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Natural Adversaries or Possible Allies? American Jews and the New Christian Right

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FOREWORD

Whatever the truth of the old saw about American Jews being just like other Americans only more so, it certainly does not apply in the political sphere, where a distinctive Jewish pattern is evident. Scholars such as Seymour Martin Lipset and Earl Raab have pointed to the "political hyperactivism" of American Jews, their disproportionate involvement in the political process as expert professionals, volunteers, and, in recent years, candidates for office. Moreover, Jewish voters show a remarkable propensity for liberal politics, a propensity that cannot be predicted on the basis of their relatively high socioeconomic status. In addition, the organized Jewish community expends enormous effort and energy in advancing favored political causes, such as support for Israel and aid to Soviet Jewry.

The existing scholarly literature on the political life of American Jews has certain limitations. In the first place, a good part of the material is dated and needs to be made current. Second -- and more important -- there are not enough studies with analytic depth, exploring not only the "whats" of Jewish political behavior but also the "whys." Why, for example, do American Jews cling tenaciously to political liberalism even as the country as a whole moves in a more conservative direction? Why do Jewish organizations pursue an activist political agenda in relation to Congress and the White House? More generally, why do American Jews gravitate to politics as a sphere of activity?

To suggest answers to these and other important questions about the role that American Jews play in the political life of the nation, the American Jewish Committee initiated the Jewish Political Studies series. The third publication in the series is Naomi Cohen's *Natural Adversaries or Possible Allies? American Jews and the New Christian Right*.

David Singer, *Director*
Department of Research and Publications

PREFACE

For centuries, Evangelical Christians and Jews have moved past (or away from) each other like the proverbial ships in the night, never really encountering one another as vibrant, unique, and complex communities. But in the 1980s fresh breezes stirred on the religious landscape as American Jews -- after many years of interreligious dialogue with Roman Catholics and liberal Protestants -- stepped up their encounters with the Evangelicals.

But this increased contact took place at the same time that many Evangelical Protestants were taking part in the resurgence of the Religious Right. As that movement grew during the 1980s, alarm bells sounded throughout much of the American Jewish community. This was a natural response, since modern Jewish history in Europe is filled with painful instances of anti-Semitism that originated or were located inside right-wing religio-political movements. The collective American Jewish psyche was convinced that strong Christian religious fervor combined with strident nationalism is always a recipe for anti-Semitism.

Yet, as Professor Naomi Cohen skillfully shows in this work, the old formulas did not precisely fit the reality of a pluralistc and democratic America. The common Jewish assumption that the Religious Right and its leaders were anti-Jewish proved difficult to substantiate.

True enough, a commitment to Evangelical Christianity often entailed the call for the conversion of the Jewish people, and the organized Jewish community disagreed with the Evangelicals on a host of specific issues.

Nevertheless, the Religious Right strongly supported the State of Israel, its advocacy of a potent American national-defense posture buttressing the case for military aid to Israel, and its vigorous anticommunism made it a natural ally of the Jews in the struggle to free Soviet Jewry. What is more, many leaders of the Religious Right denounced and repudiated anti-Semitism, and even their rhetoric regarding family values -- though usually couched in Christian theological terms -- resonated with the conviction of many Jews that the family is a vital force for the transmission of ethical values and for the development of a moral civil society.

In the 1980s, as the feared and generally unknown Religious Right seemed at times a stronger advocate of Jewish interests and values than a more familiar but increasingly unreliable American Religious Left, many American Jews felt a confusing sense of political ambiguity: it was no longer so easy to tell which Christian groups were suitable coalition partners and which were not.

It was clear by the end of the decade that the Religious Right was a permanent part of the religious scene, but it was equally clear that no one group can dominate or control religious life in America. The much discussed, predicted, and dreaded "Christianization of America" did not happen, and it even seemed,

to some observers, that the strength of the Religious Right had begun to wane.

As a direct result of the Evangelical-Jewish dialogue, many caricatures and stereotypes disappeared in both communities. Some human bridges of understanding were built across the gulf of earlier isolation and suspicion, resulting in more mutual respect.

Professor Cohen's essay provies an extraordinarily useful record of how the American Jewish community responded to the challenges posed by the Religious Right in the 1980s, and her insights will be helpful in the 1990s and beyond, for this issue is not about to disappear.

Surveying the scene today, Jews are gratified that many leaders of the Religious Right have explicitly or implicity accepted the principle of religious and cultural pluralism, and understand the need to reach out to coalition partners. But at the same time a highly organized "second wave" of the Religious Right has quietly entered the political arena, running its own candidates for many elective offices, and even, some fear, seeking to take over one of the major political parties.

The Religious Right, in some form, and the American Jewish community will be involved with one another for many years to come. The era of ships passing in the night is over.

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NATURAL ADVERSARIES OR POSSIBLE ALLIES? AMERICAN JEWS AND THE NEW CHRISTIAN RIGHT

1. Introduction

The emergence of a full-blown New Christian Right upon the national political scene in 1980 severely jolted American Jews. Like most Americans, they had believed that religious fundamentalism, a feature of the 1920s, had been permanently laid to rest along with Prohibition and the trial of John Scopes. Although the New Christian Right never defined its political program in terms of Christian versus Jew -- in fact, it firmly supported two causes of vital importance to American Jews, aid to Israel and aid to Soviet Jewry -- the sight of a militant Christianity committed to missionizing and harnessed to the forces of political conservatism resurrected age-old fears for Jewish freedom and equality.

The Evangelical clergy and organizations -- three of the most prominent in 1980 were the Moral Majority, Christian Voice, and Religious Roundtable -- that informally constituted the Christian Right challenged a secularized America. Under the theme of restoring morality to American life, they generally stood for prayer and Bible-reading in schools, restrictions on pornography, government aid to religious schools, a curb on welfare programs, and increased defense spending; they opposed abortion and demands for legislation protecting gay and women's rights. Propagating their views through journals, radio, and television, the Christian rightists charged that the removal of God and religion from the public square accounted for the social malaise gripping the nation. The pernicious virus that was eating away at American moral values and social institutions was, in the words of the Reverend James Robison, the fault of secular humanists who, in league with the Antichrist, "stood at the shoulder of Satan." "WE WANT OUR COUNTRY BACK!" a fund-raising letter from Christian Voice demanded, the way it was before the federal government began trampling on "sacred Christian values," before ultraliberals and secular humanists "started separating America from God." Equating Christian values with good Americanism, the rightists called for support of Christian lawmakers.[1]

Jews were not the primary target, but the attacks on liberalism, secularism, and humanism were too close for comfort. Fervent social-justice liberals from the days of Roosevelt's New Deal, Jews largely opposed the specific items on the Evangelicals' domestic agenda. (In some instances simply knowing the Christian Right's stand was sufficient reason to assume an opposing position.[2]) Indeed, the "Right" in "Christian Right" bothered Jews as much as "Christian." Unlike other immigrant groups, neither affluence nor status had eroded the identification of American Jews with liberalism. Overwhelmingly associated with the Democratic Party and in the vanguard of liberal causes, they found their friends and political

allies among like-minded Christians. American Jews loyally touted the liberal creed. History taught that at critical junctures -- struggles for political rights in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, persecution under despotic and totalitarian regimes of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries -- they had fared best in liberal societies. For 200 years Western Jews had viewed liberalism as the antidote to political inequality and anti-Semitism, and for many in twentieth-century America it had become a pseudo-messianic movement promising an end to exile and alienation.

For similar reasons most modern Jews, ever since their emancipation, had identified with the humanistic creed. Not only were Jews more secularized than any other religious group in America, but many had found in secular humanism a surrogate for Jewish tradition. As one Jewish scholar explained, the attitudes of modern Jews "have been governed by values, goals, and forms of collective expression that they drew not from Jewish tradition so much as their humanistic perception of modernity and their quest for acceptance according to its canons."[3]

Admittedly, certain strains on the Jewish-liberal alliance had developed since the 1960s. When the civil rights movement turned to racial quotas, when Jews in large cities clashed with racial minorities on community issues like schools and law enforcement, when many liberals played down opposition to the Soviet Union despite its anti-Semitism and Israel-baiting, and when liberal groups adopted the pro-Arab and anti-Israel views of the third world -- many Jews became uncomfortable. FDR's liberal coalition was disappearing, and American liberalism was taking a less congenial form. As a community, however, Jews did not ponder the possible clash between their long-term interests and the new liberalism, nor was their loyalty to the Democratic Party seriously shaken.[4]

Along with its antiliberal agenda, the rhetoric of the Christian Right raised deep anxieties among Jews. Taken literally, appeals to "Vote Christian," or for a "Christian America" or a "Christian Bill of Rights," callously repudiated the doctrine of religious pluralism (and its corollary of equality for non-Christian minorities) which Jews had long propagated. The Christian activists conjured up specters of nineteenth-century religious militants who did not flinch from relegating non-Christians to second-class status and of twentieth-century demagogues like Gerald L. K. Smith and Gerald Winrod who laced their aggressive Christian crusades with blatant anti-Semitism. And even if "Christian" was being used as a synonym for "religious," Jewish defense organizations reasoned that a successful religio-political onslaught endangered their interests. From the 1870s on, most American Jews, believers as well as nonbelievers, had predicated their goal of equality upon a secular government. Since official acknowledgment of religion meant at bottom a favored position for the majority religion, Christianity, Jews committed themselves to an open-ended defense of strict separationism and sought through legislation and the courts to prevent state favoritism toward religion in general and to Christianity in particular.[5]

Against that historical background, the emotionally charged condemnation of the Religious Right on the part of most Jews was not surprising. For similar reasons, a "proper" Jewish response to the New Christian Right was a foregone

conclusion. Since the right-wing Evangelical movement, another link in a long chain of Christian crusades, spelled anti-Semitism and legal disabilities, Jews concerned about their security and survival directed their energies and resources to combating the Christian activists.

And yet the realities of contemporary America seemed to point in a different direction. The situation was far different from that in the last third of the nineteenth century when the National Reform Association crusaded for a Christian amendment to the Constitution and Supreme Court Justice David Brewer held (in 1892) that the United States was a Christian nation. Jews had also come a long way from the 1950s when Americans in the grip of an escalating cold war loudly supported the collaboration of public schools in some form of religious teaching, and denounced opponents, including most Jews, as atheistic communists. Significant developments since then -- Jewish economic and educational advancement, the decline of organized anti-Semitism, and erosion of social barriers -- had reinforced the minority's sense of "at-homeness." The major legal victories of the Jewish separationists in the 1960s, notably in the *Engel* and *Schempp* cases, wiped out long-standing religious practices in the schools and, more importantly, recognized as the law of the land what had consistently been the majority Jewish position on church-state relations.

American society had changed too. The growing acceptance of pluralism and ethnic distinctiveness eased the traditional pressures on non-Protestants to conform. Just as it became easier for individuals to assert and to command respect for Jewishness and Jewish identity, so did the Jewish group become more confident, less afraid to air its opinions or collective interests. Evangelicals also absorbed the new canons of social propriety. Now, unlike during earlier crusades of religious militants, Christian leaders in the 1980s explained or apologized if their remarks offended a Jewish audience. Fundamentalists may have wanted to push the clock back, Nathan Glazer observed, but not to an era when anti-Jewish attitudes were widely accepted. Ironically, for the first time in American history, a prominent right-wing Christian movement, the Moral Majority, courted Jewish membership.[6]

Even if the vision of massive Christianization was unreal, Jewish fear was not. It testified to the Jewish gut belief that anti-Semitism was eternal, perhaps even endemic to Christian society. During the 1980s, Jews faced the New Christian Right on numerous concrete issues like religion in politics, defense of Israel, interreligious dialogue, and the separation of church and state. In each area, whether the rightists were adversaries or allies, the fear persisted.

2. Signs of Conflict

For most of their respective histories, Jews and Evangelicals had little contact with each other. The Evangelicals were concentrated geographically in the South and Southwest, regions that Jewish settlements had, until the post-World War II era, largely bypassed. Furthermore, as church historian David Rausch explains, critical differences in outlook separated Evangelicals from Jews. The former emphasized

personal faith and commitment to theological doctrine; on this-worldly issues their stand was moderate to conservative. By contrast, typical American Jews ranked Jewish peoplehood above religion, and their position on public policy was generally liberal. While Evangelicals stood for witness and mission to the Jews, Jews naturally found such doctrines offensive if not threatening.

Distance between the "two different worlds" may have served to avoid conflict, but it also bred a reluctance on both sides to explore a deeper understanding of the other. Stereotypes and caricatures dominated the thinking of both groups. Among Evangelicals, "Jews" conjured up images of Christ-killers, Shylocks, urban predators of American farmers, Elders of Zion. Even if they did not conspire to overthrow Christendom, Jews were the stiff-necked people who stubbornly resisted conversion and clung to their obsolete faith. For their part, Jews sneered at Evangelicals who cast aspersion on Judaism and its followers. Relics of a bygone era, they were ignorant rednecks, cultural Neanderthals, and fanatical Bible-thumpers led by self-styled ministers out of the pages of Sinclair Lewis. In the mindset of each group, the other was the traditional adversary.[1]

The images began to crack in the mid-1960s. At the initiative of Rabbi Marc Tanenbaum, head of its Interreligious Affairs Department, the American Jewish Committee (AJC) began to take serious note of the Evangelical churches. Tanenbaum has recalled his own "awakening": visits to southern communities that revealed that Evangelicals were not a monolith. Like all religious persuasions, Evangelicals ran the gamut from theological right-wingers and fundamentalists to social radicals. Tanenbaum also saw that many Evangelicals were modern, well-educated people who enjoyed economic power, political influence, and social status, and who, unlike the extremists for whom "Jew" meant eternal alien, were not unreceptive to contacts with Jews. Perceiving the importance of communicating with those moderates -- particularly as increasing numbers of Jews settled in the South and Southwest -- he embarked on a program of Jewish-Evangelical dialogue focusing on the need of both groups to "unlearn" stereotypes and develop a better understanding of the religious beliefs and social interests that united as well as separated the two faiths. Though both Evangelical and Jewish scholars were suspicious at first, a successful conference at Louisville Baptist Seminary in 1969 planted seeds that slowly took root.[2] But whether the Jewish rank and file would acknowledge the advantages of dialogue was still uncertain.

A different kind of stereotype, that of a quiescent Evangelical force that had retreated from the public arena after the debacles of the 1920s, shattered under the impact of Key '73.[3] A nationwide ecumenical campaign rooted in the Evangelical churches but joined by other Protestant as well as Catholic supporters, Key '73 announced its intent "To Call the Continent to Christ in 1973." Initiated in 1967, it steadily gained momentum. In 1972, the Campus Crusade for Christ, a major university-based group, dramatically intensified its missionizing activities. That same year millions of Jews read full-page ads in the press like the one circulated by the long-established American Board of Missions to the Jews. Under the caption "So many Jews are wearing 'That Smile' nowadays!" the ad explained that the thirty-nine men and women in its photograph, "Hebrew Christians," had

found their happiness in the acceptance of Jesus as the Messiah. Rabbis and Jewish communal leaders grew increasingly apprehensive. If that ad was a taste of what they could expect in intensified form, a counterstrategy was necessary. To be sure, the Evangelical drive was aimed at all people of the United States and Canada. But Jews, the quintessential non-Christians, appeared to be an obvious target.[4]

Key '73 spread its message through the media, billboards and auto stickers, Bible study groups, distribution of the New Testament, door-to-door canvassers who "witnessed" to Christ, and youthful crusaders who proselytized on high-school and college campuses. Incidents of deception and harassment, like the use of Hanukkah celebrations or Yom Kippur services as facades for proselytizing, or compulsory attendance of Jewish high-school students at missionizing assemblies, accompanied some activities. The *Washington Post* reported that a group of Christianizers stormed into a temple in Portland, Oregon, during Sabbath services, held up crosses against the Torah, and called on the congregation to convert. Interpreted by some as a religious response to the deep shocks of the 1960s, Key '73 stressed personal salvation but not necessarily the total exclusion of political involvement. Its leaders arranged "prayer breakfasts" for government officials at all levels, up to the president, and they urged the adoption of supportive resolutions by municipal and state legislatures. Noted Protestant historian Martin Marty predicted that the campaign would lead to increased social activism by Evangelicals.[5]

By the beginning of 1973 all major Jewish religious, defense, and community-relations organizations had swung into high gear. Resolutions, guidelines, and action kits on what some staff members called "the Jesus Revolution" were distributed to rabbis, congregations, and community-relations councils across the country. None questioned the freedom of religions to proselytize, and they usually implored Jews not to overreact to would-be proselytizers. The materials often included a crash course in the rudiments of the Jewish faith and tradition. The Commission on Interfaith Activities of the Reform wing of American Jewry circulated refutations of the missionizers' stock arguments, such as the "suffering servant" passages in the Book of Isaiah, which Christians had long advanced as proof that the Hebrew Bible predicted the coming of Jesus. On a different level, the American Jewish Congress, the agency most sensitive to breaches of separation between church and state, challenged a memorandum circulated by the Department of the Navy that endorsed the Evangelical enterprise.[6]

