>7</sup> Nina J. Easton. *Gang of Five. Leaders in the Center of the Conservative Crusade.* Simon and Schuster. (2000) p. 111

<sup>8</sup> Ibid. p.112

<sup>9</sup> Ibid. p.115

<sup>10</sup> Reed and Abramoff would later become key figures in the Indian gaming and Congressional bribery scandal that would in due course thwart Reed's campaign for Lieutenant Governorship.

<sup>11</sup> Nina J. Easton. *Gang of Five. Leaders in the Center of the Conservative Crusade.* Simon and Schuster. (2000). p.138

<sup>12</sup> Ibid. p.129-130

<sup>13</sup> Ibid. p.117-118

<sup>14</sup> Ralph Reed. *Politically Incorrect. The Emerging Faith Factor in American Politics.* Word Publishing. (1994) p. 25

<sup>15</sup> Ibid. p. 26

<sup>16</sup> Nina J. Easton. *Gang of Five. Leaders at the Center of the Conservative Crusade.* Simon and Schuster. (2000) p.201-202

<sup>17</sup> Ralph Reed. *Politically Incorrect. The Emerging Faith Factor in American Politics.* Word Publishing. (1994) p. 26

<sup>18</sup> Ibid. p.196

<sup>19</sup> Stephen Bates. *God's Own Country. Tales from the Bible Belt.* Hodder & Stoughton. (2007) p. 257

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- 20 Nina J. Easton. *Gang of Five. Leaders in the Center of the Conservative Crusade*. Simon and Schuster. (2000) p.209
- 21 Ibid. p. 194
- 22 Ibid. p.221
- 23 1 Corinthians 9:19-22
- 24 Matthew Continetti. A Decade of Reed. Volume 010, issue 39. From June 27<sup>th</sup>, 2005 issue: One Republican's long, lucrative march through the institutions.  
<<http://www.weeklystandard.com/content/public/Articles/000/000/005/732ujayv.asp?pg=1>> 7/09/07
- 25 Martin Durham, *The Christian Right, the Far Right and the boundaries of American conservatism*. Manchester University Press. (2000) p.15
- 26 Ralph Reed. *Politically Incorrect. The Emerging Faith Factor in American Politics*. Word Publishing. (1994) p. 24
- 27 Ibid. p. 222-223
- 28 Nina J. Eason. *Gang of Five. Leaders in the Center of the Conservative Crusade*. Simon and Schuster. p. 388
- 29 People For the American Way Action Fund, "The Christian Coalition: The Moral Majority of the 1990s," September 1992  
<[http://www.pfaw.org/pfaw/general/default.aspx?oid=21840#\\_edn2](http://www.pfaw.org/pfaw/general/default.aspx?oid=21840#_edn2)>
- 30 Martin Durham. *The Christian Right, the far right and the boundaries of American conservatism*. Manchester University Press. (2000) p.170
- 31 At the Christian Coalition's 1991 Road to Victory conference Reed made his attitude to the get-out-the-vote strategy clear. Famously Reed said: "I want to be invisible. I do guerrilla warfare. I paint my face and travel at night. You don't know it's over until you're in the body bag. You don't know until election night." Untypical Christian rhetoric this may have been, nevertheless it was characteristic of Reed.
- 32 Ralph Reed. *Politically Incorrect. The Emerging Faith Factor in American Politics*. Word Publishing. (1994) p. 2
- 33 Nina J. Easton. *Gang of Five. Leaders in the Center of the Conservative Crusade*. Simon and Schuster. (2000) p. 389
- 34 Reed operated pragmatically by taking a back seat on the non-inclusion of single issues like abortion, issues often seen as immovable for the Religious Right. These had the potential to alienate party members. Instead Reed focused on issues like tax cuts for the family which he managed to obtain a commitment on. Although conciliatory, these were areas not completely uncommon to the thinking of the Coalition having already rallied against them under the Clinton administration. This wasn't without criticism, most notably from other factions within the religious right who argued that the Christian Coalition had become too conciliatory; nevertheless it proved effective.
- 35 Ralph Reed. *Politically Incorrect. The Emerging Faith Factor in American Politics*. Word Publishing. (1994) p. 25
- 36 Jeffrey H. Birnbaum. 15/05/95. TIME MAGAZINE.  
<<http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,982929,00.html>>

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- <sup>37</sup> Martin Durham. *The Christian Right, the far right and the boundaries of American conservatism*. Manchester University Press. (2000) p.17
- <sup>38</sup> Ibid. p.76
- <sup>39</sup> Sara Diamond. *Not by Politics Alone. The Enduring Influence of the Christian Right*. Guilford. (1998) p.102
- <sup>40</sup> Transcript: press conference with Ralph Reed, Executive Director of the Christian Coalition announcing his resignation. The National Press Club. Washington D.C. April 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1997. Federal Information Systems Corporation Federal News Service.  
<[http://web.lexis-nexis.com/executive/print?dd\\_jobType=spew&\\_m=c29c21f26f3ba6...](http://web.lexis-nexis.com/executive/print?dd_jobType=spew&_m=c29c21f26f3ba6...)> 23/05/06
- <sup>41</sup> Source found at: <<http://www.pfaw.org/pfaw/general/default.aspx?oid=yes>> 20/01/2006
- <sup>42</sup> Founded in 1996 by David Kuo, the American Compass had been set up to encourage the involvement of religion in social service provision. The significance was that American Compass boasted the directorship of John Ashcroft and Marvin Olasky, two central figures in the Bush/ Religious Right alliance. David Kuo eventually became managing Director of strategic communications for Reed's soon to be incorporated political consultancy firm Century Strategies.
- <sup>43</sup> Sara Diamond. *Not by Politics Alone. The Enduring Influence of the Christian Right*. Guilford. (1998) p.236
- <sup>44</sup> Thomas B. Edsall., Hanna Rosin. "IRS Denies Christian Coalition Tax-Exempt Status", The Washington Post, 1999-11-06.  
<<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/politics/daily/june99/christian11.htm>> (27/07/07)
- <sup>45</sup> Leon Howell. Christian Century, The Ups and Downs of the Religious Right. April 19-26 2000. p. 462-466.
- <sup>46</sup> Jackson Brooks. "Christian Coalition Surrenders in Tax-exempt fight, splits into two groups." CNN. 1999-10-06.  
<<http://www.cnn.com/ALLPOLITICS/stories/1999/06/10/christian.coalition/>> (27/07/07)
- <sup>47</sup> Ralph Reed denies white House, Enron Job Tie. CNN.Com  
<<http://www.allpolitics.printthis.clickability.com/pt/cpt?action=cpt&title=CNN.com+-+...>> 15/02/06
- <sup>48</sup> Under Ralph Reed Skandalakis managed to gain political momentum, eventually defeating Day. However, this early success witnessed the familiar tactics of negative campaigning once more arise. The negative attacks included "charges that Day had desecrated Indian graves on land owned by the Day family foundation." In the end Skandalakis lost the race to Democrat state Senator Mark Taylor. In the race against Taylor aggressive, negative tactics continually came out of the Skandalakis campaign. In an attempt at mobilising south-Georgian votes against what Alan Judd of the Atlanta journal-constitution referred to as "exploiting their antipathy towards Atlanta" the Skandalakis campaign broadened their attacks. Throughout this operation racially tinged television ads materialised. Speaking of incompetence on the part of a predominantly black administration in Atlanta the cities black mayor, Bill Campbell, was described as a "buffoon." In addition to this, ads showing Taylor shaking hands with Campbell with voiceovers proclaiming, "First Taylor fought to preserve discriminatory racial quotas; then he was solidly endorsed by the homosexual newspaper, Southern Voice," contributed to the negative barrage. Ultimately these tactics backfired and Skandalakis witnessed a slide down the polls.  
Alan Judd. Smears cited in Reed races. The Atlanta Journal-Constitution. 04/26/06  
<<http://media.pfaw.org/Right/Reed.html>> 25/10/2007
- Washington Post, 11/25/98  
<<http://farleft.blogspot.com/2005/04/ralph-reed-evil.html>> 19/12/2007

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- <sup>49</sup> These defeats in 1997-8 left a feeling amongst Republicans and commentators alike that these tactics were responsible for a moderate Republican back lash and the wholesale loss of various Republican positions through out the south. This was despite the fact that Reed had represented moderate Republicans like Skandalakis. It had also been noted that the black vote in particular had been heavily dissuaded, their support shifting significantly to Democrats.
- <sup>50</sup> Joshua Micah Marshall. 'The Fire Wall Next time', The American Prospect, 31<sup>st</sup> January 2000.
- <sup>51</sup> It was Rove who chiefly initiated the idea of direct mailing. That is: the designation of potential Republican voters; who, once identified were sent fundraising and/or voter registration letters written specifically to appeal to them. This was his speciality.
- <sup>52</sup> Lou Dubose., Jan Reid and Carl M. Cannon. *Boy Genius. Karl Rove the Brains Behind the Remarkable Political Triumph of George W. Bush*. Public Affaire Reports. (2003) p. 85
- <sup>53</sup> Ibid. p. 126
- <sup>54</sup> Timothy J. Burger. August 9<sup>th</sup> 2001. Bush Aid Hid Business Link. Daily News Washington Bureau.  
<[http://web.lexis-nexis.com/executive/print?dd\\_jobtype=spew&\\_m=067331b3b49ab3...](http://web.lexis-nexis.com/executive/print?dd_jobtype=spew&_m=067331b3b49ab3...)> 18/03/06
- <sup>55</sup> The Center for Public Integrity stated that: "Federal financial disclosure documents Rove filed in 2001 indicate that the sale's proceeds were paid in instalments during 1999 and 2000, reported as \$579,000 in payroll distribution and \$108,156 in attributed income. Queried on this, Olsen refused to specify whether this was all that was paid for the Karl Rove & Co. assets."  
<<http://www.publicintegrity.org/consultants/default.aspx?act=profiles&pid=4>> 27/08/07
- <sup>56</sup> Robert Bryce. November 5<sup>th</sup> 1999. Million-Dollar Man. Delisi Reaps Bush Money on the side.<<http://www.austinchronicle.com/gyrobase/Issue/story?oid=74564>> 27/08/07
- <sup>57</sup> Richard L. Berke. January 25<sup>th</sup>, 2002. Associates of Bush Aide say he helped win contract.  
<[http://www.home.earthlink.net/~mjohnson/post\\_911/Ralph\\_Reedand\\_Enron.html](http://www.home.earthlink.net/~mjohnson/post_911/Ralph_Reedand_Enron.html)> 21/01/06
- <sup>58</sup> The Centre For Responsive Politics. A Money in Politics Backgrounder on the Energy Industry.  
<<http://www.opensecrets.org/pressreleases/energybriefing.htm>> 20/08/07
- <sup>59</sup> Enron Who's Who. Karl Rove.  
< [http://news.bbc.co.uk/hi/english/static/in\\_depth/business/2002/enron/20.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/hi/english/static/in_depth/business/2002/enron/20.stm)> 20/08/07
- <sup>60</sup> Richard L. Berke. January 25<sup>th</sup>, 2002. Associates of Bush Aide say he helped win contract.  
<[http://www.home.earthlink.net/~mjohnson/post\\_911/Ralph\\_Reedand\\_Enron.html](http://www.home.earthlink.net/~mjohnson/post_911/Ralph_Reedand_Enron.html)> 21/01/06
- <sup>61</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>62</sup> Joe Stephens. 17<sup>th</sup> February 2002. Bush 2000 Adviser Offered to use Clout to Help Enron.  
<<http://bodurtha.georgetown.edu/enron/Bush%202000%Adviser%20Offered%20To...>> 21/01/06
- <sup>63</sup> Jack Newfield. The Nation. Ralph Reeds Gamble.  
<<http://www.thenation.com/docprint.mhtml?i=20040712&s=newfield> 15/01/2006> 15/01/06
- <sup>64</sup> Judicial Watch Inc. A conservative, non-partisan educational foundation, promoting transparency, accountability and integrity in government, politics and law.
- <sup>65</sup> Ralph Reed denies white House, Enron Job Tie. CNN.Com  
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- <sup>66</sup> Ibid.

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<[http://www.house.gov/judiciary\\_democrats/enrocontracts1tr2502.pdf](http://www.house.gov/judiciary_democrats/enrocontracts1tr2502.pdf)> 27/08/07.
- 68 Ibid. {paraphrased}.
- 69 Ibid.
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- 78 Stephen Mansfield. *The Faith of George W. Bush. Charisma house*. (2004) p.99
- 79 George W. Bush. *A Charge To Keep. My Journey To The White House*. Perennial. (2004) p.144
- 80 Richard H. Davis The anatomy of a smear campaign March 21, 2004  
<[http://www.boston.com/news/globe/editorial\\_opinion/oped/articles/2004/03/21/the\\_anatomy\\_of\\_a\\_s\\_mear\\_campaign/?page=1](http://www.boston.com/news/globe/editorial_opinion/oped/articles/2004/03/21/the_anatomy_of_a_s_mear_campaign/?page=1)> 2/04/08
- 81 Lou Dubose., Jan Reid & Carl M. Cannon. *Boy Genius. Karl Rove the brains behind the remarkable political triumph of George W. Bush*. Public Affairs. (2003) p.142
- 82 Peter Marks February 18<sup>th</sup>, 2000. The 2000 Campaign: Attack Ads; Harsh, incessant wave crosses South Carolina. New York Times.  
<<http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=940DEEDE1E31F93BA25751C0A96...>> 16/10/07
- 83 Lou Dubose., Jan Reid & Carl M. Cannon. *Boy Genius. Karl Rove the brains behind the remarkable political triumph of George W. Bush*. Public Affairs. (2003) p.142
- 84 Incidentally, in 1986 John Weaver once worked with Karl Rove, the one name absent from his criticism, the pair working on Bill Clements's triumphant campaign for governor, after which Weaver became executive director of the state Republican Party. Familiarity with Bush's leading

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political architect and what GQ Magazines national correspondent Robert Draper called “the keeper of all betrayals to Bush” shouldn’t have been surprised. Either way, all those mentioned had a history and proclivity for hard ball politics; the creation of whisper campaigns against opponents something Weaver was at one point suitably positioned to know.

Robert Draper. *Dead Certain. The Presidency of George W. Bush*. Free Press. (2007) p.242

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91 Bauer declined to endorse any of his former opponents when he dropped out of the race after his poor showing in Iowa on February 4; however, on February 16, 2000 Bauer endorsed Senator John McCain.

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<sup>99</sup> Lou Dubose., Jan Reid & Carl M. Cannon. *Boy Genius. Karl Rove the brains behind the remarkable political triumph of George W. Bush.* Public Affairs. (2003) p.147

<sup>100</sup> Bob Franken, Jonathan Karl and Gary Tuchman. McCain assails religious right on Pat Robertson's home turf. Bush accuses rival of "shamelessly using religion." February 28, 2000. <<http://archives.cnn.com/2000/ALLPOLITICS/stories/02/28/campaign.wrap/index.html>> 15/06/08

<sup>101</sup> Lou Dubose., Jan Reid & Carl M. Cannon. *Boy Genius. Karl Rove the brains behind the remarkable political triumph of George W. Bush.* Public Affairs. (2003) p.242

<sup>102</sup> In the final analysis Texas Governor George W. Bush's victory in South Carolina achieved its task. In carrying the South Carolina primary by 53% to 42% over Senator John McCain, Bush was able to re-energize his own campaign. True, there was a significant distance to go, but intrinsically the damage had been done and the core voters were brought back on line. The eighteen day gap between New Hampshire and South Carolina allowed Bush time to recover and reconfigure his strategy. It appeared as though the much talked about South Carolina "firewall" had materialized, keeping intact the necessary voting base for Bush. The possible threat of transference of any Republican, Democrat, Independent or veteran voters did not materialize; at least not in the numbers required

<sup>103</sup> Frank Lambert. *Religion in American Politics. A short History.* (2008) Princeton University Press. p.196

## CHAPTER THREE

### STRATEGY NOT SCRIPTURE

If Esther Kaplan, Kevin Philips and others are to be believed it is religion that drives George W. Bush and his politics and political ambitions are shaped by this drive. This perception of Bush was deemed strong enough for him to be seen not only as a “sympathize”<sup>1</sup> but as the “new leader” and “moral center”<sup>2</sup> of the Religious Right. Clearly, George W. Bush had a strong personal faith, placing strong emphasis on the role of religion within politics. This faith undoubtedly shaped his principles which in some cases shaped his policies. “A government that truly wants to help people should welcome the active involvement of people of faith”,<sup>3</sup> wrote Bush.

However, to state that this is the unconditional premise to his political being and political actions is wrong. If, in 2000 religious advocacy became important, Bush did not instigate the process, he exploited it. As we saw in chapter one, greater religious involvement was ordered by political necessity. Indeed, the suggestion that religion propelled Bush’s aspirations misplaces cause and effect; it was Bush’s political aspirations that helped frame religion.

This is not to say that Bush was regarded by the religious community as a secular leader separated from their beliefs and interests. On the contrary, some saw Bush quite clearly in religious terms. When on December 24, 2001 Pat Robertson resigned his position as President of the Christian Coalition, Gary Bauer was quick to assert that the new de facto head was George W. Bush, stating: “Bush is [our] leader now” adding he was “one of [our] own”.<sup>4</sup> In the eyes of those willing to censure Bush

this kind of rhetoric could only strengthen his credentials as a religious leader whose approach was a potential threat to the plurality of America.

This interpretation is suspect, however. Firstly, the religious grouping is not monolithic, but a confederacy. The Religious Right, like Conservative Christians in general are far too fragmented to have one figurehead. As Woodberry and Smith note, “Defining Conservative [Christians] is difficult because they belong to such a jumble of different denominations and movements”.<sup>5</sup> Sara Diamond described the movement as a “diverse demography of all regions, all walks of life” which is cemented by the “homogeneity of its race (predominantly white), religious affiliation (Christian) and political viewpoint (Conservative and Republican)”.<sup>6</sup> Divisions over biblical, social and political objectives and stances make it even more difficult to pin down the movement. Terms like the Religious Right help, but we must remember that the spectrum of Christian political, social movements and organizations characterized by their strong support of conservative social and political values is an umbrella term. Even when viewed through individual leaders like Pat Robertson, James Dobson and Jerry Falwell the challenges of diversity remain. Each figure looks to prop-up his own position of power and each has his own religious character and social and political outlook.

Added to this was the problem of impermanence. No matter how successful or amenable he may be, the president’s time in office is limited. This temporal difficulty is expanded into the often limiting power of the presidency itself. As president it was understandable to see why he may be able to promote their causes but in practice it was not entirely viable for the modern presidency to deliver. Professor James Q. Wilson reminds us that the modern president is a “titular head of a huge federal administration”.<sup>7</sup> The complex political machine to which the President is ultimately

answerable checks many of his expectations, even assuming they were religiously driven.

With the shift to leadership via a political figure Bauer widened the symbolic space for religion, within which a number of concepts could be articulated. These concepts were valuable to both sides. To some grass-roots supporters Bauer's words may have indicated that Bush was literally "their leader". More generally, however, it represented a focal point for all sides to come together. From Bush's perspective such rhetoric helped maintain the appearance of a union from which he could pull support. As long as such rhetoric did not emanate from him, it was open to utilization. Conversely the Religious Right had a figure upon which to focus, to at least believe that Bush was, if not one of their own, then sympathetic to their causes.

Bauer's "symbolic" representation was an emblematic approach that furnished much of the structure to the Bush/Religious Right paradigm. In 2000 timing was a crucial factor. The end of the decade had proved a turbulent time for religious forces. The Religious Right in particular had seen a number of high-profile step-downs of key organizational figures as well as several investigations into financial irregularities within some of its flag-ship organizations. Added to this the acquittal of President Clinton disconcerted and divided the grouping even further. Conservative Christians in general questioned the nation's morality but for the Religious Right, having placed great store in rallying against Clinton, there was the murmur of a withdrawal from the political arena. Paul Weyrich's open letter was a good example of this attitude. Weyrich, disillusioned with politics, thought politics "had failed". The "reason is because of the collapse of the culture. The culture we are living in becomes an ever-wider sewer. In truth, I think we are caught up in a cultural collapse of historic proportions, a collapse so great that it simply overwhelms politics". Believing that

conservatives and Conservative Christians had “lost the cultural war” he called for a “strategy of separation”.<sup>8</sup>

There was then an added imperative as 2000 approached to find a focal point for religious stimulation and revitalization. The Religious Right needed to restore a sense of morality, faith and political leverage whilst Bush required political support to shore up his candidacy. With several overlapping and favorable religious features the alignment between them looked suitable for both their purposes.

The subsequent problem of interpretation was that Bush’s critics saw these purposes in a purely religious context. Described by Kevin Phillips as a “born-again favorite of conservative Christian evangelical and fundamentalist voters”, Bush, in his policies and rhetoric, “confirmed that bond”.<sup>9</sup> Phillips wrote, “To understand George W. Bush, it is crucial to understand how the president of the United State could simultaneously be the leader of the nation’s Christian Right”.<sup>10</sup> To set out the “symbolic space” in this manner, Bush’s critics found it necessary to make jumps in narrative and analysis, omit pragmatic reasoning, and marginalize political functions as well as political necessities to move directly to the controversial, sensationalist portrayal. The notion that Bush and the Religious Right had become allies for secular reasons was readily dismissed.

Textual analysis of those who took this view revealed three areas that they most commonly employed for promoting this argument. The first feature that fuelled the criticism of religion behind Bush’s politics was the candidate’s use of religious rhetoric. The second was Bush’s outwardly-professed religious persuasion and the third the electoral power of the religious grouping, interpreted as a display of Bush’s strength and support. Collectively these elements served as the bedrock of the argument for a Bush/Religious Right alliance and program.

## **Bush's Religious Rhetoric**

Bush's religious rhetoric was interpreted as overtly favourable with the Religious Right. Esther Kaplan wrote that "Bush's language closely reflects evangelical ways of speaking and habits of mind".<sup>11</sup> It was a clear indication of Bush's unashamed faith and a blatant outreach to the religious base not only for support but also to reassure them that he was one of them. It was also considered to be language that moved beyond the civil religion expected of most leaders or dignitaries. However, this is problematic. Many examples used by those critical of Bush focus upon a post-9/11 environment. This is a wholly different setting for Bush's religiously-framed language. Before 9/11, when one might have expected urgency in the rhetoric of candidate Bush, there was a lack of such language. Furthermore, Bush's religious language and religious lobbying was usually expressed confidentially and in private. Even Kaplan admits that it was in "private"<sup>12</sup> that for example Karl Rove met with key Religious Right figures to garner their support. This was a key point. Insider accounts and biographical works on Bush show this to be a common theme. As Stephen Mansfield has pointed out, it was through specific audiences with key religious figures that Bush met with a view to "win" the Religious Right.<sup>13</sup>

Religious oratory was uncommon. Where Bush used religious language publicly it was applied either quite specifically at religious gatherings or amongst religious representatives. It was natural to entreat specific audiences and/or individuals at specific locations with relevant and endearing language. Neither was Bush alone. Bush's religiously affiliated contenders like Alan Keys, Gary Bauer and John Ashcroft used similar language at similar venues. It was Bush, however, who

was criticised for his rhetoric.

The most notable pre-9/11 example of Bush's use of religious language occurred on December 13, 1999 before the Iowa Republican caucus in the civic centre in Des Moines, Iowa. Bush took part in an open debate with fellow Republican presidential candidates before a small but partisan Republican crowd. Taking part along with Governor Bush were Steve Forbes, Senator Orrin Hatch, Alan Keyes and despite his absence from the later caucus, Senator John McCain. What followed would be one of the most controversial and repeated pieces of rhetoric that Bush would ever utter. When Bush was asked what political thinker he most identified with and why, he replied: "Christ; because he changed my heart".<sup>14</sup>

This, to anyone critical of Bush was unambiguous.<sup>15</sup> his words signalling two things; firstly, a blatant reach to Conservative Christian forces for the up and coming election, both in Iowa and beyond; and secondly, the insensitive involvement of personal faith, openly brought into the political arena. It was seen as an overtly sectarian response. On this occasion, like others, Bush's words were taken to be a fearful prospect that a born-again Evangelical Christian was running for office, the implications of which were unthinkable. To Democrats, pro-choice, liberals and some moderates the display was simply astounding.

Despite the furore, Bush's opponents did not fully utilise the event to their advantage. One line of attack was that these were the words of a man who had just committed political suicide. Instead, those present took Bush's lead. Only later was greater attention given to his remarks. No one went aggressively on the offensive and tried to turn this against Bush. The theme remained religious. Importantly the follow up on the podium, less cited than Bush's response came from those sitting next to him. His fellow running mates opted for congratulating not criticising Bush,

conceding that he had stolen the debate. Senator Orrin Hatch, a Mormon from Utah, cited Lincoln and Reagan as his political role models but equally added that he too gave “witness to Christ”. He went on to say that he knew him “to be the saviour of the world”, and that it meant “more to him than anything else”. Gary Bauer, a Baptist also quoted scripture and named Christ. Steve Forbes, an Episcopalian added, “We’ve seen in this century the bloody consequences of not realising there is a higher authority, that there is a God and that life emanates from God and God only”.<sup>16</sup>

It was reasonable for such rhetoric to be found. After all, of the estimated “100,000 to 120,000 Iowa Republicans expected to attend the caucuses saw a November poll estimate that 40% of likely Republican participants considered themselves to be evangelical”. The poll showed that “30% were Protestant and 17% Catholic”.<sup>17</sup> Even so, Bush was dismissive of the remark and attending a town meeting in South Carolina on February 12, 2000 said: “I didn’t spend much time thinking about the answer. It just came out”.<sup>18</sup>

Only now, with the advantage of time can we see that an open forum was not – nor arguably remains – a wise environment for Bush to have operated. Heavily maligned for his lack of articulation and clearly unsure of himself when off message, Bush’s remarks, under these conditions, were understandable.

If we accept the criticism that Bush has to some degree to be tutored to succeed, then we have to accept that his remarks were indeed personal, unscripted and that his answer was therefore genuine. If Bush was honest, he was also naïve. True, his remarks did register with Christians as one would expect; this show of faith undoubtedly influencing their opinion and thus their vote; but if this were part of a blatant strategy to do so, it was highly risky. It was also highly improbable.

What is clear is that Bush was not frightened to express his faith or his belief

that that faith could help others. Again, Bush's only empirical knowledge based on his tenure as Governor of Texas showed this form of rhetorical approach not only possible, but acceptable. If there was a mistake, a misreading of the audience then it was a failure to tone it down as Bush stepped up to run for the presidency. Even some religious leaders joined a chorus of discontent to declare that Bush sounded more like a priest than a potential president of a secular country.

One insider account proclaimed that Bush was conscientious and he "always took exquisite pains to avoid sectarianism when he talked about God" and that it "was no accident that he spoke of his faith rather than his Christianity".<sup>19</sup> Bush himself proclaimed in his biography to recognise that "faith can be misinterpreted in the political process". He went on to say that it was an important part of his life", giving him "focus and perspective" and that it should not be "flaunted".<sup>20</sup>

Even so, critics hung on to any religious expression Bush made, rarely giving credibility to the idea that there may be nuances to Bush's religious language. There is evidence to show that some care was given to the application of religious language. We should note that in early 1999 Karl Rove made the addition of Michael Gerson to the campaign as speech writer.<sup>21</sup> Referred to as Bush's spiritual scribe and listed in February 7, 2005 edition of *Time* as one of the twenty five most influential Evangelicals, it was Gerson who deliberately wove the religious tone into Bush's scripted speeches.

Some years later, during the second term of Bush's presidency, Gerson defended himself against the use of religious language in Bush's speeches. At a two day conference on religion and politics, Gerson said: "such language was not new in presidential rhetoric and that former President Bill Clinton referred more often to Jesus Christ than Mr. Bush" and that "presidents like Abraham Lincoln and John F.

Kennedy without difficulty invoked God in their speeches, Franklin D. Roosevelt announcing D-Day to the nation in the form of a prayer”. Gerson added that there were reasons to use religious language in presidential speeches. “I think the reality here is that scrubbing public discourse of religion or religious ideas would remove one of the main sources of social justice in our history. Without an appeal to justice rooted in faith, there would have been no abolition movement, no civil rights movement and no pro-life movement”.<sup>22</sup> Gerson acknowledged some rhetorical “missteps, such as Bush’s remarks five days after the events of September 11, 2001, that the United States had begun a crusade”. This said Gerson was “unscripted”. Otherwise Bush’s words were “carefully calibrated and fully within the tradition of American civic religion”.<sup>23</sup>

Sources close to Bush, like Gerson, although partisan, should be given some credence. Bush, not un-typically, was using religious rhetoric to political effect. At no point did Bush use religious rhetoric for religion’s sake. What Gerson had managed to highlight was the fact that “unscripted” Bush was unsound and could, as indeed he had in Iowa, make errors.