Although any Jew could be accosted in his office, on his doorstep, or in his synagogue, the most vulnerable were those away from their familiar surroundings -- Jewish youth on campus. More often than not unequipped to dispute the arguments of missionizers who presented Christianity as the logical fulfillment of Judaism, they were assiduously cultivated by both serious and humorous propaganda literature and by devices like "rap sessions," "Jewish gospel music," Hebrew-Christian dramatic presentations, and special Passover seders. Doubtless the simultaneous popularity of the rock musical *Jesus Christ Superstar* abetted the

outreach to teenagers and young adults. Jewish organizations sought to counter groups like Jews for Jesus (an offshoot of the American Board of Missions for Jews) by directing a steady stream of essays and articles on facets of Judaism to Jews at college. The Rabbinical Council of America (Orthodox) established a task force of rabbis and scholars who visited Jewish students, and several antimissionary groups, like Esther Jungreis's popular Hineni, were established. For its part, the militant Jewish Defense League resorted to abuse and outright violence against the missionizers.[7]

While Jewish fear of open proselytizing may have -- as one Catholic journalist commented -- afforded significant publicity to Key '73, proselytizing understandably raised Jewish hackles. The triumphalist, monolithic tone of Key '73, Rabbi Solomon Bernards of the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) explained, reminded the non-Christian minority of disputes and debates throughout history which often resulted in popular anti-Jewish excesses. The denigration of, and hostility to, Judaism and its followers that marked the past debates also permeated the style of the present-day crusaders. Despite disavowals by activist Evangelicals, blatant or implied anti-Semitism was the natural handmaiden of zealous missionizing, and even some Christian spokesmen joined Jews in accusing the missionizers of at least "crypto-anti-Semitism." Bernards and other Jews and Christians who probed beneath the surface of missionary zeal also warned of the narrowness of a monolithic focus that threatened religious pluralism. Many crusaders looked beyond individual conversions to Christianizing the nation, a goal which Senator Mark Hatfield, a born-again Baptist, called "an inaccurate mixing of piety and patriotism." The translation of private religious commitments into public policy could easily undermine the full religious equality of Jews.[8]

Evangelicals attempted to reassure Jews. Some leaders of Key '73 announced that "the Jewish community [was] off-limits to Christian evangelizing" and that "the Jewish community as such must not be considered a target group." Evangelist leader Billy Graham decried both coercive proselytizing and the anti-Semitism that surfaced with the Evangelical drive. Still others repudiated the talk of Christianizing America. *Christianity Today*, a periodical sympathetic to Key '73, called the very notion unrealistic: "We can dismiss as wishful thinking any announced aim by uninformed Key 73 participants of making the United States a Christian nation."[9]

As the year neared its end, both sponsors and onlookers called the ambitious crusade a failure. One Methodist newspaper wrote that "Key 73 seems to have produced nothing more than a giant yawn." Although some Evangelicals blamed opposition from Jews and strict separationists for weakening the project, the results of Key '73 from the Jewish point of view were mixed. Actual defections from the Jewish fold were minimal. Nevertheless, proselytizing on campus persisted, challenging Jewish community leaders to find new ways to reach the young people. Nor did its immediate failure mean that Key '73 had not ignited forces of religious renewal, and with them the ominous possibility of the incursion of religion into politics. On the positive side, however, the Jewish fear that Key '73 would disrupt Jewish-Christian dialogue, a concern that Jewish organizations

repeatedly voiced, did not materialize. Many Christian churches, both mainline and Evangelical, maintained and cultivated contacts and communication with Jews, particularly on the local level. The progress of dialogue up to 1973 had insured that Jews would not be forced to confront the missionizers alone, in total isolation from American churches. The resultant cooperation promised to strengthen interreligious bonds.[10]

Efforts to unite Evangelicals for political and social action surfaced shortly after Key '73. A powerful coalition of organizations and publishing houses (e.g., Third Century Publishers, Christian Embassy, Christian Freedom Foundation), including some individuals formerly associated with the secular Right, announced plans to elect "the right kind of Christians" in 1976 and eventually achieve a "Christian Republic." A simultaneous project, the Christian Yellow Pages, attempted to link Evangelicalism with business. Like the standard yellow pages but limited to advertisers who swore that they were born-again Christians, it was "designed to give Christian families . . . a means to choose ethical, conscientious business people in our community who love and serve the Lord Jesus Christ." And when Democratic presidential candidate Jimmy Carter injected religion into the 1976 presidential campaign with references to his own born-again experience, he focused attention squarely on the political intentions of the Evangelicals.[11]

Jews carefully monitored local and state drives to "vote Christian" and elect "Christ-centered" candidates. They studied, for example, the anti-Semitism triggered by Representative John Conlan's campaign in Arizona and the anti-Semitic materials churned out in Arkansas by the White People's Committee to Restore God's Laws. The call to "vote Christian," an idea that Jews interpreted as tantamount to the imposition of a test oath for officeholding, was even more unsettling. Seeking allies among the Evangelicals, the AJC organized a news conference at which Dr. James Dunn, director of the Christian Life Commission of the Texas Baptists, declared that the requirement of Christian "tests" for candidates contradicted the tradition of religious liberty held by both Jews and Baptists. Meanwhile, the ADL took on the Christian Yellow Pages, launching a successful court action in California against such organized discrimination. The success of the Christian activists in 1976 was far from impressive, but the consensus was that "the year of the Evangelical," a term coined by George Gallup, had prepared the ground for sustained political involvement.[12]

"Evangelicalism is booming," proclaimed a cover story in *Time* at the end of 1977. The magazine reported that while the "cultured Protestant Establishment" (the United Methodist, United Presbyterian, Episcopal, and United Church of Christ churches) had suffered a serious decline in membership during the previous decade, the steadily growing Evangelical churches counted over 45 million members (as compared to 33.5 million within the mainline churches affiliated with the National Council of Churches). *Time* noted the Evangelical blend of "show biz and salvation"; with recourse to well-heeled financial backers, Evangelical leaders effectively used radio, TV, films, and "testimony books" from prominent converts to spread their message. Their successes crossed social classes, reaching the rich and famous as well as the poor and middle classes. Evangelicals still focused

primarily on personal salvation rather than public policy. But, *Time* asked, would they now move toward a "Third Great Awakening" for the regeneration of American society?[13]

3. The Bailey Smith Affair

Ripples in the 1976 elections became a national splash four years later when the "sleeping giant" of American politics,[1] the born-again Christian Right, finally awoke. In April 1980 some 200,000 Evangelicals attended a "Washington for Jesus" rally where they lobbied their congressmen and senators. Under the guise of prayer meetings they disseminated the views expressed in their "Christian Declaration," a document that registered opposition to abortion, religionless schools, pornography, homosexuality, and atheism. "The truth of God is taken from our schools by action of government," the Declaration read, "while unbridled sexuality, humanism, and satanism are taught at public expense." As Reform Rabbi David Saperstein stated, the implied message to the lawmakers was simple: "We will pray to Jesus to show you the light so that America can be a good Christian country."[2]

Four months later a two-day national-affairs briefing was sponsored by the conservative Evangelical Religious Roundtable. Drawing over 10,000 participants to Dallas, it sought to involve Evangelicals directly in politics. Lessons on how to "vote Christian" and support Christian policies were underscored by displays of the voting records of all congressmen -- though the sentiment of the group clearly favored Ronald Reagan and the Republicans. On the evening of the second day, Dr. Bailey Smith, president of the 13-million-strong Southern Baptist Convention, dropped a bombshell. In the course of a speech, Smith said about Jews: "With all due respect to those dear people, my friends, God Almighty does not hear the prayer of a Jew, for how in the world can God hear the prayer of a man who says that Jesus Christ is not the true Messiah." A transcript of Smith's remarks was quickly circulated among Jewish communal leaders, and the national press picked up the story in mid-September. By then Smith had raised hackles further with a statement in a radio sermon: "I don't know why [God] chose the Jews. I think they got funny-looking noses, myself." Smith apologized for the latter remark -- he was only teasing, he said -- and he denied that he was anti-Semitic. "I am pro-Jew," said Smith. To be sure, Jews were lost without Jesus, but "I believe that they are God's special people."[3]

President Jimmy Carter and his challenger Ronald Reagan quickly distanced themselves from Smith's remarks about Jewish prayer, but the words fueled still further the heated reaction to the Evangelicals. The American Civil Liberties Union and other organizations placed full-page ads in the press warning of a clear and present danger. "Something ugly -- and frightening -- has happened to the American political process," the Committee on Fair Play in the 1980 Election warned the readers of the New York *Jewish Week*. Some clergymen joined People for the American Way, an organization created by TV producer Norman Lear that sponsored television spots in support of pluralism and separationism.

Many Christians expressed shock and outrage at Smith's statement, calling it arrogant, destructive of American pluralism, and morally offensive if not downright anti-Semitic. The faculty of Union Theological Seminary in New York City condemned it; an official of the National Conference of Christians and Jews termed it "vicious anti-Semitism, motivated by a gross and divisive religious prejudice." Although eight out of ten Baptist ministers interviewed in Macon, Georgia, agreed that God did not heed Jewish prayers, other Baptist leaders denounced Smith's words. James Dunn stated: "It's sort of the ultimate antisemitic remark." When Smith arrived at a California airport, he was greeted by a group of Christian seminarians wearing yarmulkes, a sign of rebuke to the preacher and a reminder of Christian ties to Jews.[4]

Letters from Baptists and others disagreeing with Smith poured into the offices of the Jewish agencies. One written directly to Smith and signed "God" said in part: "I can tell you on the Best Authority that Jewish prayers have been getting through ever since the good old days of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob . . . . To be hanging in there for all those centuries, [Jews] just may have Somebody on their side." Some Jews took pleasure in Baptist opposition to Smith, for by proving that significant differences existed among Evangelicals, it suggested that Jews might be able to develop contacts with many among them.[5]

Did the Bailey Smith issue play a role in the 1980 election? Preacher Carl McIntire, who had founded the conservative American Council of Christian Churches in 1942, blamed Marc Tanenbaum for injecting the prayer issue into the campaign and charged that Tanenbaum, by associating himself with People for the American Way, was guilty of "abusive ad hominem attacks" against the fundamentalists. McIntyre said in a lengthy wire: "Were this to be done against you and your people we would cry out against it. Can't you recognize that we Fundamentalists are the best friends that Israel has in this country? Don't make Christianity anti-Semitic." Tanenbaum did not apologize. Interestingly, despite heavy fundamentalist backing for the Republicans, Reagan captured 40 percent of the Jewish vote, four percentage points less than Carter but more than any Republican presidential candidate since 1920.[6]

Opinion divided over the Religious Right's influence on the elections of 1980. The Religious Newswriters Association called the Christian Right's role in helping elect Reagan and defeat certain liberal senators the most significant religious news story of 1980. But the research of others led to different conclusions. A thoughtful article by Seymour Martin Lipset and Earl Raab disputed the claims that Evangelical activism and TV preachers had contributed decisively to a conservative mood and conservative victories. They asserted that "the electoral swing toward conservatism and the emergence of a political Evangelical movement were parallel movements which may have been mutually reinforcing rather than related to one another as cause and effect." Nevertheless, the rise of Evangelical politics led to some dire predictions that the worst was yet to come.[7]

Jews continued to debate the Bailey Smith affair after the election. Well aware that the Baptist leader had only verbalized what many, if not most,

Evangelicals privately believed, Jews knew from earlier polls and from an ambitious study sponsored in the 1960s by the ADL that the stronger the fundamentalist beliefs the higher the anti-Semitic quotient.[8] Yet because Smith had publicly expressed those sentiments and associated them with a political crusade whose slogans threatened religious pluralism, his remarks could not be casually dismissed. Jews spoke up, but, unlike the unified response to Key '73, significant differences of opinion emerged.

Rabbi Alexander Schindler, president of the influential Reform organization, the Union of American Hebrew Congregations (UAHC), opened the discussion. Four years earlier Schindler had reminded Reform congregations that "historically, anti-Semitism had its roots in Fundamentalist religion." Now he drew national attention when, in a report to the Union's board of trustees, he linked the New Christian Right -- particularly Smith, along with Jerry Falwell's Moral Majority -- directly with an outbreak of anti-Semitic acts. In light of Smith's remarks, Schindler stated, "there should be no surprise when synagogues are destroyed by arson and Jewish families are terrorized in their homes. . . . Aye, such preachments have their inevitable effect." The Reform leader saw greater danger in Smith's pronouncement on Jewish noses than his remark about Jewish prayer. "His earlier comment may have been no more then classic Christian doctrine. But . . . his latter dictum [is] not fundamentalism. It's unadulterated anti-Semitism -- Julius Streicher with an Oklahoma twang."[9]

Squarely opposed to Schindler was Marvin Antelman, an Orthodox rabbi from Boston, who absolved Smith of any anti-Semitism. He insisted that the issue was only one of theology, and, much as he disagreed with Evangelical missions to the Jews, he appreciated the consistency of Smith's beliefs. The rabbi also used the occasion to criticize non-Orthodox Jewish spokesmen for presuming to represent the entire Jewish community in their denunciation of the Baptist leader. Abraham Hecht, another Orthodox rabbi and president of the Rabbinical Alliance of America, came to the defense of the Moral Majority: "As one who has met and cooperated with the Moral Majority, I can safely state that the ominous threats created by Schindler's fantasy are totally unfounded and without proof."

Between Smith and these rabbis were Jewish leaders like Marc Tanenbaum of the American Jewish Committee, Nathan Perlmutter of the Anti-Defamation League, and Phil Baum of the American Jewish Congress, who, while critical of Smith, stopped short of condemning all Evangelicals out of hand. Privately, Tanenbaum told Falwell that he regretted Schindler's words, and he asked for a frank discussion with Falwell and other Evangelical leaders. Perlmutter publicly cautioned against judging Evangelicals as a monolithic body, adding, "There are good Christians and bad Christians, good Jews and bad Jews. To hear some of the talk lately, we'd also have to say there are foolish Christians and foolish Jews."[10]

Each respondent weighed Smith's words according to his own interpretation of Jewish communal priorities. Schindler believed that accommodation, even for the sake of Israel, was short-sighted, since the prime need was to avert the disaster that he thought right-wing Evangelicalism held in store for America and for American Jewish security. On the other hand, rabbis Antelman and Hecht typified

those Orthodox Jews who resented the secular character of the Jewish establishment. More in tune with the Evangelical, rather than the mainstream Jewish, position on issues like women's rights and religion in the schools, they doubtless agreed that social immorality posed the greatest danger to the survival of American Jews. As for the middle group -- whose strength lay in the mainstream Jewish defense agencies -- its position reflected a desire to find allies for Israel and to maintain Jewish-Protestant dialogue.

In an apparent response to the criticism he had aroused, Bailey Smith backtracked. At his initiative a meeting was arranged between top officials of the Southern Baptist Convention and the ADL. Smith said that he regretted any hurt he caused the Jews; he would not compromise his theological beliefs, but his commitment to a pluralistic society was unshakable. The two parties found grounds for agreement: both had been victims of religious persecution, both condemned anti-Semitism, and both insisted that their religious loyalties did not dictate rejection of the other. Ending the meeting happily, they looked forward to improved communication and dialogue.[11]

Whether out of genuine remorse or political expediency, Smith publicly cultivated a new image. Rebuking a bigot who wrote congratulating him for his initial statements, he forcefully reiterated his abhorrence of anti-Semitism. "Recently," he added, "I met with the Anti-Defamation League leadership and I found them to be the kindest and most thoughtful people in the world. I am their friend and they are mine. I stand solidly with the Jewish people and plan to do all I can to encourage them." The following Passover Smith attended a seder run by a fellow Texan and ADL official. When he talked to reporters afterward he said that "he would die to protect the rights of Jews." At the end of 1981 the Baptist leader visited Israel, where he voiced his strong support for the Jewish state.[12]

The reverberations of the Bailey Smith episode brought Jerry Falwell into the picture. The leader of the newly formed (1979) Moral Majority preached religious revival and right-wing politics in order to save the nation from spiritual bankruptcy, and he welcomed support not only from Protestant Evangelicals but also from Catholics, Jews, and all "concerned moral Americans." Indeed, although most American Jews disagreed with specific public policies of the Moral Majority and with its Christian wrappings, there was nothing intrinsically offensive to the teachings of Judaism in Falwell's "Ninety-Five Theses for the 1980's." Immediately after a highly publicized press conference of clergymen at which the Christian political crusade of the Evangelical Right drew fire from the past president of the Southern Baptists and from a Lutheran, a Catholic, and Rabbi Tanenbaum, Falwell called Tanenbaum for a meeting. Wishing to distance himself from the Smith camp, he denied privately and then publicly that he endorsed the statement about God and Jewish prayers. Since he strongly believed, he said, in full religious liberty and a pluralistic America, the Moral Majority was attempting neither to dictate national morality nor to establish a Christian republic. To prove the absence of anti-Semitism in his group, Falwell noted that Bible-believing Christians were pro-Israel. Like a chastened Smith, Falwell pledged his efforts to the maintenance of a healthy relationship between Evangelicals and Jews.[13] That

Falwell and Smith hastened to disavow any anti-Jewish sentiments testified both to the security and influence of American Jews and to the genuine acceptance of religious pluralism on the part of most Americans.