Professor David Domke disagreed. He argued that Bush was not a “petitioning supplicant” for God’s word, as for example Roosevelt and Eisenhower had been in their addresses or speeches, but that Bush was a “prophetic spokesperson”. The former, according to Domke, is when “a blessing, favour or guidance” is sought. The latter is “prophetic, issuing declarations of divine desires for the nation and the world”. Because the president has the “unique ability to act upon these beliefs”,<sup>24</sup> Domke saw this as a threat and read that a “fundamentalist leadership is implementing its policy goals”.<sup>25</sup> As we have already alluded, it is erroneous to believe that the presidential platform can ever be used to overtly promote and up-hold religious

practice. It is a useful distinction, but only a retrospective of Bush's tenure will sufficiently answer these claims. Up until now, Bush has not "acted upon his religious beliefs", neither has he "implemented" any religious based "policy".

Domke was not alone in his criticism. It is worth pointing out that some quarters of the religious community were critical too; although again, the bulk of disapproval came later, post-election. About 20 theologian professors of the Fuller Theological Seminary, the largest evangelical seminary in the country, signed a statement opposing what they called his "theology of war". An example of this was Bush's 2002 State of the Union address when Bush labelled Iraq, Iran and Korea the "the axis of evil". Although the term was penned by David Frum (Special Assistant to Bush for Economic Speechwriting from January 2001 to February 2002 and an orthodox Jew), the Fuller statement thought it a "dichotomy between a righteous United States and [the] unrighteous axis of evil". It leads, according to the statement "to a crusade in which Christians think the Christian thing to do is support war making against an allegedly unrighteous enemy". Over the course of Bush's presidency it was one of several statements delivered by the seminary. Bush's speech about a "unilateral pre-emptive war in Iraq" with, as they interpreted it, inappropriate use of "Christian language",<sup>26</sup> another example.

On closer inspection Bush's religious rhetoric was actually representative of a more careful, strategic use of terminology. Also detectable was a subtlety within the wording. Infrequently, if at all, are words like born-again, Jesus, saved, repent, heaven or hell used. Instead we find religiously generic words like faith, God, spirit, service and charge. This refinement had its function. To non-religious ears it appeared complementary and in keeping for the president to use. For the religious it simply served to reinforce his religiosity. This feature was consistent. Either way this was not

the language of an unconcealed religious zealot. It has become the language of the critic, not Bush.<sup>27</sup>

In reality trying to ascertain Bush's purpose through his religious rhetoric is difficult. Its scarcity puts pay to this. Understandably, however, this is because Bush is not a preacher ministering religion for religion's sake but a politician. Bush's primary concern is first and foremost to win votes. To assist this, Bush had a particular, though not unique, religious advantage to reach out and garner that support. In fact, the non-exclusive nature of Bush's position meant that much of the development for an alliance with the Religious Right was left to others. The constellation of individuals that surrounded Bush, like Rove, Reed, Robertson and Gerson had the task of tapping into and utilising the religious base. Bush's religious language could assist this effort, but the motive was always political expediency.

### **Religious Identity**

If Bush's religious language was found to be limited then it can also be shown that other aspects of his religiosity are wanting. It had been taken for granted that along with the rhetoric Bush's own religious identity was also overtly and purposefully expressed, particularly his evangelical identity. Core questions were never asked, however, about this identity.

Take for example the use of the word evangelical. This was a label readily applied to Bush; but under scrutiny it holds some descriptive difficulty. The first challenge is that the term has a "wide reaching definitional canopy".<sup>28</sup> So wide in fact that it was possible to make a correspondence with an individual on a number of points, each one arguably valid. It is impossible to find one, coherent term and to

apply it broadly to the political case.

In a modern context the term has come to hold pejorative connotations, a position favoured by Bush's critics. Culturally as well as politically the emergence within American Protestantism of the evangelical and that evangelical's deeper migration into the Republican Party and politics in general has been viewed with distaste. This has aided the interpretation of the evangelical as someone over-enthusiastic or zealous in pursuit of their cause. In the same vein the impression we get from the modern application of the term implies that the evangelical is only of a certain type of Christian. This is not true. In fact a more conventional understanding of the term, though less used, sees the evangelical as "relating or belonging to any Protestant Christian church whose members believe in the authority of the Bible and salvation through the personal acceptance of Jesus Christ".<sup>29</sup> It has been the activism of a certain type that has helped to diminish this though. When asked about its classification, even Bush was hesitant upon the point. "I'm not even sure what the characteristics of an evangelical are in common parlance", he said. One may have expected Bush to have been clearer; after all, according to his critics he was supposed to be the unconcealed evangelical (in the pejorative sense) proffering a religious cause.

There were other problems. For those who deemed him to be an evangelical, Bush's use of religious rhetoric held no surprises; after all, it is the task of an evangelical to evangelise or proselytise, to spread the gospel, and to preach the good news. Ordinarily this particular feature should hold control over all other actions and become the leading imperative for the religious individual. For Bush, however, evangelical outreach was subordinate to his primary position and function: politician. We cannot, in an unconditional sense, call Bush a preacher.

As the president of the United States, Bush cannot evangelise. He cannot use the presidential platform to espouse Christian doctrine and advocate the Christian faith with a view to conversion of others. The point itself was noted by Bush. When asked about a “moral obligation to try to urge people to follow the same path”, Bush replied: “Not in my line of work, I don’t. My line of work is political. My line of work is to walk the walk and respect others and respect their religions”.<sup>30</sup>

To help clarify this notion of Bush the evangelical further, we can apply a model based upon one of the most common forms of classification for the term. This allows us to view Bush even more as a secular, pragmatic politician than a religiously orientated man with a religious cause. It also helps to highlight the tensions between the public and the private where much of the misunderstanding arises.

According to historian David Bebbington there are four “specific hallmarks” that characterise the evangelical. These hallmarks see the evangelical Christian as someone who “affirm[s] to a few key doctrines and practical emphasis”. Firstly, there is conversionism, the belief that lives need to be changed or that there is an emphasis on new birth as a life changing experience of God. Secondly, there is crucicentrism; that is: a stress on the sacrifice of Christ on the cross. Thirdly there is Biblicism, a particular regard for the Bible or reliance upon it as an ultimate authority. And lastly, there is activism, the expression of the gospel in effort; namely: spread the faith.<sup>31</sup>

### **Conversionism**

This would seem an easy proposition to apply to Bush. One of the most commonly applied expressions to Bush in relation to his Christian conversion and his stance as a Christian is the term “born-again”. But once more the term should be

treated cautiously. To begin with, Bush himself has never used the term, saying he was uncomfortable with it. When asked during the campaign by the Baptist Press, (the national news service of the Southern Baptist Convention), if he would describe himself as “born-again” Bush evasively replied, “I would describe my self as someone raised Christian, who sought redemption and who found Jesus Christ”. In an interview with Steven Waldman, the editor of Belief Net, in October 2000, Bush stated that “the way I like to put it is I redirected my life to Christ”. When pressed if his “experience had been born-again”, Bush responded: “I call it a renewal of faith”.<sup>32</sup> In short, Bush has never used the term and refuses to be drawn explicitly upon the point.

Bush’s own take on how he became “born-again” is well documented, giving us a clear impression of how his conversion came about and what we should infer from it. Recounted in “A Charge To Keep” Bush states that it was in 1985 that his life changing conversion took place. While on vacation at the family home in Kennebunkport, Maine Bush encountered the family friend Billy Graham. “Over the course of that weekend”, Bush wrote, the “Reverend Graham planted a mustard seed in my soul, a seed that grew over the next year. It was the beginning of a new walk where I would recommit my heart to Jesus Christ”.<sup>33</sup> Bush’s words alluded to Mathew 13:31-32, a biblical description of the slow growth of faith, a reading removed from the lightening bolt awakening that is so often associated with being “born-again”. The key point here is that in Bush’s own words “it grew over the next year”.

Theologically it would be correct to refer to Bush’s experiences as “born again” as described in John 3:3. However, there are some interpretations that hold that in an “instantaneous sense” this was not the case. The majority of Protestant churches

do give less emphasis on the conversion or “experience” and focus rather upon the individual’s personal statement of faith and commitment. Here the emphasis is not on the time frame.

Conversely some evangelical, fundamentalist and charismatic Christian’s associate being born again with a greater emphasis on the conversion itself. This involves an intense almost lightening strike encounter with the power of God. It is to this interpretation that Bush is commonly thought to belong. Historically the Bush family is Episcopalian and Anglican both of which falls under the umbrella of Mainline Protestants. George W. Bush is no exception and is officially a Methodist. The emphasis for the Methodist is on the statement of faith and not the conversion.

What this serves to do is moderate our impression of Bush. The slow, progressive born-again Methodist appears somewhat removed from the aggressive, negative tag of a Southern Conservative Christian speaking in tongues and labelling themselves born again. Unlike Ralph Reed who walked out of a Washington restaurant and was instantaneously “born-again” Bush’s was a more measured approach. This, more considered classification eases our view of someone more apt to his political leanings than a Christian agenda.

### **Crucicentrism**

Crucicentrism refers to the emphasis in evangelical theology on the atoning death of Jesus and is often presented as the only way to salvation. According to Bebbington it is “the conviction that Christ’s death on the Cross provided the means of reconciliation between a holy God and sinful human beings”.<sup>34</sup> In short, seeing what God gave as his sacrifice we, the sinful, can believe in him.

It is true that Crucicentrism can be applied to all evangelicals, with the crucifixion of Jesus Christ remaining the predominant symbol of redemption and a pivotal feature of the Christian faith, but Bush's individual feelings or approach to this are little-known. In outlining his faith Bush said, "I'm a Methodist. I'm an active church member, I attend church, I like church, I've heard great preachers and I've heard not-so-great preachers. I love the hymns, I read the Bible daily and I pray on a daily basis. I've got a structure to my life where religion plays a role. I understand religion is a walk, it's a journey. I fully recognize that I'm a sinner, just like you. That's why Christ died. He died for my sins and your sins".<sup>35</sup> With this statement, Bush offers a thoughtful description of this particular hallmark; but all this does is highlight the sincerity of his faith through a belief in one of its central themes. It does not accentuate an alignment to the Religious Right in any additional sense other than sharing a broader, common point of view. This cohesion, even in the eyes of Bush's sternest critics, is not disputed; what is contentious is the belief that this faith tips blindly over into Bush's politics. Bush's ability to convince the Religious Right that they were equal and were doctrinally in tune, helped him trade on their support. As Steven Waldman, president and editor-in-chief of BeliefNet.Com has pointed out, "Political consultants don't sit around assessing whether voters in certain precincts follow crucicentric theology. They see a large group of voters who call themselves evangelical or attend certain churches and have developed certain political tendencies".<sup>36</sup> Nothing aided this better than the inclination amongst the Religious Right to feel comfortable in a shared faith. Still, the inclination was to gain the vote.

## **Biblicism**

Biblicism is defined as the adherence to the letter of biblical text. But as is so often the case, trying to place exact degrees on this adherence is difficult. To help interpret this we can attempt to clarify the term in two ways. On the one hand the moderate interpretation of Biblicism speaks of “reliance” or a “confidence” upon biblical text as a guiding authority. This version of Biblicism is inclined to see the bible as allegory. Most Americans would confess to this kind of observance, the symbolism of religion touching most through weddings, funerals and certain festivals like Christmas. Bush arguably falls into this category.

Then there is the more exacting understanding, often described as the fundamentalist, approach. This sees biblical text as something that is an absolute, unequivocal authority. For the fundamentalist this inerrant, literal approach is entirely pervasive. The term fundamentalist, meaning the belief that religious or political doctrine should be implemented literally does not recognise interpretation or adaptation. To this mindset the Bible is simply without error.

Whatever the denomination, the fundamentalist is perceived to be an ideological threat to the liberal, pluralist consensus within the United States. This approach melds the religious and the secular. As a result there is no clear divide for the fundamentalist between religion and politics, or, as it is sometimes stated: “religion is politics”. It is from this union that the notion of a theocracy arises, an interpretation, particularly at a populist level, that is often attributed to Bush. But there is simply no evidence to support this.

Allying Bush with fundamentalism or fundamentalists makes the error once

again of defining Bush in absolute terms. It is of course possible to discuss and criticise Bush in the context of extreme, unprecedented events or actions but it is far different to argue that these are permanent states of affairs. Bush the openly confessed Christian, the daily Bible reader, the user of some religious rhetoric, and the promoter of faith in action is not necessarily Bush the fundamentalist in every aspect of his political activity. If we take the central statement of Biblicism, that the bible is “without error” and examine two themes, the death penalty and homosexuality, it is possible to expose Bush’s political and not necessarily religious posturing.

As Governor of Texas between 1995 and 2000, Bush was the signatory for the execution orders of a record 152 convicted felons. Biblically there was an allowance for ambiguity in these cases. Biblical text states “an eye for an eye” but also “though shall not kill”. These inconsistencies allow for legitimisation on the one hand and an argument for exemption on the other. The key point, however, is Bush carried out the law of the state rather than the law of the Bible. If Texas had not had the death penalty, it is arguable that Bush would have been politically subject to that state of affairs. Even at the peak of his own religiosity, Bush followed the status quo.

In particular, Bush was not swayed in his steadfast duty as Governor by the Karla Faye Tucker trial, subordinating the role of religion to his charge as Texas governor. In his autobiography “A Charge To Keep” Bush made it clear that he was following the letter of the state’s law, as he was satisfied that Tucker was guilty.

When later questioned on the death penalty in relation to his faith, Bush’s responses lent this way. In an interview with *Charisma Magazine* in 2000 Bush was asked: “many Christians believe the death penalty is supported by scripture, while others believe it isn’t. How have you applied your faith to the issue? Bush answered: “my job is to up-hold the laws of the land. When I swore on the bible at my

inauguration as governor of Texas, I swore to uphold the laws”.<sup>37</sup> In a previous interview with the *Catholic Digest* Bush also stated the same. “I’m sworn to uphold the laws of my state. I review every case. I take it seriously. I believe every person that we have put to death in the state of Texas has been guilty and I know every person has had full access to the courts of law”.<sup>38</sup> Bush went on to say: “I support the death penalty because I believe, if administered swiftly and justly, capital punishment is a deterrent against future violence and will save other innocent lives. Some advocates of life will challenge why I oppose abortion yet support the death penalty; to me, it’s the difference between innocence and guilt”.<sup>39</sup>

Bush has also maintained this subordination of religious to political views on homosexuality. Unlike biblical scripture regarding the giving and taking of life, biblical text concerning homosexuality has no ambiguity. It is clearly stated that under no circumstances should there be same-sex activity. Leviticus 20:13 reads: “And when a man lies down with a male the same as one lies down with a woman, both of them have done a detestable thing. They should be put to death without fail”. As a result of such language it is clear to see why Christian Conservatives in general and the religious right and fundamentalists in particular see it as one of their central platforms. Like the single issue of abortion, homosexuality is in clear opposition to their moral and scriptural understanding. To many, homosexuality was anti-family values.