4. Taking Sides

The national Jewish Community Relations Advisory Council (NJCRAC), the umbrella organization of defense agencies, community-relations councils, and unions of congregations, admitted after the 1980 election that the power of the New Christian Right had been exaggerated. Several prominent Jewish communal professionals came to the same conclusion. Nevertheless, at the time, the potential political strength of the New Christian Right remained an open question, and Jewish fears persisted. One prominent rabbi was reminded of Torquemada, another of the Holocaust -- "When I hear the words 'Christian America' I see barbed wire." At bottom, the gut reaction to the New Christian Right -- a specter that triggered historical memories of Christian persecution over many centuries -- automatically evoked suspicion and distrust. One Jew phrased it this way: "Any intelligent Jew should know that there is a natural and historic tie between . . . populist conservatism and anti-Semitism. It has been true through history. Frankly, that Jews, especially in the generation that witnessed Nazi Germany, should not understand that connection literally boggles my mind."[1]

This image of Evangelical anti-Semitism remained fixed. A prominent political strategist for the Christian Right suggested that Jews held on to that perception because it legitimated their opposition to the Evangelicals' social agenda. "I think they would prefer that we be blatant anti-Semites," Gary Jarmin said. "That's because on every issue other than Israel they're totally against us."[2]

Neither sophisticated Jewish analysts and scholars nor the defense agencies that carefully monitored bigotry could persuade Jews that the Christian Right was not necessarily a synonym for anti-Semitism.[3] Indeed, Christian rightists did not have to be active Jew-baiters to earn the label of adversaries of the Jews. Their ties to the secular Right, long the home of anti-Semites, automatically smeared them. Besides, their very assumptions, an officer of the ADL said, provided the "potential" for anti-Jewish hostility. In a letter to the *New York Times* in which he backtracked on his specific charge of anti-Semitism against Bailey Smith and Jerry Falwell, Rabbi Schindler explained that it was the climate of opinion created by such men that operated against the country's traditions of democracy and pluralism: "Such a climate . . . is bad for civil liberties, human rights, social justice, interfaith understanding and mutual respect among Americans. Therefore, it is bad for Jews."[4]

Throughout their history, American Jews have used the tactic of defining Jewish security in terms of what is good for America. It drew from several roots, not least of which was the desire to merge the Jewish and the American destinies. The rightists' challenge to religious pluralism, however, threatened to separate Jews from Christian Americans. As one Baltimore rabbi said, "Falwell always makes me feel like I'm a guest in America."[5] Hence, in the minds of the liberals

anything that smacked of antipluralism was intrinsically anti-Jewish.

After the Bailey Smith affair other statements from Evangelicals lent credence to the popular Jewish belief that anti-Semitism was a "given" in the Evangelical equation. The Reverend Dan Fore, president of the Moral Majority in New York, said in a story printed in the *New York Times* that Jews have "a God-given ability to make money, almost a supernatural ability to make money." He also stated that they controlled the media and New York City. The angry reactions to the story troubled Fore, and he denied any anti-Semitic sentiments. (In a lengthy "Dear Dan" letter, AJC's Marc Tanenbaum carefully pointed out how resort to inaccurate but dangerous stereotypes contradicted Fore's professed "spiritual love" for the Jewish people.) When a reporter interviewed Fore, the latter insisted that he meant his statement as a compliment: "I love the Jews -- and Christians have never been anti-Semitic." The minister belied his own pretense to tolerance, however, when he explained about the Spanish Inquisition that "Those weren't Christians. They were Roman Catholics." According to the director of Reform Judaism's Commission on Social Action, Fore's remarks proved conclusively how correct Rabbi Schindler's initial remarks had been.[6]

Other insults were noted -- a book by Tom LaHaye, chairman of the American Coalition for Traditional Values (ACTV), which charged that by rejecting Jesus and calling for his crucifixion Jews brought God's curse on themselves and on Palestine; Jimmy Swaggart's use of Holocaust photographs to illustrate what happened to those who rejected Jesus; the maligning of Judaism by missionizers who questioned whether that faith provided a valid road to salvation.[7] Some liberal Christians seconded the Jewish complaints, lending credence to the charge of anti-Semitism. Evangelicals themselves quickly recognized the need to cleanse their image. A long editorial in *Christianity Today* "sorrowfully" acknowledged both past and present anti-Semitic remarks and acts in the Evangelical camp. Calling for more than repentance, it advised Evangelical leaders on how to condemn, expose, and guard against anti-Semitism. But even when right-wingers substituted the term Judeo-Christian for Christian or denied any aim of creating a Christian republic, Jewish suspicions were not allayed. "The anti-Semitism may have mellowed," a history professor wrote, "but the [anti-Jewish] stereotyping is alive and well." Emphasizing the link between anti-Semitism and the New Christian Right, Reform's Commission on Social Action prepared guidelines for local communities on how to handle the problem.[8]

But there were other Jews who saw no evidence of a tidal wave of Christianization or anti-Semitism. Some even thought that Jewish overreaction was more worrisome than Evangelical activity, and that the community had wrongly diagnosed the true source of contemporary Jew-hatred. Why zero in on Jerry Falwell, the editor of the New York *Jewish Week* asked, and ignore the neo-Nazis, the Klan, and the friends of Yasir Arafat? One Orthodox rabbi, writing for a fundamentalist periodical, went further, wondering how the "Christianization of America" could be considered anti-Semitic when the principles of the Evangelicals' social agenda emanated from "the very Chumash I study daily."[9] Nevertheless, such sentiments were in the minority, and emotionalism on the subject of anti-

Semitism beclouded the Jewish approach to the New Christian Right throughout the decade.

The National Survey of American Jews, conducted by the AJC in 1984, again confirmed the negative Jewish perception of Evangelicals. Listing fifteen groups -- including conservatives, blacks, mainstream Protestants, and fundamentalists -- the survey asked respondents to score them on a scale of anti-Semitism. Forty-six percent said that "most" or "many" fundamentalists were anti-Semitic. Since mainstream Protestants were regarded more favorably, the ADL's director felt impelled to defend the right-wingers. He asked: "Was it Fundamentalists who restricted their neighborhoods and clubs? Was it Fundamentalists who barred us from the executive suite?"[10]

Defense agencies kept their fingers on the Evangelical pulse, studying both the attitudes of the Religious Right and the responses they elicited from other Americans. At endless conferences, debates, and workshops, Jews -- often along with Christian spokesmen -- discussed the impact of the right-wing Evangelical movement on America and on American Jews. But attempts to forge a single position on the specific issues at stake -- the proper role of religion in politics, the social agenda of the Christian Right and its possible menace to individual liberties, the devotion of the Evangelicals to the State of Israel, the values and dictates of interreligious dialogue -- seldom resulted in clear-cut answers. Although Jews never denied the importance of moral values in public policy,[11] none suggested an alternative to the Evangelical program.

Scholars like James Davison Hunter and Robert Wuthnow have written on the recent decline of denominationalism and denominational conflict in American religion. They see a new alignment, one that cuts through denominations and revolves around the axis of orthodox versus progressive. Deepening *intra*faith divisions and nurturing *inter*faith coalitions, it has produced a "new ecumenism" (Hunter's words) on both the orthodox and progressive sides. The resultant conflict is not between faiths or denominations but rather between the competing visions of public policy that the orthodox and the progressives of all faiths champion for society at large.[12]

The Jewish response to the New Christian Right, however, does not bear out that thesis. True, within each wing of Judaism -- especially Orthodoxy and Conservatism -- the tensions between the culturally orthodox and the culturally progressive have escalated.[13] Nevertheless, these internal conflicts never seriously threatened the Jews' liberal public political stance. Differences remained unpoliticized, largely confined within the synagogues and religious organizations. They therefore had little impact on the community at large, where policy-making on social and political issues lay primarily in the hands of secular rather than religious institutions. Some synagogue-affiliated Jews may have agreed on specific issues with the New Christian Right, but they did not constitute a significant component in any newly formed religio-political alignment across denominational lines.

Rather, the Jewish response to the Religious Right in the 1980s was determined by issues (in addition to Israel) that were specifically Jewish and

outside any liberal/conservative or orthodox/progressive polarity. A Jew who was liberal, say, on welfare-statism, and a conservative Jew who was not, could share identical views about the threat of anti-Semitism, Christian missionizing, and theological beliefs hostile to Judaism. At bottom, loyalty to faith or ethnic group, interpreted by a reading of American Jewish priorities, determined the Jewish position on the Christian Right and the Jewish relationship with liberal or conservative American Christians.

Jewish opinion on the New Christian Right, like that on Bailey Smith, fell roughly into three categories. First, there were the conventional liberals who refused to deviate from the creed to which American Jews had subscribed since the end of World War II -- support of separationism and secular humanism, liberal and egalitarian welfare-state policies, disarmament and international cooperation. For them, an Evangelical Right turned politically active only confirmed the necessity of shoring up the counterstrengths of liberalism. As far as Israel was concerned, the liberals thought, Evangelicals backed a Jewish state not out of genuine friendship but for their own purpose -- as the prelude to Jewish conversion. Since the anti-Semitism of the Christian rightists was axiomatic, their overtures to Jews might be mere ruses.

Far less numerous and outspoken than the liberals were the conservatives. Virtually no Jews affiliated with the Religious Right, but some sympathized with specific planks in the rightists' program. A few, particularly among the Orthodox, supported religion in the schools and measures against abortion and pornography. One Orthodox rabbi explained his sentiments as follows: "You can't be ultraliberal or humanist and a Jew at the same time."[14] (Ironically, the same Orthodox Jews were the most suspicious of dialogue with Evangelicals, especially if it touched on theology.) Others favored the Right's stand on foreign policy, particularly its commitment to the State of Israel and to a well-armed America. In addition, Jewish neoconservatives had grown impatient with the egalitarian thrust and the focus on inner-city minorities, as well as with the third-world sympathies, of both the Democratic Party and the liberal churches. Led by what was snidely referred to as the "*Commentary* crowd," they argued that the new liberalism no longer served Jewish interests, and urged a rethinking of traditional allegiances and alliances.

Finally, there were the pragmatists, those who supported "selective collaboration" with the Evangelicals. Where interests of the two groups coincided, as on the issue of Israel, Jews were well advised to cultivate the Religious Right. Where interests diverged, as on religion in the schools or abortion, Jews could affirm their own convictions. Unlike the liberals who warned against compromising old alliances with mainline Christian groups, the pragmatists took seriously the numerical strength and political influence of the Evangelicals, and argued that different issues called for different allies. Urging greater flexibility on the part of the Jews, they tended to minimize the grievances of the liberals. Under no circumstance, the pragmatists emphasized, should dialogue with the Evangelicals be abandoned.

None of the three groups could claim total unity within its own ranks. For

example, only extremists in the liberal camp openly spurned Evangelical aid to Israel on the grounds that it stemmed from the wrong motives. Furthermore, in some cases the differences among the groups were a matter of degree rather than principle. Thus the liberal defense agencies also called for the continuation of dialogue, albeit more grudgingly than conservatives or pragmatists. Indeed, while the liberal posture won out overwhelmingly, and the organized Jewish community held fast to its traditional creed, important pragmatic qualifications were made to accommodate the needs of Israel and, to a lesser extent, dialogue.

A Jewish debate illustrating two typical approaches to the New Christian Right pitted two Conservative rabbis, Arthur Hertzberg and Marc Tanenbaum, against each other, the former representing the liberals and the latter the pragmatists. Hertzberg, who had earlier attacked the "sacro-politicians,"[15] charged that the Christian Right menaced the democratic base of American government and society. True, the Evangelicals were right in noting the weakening of the nation's moral fiber, but their antidote -- policies of repression and campaigns against liberal congressmen -- was not the cure. Nor should Jews be cheered by the rightists' support of Israel. After all, even moderate Nazis in the 1930s were willing to solve the German race problem by sending Jews to Palestine. It was more important to remember how extremists, left and right, had always posed the greatest dangers to Jews.

Tanenbaum, however, stressed the emergence of 40-50 million Evangelicals into the mainstream of American life. Even if leaders like Falwell disappeared, the Evangelicals would still constitute a force that could not be ignored. Furthermore, he argued, not all Evangelicals thought alike, and many had denounced Bailey Smith as well as the appeals for a "Christian America." That mainstream group could be reached through dialogue, and progress was being made even on the thorny matter of proselytization. Whereas the liberal Christian churches had become more sympathetic to the PLO, Evangelical support of Israel, as well as of Soviet Jewry, remained steadfast. Though that support may have been prompted by theological beliefs, according to rabbinic teaching "even though the intention may not be pure (for the sake of heaven), the effects can be pure."[16]

Another debate, this one between two rabbis of the right-wing Agudath Israel, showed how responses to the Christian Right could vary even when both stemmed from an identical Orthodox setting. Rabbi Berl Wein stated that although the Orthodox acknowledged Evangelical support of Israel (which, he said, was only paper thin), and although the Orthodox also opposed gay rights and the Equal Rights Amendment, the New Christian Right was unequivocally the enemy. The resources underlying their crusade for a Christian America along with their missionizing zeal gave them the wherewithal to capture the same alienated Jews that the Orthodox were trying to reach. Moreover, should the Evangelicals attain power they could well succeed in making Jewish ritual observance more difficult. Since their theology was shot through with anti-Semitism, they might create a publicly funded school system that taught anti-Semitism.

No, retorted Dr. Aaron Twerski, our enemies are the "nice guys," those who stood for "unbridled, unthinking, across-the-board egalitarianism" who would

"strike at the heart of the ethical structure of religious communities," threatening believers whose religious norms mandated opposition to gay rights and women's equality. Unrestrained, the egalitarian sweep might result in punishment of religious groups by the removal of government favors like tax exemption and services to religious schools. To be sure, the anti-Semitic, missionizing Evangelicals were hardly more savory. But their views on abortion, pornography, and the place of women resembled those of Orthodox Jews. Hence, they and not the liberals were the logical allies, and "we shall have to learn to be uncomfortable and ever-vigilant allies."[17]

In the overall picture, Wein stood with Hertzberg and Twerski with Tanenbaum. But the debates showed, first, how ▪ conservative (Wein) and ▪ liberal (Hertzberg), or a conservative (Twerski) and a pragmatist (Tanenbaum), reached the same side from different premises, and second, how perceptions of Jewish priorities -- in the Wein-Twerski debate the need to stem Christianization competed with the need to combat runaway egalitarianism -- divided members of the same religious subgroup. Both debates reflected ▪ primary focus on Jewish rather than ecumenical interests and ▪ distrust (whether open or implicit) of the New Christian Right.