As the governor of Texas, Bush’s stance appeared firmly anti-gay. He “spoke out against gay adoption, supported the states sodomy law and opposed the hate crimes bill that would have included gay and lesbian victims”.<sup>40</sup> There was ambiguity in this position, however. Bush was also in favour of gay employment rights and political appointments. In an interview with the *New York Times* in April 1999, Bush

said he would appoint openly gay people to his administration. He articulated that as far as he was concerned “if someone can do a job, and a job he’s qualified for, that person ought to be allowed to do his job”.<sup>41</sup> Bush went on to state that as long as the political agenda was the same, he was not interested in exclusion. The fundamentalist approach which prohibits certain lifestyles emphatically rallies against such inclusion and does not allow for mediation. Such talk also isolated the religious right and pro-family groups.

Removed from the confines of Texas, Bush’s remarks made their mark, sending out a strong message on gay rights to gay Republicans and their vote. Rich Tafel, executive director of the Log Cabin Republicans, America’s largest gay Republican organisation, said, “Many gay people will be very glad to hear his views”. Even so, Tafel was aware of Bush’s inconsistencies. Tafel added: “it is a bit Clintonesque in trying to please all sides rather than laying out a clear and consistent set of principles. That is cause for concern at this point”.<sup>42</sup> In a 1999, *New York Times* article, Richard Berke accurately drew a line under Bush’s position and what he saw as Bush’s strategy. Entitled: “Bush Navigates the Centre Line”, it highlighted not only his ambivalence on gay rights but abortion too. Critically it picked-up on Bush the politician manoeuvring politically and not the fundamentalist espousing religion. As Berke pointed out, Bush was the “ultimate Rorschach politician”, in whom “voters can see what they want to see”. Understandably Bush was attempting to be “acceptable to the broad Republican electorate”.<sup>43</sup>

In the lead-up to and including the primaries Bush continued to alternate on his position. A year after the article in April 1999 Bush opened up a more direct and open dialogue with gay Republicans. Following months of uncertainty in April 2000 Bush met with a group of gay supporters at his campaign head quarters, known as the

Austin 12. The group included former and incumbent elected officials. “I welcome gay Americans into my campaign”, Bush said. “I want the Republicans and conservatives Republicans to understand we judge people based upon their heart and soul, that’s what the campaign is all about”.<sup>44</sup>

Bush’s meeting with gay Republicans pulled down to the controversy that had followed Bush in the early primaries, when, unlike Senator John McCain he initially refused to meet with Log Cabin Republicans. In fact, at the time of the South Carolina primary, pro-Bush radio commercials, sponsored by the Christian Coalition, focused specifically upon the subject of his abstention. This led to accusations of Bush been anti-gay, intolerant and divisive. To illustrate differently Bush crossed the religious/political divide and eventually made appeasements to gay Republicans and their supporters. Soon after, Bush would make a number of appointments of openly gay people to various government posts, much to the disagreement of the religious right.

This was pure tactics on Bush’s behalf. Numerically there was little value in the actual gay vote although it may have attracted the moderate or liberal voter given its inclusive appeal. It may also have reinforced his compassionate conservative attraction. Its dangers were also clear to see, however. Bush was clearly not adhering to scripture and in doing so risked alienating those who did. Few single issues were as erosive to the Religious Right’s family values as homosexuality.

Yet, having steered the campaign back on course in South Carolina in the February Bush had room to manoeuvre. In this context, his actions were not those of an unyielding religious fundamentalist or a collaborator for the religious right but of an astute politician securing opinion and support at the appropriate time for the appropriate reason.

## **Activism**

The focal point of Bush's social policy facilitated the idea to his critics that there was an "expression of the gospel in effort", or interpreted another way, a form of Faith in action. This was the faith-based initiative and has provided one of the fiercest points of criticism of the Bush's tenure, whether at state or national level. The notion of Bush actually pursuing or actively implementing religion or religious practices was interpreted as proof of religious intention and interference.

Bush first unveiled faith-based initiatives in his "Duty of Hope" speech in Indianapolis on July 22, 1999. At the core of his social policy and an important feature of Bush's compassionate conservatism, these programmes would help the less-fortunate through various religious organisations, community groups and charities. Building on the "Charitable Choice" provisions that came out of the 1996 welfare reform law, under the Clinton administration Bush suggested that faith-based bodies compete for government contracts to deliver social services without surrendering their religious character.

Politically the faith-based initiative was meant to give a softer edge to the conservative Republican machine. But from its inception it courted controversy as critics, both secular and religious, voiced concerns. The argument was that this was a clear example of a theocratic infusion into American life through policy. Esther Kaplan for instance wrote that "nowhere has the Bush administration experimented more directly with theocracy than [with] the faith-based initiative".<sup>45</sup> Some saw a clear violation of the church state divide, others a blatant appeal to the poorer constituencies for votes.

Religious institutions receiving public funds with the possibility of regulation by the government broke with the very notion of religious liberty, crossing the church – state partition and attacking the first amendment. It was unpalatable that a religious body could enter into a contract with government. The issue was compounded by the possibility of proselytization. It was not unusual for religiously affiliated organisations to receive tax or private money for their social services, but these groups did not provide a religious message – or proselytise - within the service that they provided. With the faith-based approach, the recipient had to take part in some form of religious practice. This was a form of conversion.

This initiative was not new, however. The wave of reforms that swept the United States at the turn of the century (1900), that came to be known as Progressivism, a movement that had a “moralistic” mentality and a “strain of moral fervour was “largely derived from evangelical Protestantism”. In fact, in the 1890s Protestant churches “organised a variety of philanthropic enterprises and community services” as well as the establishment of “industrial commissions to study such questions as trade unionism, child labour, and immigration”. Furthermore, these churches “coalesced in 1908 to form the Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America, a body that placed itself firmly on the side of social-welfare legislation”.<sup>46</sup> For the Progressives, biblical scripture was never too far away. Nevertheless, the social mores of the United States some ninety years later were arguably less open to a religious-based type of reform.

Despite Bush’s advertisement as a moderate; disquiet about some of his rightist associations that added to the unease. This was also true of the faith-based initiative itself. After all, this was not Bush’s idea. Initially a legislative success for Missouri Republican Senator John Ashcroft it always had an inauspicious background

and one that, tenuously enabled critics to link the programme through him to the Christian Right in origin. But neither was the idea religious in origin, it was academic. Annie Billings White, one of Ashcroft's aides, presented Ashcroft with a draft paper containing the formulation of faith-based initiative ideas was made available. Originally the property of Professor Carl Esbeck of Missouri University of Law, (under whom White studied) the paper contained the core ideas for the involvement of religious groups in welfare programmes.<sup>47</sup> It was not until Bush embraced the idea that it took hold, leaving the world of conjecture and becoming deed.

David Aikman wrote "it wasn't a matrix of social theory that stirred Bush to action on his faith-based initiatives. It was, rather, a very real practical problem".<sup>48</sup> Bush himself refers to this in his political auto-biography "A Charge To Keep". The catalyst came in 1995 when state regulators "tried to shut down a successful drug and alcohol treatment programme called Teen Challenge, because its faith-based approach didn't conform to the agencies bureaucratic rules". To Bush it was nothing more than a "religious imperative to help neighbours in need". As a result Bush assembled a taskforce "throughout 1996 to recommend ways that churches, synagogues and mosques and other faith-based or private institutions could work with government to help people in need without violating the important principle of separation of church and state, compromising the religious nature of their mission or being shackled by government intrusion".<sup>49</sup>

Interestingly, Bush talks in terms of a multi-faith initiative with no reference to this being a solely white, Anglo-Saxon Protestant affair. This could have been sophistry on Bush's part, but his exploration into the ideas suggest not. To begin with the advisory task force set up by Bush on May 2, 1996 to survey the legal and regulatory landscape for its implementation was not completely WASP in character.

Consisting of 16 clergy there were Catholics as well as Jews on the board. Within the evangelical Protestant state of Texas this was not a requirement. Texas, predominantly white and Christian had 12,875,018<sup>50</sup> church members and adherents out of a general population of some 20,851,820.<sup>51</sup> In fact, it was Pennsylvania academic and self confessed born-again Catholic John Dilulio whom Bush chose to head the faith-based office.

This appointment had implications that ran contrary to the assumption of a Bush/Christian Right alliance. After naming Dilulio to run Bush's faith-based office there began an almost instantaneous conflict with the religious right. Sidelining and berating individuals like Pat Robertson and his allies for being "self serving" Dilulio championed instead the "black and Hispanic churches". It was to these, protested Dilulio, the "faith-based dollars" should go. Dilulio argued that it was they who had the "more benevolent traditions and histories that make them generally more dedicated to community-serving missions – more dedicated, that is, than you-know-who – and who are generally more confident about engaging public and secular partners in achieving their mission".<sup>52</sup> This was a scathing attack.<sup>53</sup>

What this shows was that the faith-based initiative was not in principle a religious instrument designed for the Religious Right. On the contrary, it soon became clear that the faith-based initiative could prove to be problematic for those elements considered to be the core of Bush's support. The fact that this was not a closed proposal to a few sectarian groups but open to all, added a new dimension to the program. A key argument for the religious right was that fringe or less appealing groups like the Church of Scientology or the Hare Krishna's could collect funding too. The idea of new or non-Western belief systems entering into government contracts was not appealing. As a result Pat Robertson was initially critical of the

initiative. On a televised episode on February 20, 2001 of Pat Robertson's 700 Club program, Robertson condemned the initiative stating that this could be a "real Pandora's box".<sup>54</sup> This was not a policy designed with them in mind. More specifically it was a political/religious platform that could put Bush at odds with the religious right.

Despite their concerns the faith-based initiative it was actually stifled from the inside. Once Bush had assumed the presidency no new money was to be allocated for the faith-based initiative making it a constrained program. This restrained approach was exasperated by its contractual arrangements. Association with the government usually meant government inspection. As a result many were cautious of contractually joining up. The notion of religious groups becoming active in politics was one thing, but government becoming active within them was something else. Transparency within certain religious bodies was not an attractive proposition. With most critics not qualifying their remarks, it is difficult to ascertain what gains the Religious Right or could hope to accomplish. In the short term there may have been monies involved but arguably the Religious Right and even the more main stream Conservative Christian churches were not short in their funds.

It remains open to question how strongly we apply this part of the doctrinal hallmark to Bush. The purpose of allowing religion to play a role in society seemed in part genuine; but gauging Bush's actual sincerity is unknowable. As the governor of Texas it provided political success and a formula with which to go forward. If the Faith based Initiative was, as David Frum called it a "brilliant ploy to unite conservative evangelicals, urban Catholics, minority pastors and traditional noblesse oblige Republicans in a grand religiously inspired approach to social problems",<sup>55</sup> it failed. Overall it was too divisive, isolating those core elements from taking part with

who Bush was supposed to be so incontrovertibly aligned. David Kuo, special assistant to Bush 2001-2003 stated in his book *Tempting Faith: an Inside Story of Political Seduction* that the faith-based initiative was “little more than a cynical facade designed to win votes”.<sup>56</sup> Once this had been achieved, interest waned. The conservative think tank The Heritage Foundation for example called it a success while the advocacy group Americans United for Separation of Church and State called it a failure.

Stephen Bates best summed it up when he said: “the faith-based programme serves both sides: President Bush to demonstrate that he cared about the Christian community and its role in society; and his critics who say it demonstrated [that there was a] theocratic nature of his administration”.<sup>57</sup> Bush’s religious convictions may be “perfectly sincere and available for use in pursuit of political advantage, they are not”, however, “deployed if they are going to cost votes”.<sup>58</sup>

This was the key: would it gain or lose votes? Arguably Bush’s navigation of the political/religious terrain in 2000 won votes, though not by indulging solely to his core support amongst the Religious Right. In reality the links to the Religious Right are fairly tenuous and Bush’s approach to the religious base far broader than commonly thought. In short, much of that projected about Bush remains symbolic.

### **The notion of a theocracy**

The summit to all arguments for a George W. Bush and Religious Right alliance was that they aspired to the implementation of a theocracy within the United States. Although implausible this is the actual charge levelled against them. Esther Kaplan for example warned that the “governing Republican Party [was] in the grips of

[a] theocratic base”, warning of its corrosive effects on democracy”.<sup>59</sup> Kevin Philips spoke in his book “American Theocracy” of the peril of politics and radical religion and the rise and threat from radical and sectarian religion under Bush. These were the most excessive of claims; nevertheless, the arguments that Bush and the Religious Right had a combined purpose had to rest somewhere.

By definition a theocracy is “a form of government in which God or a deity is recognized as the supreme civil ruler, his laws being interpreted by the ecclesiastical authorities”.<sup>60</sup> This form of rule is clearly distinguishable from other secular forms of government that have a state religion, or who are influenced by theological concepts. For example: the use of the Bible in sworn testimony, blessings given to soldiers about to enter conflict and the invocation of God in political speeches.

These instances are representative of “civil religion”; which, according to American sociologist Robert Bellah are, “an institutionalised collection of sacred beliefs about the America nation”. Bellah saw these as “symbolically expressed in America’s founding documents and presidential inaugural addresses. It includes a belief in the existence of a transcendent being called God and idea that the American nation is subject to Gods laws and an assurance that God will guide and protect the United States”.<sup>61</sup> According to Bellah these can be seen in the values of liberty, justice, charity and virtue. Bellah argued that the majority of Americans shared common religious characteristics that were expressed through their symbols and rituals. But Bush’s critics have suggested that he goes beyond this, threatening to surpass acceptable symbolism and absorb the Union in Christian mores and practice. At the very least it was perceived that Bush would allow elements like the religious right to become more active and attempt to carry out such practices.

But to whom are we implying that this theocracy belongs? As we are aware,

the Religious Right grouping is not monolithic and the positioning of Bush as its figure head is not as we have seen, viable. Conversely the fragmented grouping that is the Religious Right has no centre from which to operate. Almost instantly the argument dissolves. If such a rule were to come into fruition its sheer diversity means it could not co-exist. After all, there has to be a bridge between the civil ruler, and the ecclesiastical authorities. To who these “authorities” may be is not clear. Unlike the Church of England, for example, there is no one point within American society, history or culture that may be a representative. Certainly, within the Christian Right there was no open call to a theocracy, just as we cannot find an address for such a notion by Bush.