5. Religion and Politics

Though Americans in the 1980s knew that the nation's political history had always been influenced by pressures from religious spokesmen and religious groups, the New Christian Right reflected a radically changed Evangelicalism whose partisan political agenda seemed aimed at a massive, nationwide takeover, and many questioned the legality of its activities. Did the rhetoric of Christianization with its attendant discrimination merit protection under the guarantee of free speech? Did the call for Christian officeholders contradict the constitutional prohibition against a test oath? Did political involvement by the churches run afoul of their tax-exempt status? Measured by church attendance Americans may have been more religious than most peoples, but they were also wary of those who made religion ▪ form of politics. And even if the law allowed the Christian religious crusade, many deemed it at odds with the accepted meaning of church-state separation. Over 50 percent of Americans thought religious leaders should stay out of politics entirely, because, as the TV spots of People for the American Way emphasized, mixing Christianity with politics was just not "the American way."[1]

Jews too distinguished between proper and improper behavior by churches and clergy on political issues. "Proper" meant the right, even responsibility, of religious spokesmen to speak out on social matters. That type of involvement, endorsed as early as 1885 in the Pittsburgh Platform of Reform rabbis, was considered beneficial to both religion and society. Such an activist religion kept alive the prophetic imperative for social justice, and a vibrant religious commitment could help resolve ethical crises facing the nation. So wrote Reform rabbi Balfour Brickner, a staunch liberal, in an op-ed piece that appeared in 1974 under the title "The Church Dare Not Stay Out of Politics." The rank and file of

American Jews readily accepted religious preachments on public policy from Jewish as well as Christian mainstream groups. Under the leadership of both secular and religious organizations, they had grown accustomed after the Second World War to cooperating with liberal Protestant churches on a wide variety of issues, and they neither ignored nor denied the relevance of religion for themselves and for American society as a whole. Even the American Jewish Congress, the most zealous Jewish guardian of the divide between religious and secular, did not refrain from citing the teachings of Judaism in its own legal briefs.[2]

Although American Jews were more receptive to religious messages that preached a liberal brand of humanitarianism and social justice, as proponents of a free market in ideas, they never questioned the right of Catholic clerics, with whom they frequently disagreed, to speak out on issues of public policy. But the Christian Right posed a different kind of challenge. Precisely because it appeared to flout the basic rules of American political conduct, precisely because its agenda, tactics, and authoritarian spirit constituted "improper" American behavior, the question of defining the boundaries between religion and politics took on a fresh urgency. NJCRAC, for example, when debating the role of religious groups in the political process, focused on whether limits could be set to "legitimate political discourse." The organization held that calls by the Religious Right to vote Christian were "glaringly incompatible" with the prohibition on religious tests for officeholders, but neither it nor any other Jewish agency disputed the freedom of the Christian Right to become politically active. Nor could any legitimately claim that Evangelical political action violated the religion clauses of the First Amendment.[3]

Jewish liberals, like liberals generally, attacked the Christian rightists for their "moral absolutism" that allegedly made them bigoted, authoritarian, intolerant, intimidating, and manipulative. The closed-mindedness of the Christian Right sharply contradicted the pluralistic base of American democracy. Some liberals accused the Christian leaders of dangerous demagoguery, "a kind of McCarthyism in clerical garb," Rabbi Schindler said. "I am frightened of the politics of ayatollahs," Rabbi Hertzberg commented. At the very least, ministers who branded all opposing political views as ungodly or immoral were resorting to "divisive and destructive" methods that were "offensive to the principles of democracy."[4]

By equating their interpretation of God's will with proper American behavior and with their construction of the "Righteous Empire," Christian activists, liberals charged, overturned the accepted canons of political propriety and discourse. "We reject those claims and those who make them," the governing council of the American Jewish Congress stated. "We deplore their willingness to wield religious commitment as an instrument of political coercion, their use of fundamentalist piety as the principal measure of political competence, their readiness to invoke Divine authority -- and thus trivialize Divine sanction -- for every minute ephemeral political issue which they find of current interest. We deplore their efforts to intimidate . . . [and] to play upon and abuse the apprehension and emotional vulnerability that so often accompany genuine spiritual search."[5] The Christian rightists countered that liberals were guilty of a double standard, that

they had originally injected religion into politics and that *they* too cloaked themselves in a mantle of morality. In Jerry Falwell's words, the liberals and not the conservatives had politicized the Gospel. (Indeed, it could also have been pointed out that Rabbi Isaac Mayer Wise and his *American Israelite* had their versions of candidate ratings and hit lists in the last quarter of the nineteenth century.[6]) Nevertheless, the charges of improper and abusive political conduct on the part of the Religious Right endured throughout the decade.

Jewish critics lashed out at the methods and the all-encompassing agenda of the New Christian Right. For one thing, religion could not resolve all political issues. As Rabbi David Polish of the Synagogue Council of America wryly observed, "religion just won't tell you whether an acceptable rate of inflation is 6 or 8 percent." Furthermore, some questions did not belong in the public arena. Rabbi David Saperstein maintained that "you can't legislate private morality." Matters like sexual behavior and pornography -- "What happens in the bedroom? What happens in terms of what you read and view?" -- lay beyond the purview of government. Compounding the error, Christian Voice began rating congressmen on a "morality scale," and those failing the test were targeted for defeat at the polls. The use of these "report cards" and "hit lists" incensed liberals. Not only did endorsements of proper "Christian candidates" go beyond the acceptable limitations of church-state separation, but they were irrelevant and absurd. Opposition to gun control, SALT II, or the Panama Canal treaties -- items on the morality scale -- hardly proved that one was a good Christian. On the other hand, if congressmen indicted in business or sex scandals could receive perfect scores on a morality test, the test was valueless and religion was being used as a facade for right-wing politicking. The hit lists underscored the political bias of the Christianizers: in 1980, they included notable liberal senators like Frank Church, George McGovern, Birch Bayh, and Jacob Javits.[7]

According to some Jews the methods of the Christian Right contradicted Jewish teachings and tradition. Saperstein, for example, faulted the rightists for attempting to control the votes of their followers, and declared that Judaism, in contrast, recognized the right of individuals to follow their own consciences. Others noted that Jews behaved according to pluralistic guidelines; unlike the Christian Right, they accepted divergent opinions within their own community just as they respected diversity within the ranks of American religion generally. Jews never claimed that an issue was exclusively theirs, but worked instead with allies of all religions. At no time did they equate an issue of public policy with religious "commandment" or "sin."[8]

Jews agreed, however, that their community had much to learn from the Christian Right's intense involvement in the political process. Write letters, make phone calls, develop personal contacts with lawmakers and their staffs, Saperstein urged. After all, he claimed, in proportion to their numbers, Jews had been more heavily involved in the political process than any other American group until the rise of the New Christian Right. In line with his recommendation, the UAHC's book *The Challenge of the Religious Right* included a section called "How to Influence Your Members of Congress." Other Jews called for more sophisticated

political "know-how" on the part of the community, including the use of the media and modern marketing techniques to uncover potential alliances with like-minded Christians, including Evangelicals, on specific issues.[9]

Jews throughout the country discussed the New Christian Right -- its methods, agenda, and impact on American Jewry. Representatives of the New York-based defense agencies often brought their messages to outlying cities. Whether they spoke to Jews, to mixed audiences, or to defenders of the Christian Right, they emphasized religious pluralism. In smaller communities Jews often reported the pressure of "Christianization" and the attendant isolation of Jews, and the representatives were pressed to suggest measures for improving communal relations. How each addressed the question depended on the intensity of his commitment, or that of his agency, to liberalism. Nathan Dershowitz of the American Jewish Congress, for example, was not impressed by the sentiments of Orthodox Jews who shared the views of the Christian Right on abortion, homosexuality, and support for religious schools. As he told a Baltimore audience, there just was not enough common ground for Jews to become involved with a movement that stood for the Christianization of America.[10]

On various occasions Jerry Falwell participated in the public debates, either as a speaker before Jewish audiences or as the subject interviewed by Jewish periodicals. Falwell, who had built up a congregation of 17,000 over twenty-two years, headed the Moral Majority, the most prominent group within the Christian Right. A few Jews did join the Moral Majority, but for most Falwell became, according to one reporter, "the man Jews love to hate." For his part Falwell was eager to cultivate Jewish support. "God has blessed America because America has blessed the Jew -- His chosen people," he said. The minister blamed the media and especially People for the American Way for the negative image that Jews held of his movement, and he labored to correct it. Toward that end he cooperated with a political journalist, Merrill Simon, who, out of a deep commitment to Israel, sought to give the Baptist leader a fair hearing on matters of Jewish concern. The result of two years work was Simon's sympathetic book, *Jerry Falwell and the Jews*.[11]

Falwell felt that his agenda was inoffensive and hardly calculated to arouse Jewish animosity. His "Ninety-Five Theses for the 1980's" emphasized the sanctity of the family (and hence opposition to abortion, homosexuality, drug abuse, adultery and premarital sex, pornography, and the Equal Rights Amendment), stands with which some religious Jews could sympathize. To be sure, the platform lacked a social-justice component, such as a focus on the problems of civil rights, poverty, or urban blight, but it included five planks in support of Israel. Although it asked for voluntary prayer and Bible reading, and for Easter and Christmas celebrations in public schools, it stated unequivocally that the "Constitution explicitly declares the separation of church and state." Subsequent paid advertisements labored to promote an even more moderate image. The Moral Majority explained that it supported equal rights for women (but that the Equal Rights Amendment was the wrong way) and that it did not seek to deprive homosexuals of their civil rights. It was not a political party, a censorship agency,

or a religious organization aiming to control the government, but rather a popular coalition of all religions and races that aimed to restore America's "moral sanity."[12]

Jews who confronted Falwell directly were less concerned about his theological beliefs regarding Jews and Judaism, his views on missionizing, or even his social agenda than they were about his stand on Israel, anti-Semitism, and the Christianization of the country. The questions they asked graphically illustrated their immediate priorities and their ingrained suspicions. Over and over, Falwell gave the right answers: He loved Israel and opposed anti-Semitism. He admitted that his father, an agnostic, was anti-Semitic, but that when he, Jerry, became a Christian, "I became a lover of the Jewish people by becoming a student of Scripture." Disavowing Bailey Smith's remarks, he told how the Moral Majority brought suit against the Carter-Mondale campaign for a TV spot that erroneously attributed Smith's statement on Jewish prayer to Falwell.

Though applauding ministers who preached about politics, he denied that the Moral Majority as an organization, in contradistinction to Falwell as an individual, endorsed candidates. He repeatedly expressed his commitment to pluralism and denied that he stood for the creation of a Christian republic. The Moral Majority, he said, used neither hit lists nor religious tests for candidates. Only one among many special-interest groups within a pluralist society, his organization did not "take a nonnegotiable position on any moral issue saying 'this is the will of God and therefore all other positions are evil.'" He explained that a Christian bill of rights, which emanated from his church and not the Moral Majority, was never intended to be incorporated into law. Merely a statement of convictions, it could just as easily be called a Judeo-Christian bill of rights.[13]

Falwell's appeal to Jews broke the stereotypical mold of the bigoted Evangelical preacher, but made him no more palatable to most Jews. Some critics remembered contradictory remarks that he had made or cited his refusal to acknowledge the anti-Semitism of some of his colleagues, and they asked whether his followers understood and accepted his explanations about the Christian bill of rights. Despite a 1982 American Jewish Congress report by Marc Stern which concluded that the Moral Majority had not endangered American Jewish interests, distrust and suspicion persisted. Popular Jewish opinion tended to agree with the president of People for the American Way, who wrote that "Falwell is a Jewish affliction."[14]

6. The Election of 1984

The right-wing religious groups pressed on. They expanded their organizations, mounted new projects (e.g., the boycott of advertisers who sponsored offensive TV programs), and backed parents who fought against classes in sex education or who sought the removal of objectionable books from classrooms and libraries. Outreach to Jews was broadened too; one fundamentalist minister who bought the New York radio station WNYM from the *Jewish Daily Forward* in 1981 aired nightly programs aimed at Orthodox Jews. In 1984, which a knowledgeable observer termed a "revival year" for the New Christian Right, the Evangelicals

formed an umbrella organization, the American Coalition for Traditional Values (ACTV). By the time the presidential campaign of 1984 moved into high gear, right-wing tactics for grass-roots recruitment and mobilization of voters had become more sophisticated and effective.[1]

The overarching aim of the New Christian Right remained the same. Within state legislatures and Congress its influence was clearly discernible in drives for school prayer, equal access to school premises by student religious clubs, antiabortion legislation, and the teaching of creationism. When a member of Congress affirmed during a debate on school prayer that "This is a Christian nation," he was expressing the sentiments of the activists. The latter also enjoyed the sympathy of Ronald Reagan. While the president was careful not to identify too closely with the Christian Right, he endorsed antiabortion measures and a prayer amendment. When the ACLU criticized him for designating 1983 as the Year of the Bible, he stated that he wore the indictment "like a badge of honor." Court battles on church-state matters, in themselves evidence of the relentless drive and legislative successes of the Christian Right, proliferated. And, to the consternation of liberals, the courts were apparently responding to popular pressures and showing a "softer" stand on separation.[2]

In the ongoing war with the Christianizers, Jewish defense agencies were upset most by the growing popular acceptance of religious influences on public policy and by legislative, judicial, and executive acts that were, they claimed, eroding the wall of separation. The solicitor-general's opinion that a city could use public funds to conduct a voluntary religious service was regarded as one ominous sign; the decision in *Lynch* v. *Donnelly* (March 1984), in which the Supreme Court upheld a publicly sponsored nativity scene, was a ruder shock.[3] In some instances, head-on collisions between Jews and Christianizers occurred on the local level, where the practical consequences of Christian rhetoric translated soonest and most often into public policy. Rabbi A. James Rudin of the American Jewish Committee explained that the problem involved school boards, library boards, and human-rights commissions as well as local and state legislative bodies. "This is how it plays out where Jews live." To cite but one example, a Reform rabbi in Boca Raton, Florida, felt impelled to mobilize the community in order to defeat an Evangelical drive for the election of "qualified Christian candidates" to the school board. Such situations reinforced Jewish identification with politically liberal positions, and in elections Jews continued to score higher than all other white groups in support of liberal candidates.[4]

Jewish voters in 1984 had to weigh the two issues that had engaged them for four years: the Christian Right's threat to American pluralism versus Evangelical support of Israel. Complicating the situation was a new factor that surfaced some months before the national conventions, Jesse Jackson's bid for the Democratic presidential nomination. The charismatic black minister who arduously canvassed voters for support of his Rainbow Coalition enraged Jews by references to New York and to Jews as "Hymietown" and "Hymies." Jackson tried to make amends in appearances before Jewish gatherings, but his appeals rang hollow. The same day that he admitted that the use of the term "Hymies" was wrong, he related that

his daughter had chosen not to go to Harvard because she felt badgered at her interview by a Jewish lawyer. Nor was his past performance of much help. True, he had marched with the protesters against neo-Nazis in Skokie and had criticized an anti-Semitic remark by the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, but at the same time he had talked about Jewish slumlords and Jewish fight promoters and had blamed Andrew Young's forced resignation from the post of ambassador to the United Nations on Jewish pressure. Jews fumed in particular over Jackson's association with Black Muslim leader Louis Farrakhan, who admired Hitler and called Judaism a "gutter religion." More worrisome still was Jackson's anti-Israel posture, highlighted by his embrace of Yasir Arafat, his pro-Palestinian statements, and his financial support from the Arab League and from Arab-Americans. Some private meetings were arranged between Jews and Jackson in the early part of 1984, but they failed to change the minister's point of view. Convinced that Jackson was a threat to Jewish interests, a large majority of Jews registered that sentiment in the Democratic primaries.[5]

Many were reassured by the proceedings of the convention. Jackson did not come close to receiving the nomination. Although a resolution denouncing anti-Semitism failed to pass -- thanks to Jackson's supporters -- Jackson himself spoke in a conciliatory fashion and admitted to earlier mistakes. Serious confrontation was avoided, but the specter of Jackson's influence within the party continued to haunt the Jews.[6] Was Jackson as a symbol of a new Democratic trend a greater danger to Jewish interests than the Christianizers in the Republican Party who at least defended Israel? Jews were unhappy with their options. To be brushed aside within their traditional political home was painful and demeaning. On the other hand, if they deserted the liberals for the unfamiliar conservative camp, how comfortable would their new hosts make them feel?