This does not mean that within the constellation of the Religious Right there are not those who would wish to see such a rule. A body of some influence that had pointedly suggested the notion of a Federal Government replaced by a Christian theocracy was the Reconstructionists. This particular belief system is worth noting because it demonstrates the extremes to which it is possible to take the theocratic argument. “Created initially by the Presbyterian thinker (and John Birch Society activist) R.J. Rushdoony at the end of the 1950s [they] had become an increasingly visible presence among conservative Protestants”.<sup>62</sup> But this body should not be confused as been a part of the Christian Right but a separate entity that even they had occasion to deem excessive. Reconstructionalism and its supporters were clear, the avocation of “a total reorganization of contemporary Western society to conform to the laws of the Old Testament”.<sup>63</sup> For the Reconstructionist there was a “compromised Christian agenda in which America is called back to morality but not necessarily to Christ”.<sup>64</sup> Such a view was at odds with Bush’s beliefs. Whereas the Religious Right and the broader body of Conservative Christians and mainline

churches were seemingly content to operate in a secular world, Reconstructionists took the view that “Pluralism is a myth” and that “God and his law must rule all nations” with “no tolerance for other faiths and the restoration of biblical punishments for malefactors”.<sup>65</sup> Bush can be extracted completely from this view; his interests are far too secular.

More specifically, the Reconstructionist believes that Christ will return, only after “an extended period of Christian government”. In other words: “the second coming follows not precedes the creation of a Godly order”. It is therefore their desire to take dominion over the earth. This, however, is in contrast to the “widespread belief amongst the Christian Right and indeed amongst evangelicals more generally in what is known as premillennialism”. This view holds that Christ will return lifting the faithful up into the heavens. This is termed as the “Rapture”. From then onward with the new millennium begins. While this does appear to have “secured a sound basis for political action” on the part of the Reconstructionist, it should exclude the premillennialist from political action because they “expect at any time to be rescued from a world that is in its last days”.<sup>66</sup> Even so, as Martin Durham has pointed out “premillennialists have proved perfectly able to pursue a political agenda”.<sup>67</sup>

This did not mean that there were not areas where the Christian Right and Reconstructionists did not converge, particularly on certain areas of doctrine, but generally the Reconstructionist frowned upon the authoritarian institution of secular power that the Christian Right was wedded to. Conversely Christian Right leaders have been “cautious about showing any interest in this radical movement”, due to the intense nature of its ideas. But as Professor Richard Dawkins has said, this has not stopped Jerry Falwell and Dr D. James Kennedy of the Coral Ridge Ministries in Florida “endorsing Reconstructionist books”.<sup>68</sup> In fact, William Martin noted in his

work on the Christian Right that one member once said: “though we hide their books under our bed, we read them just the same”.<sup>69</sup> What this says about the Christian Right is that like Bush, they may well idealistically agree on a Biblical blue print or certain have the same opinion on certain scriptural points; but they are far too pragmatic about their present environment.

Despite there being absolutely no link between them it has been suggested that this “last days”, or end times outlook accounts for certain aspects of Bush’s attitude; for example, environmentalism. With an eagerness for what is known as “end times” there is in the words of Stephen Bates no “point in saving things”.<sup>70</sup> This “fatalist view” means there is “less incentive to save the world or to work for its improvement”. As a result there is little or no appetite to “embark on irrelevant schemes to improve society, ameliorate injustice or even save the planet by husbanding its resources”.<sup>71</sup> However, trying to locate an “end times” philosophy in relation to Bush was not possible. What did continually surface was a worldly, material and practical attitude. Whilst it was feasible to try to understand the apparent recklessness of some of Bush’s attitudes and policy decisions from a “premillennialist” perspective, it was more realistic to see things rooted in the secular. For instance: Bush’s record on the environment speaks heavily of a pro-industry leaning of which even some Christians have been critical. Bush’s approach, especially to the area of clean air, the drilling for oil in Alaska and the allowance for a rise in mercury in the water, has not soothed all religious observers. More importantly the Bush administrations appointments to over see and regulate environmental questions were in most cases the lobbyists for the industries involved. They were not religiously affiliated appointees. Whilst it has been common to discuss the strong presence of evangelicals or even Catholics in the White House, it is equally possible to discuss the

prominence of corporate chief executives. The question was, was Bush following biblical doctrine or pandering to corporate desire?

To dismiss the notion of a Bush led theocracy even further and recognize the political and not religious strategy that surrounded and steered Bush, we should turn our attention to those who intimately kept Bush's court. A study of this grouping; that is: Bush's family, friends and advisors shows that a realistic conclusion of their purpose was a blend of the paternal and the political mixed robustly with the corporate. Religion, though high on the agenda and deeply important in its personal role for Bush, was nevertheless part of a collective and not a sole constituent to Bush's office.

Despite accusations of Bush been told by God to run for office, an analysis of insider accounts tells of a different story and once more Bush's purpose takes on a different perspective. Having witnessed a comfortable and successful governorship in Texas a coalition of those closest to him subtly but consistently spurred Bush on for a run for the presidency. Initially Bush was cautious. According to Robert Draper it was what Bush had witnessed his father and family go through that gave him concern. In a conversation around 1998 with Karen Hughes, Bush's press secretary, Bush said: "I'm just not gonna do this. I want my girls to have a normal life".<sup>72</sup> Was this the attitude or vision of a determined theocrat? According to David Aikman's account the various reverends and pastors that Bush listened to or knew personally, helped guide and influence, not manipulate him at that time.<sup>73</sup>

Bush's paternal ties should not be discounted either. The Bush "dynasty" as it is now referred is well documented as having its interests firmly imbedded within the secular that is the political and big business arena. There is also a complex blend of intelligence and military networks that do not sit easily with the faith factor. Although

George W. Bush was different in his religiosity from the rest of the family his religious devotion is something that should be measured carefully against his family's sphere of influence. It is highly unlikely that the Bush family would acknowledge the single intention of a theocracy or indeed a theocrat. Even a tenuous approach to such a rule would be completely against their secular interests. The notion is just too unrealistic.

Overall it is political not religious authority that holds authority. In advance of the presidency the hub of this influence was known as the "iron triangle". It consisted of Karl Rove (chief campaign strategist), Joe Allbaugh (gubernatorial Chief of Staff, soon to be campaign manager) and Karen Hughes (press secretary, soon to be communications director). This was Bush's inner political circle and had been ever since 1994 when Bush first ran for governor. Beforehand these names had little or no distinction outside of the state of Texas; nevertheless, this was the group underpinning his political progression. Whatever religious overtones were occurring around that time, it was Joe Allbaugh and Karl Rove who were pushing buttons and planning for an expansion of Bush's gubernatorial success. It was at its heart both politically motivated and guided. These figures keenly saw the role of religion as a strengthening political factor to aid in their cause. Political power not religion was their doctrine.

Karen Hughes was possibly the one exception due to her own religiosity. Describing her self as a "Committed Christian, and a follower of Christ"<sup>74</sup> the Presbyterian elder and Sunday school teacher would have indeed been well placed to help in the orchestration of any theocratic tendencies but for several factors. Her real concerns lay in family and finance. Her "family-friendly" decision, as it was termed, in 2002 to resign from the Bush administration, was also laced with an "income-friendly" decision".<sup>75</sup> Even so, her role before this was to project to the nation the

image of “warmth, compassion and multiculturalism of the Republicans 2000 convention”. It was Rove who was responsible for narrowly targeting the “indispensable base of religious extremists”.<sup>76</sup> Robert Draper observed that “unlike Rove, she had no agenda other than the presidents”.<sup>77</sup>

In relation to Karl Rove, arguably the single most important individual in Bush’s political ascendancy, it is possible to obtain a clearer picture of the pragmatic approach. Described by Republican strategist David Weeks as “Bush’s whirling dervish”, Weeks said “Rove was a man in perpetual motion. No part of the campaign escapes his eye – strategy, organization, message, polling, media, issues or money. He dominates a campaign. Nothing ever happens that he’s not aware of”.<sup>78</sup> This centrality of Rove’s political dominance is something that most commentators would find indisputable. Therefore, how do we discount him from Bush the theocrat or a Bush led theocracy? Arguably we don’t. Karl Rove’s function in all its dynamics was undoubtedly that of secular politics, not religion. Where religion does feature we can be assured it had intrinsic, political value. Unlike Bush, Rove had no real personal religious attributes. There are no religious ties, favouritisms or spiritual affiliations only political connections. Consistently Rove’s motivating force can only ever be identified as that of a thoroughbred political strategist. Even historically analyses of Rove’s political career shows that a connection between Rove and religion was only visible when religion mattered for political gain. In fact, there are a number of instances when the involvement of religion in the political arena was for Rove nothing short of a hindrance.

For example: when George H. W. Bush charged Karl Rove with the task of counter balancing the dominance of the Democrat Party in Texas with the building of a worthy Republican Party, religious forces became highly significant. During this

time Rove learnt the value of not underestimating the power of the religious activist. More importantly Rove learnt the importance of their inclusion. Rove could not fail to recognise the strong, unifying and at times aggressive strength of the politically motivated faith-base, whatever its denomination.

With a view to controlling the Texas Republican Party Rove needed to first secure the party chairmanship. If this could be done it would assist in the progression of his then new candidate for the job George W. Bush. But in 1994 the Republican state convention was “Filled with Christian Right delegates” who wished to oust Fred Meyer as Party candidate and put into service Tom Pauken. Fred Meyer, a Dallas CEO and friend of George H. W. Bush had been six years in the Republican Party Chair but was put under sustained pressure by Christian Right activists taking over county and district conventions not to run. After having been accused of, “never having gone to a pro-life rally, their litmus test for party officers, [Meyer] announced his resignation”. The Christian-right candidate had succeeded and former Reagan White House functionary Tom Pauken, a Catholic was then up against Texas Congressman Joe Barton. Barton, supported by gubernatorial candidate Bush and endorsed by Senator Phil Gramm and Representative Henry Hyde of Illinois would ordinarily have been given a green light. However, the Christian right had “70% of the delegates in Fort Worth” and as a result the Christian right “just rolled over Barton”.<sup>79</sup> In the end, Pauken was selected by the state convention delegates to lead the Texas delegation to the GOP national convention. In the words of Dubose, Reid and Cannon it was an “uncompromising backing Rove couldn’t control”. What followed was an “accommodation of the Christian Conservative agenda”.<sup>80</sup> His greatest asset in this was Bush himself.

There can be no doubt that these lessons were taken on board. Here was a

power base that if aligned to correctly could aid in political progression. The key then was to re-align this base with Bush. The value of the motivated Christian activist and voter was clear to see. In Texas, the test bed for the Bush presidency, Rove targeted the states religious support in favour of Bush's gubernatorial races. This then moved to incorporate the presidential run for office. For the individual Christian activist who thought they were making inroads into politics the notion of a theocracy may have been appealing, but this was not the case for Rove and Bush. Taken as a whole, the very notion of a theocracy is pure folly. At their core these were political individuals with political agendas. Religion was a functioning and expedient subdivision to their cause. Even here, at a personal level the position is not clear.

Textual analysis both biographically and auto-biographically gave the impression that contrary to common belief Bush was, in the words of Alan Cooperman, someone who leaves the specifics of his faith to speculation. Several books written about Bush's faith demonstrate that we cannot unconditionally locate his religious position. David Aikman, who was given wide access to Bush's friends and senior officials said he "could not get from anybody a sort of credo of what [Bush] believes". Aikman went on to say that he was forced to "intuit" many elements of the president's faith. Indeed, in his final analysis Aikman concluded that Bush is a mainstream evangelical. It may be best to state, however, that Bush was a mainstream Methodist. Stephen Mansfield, the author of "The Faith of George W. Bush", a text highly favourable of Bush, wrote that he was indeed a "conservative Christian but on many issues is less doctrinaire than his faith would make him appear, and this is part of the mystery of George W. Bush".<sup>81</sup> It is not so much a mystery as he is not as rightist or fundamentalist as we are led to believe.

What is clear is that by dissembling certain terms it is possible to take a

different viewpoint of Bush. This allows us to see a more mainline, moderate character with conservative tendencies in both definition and approach than his critics hypothesize. Identifying Bush as a fundamentalist or as a born-again Christian or even an evangelical is potentially misleading. Bush's religious position is basically that of an observant Methodist whose politics (Republicanism and Conservatism), combined with his Southern adopted patronage and Southern characteristics move him, often symbolically, to the right of the socio/religious and political spectrum. In actuality George W. Bush is difficult to pin down; we therefore have to be cautious of extreme interpretations. Bush does not wholly fit the criteria his critics present.

As a result of the above it became understandable why, under scrutiny, the relationship between Bush and the religious constituency held some other revelations, exposure that demonstrated that this was not the harmonious collective that had been suggested. This was particularly the case where it counted most: at the ballot box.

### **The Electoral Grouping**

Contrary to the assumption that George W. Bush had a hold of the religious voter Bush lost the religious vote in 2000/1. This is a crucial statement. As one of the main features underpinning his critic's arguments, there was never an endeavor to apply actual numbers or denominational specifics to the percentages that they argued were in his support. Although our concern is with the Religious Right it is necessary to grasp something of the broader religious umbrella under which Bush is often placed. This was found to be a general weakness amongst all literature. More significantly it demonstrates how imprecise the alliance was. If Bush's support

amongst the religious political base is found deficient it crucially raises questions about the strength and depth of the association.

Esther Kaplan, for example, was typical of those who stressed the significance of the religious vote. In her book: “With God on Their Side”, a highly critical analysis of Bush’s relationship to the religious right, emphasis was immediately placed on the strength of the religious vote Bush received in 2000. Kaplan cited research carried out by the University of Akron Survey Research Center. From this it was estimated that in 2000 “about 25% of the national population were white evangelicals” and that “this bloc accounted for 40% of Bush’s electorate”. This figure was raised to 52% when “religiously observant Catholics”<sup>82</sup> were added to the equation.

Using Kaplan’s reference as our model the first difficulty was trying to assess what was meant by “national population”. Three sets of figures were practical to work from. Firstly, there was the total population of the United States. Secondly, those eligible and/or registered to vote and lastly: the final voter turnout. Together they provided the most secure base to attempt a result.

The general election demographics for 2000 were as follows: The population in 2000 stood at 281,421,000 of this number 202,263,000 were eligible to vote (72%) and from this number, those registered to vote stood at 158,000,000 (78%). Those eligible but not registered stood at 44,000,000 (22%). The 2000 general election turnout was recorded at 105,365, 000 (67%).<sup>83</sup> The totals for Bush and Gore respectively were: 50,461,000 and 50,994,081.

If accurate, the figure of 25% Kaplan uses of the National population (281,421,000) would equate to 70,355,250 white evangelicals. Of this bloc, Kaplan states, 40% (28,142,100) went for Bush. Kaplan then adds another 12% for the Catholic vote raising the overall percentage to 52%. This would give a figure of

36,584,730. What happened to the remaining 33,806,520 Christians is not clear.

The figure of 28,142,100 as a total of the turnout for evangelicals who voted for Bush is not given as a breakdown. Without a breakdown of the complex amalgamation of denominations involved this makes it extremely difficult to collapse the vote. This bloc falls then under the umbrella of white evangelical Protestants, which, as we have seen is a very loose interpretation. It certainly does not provide a detailed picture of Bush's religious electorate.