As Irving Kristol, the *doyen* of the Jewish neoconservatives, pointed out: "For the first time in living memory, Jews are finding themselves in the old condition of being politically homeless." Kristol claimed that the New Christian Right baffled Jews precisely because it was neither anti-Semitic nor anti-Israel. He advised Jews to free themselves from their fixed mindset -- in his words, from the "liberal time warp" -- and to rethink both their "habitual reflexes" about church-state separation and their blanket condemnation of the rightists' social agenda. Not theology, he insisted, but a misplaced commitment to secular humanism distanced Jews politically from the Christian Right. The theme of homelessness was picked up by others, testifying to the alienation of Jews from elements in both parties.[7]

To show their good faith, the Republicans played up to the Jews in their platform and at their convention. The Republican National Committee set up the National Jewish Coalition, a group of active Jewish laymen who worked with a paid professional staff and a $2-million budget to influence Jewish voters in eight pivotal states. A concerted drive to win over the Jews was apparent at the August convention. Hyman Bookbinder, the Washington representative of the AJC and himself a Mondale supporter, described the scene: "There has never been a more prominent and explicitly welcomed Jewish presence at any of the many conventions I have attended over the years. Jewish concerns were addressed in the platform,

in speeches by the President . . . and others, and in the special events held by and for Jewish delegates and guests." Although Jewish delegates to the convention numbered only about fifty (compared to 300 at the Democratic convention), on the two themes of America's firm support of Israel and denunciation of anti-Semitism the platform and convention came through with flying colors. Only by its failure to support the move of the U.S. embassy to Jerusalem did the Republican platform score lower than the Democratic with respect to specific Jewish demands.[8]

Eight national Jewish organizations appealed jointly to the Republican platform committee to expand its condemnation of bigotry by a forthright rejection of "the current divisive assault on the First Amendment's separation of church and state," but the attempt to distance the party from the Christian Right failed. Republican strategists never considered dumping the rightists in deference to liberal concerns. Partisan needs mandated a courtship of the Evangelicals; numerically significant, they had to be kept in the fold, especially in light of some talk about a conservative third party. At the convention some Republicans tried to persuade Jews to challenge the rightists from within the party: "Precisely because our party may be threatened by the far right, come join us and make this the party in which Jews can feel comfortable." Gambling on the recognition of Jewish interests by the platform and on Jewish disaffection with Jackson and his supporters, the GOP hoped to increase its share of Jewish votes without alienating the Evangelicals. A 1983 *New York Times* poll had reported that over a third of Jews defined themselves as "moderate" rather than liberal or conservative, and with help from that group the Republicans in 1984 might very well capture more than the 40 percent that had supported Reagan in 1980.[9]

For most Jews, however, the Jackson issue receded in importance when religion-in-politics again drew national attention. With the encouragement of Republican leaders from the oval office down, the Christian Right exerted a potent influence on the Republican platform and convention. The result, Jerry Falwell announced, could not have been better. Falwell and other right-wing Evangelicals were invited to deliver benedictions at the convention, and the head of the Moral Majority called Reagan and Bush "God's instruments for rebuilding America." According to Bookbinder the delegates were subjected to "an unprecedented mingling of politics and religion at a national convention." "The platform reflected it; the speeches reflected it; the mountains of pamphlets and other materials inside and outside the convention center reflected it; the prominence of militant Evangelical personalities on and off the rostrum reflected it." Crowning the Republican campaign with a "religious halo," Evangelical leaders may well have thought that the party was on its way to "political salvation."[10]

The most dramatic evidence of the Republican-Evangelical alliance was the insertion of copies of the New Testament into the delegates' kits by the convention committee. Although the White House quickly had the books removed, the initial act severely damaged Republican attempts to win over the Jews. One reporter summarized the effect: "The well-meaning soul who gave a copy of the New Testament to each delegate . . . may have blocked a decisive moment in U.S.

political history: the shift of a majority of Jewish voters to the Republican ticket."[11]

Compounding the damage was Ronald Reagan's declaration at a prayer breakfast the day after the convention that religion and politics were "necessarily related," and his charge that proponents of church-state separation were "intolerant of religion." Resentful that their view of separation was equated with hostility to religion, Jewish organizations defended their opposition to all forms of government-sponsored religion. Democratic candidate Mondale followed suit, making church-state separation the first issue of the campaign by accusing Reagan of "moral McCarthyism." Although the president repeatedly stated his opposition to an established religion and his belief that the government should protect freedom of belief, Jews were not reassured. Because of his close ties to the Christian Right, explained one journalist, "Reagan regards the evangelical New Right as an auxiliary force, a division of Christian soldiers in the conservative army," and the rightists saw his reelection as another step in the Christianization of America.[12]

The convention heralded a new burst of political energy on the part of Christian rightists. Under the vigorous leadership of ACTV, they raised funds, mounted voter-registration drives, and brought the pro-Reagan message into their churches. Once again they targeted liberals as the enemy, and issued congressional report cards to make the point. Aiming for leverage in Congress as well as the White House, the activists pushed their social agenda in district elections. In the three congressional contests where Jewish candidates felt the heat of the Christian campaign -- the Jews were denounced as "unbiblical," or as not "one of us," or as a "New York liberal" -- it was difficult to ignore traces of anti-Semitism. Overall, the election seemed like a replay of 1980 -- journalists querying the candidates in national debates about their religious views and habits, clergy pressing public officials to regard church dogma as their first loyalty, demands that candidates for a local board meet a religious test. And all this while the American people, according to a Harris poll, overwhelmingly disapproved of political activism on the part of ministers and churches. Meantime Jewish agencies, either alone or together with Christian allies, continued to condemn calls for Christianization or a Christian republic.[13]

In November, about 65 percent of Jewish votes went to Mondale, marking Jews as the only group whose support of Reagan was less than it had been in 1980.[14] Whatever momentum had developed to shift Jews away from the Democrats had petered out after the Republican convention. A survey sponsored by the AJC during the campaign showed that Jews were indeed less liberal and less sworn to the Democrats than in prior years, but that they were still more liberal than other groups. The 1984 returns proved yet again that, unlike other Americans, Jews did not vote according to their socioeconomic status. Perhaps, as one observer remarked, some liberal Jews were inclined "to overlook anti-Semitism on the Left even when it flourishes, and to detect it on the Right even in those cases where it does not exist."[15]

Neoconservatives like Lucy Dawidowicz deplored the inappropriate response of Jewish voters to current issues, and along the lines drawn by Kristol she was

highly critical of secular humanism, strict separation, and misplaced fear of religion in public life. Liberals, however, were delighted by the Jewish rejection of the Christian Right. Henry Siegman of the American Jewish Congress summed up the results as follows: "Jews understood . . . that of the two dangers, Falwell represents the greater, for all of his professions of love of Jews and Israel. However gutless the behavior of the Democratic leadership . . . no one seriously believed that they shared Jackson's anti-Semitism. On the other hand, Reagan and the Republican party publicly declared their support of Falwell's 'Christian America,' in which prayer and Bible readings are returned to our public schools and battle is waged with 'secular humanists,'" a category that included the Jews.[16]

A prominent Christian rightist expressed disappointment. Ron Godwin of the Moral Majority wished, he said, that Jewish groups would have recalled Evangelical support of Israel. "Sometimes I think that fundamentalist Christians are almost always supporting Israel, and our sharpest critics are liberal Democratic Jews."[17]

Troubled by what it considered the improper incursions of religion into the election, NJCRAC issued a statement the following February on "The Role of Religion and Religious Groups in the Political Process." While welcoming the voice of religion on questions of social morality, it deplored the entanglement of religion and politics and tactics destructive of religious pluralism. NJCRAC appealed to both religious and political leaders "to stand guard against any who would identify American party politics with any brand of religious view" or who attempt "to convert political parties into sectarian instrument." "We look to them to reject categorically the pernicious notion that only one brand of politics or religion meets with God's approval and that others are necessarily evil. We look to them to recommit the major political parties . . . to the spirit of religious tolerance and religious forbearance that is indispensable to a free society." Using the statement as the basis for discussion with Protestant and Catholic leaders, NJCRAC sought to forge an interreligious consensus.[18]

After the 1984 election, once again some Jewish observers detected signs of political moderation on the part of the Jewish electorate -- away from the Democratic left wing and even to the Republican Party. One communal worker wrote that liberalism was "loosening" its hold on Jewish attitudes; he and others predicted that close to 50 percent of the Jewish vote would go to the Republicans in 1988. But despite support from Jewish neoconservatives and financial aid from some hitherto "lifetime" Democrats, 71 percent of the Jewish voters supported Dukakis in 1988. The presidential bid of televangelist Pat Robertson, and the persistent fear of the Christian Right's hold over the Republicans, kept Jews safely within the Democratic ranks.[19]

7. Israel and Alliances

Had the new Christian Right opposed the Jewish state, it would have been much simpler for American Jews to denounce the rightists. Yet, just because Evangelical leaders loudly supported Israel, conventional labels like "anti-Semite" or "Jew-

hater" lacked precision and consistency. The AJC's Rabbi A. James Rudin highlighted the curious phenomenon of the Christian Right as both adversary and ally in a description of two congressional hearings held in the spring of 1984. The first, which considered an amendment mandating prayer in the public schools, found Jewish organizations joined with the liberal churches in opposition to the Christian Right; the second, which dealt with the relocation of the U.S. embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, saw Jews line up with Jerry Falwell against the liberal National Council of Churches in favor of the proposal.[1] The episodes well illustrated how different Jewish interests could change enemies into friends and friends into enemies.

The reliability of Evangelical friendship for Israel was hotly debated. Some Jews feared that in the end the Evangelicals would sooner accept the destruction of the Jewish state as part of a divine plan than fight actively on its behalf. Others were uneasy about their role in Christian eschatology; if they refused to convert, the Evangelicals might seek revenge against those who upset the messianic timetable. Still others suspected that Evangelicals would eventually demand Jewish support of their social agenda as the price for a pro-Israel stand.[2]

Questions mounted. Should Jews seek or encourage Evangelical aid for Israel if that support was predicated on anti-Jewish theological calculations? For the sake of Israel should Jews ally themselves with the Christian Right or at least mute their criticisms of its agenda, or would an appearance of one-issue politics prove harmful to Jewish interests? From the vantage point of their own security could Jews afford to turn their backs on decades of cooperation with the liberal churches on weighty issues like religious pluralism, civil rights, and welfare policies? Jews divided in their answers.

Evangelical support of a Jewish state long antedated the emergence of the New Christian Right. In 1891, six years before the first Zionist Congress, William Blackstone, a fundamentalist Christian from Chicago, amassed hundreds of signatures from both Christians and Jews to a petition calling for the return of Palestine to the Jews. Eighty years later Billy Graham, an outspoken friend of Israel, was prompted by the Six-Day War to fund and produce a pro-Israel film for Christian consumption. Historian David Rausch explained to readers of the Zionist journal *Midstream* how such support was rooted in the eschatology of the "Fundamentalist-Evangelicals." Following the literal biblical text, they believed in the preservation of the Jewish nation and its restoration as an independent entity in Palestine; affirming the Jewish roots of Christianity and the abiding heritage of the Jews as the "chosen people," they denied that all of the Jews had to be converted to Christianity before the arrival of the messiah. According to Rausch, Jews had less to fear from those Christians than from the liberals whose theology dictated the obliteration of both Jewish nationhood and Judaism in the "melting-pot of mankind at large." Indeed, distrust was entirely unwarranted in the case of those who literally accepted the verse in Genesis: "I will bless them that bless thee and curse him that curseth thee."[3]

Not all Evangelicals were friends of Israel -- spokesmen for the social-justice group the Sojourners were avowed critics -- but right-wing Evangelical leaders and

their congregants echoed Rausch's views during most of the 1980s. While they reserved the right to criticize specific policies of the Israeli government, they affirmed Israel's right to defend its land.[4] Polls confirmed that fundamentalists were more supportive of Israel than non-Evangelical Congregationalists, Presbyterians, and Episcopalians. Some ministers, including Jerry Falwell, added this-worldly, immediate reasons to back the Jewish state, arguing that Israel was the only democratic ally of the United States in the Middle East, and also a staunch opponent of Soviet communism. In a full-page ad the Moral Majority declared that one could not belong to the organization "without making the commitment to support the State of Israel in its battle for survival."[5]

Falwell vividly recalled his emotions upon first visiting the land where Christianity was born, but he seemed equally impressed by the spirit and accomplishments of the Jewish builders of the new state: "I left the land and the people of Israel with a greater commitment to the Bible, and a greater commitment to God's land and people." To concerned Zionists the minister's answers were reassuring. He urged American economic aid for Israel, opposed the sale of AWACs to Saudi Arabia, and, in opposition to the National Council of Churches, he defended Israel's bombing of an Iraqi nuclear reactor. Moreover, Falwell maintained that all of Israel's wars against its neighbors were justified: "The Arabs have indicated time and again that, given the chance, they are determined to destroy the Jews . . . and not the other way around." Gladdening the hearts of "maximalist" Zionists, Falwell upheld Jewish sovereignty over Judea, Samaria, and the Golan Heights. The land, he declared, was promised to Abraham by God.[6]

This pro-Israel stand served the political as well as the theological interests of the Christian Right. The strongest weapon possible for garnering Jewish support, it countered the charge of anti-Semitism. After all, the reasoning went, would an anti-Semite be consistently supportive of Israel? A Baptist minister and friend of Bailey Smith boasted further, "If it hadn't been for conservative Christian America, [the United States] would have abandoned Israel years ago."[7] Moreover, support of Israel might help undercut Jewish alliances with the liberal churches. Whatever the motive, the Israeli government courted American Evangelicals. Falwell himself became a close friend of Prime Minister Menahem Begin. After presenting Falwell with the prestigious Jabotinsky Award in 1980, Begin, on subsequent visits to America, would single out the Baptist minister as his primary or sole contact with American Christians.[8]

Israeli interest in developing ties with the Evangelicals grew in proportion to the escalation of anti-Israel and pro-Arab sentiment within liberal Protestant organizations. American Jews might have been the liberals' best friends on social-justice issues, but after 1967 the typical pattern of these churches was to condone and support Arab extremists (the downtrodden victims) and to condemn Israeli "aggressiveness" and "Zionist racism." A National Council of Churches policy statement of November 1980 called for recognition of the PLO as the legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. Such a declaration could only undermine support for the Jewish state in the Christian community, among the general public,

and in Congress. Since for many Jews the litmus test for the "real" anti-Semitism was anti-Zionism, the lineup of the Christian churches dictated a fresh Jewish approach to both the liberals and the Evangelicals.[9]

Nevertheless, few Jews seriously entertained the idea of breaking off working relations with the liberal churches. Jews could not demand ideological purity in their search for allies, Rabbi Schindler maintained. Despite the National Council of Churches' "unconscionable" statement, he said, Jews could still work with them on certain matters while disagreeing on others. In taking this position not only did Schindler relegate Israel to the category of any other divisive issue -- for example abortion, which pitted Jews against Catholics -- but he also refused to apply his own pragmatic guidelines to alliances with the Christian Right, the very nature of which, he felt, aimed for the extinction of Judaism and the Christianization of America. Its support of Israel was unwelcome and even harmful in Schindler's eyes: "We [Jews] fail to see that one cannot be good for Israel when one is injurious to America and its Jews! . . . We make a pact with the devil for transient boon, even while we know or ought to know that in the end we serve *his* purposes!" For Israel and American Zionist organizations to honor Evangelical leaders was "madness" and "suicidal."[10]

Other liberal Jews joined Schindler in denouncing one-issue, Israel-centered politics. They reiterated time and again that Evangelical support for Israel stemmed from the wrong motives. Evangelical theological views that looked to the ultimate conversion of the Jews "demeaned" Judaism; focused on eschatology, Evangelicals were blind to the welfare of present-day Israel and Jews. Liberals charged that the Christian Right, whose congressional hit lists targeting certain staunch supporters of Israel had contributed to their defeat, had actually hurt Israel. Moreover, despite their rhetoric, the Evangelicals failed to produce pro-Israel votes in Congress, as in the critical matter of the AWACs sale. Beware of such allies, liberals cautioned in highly emotional tones.[11] Some liberals found the thought of any dealings with the Christian Right so distasteful that the American Jewish Congress changed a clause in a position paper from "we acknowledge and welcome" to "we acknowledge" the support for Israel by the Christian Right.[12]

Jews who warned the community against the blandishments of the Christian Right were those who swam most comfortably with the tide of the new liberalism -- the preachers of egalitarian social justice, the doves in foreign policy who criticized both American militarism and Israeli hawkishness -- who doubtless feared alienating the liberal churches. Indeed, not only did Christian liberals second the arguments against any alliance with the Evangelical right, but they candidly reminded their Jewish friends that the mainline Protestants still enjoyed considerable political, economic, and religious clout. Jewish agencies acknowledged the need to maintain good relations with the liberal churches. NJCRAC, for instance, which noted "a marked slackening of contact and involvement" since the mid-1970s between those Christians and Jews, urged its affiliates to work for the renewal of ties at local and denominational levels.[13]

Thus -- principally with Israel in mind -- the Jewish organizational network hewed to a pragmatic line: work with the right-wing groups on issues of mutual

concern, part company where you disagree. NJCRAC, formally supporting such efforts, insisted that the Jewish community-relations profession "vigorously and consistently assert its basic commitment to religious and cultural pluralism, to the separation of church and state, and to the religious integrity of Judaism, when it *cautiously* explores meaningful encounters with the 'religious right.'"[14] Whereas the Zionist organizations, which were not primarily concerned with questions of social policy, freely welcomed Evangelical support of Israel -- the president of the Zionist Organization of America stated: "We welcome, accept and greet such Christian support for Israel without involving ourselves in their domestic agenda" -- the others trod more warily. Yet, with varying degrees of enthusiasm, none closed the door to dialogue. The chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish organizations explained: "They [the fundamentalists] strongly support a lot of things I think are dreadful for the country, but I'm not going to turn away their support of Israel for that." Nor was Evangelical theology a serious deterrent. It's their theology but our Israel, Irving Kristol stated.[15]

Jewish defense agencies, particularly the ADL and AJC, began to offer Evangelical leaders trips to Israel and invite them to speak at Jewish events. Nonetheless, it was difficult for the rank and file to bury their suspicions of the Christian Right. A member of the prestigious Reform congregation in Washington, whose rabbi, Joshua Haberman, actively cultivated Evangelical friendship, recounted her experience at a Sabbath service in honor of Israel which was attended by nearly 2000 Evangelicals. "It was an exciting evening. The Evangelicals marched and sang outside the temple before the service began. At first it was thrilling. Here were Christians who proclaimed their love and affection for Israel, real support. Then, about halfway through the service, I became uneasy with all their Hebrew songs and their cries of *Am Yisrael hai*. . . . Finally, I got nervous, because even though they never mentioned conversion of the Jews, I felt it wasn't very far beneath the surface." Ironically, Reform Jews, whose own faith in messianism was largely eroded, appeared to be more seriously disturbed than Orthodox Jews by Evangelical eschatology.[16]

Evangelical ministers were quick to promise their help for Israel. At a meeting in September 1980, at the height of the Bailey Smith affair, Pat Robertson, president of the Christian Broadcasting Network, assured a small group of high-level Jewish leaders of his readiness to participate in an ambitious public-relations campaign. "We can deliver thousands of letters . . . to the Congress, the president and other officials," he promised. Across the country Evangelical activities on behalf of the Jewish state, from tourism to promotional TV campaigns, multiplied. One minister in San Antonio, enraged by American condemnation of Israel for bombing an Iraqi nuclear reactor in 1981, organized a "Night to Honor Israel," a traveling show replete with orchestra and eighty-voice choir that presented a program of prayer and music (American and Israeli) in different cities of the Southwest. That same year an Evangelical filmmaker produced a movie aimed at Christians that, according to the public-relations department of the Jewish Agency, was one of the best pro-Israel films ever done. In Israel itself Evangelicals, who accounted for more tourist dollars than any other

Christian group, planted trees and worked on kibbutzim.[17]

Evangelicals not only enrolled alongside Jews in new pro-Israel organizations, but they also created groups of their own, such as the California-based TAV Evangelical Ministries. Led by a businessman who was also a lay preacher, it worked to counteract PLO propaganda through newspaper ads and radio programs and to develop a strong, Christian pro-Israel voice. In 1982 it formulated a forceful statement called "Evangelical Christian Declaration of Support for Israel and the American Jewish Community." The modern state was hailed as "an undeniable fulfillment of biblical prophecy, the herald of the Coming Messiah," and the Evangelicals declared their unequivocal opposition to anti-Zionism and Arab terrorism. TAV also planned interreligious conferences and dialogues, and toward that end it established contacts with Zionists and with all stripes of religious Jews.[18] Although the practical results of their support for the Jewish state cannot be measured quantitatively, many Evangelicals willingly widened their theological focus in order to serve the needs of a modern Israel.