There are further discrepancies. Kaplan, as do others, appears to confuse the Religious Right with Evangelicals.<sup>84</sup> This is also the case for others too. Kaplan, having presented the above figures, stated that the Christian Right is "Bush's base".<sup>85</sup> This too is erroneous. Those who identified themselves as belonging to the Religious Right in 2000 accounted for only 14%<sup>86</sup> of the religious vote. We can only assume that this was 14% of the total religious voter turnout, which was 25% of the population purported to be "white evangelicals".

If so, then 14% of 70,355,250 are 9,849,735. It was estimated 79% of this "Christian Right" bloc voted for Bush while Al Gore received 19%.<sup>87</sup> This means that only 7,781,286 of the self described Religious Right votes were captured by Bush. Interestingly the figure of 14% for the Religious Right was a decline from the electorate who described themselves in this way in 1996. Then the figure was given as 17%.<sup>88</sup> If true then the focus of attention surrounding the religious rights activity in 2000 was actually a decline. Compared to the 50,461,000 who cast their vote for Bush this is only 15% or 1 in 6 of the electorate. This figure cannot possibly be presented as Bush's base.

A further consideration when viewing the voting is that the 2000/1 election became known as a 50/50 election. This was because not only were the results very

close but voter turnout was extremely low. In other words only 50% took part. Combining Bush and Gore's totals saw 101,455,160 votes, only half of those eligible to vote at 202,263,000. Divide Bush and Gore's totals once more and in reality you end up with only a quarter of the vote. This meant that amidst the 50% unaccounted for were unidentified religious numbers. If, however, we start to subtract the above percentages from these numbers we end up with considerably less votes. Either way Bush's command of the religious vote requires serious scrutiny.

But if there is some difficulty in the voting for the general election then this is also the case for the primaries. Take the vital South Carolina primary in 2000 where the religious right exhibited a particularly strong mobilization for Bush. Here 32%<sup>89</sup> of those described as the religious right did not vote for Bush. In one of the most conservative, religiously orientated states in the union that had been specifically targeted for mobilization, this was a high percentage.

Similarly in the preceding primary in New Hampshire where the catalyst for Bush's alignment to the Religious Right occurred, there was collectively a greater majority of 62% who gave their vote to other candidates against Bush's 36%.<sup>90</sup> Bush won their vote but lost the majority. This pattern is consistent through out the election. What we can say is that this was not a single, harmonious mass for Bush's support.

A realistic account should have focused more generally on the religious vote and not tried to promote one of its composite parts, that is: the religious right. But here too, difficulties arose. According to data taken for the Third National Survey of Religion and Politics by the University of Akron in the spring of 2000 the broader religious vote did not favor Bush either. (See Appendices C).

Of those who voted in the presidential election, 84% of white, more observant,

evangelicals cast their ballots for Bush, while 16% voted for Gore. Conversely, black protestants went 96% Gore, 4% Bush. Bush also lost the Hispanic vote 76% to 24% a vote Karl Rove along with evangelicals had been specifically targeted and was seen as ostensibly pro-Bush. In addition Bush also lost the Jewish vote 77% to 23%. The only other substantial ground gained by Bush was the “more observant” Catholic vote 57% to Gore’s 43%.

The one consistent factor amongst the polling data for Bush was from those who were identified as “more observant”, that is: those who attended religious services once a week were constant in their support. This group overwhelmingly voted for Bush, regardless of the denomination. This particular group’s support also transcended into the results from the primaries, regardless of the state. But the key information to be drawn from the data is that one may very well argue that Mormons or even Catholics, for example, and not white evangelical Protestants swung the election for Bush. The Catholic, Black Protestant and Jewish vote collectively diminished the White Evangelical Protestant vote. More importantly, if all the totals are added up then albeit by 0.4%, Bush did not command or win the faith base, but over all lost. See Appendices C. This dents the argument for Bush holding command over the religious vote.<sup>91</sup>

It is an invalid proposition then, to state overwhelmingly that Christian forces gravitated entirely to Bush. Amidst those votes that did not take part in the election or that chose instead to vote for one of his rivals witnessed a greater percentage of the religious vote. In fact, without a full turn out and a more detailed assessment of the religious vote in general the figures are spurious. Karl Rove himself questioned the numbers. Speaking in 2001 at the conservative American Enterprise Institute, Rove gave recognition for the need for future engagement of the religious and in particular

the evangelical vote. Looking towards the 2004 election, Rove pointed to there been a “crucial weakness in the Republican’s 2000 campaign” on account of a “failure of evangelicals to turnout in significant numbers”.<sup>92</sup> This “fall of in the white evangelical vote” was something that according to Rove “wouldn’t happen again”.<sup>93</sup> Indeed, Karl Rove thought the popular vote, lost by Bush in 2000, was due to “four million evangelicals not casting their ballots”.<sup>94</sup>

This was an intriguing point and details a number of things concerning the supposed alliance. The figure of four million has proved to be a contentious point with some observers questioning Rove’s source and numbers. It was possible for something approaching this number to be found amongst the two sets of figures we alluded to earlier: the abstaining vote and the vote lost. But even if the figures were inflated or completely erroneous it was curious rhetoric from someone who arguably understood this voting bloc. Perhaps few had better knowledge of such groupings and how best to reach out and utilise them for his candidate than Karl Rove. The question was, were Rove’s comments a rallying call or a rebuke for genuinely not turning out for Bush?

If a rebuke it was curious. Grass roots support for local elections still mattered as did the need to keep the religious base on side for a re-election campaign. Antagonising a still required constituency was not wise. If taken for granted by Bush then Rove was justifiable in attempting to rally more support, revitalising any complacency. What Rove’s comments do show is that the Religious Right was not the union it had been argued to be. Clearly there was a serious shortfall in voter turn out amongst the faith base that needed re-addressing.

The fact that this became an election underpinned by religion is not in doubt; Bush sufficiently mobilizing core religious constituencies. But as these figures show

these were narrow margins and diminished numbers. It was only at times like the South Carolina primary when activity and support appeared to spike. Overall the general pattern that emerged is less pronounced. In fact, had Rove and Bush succeeded in boosting the Hispanic or the black vote, as well as other religious denominations, the popular vote would have been won and thus the religious vote placed into proper perspective.

What can be established is Bush did not wholly command this group, only sections of it and at choice moments. Conversely this wide denominational grouping did not herald him to be their choice. The assertion of a strong union between Bush and the Religious Right, often built around perception needs to be reevaluated. The relationship between George W. Bush and both the Religious Right and Conservative Christians in general at the ballot box remains highly questionable. This is also the case for Bush's own religiosity. The mistake often made is to treat these elements in absolute terms. Because this cannot be done notions such as Bush the fundamentalist attempting theocratic rule or even the implementation of religiously aimed policy lacks any sense.

In sum, George W. Bush has to be approached and understood in more precise terms. He is a career politician who in the end achieved his political aspiration. Religion, its place and function was a vital ingredient but it remained married to the greater drive and goal of secular politics. George W. Bush may well have "woven faith into his presidency more enthusiastically than any recent president", but as Micklethwait and Wooldridge have suggested Bush was "more of a pillar in the nave".<sup>95</sup> Fittingly Micklethwait and Wooldridge sum up Bush's position by pointing out that "belief in God is a political advantage in a country where 85% of the people profess some sort of religious belief". A narrow focus on Bush's links to the Religious

Right misses the fact that Bush is far more “ecumenical”. While Bush may have been eager to “mobilize the Christian Right he is usually careful not to be captured by it”.<sup>96</sup> In fact Bush is surrounded by and far more influence by Catholics and Jews than Religious Right figures. What emanates from these influences whether as advisors or speech writers it is always a matter of political strategy and once more not religious endeavor.

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<sup>1</sup> Esther Kaplan. *With God On Their Side. How Christian Fundamentalists Trampled Science, Policy and Democracy in George W. Bush's White House*. The New Press. (2004) p276

<sup>2</sup> This expanded through his rise to political power to make out that he was the “muscle behind the Christian right agenda” and that in 2000 he had “re-energized” them.

But these assertions are not supported. In 2000, religion became important and Bush exploited, not instigated it. As we saw in chapters one and two, it was politically expedient to do so. The suggestion, however, that religion propelled Bush's aspirations has it the wrong way around.

<sup>3</sup> George W. Bush. *A Charge To Keep. My Journey to the White House*. Perennial. (2001) p.213

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- <sup>4</sup> Dana Milbank. Religious Right Finds its Center in the Oval Office. Bush Emerges as Movements Leader after Robertson Leaves Christian Coalition. Right Wing Watch. Washington Post. December 24<sup>th</sup>, 2001.  
<[http://www.commondreams.org/cgi\\_bin/preint.cgi?file=/headlines01/1224-02.html](http://www.commondreams.org/cgi_bin/preint.cgi?file=/headlines01/1224-02.html)> 13/09/07
- <sup>5</sup> R Woodberry & C.S., Smith. *Fundamentalism et al: Conservative Protestants in America*. Annual Review of Sociology (1998) 24: 25-26.
- <sup>6</sup> Sara Diamond. *Not by Politics alone. The Enduring Influence of the Christian Right*. (Guilford. 1998) p.18
- <sup>7</sup> James Q. Wilson. *American Government*. Houghton Mifflin. 5<sup>th</sup>, Edition. (2000). p. 223
- <sup>8</sup> Letter to Conservatives by Paul M. Weyrich. February 16\_1999.
- <sup>9</sup> Kevin Phillips. *American Dynasty. How the Bush Clan Became the Worlds Most Powerful and Dangerous Family*. Penguin. (2004) p.11
- <sup>10</sup> Ibid. p.223
- <sup>11</sup> Esther Kaplan. *With God On Their Side. How Christian Fundamentalists Trampled Science, Policy and Democracy in George W. Bush's White House*. The New Press. (2004) p79
- <sup>12</sup> Ibid. p.80
- <sup>13</sup> Stephen Mansfield. *The faith of George W. Bush*. Charisma House. (2004) p.83-4
- <sup>14</sup> David, Aikman. *A Man of Faith. The Spiritual Journey of George W. Bush*. W Publishing Group. (2004) p.3.
- <sup>15</sup> Judy Keen, USA TODAY.  
<[http://www.midnightangel308.com/president\\_bushs\\_prayers.htm](http://www.midnightangel308.com/president_bushs_prayers.htm)> (14/04/08)  
  
BUSH WATCH. Candidate Christ and George W. Bush  
<<http://www.bushwatch.com/jews.htm>> 914/04/08)
- <sup>16</sup> Stephen Buttry. (15/12/1999) Candidates Focus on Christian Beliefs. The Des Moines Register.  
<<http://archives.cnn.com/1999/ALLPOLITICS/stories/12/15/religion.register/>> 22/01/08
- <sup>17</sup> Ibid.

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- <sup>18</sup> Town meeting. Columbia, South Carolina, February 12<sup>th</sup>, 2000. Source: Beliefnet. A Library of Quotations on Religion and Politics by George W. Bush..  
<[http://www.beliefnet.com/story/33/story\\_3345.html](http://www.beliefnet.com/story/33/story_3345.html)> 25/01/08
- <sup>19</sup> David Frum. *The Right Man. An Inside Account of the Surprise Presidency of George W. Bush*. Weidenfeld & Nicolson. (2003) p.252
- <sup>20</sup> George W. Bush. *A Charge To Keep. My Journey to the White House*. Perennial. (2001) p.138
- <sup>21</sup> Matthew Scully. Present at the Creation. The Atlantic Monthly. September 2007. p 76
- <sup>22</sup> Elisabeth Bumiller. January 17, 2005. White House Letter. The Man Who Puts Words in the President's Mouth Defends His Style. New York Times.  
<http://www.nytimes.com/2005/01/17/politics/17letter.html?n=Top/Reference/Times%20Topics/People/B/Bush,%20George%20W.>> 21/09/07
- <sup>23</sup> Alan, Cooperman. December 12<sup>th</sup>, 2004. Bush's References to God Defended by Speechwriter. President does not claim divinity is on his side. WashingtonPost.com  
<<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A57915-2004Dec11.html>> 21/09/07
- <sup>24</sup> Domke. David Domke & Kevin Coe. How Bush's God Talk is different. BeliefNet.  
<[http://www.beliefnet.com/story/159/story\\_15962\\_1.html](http://www.beliefnet.com/story/159/story_15962_1.html)> 21/09/07
- <sup>25</sup> David Domke. (2004) *God Willing?* Pluto Press. (2004) p.177
- <sup>26</sup> Evangelicals slam Bush for his 'theology of war' (12/10/04).  
[http://www.ekkllesia.co.uk/content/news\\_syndication/article\\_041012bsh.shtml](http://www.ekkllesia.co.uk/content/news_syndication/article_041012bsh.shtml)>
- <sup>27</sup> Bush's remarks did of course register with Conservative Christians as one would expect, a show of faith undoubtedly influencing their opinion and thus their vote; but blatantly used it was highly risky. Delivered less explicitly Conservative Christians would still have recognised him as a friend. After all, Bush knew how to use coded language.
- <sup>28</sup> "Defining Evangelicalism".  
<[http://www.wheaton.edu/isae/defining\\_evangelicalism.html](http://www.wheaton.edu/isae/defining_evangelicalism.html)>
- <sup>29</sup> Encarta ® World English Dictionary © & (P) 1998-2004 Microsoft Corporation.
- <sup>30</sup> Interview with Steve Waldman; Editor in Chief for Belief Net October 2000. Source: Belief Net. A Library of Quotations on Religion and politics by George W. Bush.  
<[http://www.beliefnet.com/story/33/story\\_3345.html](http://www.beliefnet.com/story/33/story_3345.html)> 25/01/08
- <sup>31</sup> David Bebbington. *Evangelicalism in Britian: a History from the 1730's to the 1980's*. London: Unwin Hyman. (1989) P.2-17

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<sup>32</sup> US News Online, George W. Bush: Running on his faith. Source: Belief Net. A Library of Quotations on Religion and politics by George W. Bush.  
<[http://www.beliefnet.com/story/33/story\\_3345.html](http://www.beliefnet.com/story/33/story_3345.html)> 25/01/08

<sup>33</sup> George W. Bush. (2001) *A Charge to Keep. My Journey to the White House*. Perennial: Harper Collins. (2001) p. 136

<sup>34</sup> Defining Evangelicals. The Stones Cry Out.  
<[http://www.stonescryout.org/archives/2005/08/defining\\_evange.html](http://www.stonescryout.org/archives/2005/08/defining_evange.html)> 4/03/08

<sup>35</sup> US News Online, George W. Bush: Running on his faith. Source: Belief Net. A Library of Quotations on Religion and politics by George W. Bush.  
<[http://www.beliefnet.com/story/33/story\\_3345.html](http://www.beliefnet.com/story/33/story_3345.html)> 25/01/08

<sup>36</sup> Steven Waldman. (8/7/08) What's the Meaning of Evangelical?  
<http://blogs.wsj.com/politicalperceptions/2008/07/08/whats-the-meaning-of-evangelical/>  
14/11/08

<sup>37</sup> God and the Governor. August 29<sup>th</sup>, 2000. Charisma magazine.  
<[http://www.beliefnet.com/story/33/story\\_3345.html](http://www.beliefnet.com/story/33/story_3345.html)> 25/01/2008

<sup>38</sup> Catholic Digest. August 11<sup>th</sup>. 2000  
<[http://www.beliefnet.com/story/33/story\\_3345.html](http://www.beliefnet.com/story/33/story_3345.html)> 25/01/2008

<sup>39</sup> George W. Bush. (1999) *A Charge To Keep. My Journey To The White House*. Perennial. (1999) p.147

Bush's primacy of politics over religion is further highlighted by the resolutions of the United Methodist Church, to which Bush belongs, which are reproachful of capital punishment. In fact, the United Methodist Church has often been at pains to distance itself from Bush on several issues, some even arguing that Bush is not an observant member of their church at all. From what little can be gleaned from Bush's comments on capital punishment he does not speak in religious terms, in fact his guidance and/or justification are secular, his attitude underpinned by his political and occupational role and not his religious position. The state and his work were priority.