8. Dialogue

The Israel connection fed logically into intergroup dialogue, which, at the very least, exposed Evangelicals to Jews whom they otherwise would hardly have noticed. For example, when TAV held a conference in Washington, some 300 Christian followers were housed with Jewish families. Moreover, Israel as a shared concern, and particularly as a cooperative venture, sensitized Evangelicals to other Jewish interests. TAV's supportive statement on Israel in 1982 included a clause that specifically recognized other long-standing areas of Jewish bitterness: "We . . . abhor anti-Semitism; mourn the Holocaust; and repent of the Church's silence."[1] While the Jewish agencies would surely have sought interfaith discussions if only in recognition of the influence of the Evangelical Right on the American scene, the ongoing needs of Israel and the disenchantment on that score with the liberal churches added an urgency to dialogue.

Interreligious bonds were nurtured by individuals as well as established agencies. A young Orthodox rabbi who labored to broaden the Israel connection and create a richer dialogue between Jews and Evangelicals was Yechiel Eckstein of Chicago, the man who had accompanied Bailey Smith on an educational tour of Israel. Eckstein and the coalition he created in 1983, the 1000-member Holy Land Fellowship of Christians and Jews, became nationally known as an interreligious "bridge-builder." Convinced of the sincerity of the Evangelical commitment to Israel, Eckstein set out to activate that sympathy. He attended countless prayer meetings and, from pulpits and through the media, addressed countless audiences; he also escorted Christians on visits to the Jewish state. Showing Evangelicals how, by their support, they were participating in the historic return of the Jews to the Holy Land, he secured the cooperation of prominent Evangelical ministers in fund-raising efforts for the resettlement of Soviet Jews in Israel.

Eckstein built bridges on behalf of Israel and Soviet Jewry, but from the very

beginning he aimed for something bigger. Working to break down the misinformation that divided Jews and Evangelicals, he sought to educate each group to the convictions and sensitivities of the other. Toward that end, he wrote a book for Christians about Jews and Judaism and one for Jews about the Evangelicals. Eckstein insisted that religious and political distinctions were legitimate. Neither group, he said, should compromise its religious integrity for the sake of the other; to ask the Evangelicals to give up evangelizing was like asking Jews to give up the Shabbat. Just as Jewish survival was the paramount imperative for modern Jewry, so proclamation of the gospel was for Evangelicals. Eckstein respected the idea of witness but opposed active Christian missionizing among Jews; he sympathized with the desire for a moral America but warned against crossing the line that separated moral from Christian. As mediator and conciliator, he drew fire from both sides -- from Jews who charged that he was helping Evangelicals evangelize, from Evangelicals who charged that he undermined their religious mission -- but he continued to pursue his objectives.[2]

Serious dialogue between Jews and any Christian group was, as Professor David Berger cogently explained, fraught with complications. Christians generally preferred a broad agenda, one that included theological as well as historical and this-worldly issues, whereas Jews shied away from theology in favor of subjects like human rights, Israel, and social action. The age-old suspicion that Jewish-Christian discourse was but a facade for Christian missionizing still lingered. Besides, although Jews might have been eager to apprise Christians of their "erroneous" theological views that bore upon Judaism and Jews, they were largely unprepared to entertain suggested modifications of their own religious attitudes. Without any show of "theological reciprocity," could Jews expect Christians to abandon their goal of Jewish conversion or to repudiate the blatantly anti-Semitic passages of the New Testament? Afraid of challenges to their religious integrity, most Orthodox Jews, like fundamentalist Christians, rejected dialogue out of hand. Nevertheless, despite problems of agenda and participants, dialogue between Jews and Evangelicals was born. In a heretofore unworked field, any meeting of minds, however limited, connoted progress.[3]

Just as Jews wanted the cooperation of Evangelicals, so did some of the latter stand to profit from alliances with Jews. During the 1980s, as the chasm between the moderates and the Christian reconstructionists (extreme right-wingers whose postmillennial theology dictated a rigid commitment to a Christian state) widened, the moderates looked to Jewish support to shore up political strength within their own community.[4]

Indeed, for the most part, early organized Jewish efforts at outreach were limited to mainstream Evangelicals. Tanenbaum of the AJC, who pioneered in the field in the 1960s, focused on leaders who were receptive to the idea of establishing contacts with the Jewish community. The rabbi's friendship with Billy Graham proved an invaluable asset. The prominent Baptist leader actively aided Israel during the 1967 war, publicly condemned anti-Semitism during the 1970s, and supported the cause of Soviet Jewry. Opposed to organized conversionary activities that targeted Jews, Graham declared that Jews enjoyed an ongoing

covenant with God. Although such views aroused criticism from some Evangelicals, Graham held firm. According to an admiring Tanenbaum, Graham's positive influence on the course of Jewish-Evangelical relations was as significant as that of Vatican Council II on Jewish-Catholic relations. In 1969 the first major conference between Baptist and Jewish scholars took place at Southern Baptist Seminary in Louisville, and its success heralded the start of serious ongoing intergroup discussions.[5]

The pace of interreligious work quickened in the 1970s. One Christian scholar noted a "loosening up" of conservative religious attitudes toward critical scholarship; that, combined with the negative response of the liberal churches to the Six-Day War, eased the way for a Jewish approach to the Evangelicals. On a different level, Jimmy Carter's 1976 campaign as a "born-again" Christian piqued Jewish curiosity about the public policies of a southern Evangelical president. When the New Christian Right gained national prominence in the 1980 campaign, concern replaced curiosity. If Evangelicalism was to be a major political force, Jews needed to cut through the old negative stereotypes. It was imperative to learn -- and from the source -- what Evangelicals thought about Jews, their interests, and their place in the Evangelical design for America.[6] Dialogue between the two groups became institutionalized. Evangelical colleges and seminaries offered courses (some taught by rabbis) in Jewish studies; local churches and synagogues arranged lectures and other programs; Jewish and Evangelical agencies cosponsored regional and national interreligious conferences.

Of the major Jewish organizations that cultivated Jewish-Evangelical discussions, the AJC and ADL, each with a strong interreligious department, were most prominent. The AJC ran (officially as cosponsor with Evangelical institutions) three national conferences -- in 1975, 1980, and 1984. At first, Tanenbaum recalled, it was difficult to secure the participation of reputable Jewish or Christian scholars, but trust and camaraderie shortly replaced suspicion and fear. To be sure, Christian participants represented neither the extreme rightists nor the fundamentalists, but since they came from the colleges and seminaries, the training ground for the Evangelical ministry, their potential influence among larger audiences was significant.[7]

The agendas of these national conferences meshed theological with historical and contemporary issues, the topics ranging from the meaning of "faith" and "grace" to the current moral crisis in America. They emphasized the ties that bound Evangelicals and Jews, pointing up, for example, the shared biblical ideas that underlay a democratic society. Another link was the fact that both groups were, or had been, targets of prejudice. Each now condemned religious prejudice generally and, more particularly, pledged to combat the caricaturing and negative stereotyping from within its own camp that was directed against the other. (On the subject of stereotypes, a sign of progress was Professor Hillel Levine's paper at the third conference which discussed the popular images of the "liberal," "radical," and "secular" Jew. Levine disputed the notion that the labels fit *all* Jews, but he frankly discussed -- something that would have been unusual ten years earlier -- the historical grain of truth in each.) The conferees also considered the historical

legacy of both groups to modern society. The Evangelicals were alerted to the "continuity of the Jewish witness" to world civilization down to the present. They also learned that modern Judaism had "an impressive dimension of theological expertise." For their part, Jews were informed of Baptist contributions to political democracy, higher education, and social-reform movements -- in fact, that "Evangelicalism does have a social conscience." Divisive issues were raised too. On the touchy matter of conversion, Jews learned that an Evangelical who renounced the belief in mission faced ostracism. Evangelicals, acknowledging that coercive or deceitful techniques for missionizing were out of order, were taught how historically the horrors of anti-Semitism had often accompanied Christian efforts at proselytization.[8]

In 1984, the conference call for the third meeting formulated a ten-point platform that revealed how much progress had been made. The first plank expressed "outrage" over anti-Semitism and a commitment to teach succeeding generations about the "unspeakable horror" of the Holocaust; the next three dealt with the legitimacy of Zionism and with Israel, a Jewish state rooted in Scripture "no less than in the painful history of the Jewish people." The platform also addressed the most common Jewish objections to the Christian Right. One plank affirmed a commitment to the separation of church and state, and another stated: "We strongly condemn those who would use unethical, coercive, devious, or manipulative means to proselytize others. Witness to one's faith must always be accompanied with great sensitivity and respect for the integrity of the other person lest religious freedom and pluralism be threatened."[9] Jews and Evangelicals involved in the dialogues agreed that relations between the two groups were stronger than ever before, though much still needed to be done.[10]

In a thoughtful article that appeared in *Christianity Today* and in a recent book, Professor David Rausch discussed the major problem of how to transmit the altered images of Evangelicals and their faith and of Jews and Judaism to the rank and file of the two communities. Among Evangelicals, he said, most laypeople as well as clergy were ignorant of the persecution that Jews had suffered at the hands of Christians. So too their knowledge of Judaism and the Jewish roots of Christianity was woefully inadequate: "most . . . are unaware that Judaism teaches grace and faith . . . that the Pharisees were some of the best people of their day . . . that both Jesus and Paul were observant Jews." As for the Jews, most were still ignorant of the difference between *evangelist* and *Evangelical*. Nor, despite data presented to them on the shared interests of Jews and Evangelicals -- e.g., aid to education, civil rights, gun control, AIDS education -- were Jews eager for cooperation. And beyond the ongoing need to dispel ignorance, a deeper problem loomed: how far could each side go in modifying its creed? Here Rausch was discussing Evangelicals, but the same applied to believing Jews. Those involved in dialogue, he said, realized that "there is [only] a fine line between holding to their beliefs and drifting into a live-and-let-live ecumenical relativism."[11]

Ironically, on the subject of Israel, which had initially been the strongest link between the two groups, mainstream Evangelical support seemed to be waning at the end of the decade. Rausch talked of the "erosion of Christian Zionism";

Professor Marvin Wilson, an active participant in the AJC dialogues, described it as the "maturing" of Christian opinion; but both perceived a more equivocal attitude on the part of Evangelical academicians and leaders. The reasons, they said, were concern for Arab rights, Israel's militaristic policies, the *intifada*, and the Jonathan Pollard case. Wilson explained that because Evangelicals had come to view Israel as a modern state and not merely as a component of Christian eschatology, they felt freer to voice criticism. Thus, even more ironic, one could infer that dialogue had proved counterproductive. At interreligious conferences Jews themselves, anxious to free Israel from Christian theology, had fed the image of a modern Jewish state deserving of Christian support for reasons of social justice and in recognition of the Jewish struggle for survival. Rabbi Yechiel Eckstein was not impressed by the shift in Evangelical attitudes; support for Israel from intellectuals and academicians had never been that strong, he said. But Jewish organizations such as the AJC thought differently, and Jewish leaders gloomily predicted a serious setback both to Israel and to interfaith activities.[12]

David Rausch ends his new study of Evangelicals and Jews on a pessimistic note. Radical differences in self-identification and in social agendas are still stronger, he says, than an appreciation of common interests. Despite efforts by bridge-builders from both groups, the traditional suspicions nurtured by history and theology keep the two apart. And, he concludes, setbacks to intergroup harmony may actually increase in the next century.[13]

9. Religion and the Public Schools

The crusade for public policies fashioned according to religious values naturally targeted the public schools. Like nineteenth-century proponents of public-school education, the Christian Right affirmed that religious teachings undergirded the schools' function to inculcate "republican virtue." Following a pattern that went back to antebellum days, they also blamed the schools for the social ills which, they claimed, were eroding the nation's moral fiber. Since the cultural upheaval that crested in the 1960s, like the new prominence of problems of sexual license, drugs, and crime, coincided in time with major Supreme Court decisions that severed traditional links between religion and the schools, they found the culprit in the "godless" public schools. But just as schools caused the problem, so schools could also solve them. If Americans restored religious content to the classroom, they would be able to rebuild the moral framework of their society. To achieve their goal the rightists labored arduously to capture control of local school boards, to sway state legislatures and Congress to their point of view, and to champion their cause through the courts.[1]

The Christian Right supported a variety of measures for bailing out the so-called morally bankrupt schools, including devotional prayers, access to school premises for student religious groups, and displays of religious symbols like the Ten Commandments and Christmas nativity scenes. On a deeper and potentially more radical level, it focused on the substance of the school curriculum. Concerned parents and Christian educators examined teaching materials,

textbooks, and school-library books. Their judgment of what was taught was shaped by their views of what *should* be taught. At bottom, their aim was to refashion the average school in their own Protestant image.

In particular, Evangelical preachers lashed out at the schools for purveying the nefarious doctrines of "secular humanism." It was up to Christians, Pat Robertson said, to reclaim the government, the courts, and the schools, which the secular humanists had stolen from the "God-fearing majority." The sentiments of the Evangelicals acquired political legitimacy when endorsed by Ronald Reagan and his administration. The president agreed that God should be put back into the classroom.[2]

The Religious Right was not deterred by Supreme Court decisions from 1947 on that had systematically whittled down the ties between religion and the schools. Decisions could be overturned by a constitutional amendment (hence the popularity of a prayer amendment in the 1980s) and by court-stripping, congressional action that removed specific issues from the jurisdiction of federal courts. The simplistic logic of the Christian Right would undo the judicial acts that had rendered the schools "religion-less": (1) Schools had to teach moral values, which were, by definition, inseparable from religion and belief in God. Only those values rooted in the Christian (or Judeo-Christian) heritage could restore social well-being. (2) Education was either theistic or antireligious, and court-imposed neutrality that resulted in the absence of religion was not neutrality. By impeding the faithful from obtaining the instruction they desired for their children, and subjecting them to "atheistic" and "humanistic" doctrines contradicting their beliefs, it was in fact antireligious.

Nor were the rightists inhibited by considerations of church-state separation. Some, like Falwell, affirmed support of that doctrine, but claimed that the very idea of separation, which was not explicitly provided for in the Constitution, had been grossly inflated and misinterpreted. An officer of the Moral Majority explained that the true meaning of separation was obliterated by those who desired to separate the conservative churches from the state "so that liberal clergy and liberal politicians can run the country."[3]

It was inevitable that the Christian Right's agenda for the public schools would meet firm resistance from American Jews. Since the beginning of American public education, the pursuit of religious equality had made Jews active and consistent champions of the secular school or, in their words, the "public's schools." To rid the schools of religious trappings became an ongoing aim, and toward that end Jewish defense organizations plunged into litigation after World War II. Building on Justice Hugo Black's sweeping interpretation of the establishment clause of the First Amendment, they participated in the major battles over released time, school prayers, and Bible reading. Nor did they relax their guard after the landmark victories in *McCollum, Engel*, and *Schempp*. Through judicial briefs and statements before legislative bodies, they countered any move that represented a breach in the wall between religion and the school.[4] The school agenda of the Religious Right put strict separationists on constant alert. Not only were specific proposals like prayer or equal access intrinsically objectionable, but

Jews feared that such steps might open the floodgates to massive injections of religious (Christian) teachings into the classroom. They took no comfort from the rightists' use of the term "Judeo-Christian," which, to most Jews, was merely a euphemism for Christian.[5]

The Christian Right renewed the fight against teaching evolution in the schools. Darwinism had long been tagged as the symbol of the "satanic" forces of modernism. The core of secular humanism, it undermined the Christian state and the nation's schools; like communism and atheism, it accelerated the moral degeneration of society. Despite the ridicule heaped on fundamentalists in the wake of the Scopes trial of 1925, the desire to counter the teachings of Darwin lived on. Jerry Falwell's college in Lynchburg trained biology teachers for the public schools for just that purpose. "Of course, they'll be teaching evolution," Falwell said, "but teaching why it's invalid and why it's foolish, and then showing the proper way and correct approach to the origin of species."[6]

In the *Epperson* decision of 1968 the Supreme Court struck down an Arkansas law that forbade the teaching of the "theory or doctrine that mankind ascended or descended from a lower order of animals." The Court said: "There is and can be no doubt that the First Amendment does not permit the States to require that teaching and learning must be tailored to the principles or prohibitions of any religious sect or dogma."[7] The fundamentalists, active now in numerous states beside the Bible Belt, were compelled to adopt a new strategy. To circumvent the Court's ban, as well as other decisions that had removed religion from the classroom, they argued that the case of the antievolutionists deserved "equal time." Along the lines implied by their interpretation of government neutrality, they demanded that schools also be required to teach the biblical account of man's origins if evolution, a doctrine hostile to their faith, was taught. They defended the creation story in Genesis, elevating it to a science under the name of "scientific creationism" or "creation science." Drawing on "evidence" amassed by certain academics and by special-creation research centers, they carefully avoided references to religion in drafting proposals for state legislatures and policy statements for local school boards. The creationists gained wide publicity, and neither politicians nor textbook publishers could safely ignore their demands.[8]

The media played up the creationism controversy. The views of teachers, students, clergy, laymen, and scholars were recorded in newspapers and journals; conferences and teach-ins, where *Scopes* was often rehashed, multiplied; the scientific and legal merits of the issue were expounded time and again. Critics agreed that scientific creationism was really a religious doctrine, an idea at war with rationalism and long-held Enlightenment precepts, a maneuver to serve the religious purposes of its proponents. It ran afoul of church-state separation at the same time that it negated sound educational principles. Renowned author Isaac Asimov referred to the zealots as "an army of the night." An article in the *Library Journal* hinted at a conspiracy; creationists not only packed school libraries but trained biology teachers for "undercover" work -- to teach Christian fundamentalism in public schools wherever they found an opening.[9] In the heat

of the debate few conceded that Darwinism might not be the final truth and that the average school and textbook ignored contrary views.

Except for a few among the Orthodox, the Jewish community closed ranks against the creationists.[10] At stake were two cardinal principles, church-state separation and the need to protect Jewish pupils in fundamentalist-controlled school districts. Moreover, if the antievolutionists had their way, further radical revisions of the school curriculum for religious indoctrination could result. Jews shuddered at the onslaught of obscurantism. In their collective memory, Jewish emancipation and civil equality were products of the Age of Enlightenment; the opposite, Jewish disabilities and persecution, flowed from a closed Christian mindset. Unlike the fundamentalists, most believing Jews had successfully reconciled science with Scripture. An editorial in the *American Hebrew* during the *Scopes* trial, which called the "antievolution farce" a manifestation of "a return to mediaevalism in both thinking and action," was still timely some sixty years later.[11]

Happy to find another reason to blast the New Christian Right, the major Jewish agencies repeatedly described scientific creationism as a subterfuge for teaching religion, and hence barred by law from the classroom. Along those lines, the American Jewish Congress instructed Jews in southern states how to combat the passage of creationism legislation. To deflect criticism of the Jewish position, some advised that Jews ally with like-minded Christians in approaching legislators and school boards. Others suggested that teachers indicate in class, if the issue arose, that some groups believed in creationism. NJCRAC concluded that *requiring* teachers to so indicate would encourage school boards to set religious policy, and it refrained from suggesting how the issue should be handled.[12]

When Arkansas passed the Balanced Treatment for Creation-Science and Evolution-Science Act (1981), Jewish agencies quickly joined the fight for judicial relief. In *Epperson* only the American Jewish Congress, filing a joint *amicus* brief with the ACLU, had taken part, but this time, in *McClean* v. *Arkansas*, the Congress was joined by the American Jewish Committee and the UAHC. Along with twenty other individuals and organizations, including representatives of various churches, they acted as plaintiffs and not merely *amici*. They charged that since creationism was religious doctrine, and since the law itself was the product of fundamentalist zeal, it constituted an establishment of religion. They also claimed that the law did not meet the guidelines set forth in the *Lemon* decision of 1971. The emphasis on the establishment clause closely resembled briefs that Jews had filed in previous years, including *Epperson*. So did an assertion that the plaintiffs were not anti-religious but that they believed that religion flourished best when completely separated from the government.[13]

Nevertheless, the creationists trumpeted their cause through pulpits and the media, helped by a nationwide poll revealing that 76 percent of Americans wanted the biblical theory of creation taught alongside evolution, and that just 8 percent favored only the evolution theory. At the trial, however, witnesses for the defense presented a sorry spectacle; unable to prove that creationism was indeed a science, their performance provided material for sneering journalists.[14] The federal district court easily found for the plaintiffs. Judge William Overton agreed that by seeking

to inject biblical doctrine into the classroom the Arkansas law violated the establishment clause. But not all commentators chuckled over the defeat of the backward Bible-thumpers. The *Wall Street Journal* was equally discomfited by the zealous separationists who sought to divorce government totally from religion: "If caught between the relativists and the fundamentalists, we ourselves might often be tempted to side with the fundamentalists, at least those who are concerned, as we are, about a decline in the moral order." Also differing with the strict separationist line of the Jewish agencies, neoconservative Irving Kristol faulted "pseudo-scientific dogmatism" -- for Darwinism was not a firmly established truth -- for provoking the creationists' crusade. He agreed that creationism had no place in the schools, but he thought that if evolution were taught more "cautiously," without an attendant bias against religion, the issue would be far less controversial.[15]

The creationists kept up the struggle. With legal costs borne by private fundamentalist groups, they turned to the defense of Louisiana's Balanced Treatment Act, which, like that of Arkansas, gave creationism equal time. Repeating the same arguments used in *McClean*, the Jewish defense agencies, singly or with other groups, filed *amicus* briefs on behalf of the anticreationists as the case made its way up to the Supreme Court. With "Orwellian logic," one ADL brief said, the fundamentalists blurred the distinction between religion and science in order to teach the literal biblical account. The Congress and the AJC concurred, and only one member of the AJC's National Legal Committee argued against an *amicus* brief -- on the grounds that a ban on scientific creationism was tantamount to educational censorship. Again, the Jews stated that their opposition did not stem from hostility to religion. The joint brief of the Congress and the Synagogue Council of America, an organization that represented Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform rabbis and congregations, pointedly asserted: "While our membership embraces many who accept the Book of Genesis as literal truth, we oppose the teaching of any such doctrines, overtly or covertly, in the public schools." Jews also reaffirmed their support of objective teaching *about* religion. The Congress even suggested that a course that covered a range of origin theories, including religious ones, would not be objectionable on constitutional grounds. Only the Rabbinical Alliance, an organization of the ultra-Orthodox, joined in a convoluted, philosophical brief on behalf of the creationists.[16]

By a vote of 7-2 the Supreme Court struck down the Louisiana statute in the case of *Edwards* v. *Aguillard* (1987). Strict separationists, and the Jews among them, were elated. Nevertheless, as a thoughtful memorandum of the Congress explained, several issues went unanswered: Did the establishment clause automatically invalidate all laws where a religious purpose was discerned? Did the victory over creationism keep students from exposure to a broad range of ideas, and thereby amount to a form of educational censorship? Central to both issues remained the problem of defining government neutrality toward religion and the boundary line between neutrality and accommodation.[17]

The fundamentalist crusade against secular humanism reached new heights in the 1980s as the term "secular humanism" replaced communism and bolshevism

as the "catchall attack word."[18] The rightists charged that secular humanism, defined as a religion of godlessness or a "satanic" force, had become the established religion of the schools. Filling the vacuum created by the ban on prayer in the classroom, it worked through all disciplines and at all levels in primary and secondary schools to undermine Christian morals, biblical principles, and proper family relationships. Just as it drew its sustenance from Darwinism, they charged, so was it reinforced by teaching materials that spread antitheistic doctrines. The result was schools where Christian children were not only not accommodated but, even worse, were indoctrinated in an anti-Christian faith.

The simplistic either-or mindset of the fundamentalists was once again evident: if schools did not affirm theism, better still Christianity, they were not neutral but antireligious. Accordingly, some Christian parents, with the assistance of groups within the New Christian Right, looked to the courts to purge the schools of objectionable textbooks. Although they discounted the relevance of the establishment clause when conventional religious teachings were at stake, they invoked it now. That clause, they held, was violated by materials which perpetuated domination of the schools by the religion of secular humanism.[19]

Nonfundamentalists, however, were hard put to define secular humanism.[20] Strict separationists agreed that if it was a religion, as the Supreme Court had indicated in a footnote to *Torcaso* v. *Watkins* (1961), it had no place in the schools. But, critics of the Religious Right insisted, the mere exclusion of religion did not amount to the positive teaching of secular humanism or of any other form of irreligion. Some admitted to a neglect of moral values in classrooms and textbooks and even to a studied avoidance of religion that in certain cases -- discussions of the Pilgrims or of Joan of Arc -- was downright absurd.[21] The majority held, however, that the religious crusade, an extremist assault both on free inquiry in the schools and on the separation of church and state, was misguided. Yet the rightists could not be dismissed as "harmless crackpots" since the pressures of textbook watchers was on the rise -- the influence of Mel and Norma Gabler of Texas, for example, was legendary -- and throughout the country publishers, school boards, and teachers were succumbing.[22]

With the aid of legal counsel provided by televangelist Pat Robertson, the fundamentalists sought relief through litigation. A 1986 case in Alabama, *Smith* v. *Board of Commissioners*, focused on history and home economics (i.e., values and life-styles) texts, the former because they omitted references to religion, the latter because they ignored religious values and truths. The plaintiffs won in a federal district court. Judge W. Brevard Hand banned over forty books from Alabama's public schools on the grounds that they established the religion of secular humanism.

Hand's decision evoked strong criticism. An official of People for the American Way called it "judicial book-burning." One Jewish opinion pointed out that the power of the school boards to shape curricula would be destroyed by "undue court review." But Jewish separationists no longer defended the schools against charges of godlessness as they had forty years earlier. Rabbi David Saperstein, acknowledging that teaching of moral values and teaching about

religion had been chased from the classroom, wrote, "Banning books isn't the answer; rediscovering an educationally sound and constitutionally permissible way to teach about religion is."[23]

When the case was appealed, six national Jewish organizations, secular and religious, joined five other agencies in an *amicus* brief against the fundamentalists. Besides invoking the *Lemon* guidelines, the brief maintained that the textbooks at issue did not establish a religion; they neither advanced secular humanism nor inhibited any religion. Rather, Hand's decision constituted a violation of the establishment clause. The express purpose of the judge, a man who believed that the establishment clause was not binding on the states and who agreed with the fundamentalists that evolution was a secular religion, was to banish materials offensive to one particular sect. His decision operated to advance theism, and Christianity in particular, thus contradicting both the *Lemon* decision and the establishment clause. A unanimous court of appeals found the textbooks appropriately neutral and reversed Hand's ruling.[24]

A second textbook case, *Mozert* v. *Hawkins County*, arose in Tennessee. This time parents objected to a series of Holt, Rinehart readers, which, they claimed, offended their religious beliefs and hence their right to be accommodated under the free-exercise clause. They said that exposure to the series might cause their children to adopt the views of "a feminist, a humanist, a pacifist, an anti-Christian, a vegetarian, or an advocate of a 'one-world government.'" Unlike the plaintiffs in *Smith*, they did not seek a formal ban on the texts nor did they mount a frontal attack on secular humanism. Rather, they asked that their children receive alternative reading instruction. The school board countered that such an undertaking would entangle the state excessively with religion, thereby violating the establishment clause. The case, as the court noted, pitted the First Amendment's guarantee of free exercise against that of no establishment. It also raised the issue of the power of the state over education.[25]

Judge Thomas Hull's decision gave the plaintiffs a partial victory. Since the textbooks in question did impose a burden on religious beliefs, the parents could rightfully invoke the free-exercise clause. On the other hand, the creation of alternative classes was likely to impinge upon the establishment clause. Hull compromised by allowing the children of the plaintiffs to "opt out" of reading classes, to sit in a study hall or library during the reading period and receive parental instruction at home. The court rejected the school board's claim that accommodation of the few pupils involved would cause a flood of similar requests and "wreak havoc" with the school system.[26]

The decision in what was called the textbook censorship case or "Scopes II" drew national attention. Since some fundamentalists had complained about themes in stories like "The Three Little Pigs," "Goldilocks," and *The Wizard of Oz*, the media, often exaggerating the facts or equating out-of-court statements with official testimony, heaped ridicule upon the parents. Many Jews took personal affront at one witness's objection to a passage in *The Diary of Anne Frank* in which Anne tells a friend that he needs to believe in something but that it does not matter in what. The Anne Frank Center along with prominent Christian and

Jewish representatives defended the book and its message of pluralism. Can you imagine, actor Eli Wallach stormed, if a Jewish or Muslim child refused to read textbooks with which they found fault? Underlying the liberal criticism of the decision was the realization that the objectionable themes were not confined merely to the Holt readers or, indeed, to the subject of reading alone. Once the door was opened to fundamentalist demands, and once an attack on anything called secular humanism was upheld, the entire structure of an education predicated on the principles of free inquiry and respect for diversity was jeopardized.[27]

The issue, however, was not that straightforward for the Jewish defense agencies. On the question of whether they should support the appeal of the school board in *Mozert* they wrestled with conflicting values. To be sure, they too stood for education that inculcated the values of pluralism; they too opposed censorship of curricula; and they too feared the anarchy (students walking in and out of classes, constant disruptions in the school day) that seemed implicit in Hull's decision. How could a viable system of public education survive, they wondered, if parents were free to select the teaching materials? As Jews, they also worried lest future lawsuits succeed in bringing Christian materials into the schools.

Nevertheless, the agencies were deeply troubled by the school board's position. They believed that the defendants minimized the importance of free exercise; the claim that only the beliefs *central* to a faith merited protection implied uncomfortable limits and, as Richard Foltin of the AJC hinted, would grant the courts near-inquisitorial functions. Moreover, the school board's narrow view of the right of excusal for religious reasons might mean that Jews, for example, could not expect a court ban on Christmas celebrations that included the singing of Christian hymns, and that their only remedy was to opt out, or to ask that their children be excused.[28] The American Jewish Congress and the ADL voiced similar concerns. One Jewish organization that had no doubts about the merits of the fundamentalists' case was COLPA (Commission on Law and Public Affairs), which spoke for the interests of the Orthodox community. Its director, Dennis Rapps, asserted that the violation of one's religious faith must not be the price for the enjoyment of public benefits. Jewish insistence on the accommodation of minority religious opinions had ample precedent.