<sup>40</sup> Esther Kaplan. *With God On Their Side. How Christian Fundamentalists trampled science, Policy and Democracy in George W. Bush's White House*. The New Press. (2004) p.148

<sup>41</sup> Richard L. Berke. April 9, 1999. High in the Polls and Close to Home, Bush Navigates by the Center Line.  
<<http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9506E6DF1238F93AA35757C0A96F958260&sec=&spon=&pagewanted=1>> 12/02/08

<sup>42</sup> Bush Takes Big Step in Favour of Gay Rights.  
<<http://www.com/archive/199904091258.shtml>> 12/02/08

<sup>43</sup> Richard L. Berke. April 9, 1999. High in the Polls and Close to Home, Bush Navigates by the

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Center Line.

<<http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9506E6DF1238F93AA35757C0A96F958260&sec=&spon=&pagewanted=1>> 12/02/08

<sup>44</sup> Bush Meets with Gay Supporters. A Positive First Step for GOP Nominee.

<<http://www.com/archive/200004131718.shtml>> 12/02/08

<sup>45</sup> Esther Kaplan. *With God On Their Side. How Christian Fundamentalists Trampled Science, Policy and Democracy in George W. Bush's White House.* The New Press. (2004) p. 39

<sup>46</sup> Maldwyn Jones. *The Limits of Liberty. 1607-1992.* Oxford University Press. 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. (1995) P.370-1

<sup>47</sup> Esbeck, a key figure in Christian legal circles dating back to the 1970's would later become the director of the task force for the faith-based initiatives within the department of Justice in 2001. It was Esbeck who initially led Bush's task force on the faith-based initiative and who was the principle architect for 'Charitable Choice.' Esbeck worked in consultation with James Skillen (president for Public Justice) and Stanley Carlson-Theis (scholar and White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives from February 2001 to May 2002).

<sup>48</sup> David Aikman. *A man of Faith. The Spiritual Journey of George W. Bush.* W Publishing Group. (2004) p.101

<sup>49</sup> George W. Bush. *A Charge to Keep. My Journey to the White House.* Perrenail. (2001) p.213-14

<sup>50</sup> Texas Almanac. Church Membership Figures for Texas, 1990 and 2000  
<[http://www.texasalmanac.com/religion/religion\\_chart.pdf](http://www.texasalmanac.com/religion/religion_chart.pdf)>

<sup>51</sup> U.S. Census Bureau.  
<<http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/48000.html>>

<sup>52</sup> David Frum. *The Right Man. An Inside Account of th Surprise Presidency of George W. Bush.* Weidenfeld & Nicolson. (2003) p.101

<sup>53</sup> Eventually John Delulio would resign, making it clear that he was "fed up with criticism from both the right and the left", over the issue.

Joseph Conn. Dilulio Departs. Church and State. October 2001, 13.

<sup>54</sup> Laurie Goodstein (3/03/01) Rightwingers getting cold feet on Faith Based Initiative.  
<<http://www.skeptictank.org/gen02056.html>>

<sup>55</sup> David Frum. *The Right Man. An Inside Account of the Surprise Presidency of George W. Bush.* Weidenfeld & Nicolson. (2003) p.100-101

<sup>56</sup> Julian Borger. Aide says White House mocked evangelicals. (14/10/06)

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71 Ibid. p.141

72 Robert Draper. *Dead Certain. The Presidency of George W. Bush*. Free Press. (2007) p.55

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<sup>73</sup> See David Aikman. *A Man of Faith. The Spiritual Journey of George W. Bush*. W Publishing Group. (2004) p.111-113 & 114-121

<sup>74</sup> David Aikman. *A Man of Faith. The Spiritual Journey of George W. Bush*. W Publishing Group. (2004) p.12

<sup>75</sup> Robert Draper. *Dead Certain. The Presidency of George W. Bush*. Free Press. (2007) p.338

<sup>76</sup> Esther Kaplan. *With God On Their Side. How Christian Fundamentalists trampled science, Policy and Democracy in George W. Bush's White House*. The New Press. (2004) p.76

<sup>77</sup> Robert Draper. *Dead Certain. The Presidency of George W. Bush*. Free Press. (2007) p.339

<sup>78</sup> Dan Blaz. Team Bush: The Iron Triangle. Friday, July 23, 1999; Page C1.  
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<sup>79</sup> Lou Dubose & Molly Ivins. (5/3/00) Dubya's Dance With The Devil.  
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<sup>80</sup> Lou Dubose, Jan Reid.& Carl M. Cannon. *Boy Genius. Karl Rove the Brains Behind the Remarkable Political Triumph of George W. Bush*. Public Affairs Reports. (2003) p.90-92

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<sup>84</sup> The Religious Right taken to mean those of a right-wing Christian political and/or social movements and organizations and characterized by their strong support of conservative social and political values.

<sup>85</sup> Esther Kaplan. *With God On Their Side. How Christian Fundamentalists Trampled Science, Policy and Democracy in George W. Bush's White House*. The New Press. (2004) p. 3

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<sup>87</sup> Lyman A. Kellstedt., Corwin E. Smidt, James L. Guth and John C Green. (2001) Cracks in the Monolith? Evangelical Protestants and the 2000 Election. Books & Culture Magazine/Christianity Today.  
<<http://www.christianitytoday.com/global/pf.cgi?bc/2001/003/2.8.html>> 7/01/08

<sup>88</sup> Mark J Rozell., Bush's Wild Card: The Religious Vote. USA TODAY.  
<[http://www.usatoday.com/news/opinion/2004-09-21-bush-religiousvote\\_x.htm](http://www.usatoday.com/news/opinion/2004-09-21-bush-religiousvote_x.htm)> 17/01/06

<sup>89</sup> Election 2000. GOP primary: South Carolina. Exit Poll: Republicans.  
<<http://www.cnn.com/ELECTION/2000/primaries/SC/poll.rep.html>> 02/10/2007

<sup>90</sup> Election 2000. GOP Primary: New Hampshire. Exit Poll: Republicans.  
<<http://www.cnn.com/ELECTION/2000/primaries/NH/poll.rep.html>> 21/06/2006

<sup>91</sup> The religious vote is to be treated with prudence. Dependent upon how the question of religious affiliation was posed and by whom, the available statistics are enormously wide-ranging and often conflicting. The breadth of religious grouping from Protestant to white protestant; from evangelical to white evangelical; from observant to less observant Christian; from Catholic to white Catholic; for religious left to religious right and so on, means that all data has to be handled extremely cautiously. Despite a number of significant surveys having been carried out there is a lack of official requisition for religious data. This means that outside of the sampling data collected every so often, a national picture of accuracy is absent. For example the United States Census Bureau does not ask for religious data within any of its census surveys, this is predominantly true of the state too. Those figures utilized above were from the most prominent surveys taken and used only where data matched or could be corroborated by other sources.

What is clear is that in 2000 the presidential victory of George W. Bush both in the primaries and in the general election was influenced by a southern, white, more observant, Conservative Christian voting bloc. However, we should remain guarded against the application of terms like the 'religious right' as an expression for Bush's religious turnout. When required their intervention had proved to be highly valuable but it has to be kept in context. This was not a monolithic movement with Bush at its head but rather a hugely fragmented body that only in part chose to gravitate to wards him.

<sup>92</sup> Martin Durham (2005) Evangelicals and the politics of red America. (unpublished essay)

<sup>93</sup> Dionne. E.J., The Jesus Factor.  
<<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/jesus/interviews/dionne.html>> 17/09/07

<sup>94</sup> Tony Carnes. Wooing the faithful: President Bush needs evangelicals more than ever, but it's unclear how badly they want him for another four years. Christianity today magazine.  
<<http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/archives/october2004.html>> 17/09/07

<sup>95</sup> John Micklethwait and Adrian Wooldridge. *The Right Nation Why America is Different*. (2005) p.144

<sup>96</sup> Ibid. p.147

## CONCLUSION

“Above all” wrote Richard Hofstadter, “professional politicians want to win and their conduct is shaped by this pragmatic goal”. He added that “both their ideas and their partisan passions are modified by the harsh corrective of reality”.<sup>i</sup> Early in the 2000 campaign, Bush’s conduct was shaped by his loss in New Hampshire. With an ability to modify his position and utilise Religious Right forces, Bush was able to regain political momentum and navigate a difficult period. The central premise for Bush always remained the same: “professional politicians want to win”. Aspirations of a political and not religious nature always lay at the heart of Bush’s objectives and strategy.

The 2000 campaign demonstrated that whilst religion had a serious and defining role for Bush, it was not the rationale behind the candidate. The religious tone of the period, Bush’s openness about his faith, his apparent public stand with social conservatives and his belief that religion should and could make social changes detracted from his real purpose: politics.

By narrowly focusing on religion, those critical of Bush lost sight of the complexity involved in his politics, excluding Bush’s overriding ambition as a politician and ignored the complex interplay of the two spheres. This failure meant that Bush, religion, and politics were not set in their proper context.

Those who observed the candidate at the time were under no such illusions. “Pat Buchanan and his hard-core followers never believed Bush could be their champion in America’s religious war”.<sup>ii</sup> To them Bush’s religious commitment wasn’t strong enough. John McCloskey, director of the Catholic Information Office in

Washington D.C., described Bush as “a totally uninformed Christian”, whose faith was “shallow”.<sup>iii</sup> Deal Hudson, editor of *Crisis Magazine* best summed up Bush’s position when he said, “Bush occupies a niche between the mainstream and the evangelical right”.<sup>iv</sup>

The value of these interpretations is that they do not portray Bush in absolute terms, fixing him in a rigid union with extreme forms of religion, but depict the candidate as someone able to navigate around the religious terrain. These analyses avoid the positioning of Bush through religious labels and/or definitions and illustrate that there are no unconditional classifications.

At best, Bush offered a higher level of religious involvement, possibly through policy changes, religious programmes and political positions bestowed upon religiously orientated people. With this involvement, religion may have played a more active role, for example through faith-based programmes, but this was not the religious takeover of social policy or American democracy that some proposed. Similarly the appointment of certain individuals, such as John Ashcroft, to key positions in the Administration did not amount to religious intrusion. Whilst it is still possible to cherry-pick examples to fit incomplete and inaccurate arguments, a retrospective look at Bush’s presidency does not show any overt form of religious implementation or change, either socially or politically.

If anything, Bush presented a focal point, a renewed interest in religion and its causes. As the Religious Right emerged from a difficult period in 2000, it sought a point upon which to focus and reinvigorate itself. However, if the designs of these individuals and/or groups who favoured Bush were purely religious, we cannot state the same for Bush. The decisive factor for the candidate was to revive his campaign, halt the momentum gained by McCain, and win nomination. To do this religion

served a purpose.

In a first-term retrospective *Time Magazine* ran an article asking, “What does Bush owe the Religious Right?” The movement had been busy reminding Bush how hard they had worked for him and was still pressing for policy changes. However, the President was non-compliant because of “political realities”, angering religious groups on issues such as gay marriage. Overall the feeling was “mixed”, and questions were still open. Bush’s religious supporters were asking “What now? And when, if not now?”<sup>v</sup>

This thesis has attempted to show that it was pragmatics that guided George W. Bush. His religiosity, his own political knowledge (having worked on his father’s campaign), and his familiarity with the mores, practices and political structure of the Religious Right helped him draw on their support in 2000. It was, however, chiefly down to others to cement the bonds, and where possible the Religious Right was held at a distance. This allowed the symbolic space to be filled with notions of unity that aided the Bush campaign; in political reality, much was left to speculation over whether Bush was “one of them”. Nowhere was it found that this was a campaign of religion for religion’s sake. It was political pragmatism that emerged: this battle was about political strategy and not scriptural endeavour.

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<sup>i</sup> Hofstadter, Richard, (1996) *The Paranoid Style In American Politics & Other Essays*. Harvard University Press. p.103

<sup>ii</sup> Deal W. Hudson. *Onward Christian Soldiers. The growing political power of Catholics and evangelicals in the United States*. Threshold Editions. (2008) p.42

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iii David Aikman. A Man of Faith. The Spiritual journey of George W. Bush. W Publishing Group. (2004) p.199

iv Ibid.

v Karen Tumulty & Matthew Cooper. TIME MAGAZINE. Does Bush Owe the Religious Right?  
<<http://www.time.com/time/covers/1101050207/story.html>> 01/10/07

## APPENDICES A

### New Hampshire Presidential Primary, February 16, 1988

#### Republican Results<sup>i</sup>

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| <b>Candidate</b>  | <b>Votes</b> | <b>percentage</b> |
|-------------------|--------------|-------------------|
| George H. W. Bush | 59,290       | 37.8%             |
| Bob Dole          | 44,797       | 28.6%             |
| Jack Kemp         | 20,114       | 12.7%             |
| Pierre S. DuPont  | 15,885       | 10.7%             |
| Pat Robertson     | 14,775       | 9.4%              |

### South Carolina Presidential Primary, 1988.

#### Republican Results<sup>ii</sup>

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| <b>Candidate</b>  | <b>Vote</b> | <b>percentage</b> |
|-------------------|-------------|-------------------|
| George H. W. Bush | 94,738      | 48.5%             |
| Bob Dole          | 40,265      | 20.6%             |
| Pat Robertson     | 37,261      | 19.1%             |

**New Hampshire Presidential Primary, February 18, 1992**

**Republican Results<sup>iii</sup>**

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| <b>Candidate</b>  | <b>Votes</b> | <b>Percentage</b> |
|-------------------|--------------|-------------------|
| George H. W. Bush | 92,274       | 53.2              |
| Pat Buchanan      | 65,109       | 36.5              |

**South Carolina Presidential Primary Results, 1992**

**Republican Results<sup>iv</sup>**

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| <b>Candidate</b>  | <b>Votes</b> | <b>Percentage</b> |
|-------------------|--------------|-------------------|
| George H. W. Bush | 99,558       | 66.89%            |
| Pat Buchanan      | 38,247       | 25.70%            |
| David Duke        | 10,553       | 7.09%             |

**New Hampshire Presidential Primary Results, February 20, 1996**

**Republican Results<sup>v</sup>**

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| <b>Candidates</b> | <b>Votes</b> | <b>Percentage</b> |
|-------------------|--------------|-------------------|
| Pat Buchanan      | 56,921       | 27.20             |
| Bob Dole          | 54,840       | 26.20             |
| Lamar Alexander   | 47,216       | 22.56             |
| Steve Forbes      | 25,535       | 12.20             |

**South Carolina Presidential Primary, March 2, 1996**

**Republican Results<sup>vi</sup>**

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| <b>Candidates</b> | <b>Votes</b> | <b>Percentage</b> |
|-------------------|--------------|-------------------|
| Bob Dole          | 124,904      | 45.13             |
| Pat Buchanan      | 80,824       | 29.20             |
| Steve Forbes      | 35,039       | 12.66             |
| Lamar Alexander   | 28,647       | 10.33             |
| Alan Keyes        | 5,752        | 2.08              |

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- i Source: <<http://www.politicallibrary.org/TallState?.1998rep.html>>
- ii Source: Telephone conversation: Jason Bucelato. Public Information Specialist. Public Records office. FEC.001/800424-9530. 11/10/06 2.15 pm.
- iii Source: <<http://www.politicallibrary.org/TallState/1992rep.html>>
- iv Source: Telephone conversation: Jason Bucelato. Public Information Specialist. Public Records office. FEC.001/800424-9530. 11/10/06 2.15 pm.
- v Source: <<http://www.fec.gov/96fed/newhamp.htm>>
- vi <<http://www.fec.gov/96fed.southcar.htm>>

## APPENDICES B

### SOUTH CAROLINA: GOP Primary Election: February 19, 2000<sup>i</sup>

| <i>Category</i>    | <i>Republican Candidate &amp; percentage</i> |      |       |        |
|--------------------|--|------|-------|--------|
|                    | All  | Bush | Keyes | McCain |
| <b>Gender</b>      |  |      |       |        |
| Men                | 50   | 51   | 6     | 43     |
| Women              | 50   | 55   | 4     | 41     |
| <b>Race by Sex</b> |  |      |       |        |
| White Males        | 49   | 52   | 5     | 43     |
| White Females      | 51   | 55   | 4     | 41     |
| <b>Race</b>        |  |      |       |        |
| White              | 97   | 54   | 4     | 42     |
| African American   | 2  | 0    | 0     | 0      |
| Hispanic           | 0  | 0    | 0     | 0      |
| Asian              | 0  | 0    | 0     | 0      |
| Other              | 0  | 0    | 0     | 0      |
| <b>Age</b>         |  |      |       |        |
| 18-29              | 10   | 54   | 11    | 35     |
| 30-44              | 25   | 59   | 6     | 35     |
| 45-59              | 30   | 50   | 7     | 44     |
| 60 or Older        | 35   | 51   | 1     | 47     |

|              |    |    |   |    |
|--------------|----|----|---|----|
| Age          |    |    |   |    |
| 18-64        | 75 | 54 | 6 | 40 |
| 65 and Older | 25 | 50 | 1 | 49 |

|              |    |    |   |    |
|--------------|----|----|---|----|
| Age          |    |    |   |    |
| Under 75     | 92 | 53 | 5 | 41 |
| 75 and Older | 8  | 48 | 1 | 50 |

|                |    |    |   |    |
|----------------|----|----|---|----|
| Income         |    |    |   |    |
| Under \$15,000 | 4  | 42 | 4 | 54 |
| \$1530,000     | 11 | 60 | 5 | 35 |
| \$3050,000     | 25 | 55 | 6 | 39 |
| \$5075,000     | 31 | 51 | 4 | 45 |
| \$75100,000    | 15 | 55 | 5 | 40 |
| Over \$100,000 | 14 | 56 | 7 | 38 |

|                      |    |    |   |    |
|----------------------|----|----|---|----|
| Education            |    |    |   |    |
| No H.S. Degree       | 4  | 51 | 3 | 46 |
| High School Graduate | 19 | 57 | 5 | 38 |
| Some College         | 31 | 52 | 5 | 43 |
| College Graduate     | 26 | 59 | 5 | 35 |
| Post Graduate        | 21 | 46 | 6 | 48 |

|                   |    |    |   |    |
|-------------------|----|----|---|----|
| College Graduate? |    |    |   |    |
| Yes               | 46 | 54 | 6 | 41 |
| No                | 54 | 54 | 5 | 41 |

|                    |    |    |   |    |
|--------------------|----|----|---|----|
| Are You a Veteran? |    |    |   |    |
| Yes                | 27 | 47 | 5 | 48 |
| No                 | 73 | 56 | 5 | 38 |

|                            |    |    |   |    |
|----------------------------|----|----|---|----|
| Ever Voted in GOP Primary? |    |    |   |    |
| Yes                        | 68 | 59 | 5 | 36 |
| No                         | 31 | 42 | 5 | 53 |

Party Identification

|             |    |    |   |    |
|-------------|----|----|---|----|
| Democrat    | 9  | 18 | 3 | 79 |
| Republican  | 61 | 69 | 5 | 26 |
| Independent | 30 | 34 | 6 | 60 |

Ideology

|              |    |    |   |    |
|--------------|----|----|---|----|
| Liberal      | 10 | 34 | 3 | 63 |
| Moderate     | 29 | 37 | 3 | 59 |
| Conservative | 61 | 65 | 6 | 29 |

Ideology

|                        |    |    |    |    |
|------------------------|----|----|----|----|
| Very Liberal           | 3  | 0  | 0  | 0  |
| Somewhat Liberal       | 8  | 32 | 3  | 65 |
| Moderate               | 29 | 37 | 3  | 59 |
| Somewhat Conservative. | 37 | 59 | 4  | 37 |
| Very Conservative      | 24 | 74 | 10 | 16 |

Family's Financial Situation

|        |    |    |   |    |
|--------|----|----|---|----|
| Better | 45 | 49 | 5 | 46 |
| Worse  | 9  | 57 | 7 | 35 |
| Same   | 41 | 57 | 5 | 37 |

Member of Religious Right?

|     |    |    |   |    |
|-----|----|----|---|----|
| Yes | 34 | 68 | 8 | 24 |
| No  | 61 | 46 | 2 | 52 |

Born in South Carolina?

|     |    |    |   |    |
|-----|----|----|---|----|
| Yes | 52 | 58 | 5 | 37 |
| No  | 48 | 49 | 6 | 46 |

Abortion Should Be Legal...

|        |    |    |   |    |
|--------|----|----|---|----|
| Always | 13 | 40 | 4 | 56 |
|--------|----|----|---|----|

|            |    |    |    |    |
|------------|----|----|----|----|
| Most Cases | 26 | 43 | 2  | 56 |
| Few Cases  | 41 | 58 | 4  | 37 |
| Never      | 17 | 67 | 13 | 19 |

When Did You Decide To Vote?

|                   |    |    |   |    |
|-------------------|----|----|---|----|
| Today             | 9  | 57 | 9 | 34 |
| Last 3 Days       | 10 | 59 | 7 | 34 |
| Last Week         | 19 | 47 | 9 | 44 |
| Earlier This Year | 46 | 47 | 3 | 50 |
| Last Year         | 16 | 71 | 3 | 26 |

Satisfied With GOP Candidates?

|     |    |    |    |    |
|-----|----|----|----|----|
| Yes | 88 | 55 | 4  | 40 |
| No  | 9  | 35 | 13 | 53 |

Did You Watch Debate?

|     |    |    |   |    |
|-----|----|----|---|----|
| Yes | 43 | 50 | 6 | 44 |
| No  | 56 | 57 | 5 | 39 |

Opinion of Bush

|              |    |    |   |    |
|--------------|----|----|---|----|
| Favourable   | 73 | 73 | 5 | 22 |
| Unfavourable | 26 | 3  | 6 | 92 |

Opinion of McCain

|              |    |    |   |    |
|--------------|----|----|---|----|
| Favourable   | 67 | 37 | 3 | 59 |
| Unfavourable | 30 | 88 | 9 | 3  |

Did Bush Attack Unfairly?

|     |    |    |   |    |
|-----|----|----|---|----|
| Yes | 35 | 17 | 4 | 79 |
| No  | 59 | 76 | 6 | 19 |

Did McCain Attack Unfairly?

|     |    |    |   |    |
|-----|----|----|---|----|
| Yes | 43 | 70 | 6 | 24 |
| No  | 50 | 39 | 4 | 57 |

Who is a Real Reformer?

|             |    |    |    |    |
|-------------|----|----|----|----|
| Only Bush   | 24 | 9  | 5  | 23 |
| Only McCain | 17 | 5  | 1  | 94 |
| Both        | 36 | 56 | 3  | 41 |
| Neither     | 15 | 38 | 19 | 43 |

Is Bush a Real Reformer?

|     |    |    |   |    |
|-----|----|----|---|----|
| Yes | 59 | 71 | 3 | 26 |
| No  | 32 | 20 | 9 | 71 |

Is McCain a Real Reformer?

|     |    |    |   |    |
|-----|----|----|---|----|
| Yes | 53 | 39 | 2 | 58 |
| No  | 39 | 73 | 9 | 19 |

Bush Knows Enough?

|     |    |    |   |    |
|-----|----|----|---|----|
| Yes | 77 | 68 | 5 | 27 |
| No  | 21 | 2  | 5 | 94 |

McCain on Campaign Finance

|                |    |    |   |    |
|----------------|----|----|---|----|
| Not Consistent | 43 | 77 | 6 | 16 |
| Consistent     | 50 | 30 | 4 | 67 |

More Likely To Win in November

|        |    |    |   |    |
|--------|----|----|---|----|
| Bush   | 57 | 89 | 5 | 6  |
| McCain | 38 | 4  | 3 | 93 |

Who Says What He Believes?

|             |    |    |    |    |
|-------------|----|----|----|----|
| Only Bush   | 37 | 95 | 3  | 2  |
| Only McCain | 37 | 5  | 2  | 93 |
| Both        | 14 | 71 | 4  | 24 |
| Neither     | 9  | 50 | 26 | 24 |

|                               |    |    |    |    |
|-------------------------------|----|----|----|----|
| Bush Says What He Believes?   |    |    |    |    |
| Yes                           | 52 | 89 | 3  | 8  |
| No                            | 46 | 14 | 7  | 80 |
| McCain Says What He Believes? |    |    |    |    |
| Yes                           | 51 | 24 | 3  | 74 |
| No                            | 46 | 87 | 7  | 6  |
| More Important to Your Vote   |    |    |    |    |
| Issues                        | 41 | 61 | 8  | 30 |
| Personal Qualities            | 55 | 48 | 3  | 49 |
| Republican Who Prefer...      |    |    |    |    |
| Loyal to GOP                  | 57 | 83 | 2  | 15 |
| Not Tied to Party             | 39 | 49 | 8  | 43 |
| Higher Priority               |    |    |    |    |
| Tax Cut                       | 44 | 70 | 7  | 23 |
| Social Security               | 52 | 40 | 3  | 57 |
| Confederate Flag Over Capitol |    |    |    |    |
| Approve                       | 47 | 61 | 4  | 35 |
| Disapprove                    | 48 | 45 | 6  | 49 |
| Use Internet Regularly?       |    |    |    |    |
| Yes                           | 53 | 52 | 6  | 43 |
| No                            | 47 | 54 | 5  | 41 |
| Most Important Issue          |    |    |    |    |
| World Affairs                 | 10 | 50 | 1  | 49 |
| Campaign Finance              | 6  | 21 | 1  | 78 |
| Abortion                      | 6  | 65 | 13 | 22 |
| Social Security               | 19 | 40 | 2  | 58 |
| Moral Values                  | 37 | 55 | 9  | 36 |

|         |    |    |   |    |
|---------|----|----|---|----|
| Taxes   | 13 | 78 | 2 | 20 |
| Tobacco | 0  | 0  | 0 | 0  |

Most Important Quality

|                      |    |    |    |    |
|----------------------|----|----|----|----|
| Stand Up For Beliefs | 31 | 38 | 8  | 54 |
| Not Typical Politics | 6  | 12 | 13 | 75 |
| Can Win in November  | 9  | 78 | 1  | 21 |
| Conservative Values  | 18 | 80 | 7  | 13 |
| Strong Leader        | 20 | 60 | 1  | 39 |
| Military Record      | 4  | 2  | 0  | 98 |
| Experience           | 8  | 60 | 0  | 40 |

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<sup>i</sup> Source: <<http://www.edition.cnn.com/ELECTION/2000/primaries/SC/poll.rep.html>>

## APPENDICES C

### How the religious groups voted in the 2000 Presidential Election.<sup>1</sup>

| <i>Vote by religion</i>       | <i>Bush</i> | <i>Gore</i> |
|-------------------------------|-------------|-------------|
| White Evangelical Protestants |             |             |
| More Observant                | 84%         | 16%         |
| Less Observant                | 55%         | 45%         |
| White Mainline Protestants    |             |             |
| More Observant                | 65%         | 35%         |
| Less Observant                | 57%         | 43%         |
| Black Protestants             | 4%          | 96%         |
| Hispanic Protestants          | 33%         | 67%         |
| Hispanic Catholics            | 24%         | 76%         |

|                      |       |       |
|----------------------|-------|-------|
| Roman Catholics      |       |       |
| More Observant       | 57%   | 43%   |
| Less Observant       | 41%   | 59%   |
| Mormons              | 88%   | 12%   |
| Other Christians     | 28%   | 72%   |
| Jews                 | 23%   | 77%   |
| Other non-Christians | 20%   | 80%   |
| Seculars             | 35%   | 65%   |
| All Voters           | 49.8% | 50.2% |

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<sup>1</sup> Faith and Values in Politics. How Religious Groups Voted in the 2000 Presidential Election. Beliefnet. Source: The Third National Survey of Religion and Politics, Conducted by the University of Akron Survey Research Center.  
<[http://www.restoreamerica.org/takeaction\\_vote.shtml](http://www.restoreamerica.org/takeaction_vote.shtml)> 08/04/07

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<[http://www.restoreamerica.org/takeaction\\_vote.shtml](http://www.restoreamerica.org/takeaction_vote.shtml)>

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