While the Jewish agencies explored the pros and cons of the issue, liberal church groups also worried about the hostility to free exercise implicit in the school board's case, and fundamentalists appealed for Jewish support. An attorney for the Concerned Women of America, the organization that represented the parents in *Mozert*, said that the fundamentalist fight was on behalf of all minority religions. Requesting the help of Jewish *amicus* briefs, he added in a personal letter to Marc Stern of the American Jewish Congress: "I believe the Judge's ruling benefits minority religions . . . such as the Jewish faith. I think the parents' minor objection to one small part of the *Diary of Anne Frank* is being twisted and exaggerated to divide natural allies in this case. The Tennessee parents are not anti-Semitic." But counsel for People for the American Way, which defended the school board, contended that Jewish concern about Christmas pageants was far

different from the fundamentalist crusade that presaged the fragmentation of the school system. While both sides vied for Jewish support, the agencies deliberated, and members disagreed, on what role to take when the case reached the circuit court.[29]

In the end, the AJC, along with the UAHC, the faculty of the New York Theological Seminary, Rabbi Balfour Brickner, and Episcopal Bishop Paul Moore, Jr., filed an *amicus* brief with the U.S. court of appeals. (A short time later the ADL joined the same brief.) Agreeing with the parents' claim to the protection of the free-exercise clause, the brief nevertheless argued on behalf of the compelling interest of the state to provide a broad education. "*Amici* believe that all parents who choose to send their children to public schools must tolerate exposure to some significant measure of diversity of thought." The brief criticized the alternative of "opting out," which could result in weakened school boards, "balkanization" of the schools, and divisiveness among students. More reasonable, it said, were the alternatives of total home education or private religious schools.[30]

The brief was a noble attempt to construe the right of free exercise broadly while simultaneously siding with the school board. But the appeals court reversed the decision and destroyed the plan of "opting out" of reading classes on a narrower view -- and hence one potentially detrimental to any minority's interest -- of what constituted a burden on religious beliefs. The Supreme Court denied a hearing, and so the appellate decision stood. Commenting on the "dark cloud of religious oppression" over America's schoolhouses, a spokesperson for Concerned Women of America predicted that as a result of the Supreme Court's action Jewish children could be required to sing Christmas carols, blacks to read racially offensive books, and others to face expulsion for nonparticipation in "Bible as literature" classes.[31]

In large measure the court fights over creationism and secular humanism confirmed old stereotypes. Jews continued to see Evangelicals as obscurantists; Evangelicals still labeled Jews as secular humanists. Yet the textbook struggle revealed some signs that the gap between the two groups could conceivably narrow. Protection of the free-exercise rights of a religious minority, which the Jews had seriously debated in connection with *Mozert*, was a shared concern. Moreover, even strict separationists among the Jews increasingly acknowledged the imbalance in school curricula that neglected or underplayed the role of religion. One did not have to be a fundamentalist, or even a Christian, to be disturbed by such omissions and distortions. As a 1988 policy statement of the American Jewish Committee put it: "It is not possible to gain an adequate or accurate picture of history without a knowledge of the role that religious groups have played in shaping that history. Nor is it possible to understand contemporary American society without a grasp of its religious components."[32]

To address that common problem, new lines of communication between Jews and Evangelicals were drawn. In 1988, in what was hailed as a major breakthrough, a coalition of educational and religious groups issued a statement endorsing the teaching about religion in the public schools. Among the sponsors were two conservative Evangelical groups -- the National Association of

Evangelicals and the Christian Legal Society -- and the American Jewish Congress, the embodiment of separationism in the Jewish community. Using a question-and-answer format, the statement explained the need for religion in the curriculum, the differences between an academic and a devotional approach, and the boundaries between what was constitutionally permissible and what was not. A second statement on religious holidays in the schools showed a similar sensitivity to the priorities of conflicting groups. Journals noted that these endeavors were already causing religion to make a comeback in the classroom and that publishers were revising their textbook lists. In terms of the Jewish-Evangelical encounter, the project at least temporarily turned adversaries into partners.[33]

10. Conclusion

Interaction with the New Christian Right in the 1980s highlighted a number of typical Jewish behavior patterns: (1) Passions were automatically inflamed by the intrusion of Christian rhetoric into politics, by attacks on church-state separation, and by threats to Israel. (2) Those immediate, pragmatic issues overshadowed interest in theological differences, in Christian missionizing, and in cultivating dialogue with the Evangelicals. (3) Where priorities clashed, as in the case of support for Israel versus religion-free politics, most Jews opted for the latter. (4) American Jews remained loyal to liberalism (and to the Democratic Party) despite dissatisfaction with the new currents of liberalism. Any shift on the political spectrum away from liberalism, which some observers had discerned earlier, was in fact stymied by the aggressiveness of the Christian Right.[1]

At the same time, Jews were forced to grapple with deeper issues. If, under the influence of the Christianizers, religion was becoming more central to American life, how should secular-minded Jews adapt? If American Jews, as Evangelicals believed, were strong on "Jewishness" but weak on "Judaism," would their defense of a secular society ultimately prove harmful to the survival of their faith? (Irving Kristol once caustically remarked that "One does get the impression that many American Jews would rather see Judaism vanish through intermarriage than hear the president say something nice about Jesus Christ.") Throughout the post-World War II era, individual Jews, and not only from the Orthodox camp, had challenged the majority belief that Jews and Judaism fared best in a secular society. In the 1980s intergroup tensions lent a new urgency to an unresolved, internal Jewish debate.[2]

By the end of the 1980s it seemed as if the political force of the New Christian Right was spent. Jerry Falwell disbanded the Moral Majority in 1989; scandals discredited other TV Evangelical ministers. Obituaries on the death of the Religious Right usually noted that it had never been a unified movement to begin with, that its influence had been grossly inflated by the media, and that it had succumbed to internal tensions and divisiveness. The unsuccessful presidential bid of Pat Robertson in 1988 marked the end of sustained Jewish attention to the Christian Right. After a decade of surveillance and warnings, NJCRAC's *Joint Program Plan* for 1989-90 noted "the decline of the 'Religious Right' as a political

and social force."[3]

A 1991 survey by the American Jewish Congress concluded that the Evangelical agenda had done no legal damage -- the ban on school prayer stood, creationism had failed to pass constitutional muster, and abortion was still a constitutional right. In the final analysis, mass Christianization had not swept the country, and the wall of separation stood unbreached. The mood in the Jewish agencies was one of satisfaction and even self-congratulation. Unwavering Jewish resistance to attacks by the Christian Right, they claimed, had helped preserve the American tradition of separationism.[4] The results confirmed the belief that the conventional Jewish stand on the separation of religion from politics and from state institutions had been appropriate all along.

Postmortems, however, may have been premature. According to one survey, born-again Christians accounted for 42 percent of the delegates to the Republican national convention of 1992. Despite differences within the Evangelical camp between hardliners and moderates, the rightists set the tone of the convention. Two featured speakers, Pat Buchanan and Pat Robertson, carried a message that resonated throughout the sessions. Buchanan sounded a 1980s-like call to arms: "There is a religious war going on in this country for the soul of America. It is a cultural war, as critical to the kind of nation we shall be as the cold war itself." In the opinion of both speakers, leftists and liberals had now replaced Russia as the primary threat to American society.[5]

Meantime, Pat Robertson and his revitalized Christian Coalition labored quietly but effectively across the country to organize grass-roots support. Targeting what one Jewish Republican activist correctly called the "nuts and bolts" of the party, they campaigned vigorously in elections for town, municipal, and state officials. Their victories in 1992 were impressive; People for the American Way estimated that they won about 40 percent of some 500 contests. Indeed, the renewed strength of the Christian Right on the local level, particularly evident in school boards, has continued to build.[6]

A footnote to the political activism of the Christian Right surfaced in a postelection conference of Republican governors, the purpose of which was to project the image of a broad-based party in which the religious element was merely one among many. Attempts to downplay the role of the Evangelicals were badly undercut, however, when Governor Kirk Fordice of Mississippi, calling himself a good friend of Pat Robertson, told reporters that the United States was a Christian nation. Immediately rebuked by Jewish groups and by his own colleagues, Fordice was forced to apologize. Nevertheless, the episode was a graphic reminder that the Christian Right in politics was alive and well.[7]

So far, the Religious Right has had no major impact on the Jewish community. After more than a decade often fraught with alarm, the postures and priorities of most American Jews remain unchanged. While their continued security and well-being should theoretically allow more flexible responses, the mindset fashioned by historical precedents still conveys an image of the New Christian Right as a clear-and-present danger. It is still uncertain whether any intergroup projects seeking to reconcile the traditional adversaries will yield lasting

results, or even continue. For American Jews, the encounter with the full-blown New Christian Right in the 1980s was merely another battle in a long struggle for religious equality.

Notes

1. Introduction

1. Robert C. Liebman and Robert Wuthnow, eds., *The New Christian Right* (New York, 1983), ch. 2; Richard John Neuhaus, "What the Fundamentalists Want," in Richard John Neuhaus and Michael Cromartie, eds., *Piety and Politics* (Washington, 1987); Steve Bruce, *The Rise and Fall of the New Christian Right* (Oxford, Eng., 1988), chs. 1-2; James E. Wood, Jr., "Religious Fundamentalism and the New Right," *Journal of Church and State* 22 (1980): 409-421; Marc Tanenbaum in symposium, *Reform Judaism*, March 1981, p. 11; undated letter from R. Grant of Christian Voice, New Christian Right/Correspondence, Congress files.

2. Marc Stern and Lois Waldman to author, 29 Nov. 1991.

3. *Religion in America -- The Gallup Report*, April 1987, no. 259, pp. 38, 41; Gerson D. Cohen, *The State of World Jewry Address*, 19 Oct. 1982 (New York, 1982), p. 20.

4. A. James Reichley, "Religion and the Future of American Politics," *Political Science Quarterly* 101 (1986): 35-38. From 1972 through 1984 at least 60 percent of Jews continued to vote for the Democratic presidential candidate: *American Jewish Year Book* (hereinafter *AJYB*) 86 (1986): 73.

5. Leo P. Ribuffo, *The Old Christian Right* (Philadelphia, 1983); Naomi W. Cohen, *Jews in Christian America* (New York, 1992).

6. Nathan Glazer, "Fundamentalism: A Defensive Offensive," in Neuhaus and Cromartie, *Piety and Politics*, p. 253; J. Falwell in *Jewish Veteran*, January/March 1981, p. 13; Moral Majority ad in *New York Times*, 23 Mar. 1981. A Jew, Howard Phillips, helped to establish the Moral Majority (Seymour Martin Lipset and Earl Raab, "The Election & the Evangelicals," *Commentary*, March 1981, p. 29).

2. Signs of Conflict

1. David A. Rausch, *Communities in Conflict* (Philadelphia, 1991), passim; Marc H. Tanenbaum, Marvin R. Wilson, and A. James Rudin, eds., *Evangelicals and Jews in Conversation on Scripture, Theology, and History* (Grand Rapids, 1978), pp. vii-xiii.

2. M. Tanenbaum to author, 21 Jan. 1992; transcript of gathering, 12 June 1981, IAD-Evangelical TAV Ministries, AJC files.

3. Many commentators pointed out the ever-present connection in American history between piety and politics. See, for example, Leo P. Ribuffo, "Liberals and That Old-Time Religion," *Nation*, 29 Nov. 1980; on the growth of Evangelical

strength after World War II, see Mark Silk, "The Rise of the 'New Evangelicalism,'" in William R. Hutchison, ed., *Between the Times* (Cambridge, Eng., 1989).

4. M. Tanenbaum to NJCRAC Program Plan, 20 Apr. 1973, Evangelicalism/AJC, AJC vertical files; "Jewish Furor Over Key 73," *Christianity Today*, 22 Dec. 1972; *Newsweek*, 17 Apr. 1972; *AJYB* 74 (1973): 161.

5. NJCRAC, *Joint Program Plan*, 1973-74, pp. 42-44; Judith H. Banki, "Key 73: An Interim Report," October 1973, AJC library; M. Tanenbaum to NJCRAC Program Plan, 20 Apr. 1973, Evangelicalism/AJC, AJC vertical files; Jim Castelli in *The Lamp*, December 1973, pp. 11-12.

6. See folders Evangelicalism/Jewish Viewpoint and Evangelicalism/AJC in AJC vertical files; NJCRAC, *Joint Program Plan*, 1973-74, p. 44; Banki, "Key 73," pp. 22-23.

7. A. James Rudin and Marcia R. Rudin, "Onward (Hebrew) Christian Soldiers," *Present Tense*, Summer 1977, pp. 17-26; Jerome S. Gurland, "Key 73 and 'Dialogue,'" *Jewish Spectator*, June 1973, pp. 7-8; "Jewish Furor Over Key 73," pp. 37-38; Rausch, *Communities in Conflict*, p. 130.

8. Castelli in *The Lamp*; Solomon S. Bernards, "Key 73 -- A Jewish View," *Christian Century*, 3 Jan. 1973; also *Christian Century*, 2-9 Jan. 1974; news release 2 Mar. 1973, Evangelicalism/AJC, AJC vertical files.

9. Banki, "Key 73," pp. 3-18; M. Tanenbaum to author, 21 Jan. 1992; *AJYB* 75 (1974-75): 126.

10. Banki, "Key 73," pp. 25-29; NJCRAC, *Joint Program Plan*, 1973-74, pp. 43-44, 1974-75, p. 50; Rudin and Rudin, "Onward (Hebrew) Christian Soldiers"; *AJYB* 76 (1976): 122-123; J. Ollender to H. Arian et al., 2 Aug. 1974, IAD-Cults/Jews for Jesus, AJC files; Gurland, "Key 73 and 'Dialogue'"; for an Orthodox suggestion on outreach to youth, see Aryeh Kaplan, "Key 73 and the Vulnerable Jew," *Jewish Observer*, June 1973, pp. 7-12.

11. George F. Will in *Washington Post*, 27 Jan. 1978; *Group Research Report*, vol. 15, no. 5, 9 June 1976; M. Ellerin to B. Gold, 15 Oct. 1976, to J. Harburger, 21 Sept. 1976, B. Gold to N. Appleman, 20 Oct. 1976, TA-Evangelicals/Politics, M. Ellerin to J. Harburger, 22 Dec. 1977, IAD-Christian Yellow Pages, AJC files; Jim Wallis and Wes Michaelson, "The Plan to Save America," *Sojourners*, April 1976; *AJYB* 78 (1978): 63-64, 76-79.

12. M. Ellerin to M. Tanenbaum, 23 Sept. 1976, to B. Gold, 5 Oct. 1976, news release, 3 Dec. 1976, TA-Evangelicals/Politics, M. Ellerin to J. Harburger, 22 Dec. 1977, IAD-Christian Yellow Pages, AJC files; *ADL Bulletin*, January 1982, pp. 4-5; *AJYB* 78 (1978): 79.

13. *Time*, 26 Dec. 1977; on the marked change in Evangelical political activism in the second half of the 1970s, see Rausch, *Communities in Conflict*, pp. 156-157.

3. The Bailey Smith Affair

1. *U.S. News & World Report*, 24 Sept. 1979.

2. *Religious News Service*, 30 Apr. 1980; R. Address to N. Dershowitz, 5 June 1980, New Christian Right/Correspondence, Congress files; David Saperstein, "The New Right Threat," *Reform Judaism*, September 1980.

3. M. Tobian to M. Tanenbaum, 28 Aug. 1980, TA-Bailey Smith, AJC files; *Washington Post*, 26 Sept., 21 Nov. 1980; Mark Silk, *Spiritual Politics* (New York, 1988), pp. 159-162; *Religious News Service*, 19 Nov. 1980.

4. See folders TA-Bailey Smith and IAD-Southern Baptists, undated statement by M. Tanenbaum on "New Right Evangelicals," IAD-New Christian Right, AJC files; Marc Stern, *Christianity in Politics*, Research Report for Institute of Jewish Affairs, October 1982, p. 7; Richard John Neuhaus, "What the Fundamentalists Want," in Richard John Neuhaus and Michael Cromartie, eds., *Piety and Politics* (Washington, 1987), pp. 5-7; *Jewish Week*, 2 Nov. 1980; *Newsweek*, 10 Nov. 1980; *Washington Post*, 26 Sept. 1980; *AJYB* 82 (1982): 103; *Seattle Jewish Transcript*, 30 Oct. 1980.

5. *Washington Post*, 26 Sept. 1980; letter from "God," 19 Sept., J. Banki to J. Hechinger, 6 Oct. 1980, IAD-Southern Baptist Convention, AJC files; *Newsweek*, 10 Nov. 1980; David A. Rausch, "The New Fundamentalists," *American Zionist*, December/January 1983.

6. Mark Silk, "The Rise of the 'New Evangelicalism,'" in William R. Hutchinson, ed., *Between the Times* (Cambridge, Eng., 1989), pp. 278-280; C. McIntire to M. Tanenbaum, 3 Nov. 1980, TA: Fundamentalists, AJC files; *AJYB* 82 (1982): 105, 115. Fourteen percent of the Jewish vote went to Anderson, proving that Jews were not necessarily turning to the right.

7. A. James Reichley, *Religion in American Public Life* (Washington, 1985), pp. 323-324; *Religious News Service*, 24 Dec. 1980; Seymour Martin Lipset and Earl Raab, "The Election & the Evangelicals," *Commentary*, March 1981, pp. 25-31.

8. Nathan Perlmutter and Ruth A. Perlmutter, *The Real Anti-Semitism in America* (New York, 1982), ch. 4. Particularly relevant from the ADL's series, Patterns of American Prejudice, are Charles Y. Glock and Rodney Stark, *Christian Beliefs and Anti-Semitism* and Rodney Stark et al., *Wayward Shepherds*.

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11. *New York Times*, 23 Nov. 1980; *JTA Daily Bulletin*, 22 Dec. 1980; Perlmutter and Perlmutter, *Real Anti-Semitism*, pp. 165-166.

12. See folder TA-Bailey Smith, AJC files; *New York Times*, 10 Dec. 1981.

13. Silk, *Spiritual Politics*, pp. 163-166; 95 Theses in Religion and Politics, AJC vertical files; *Jewish Week*, 31 Oct. 1980; *New York Times*, 26 Nov. 1980;

Religious News Service, 28 Jan. 1981.

4. Taking Sides

1. NJCRAC, *Joint Program Plan*, 1981-82, pp. 52-53; Marc Stern and Phil Baum to author, 24 Feb. 1992; Arthur Hertzberg, "The Moral Majority -- Is It Good for the Jews?" *Hadassah Magazine*, April 1981, p. 48; Richard Neuhaus, "What the Fundamentalists Want," in Richard John Neuhaus and Michael Cromartie, eds., *Piety and Politics* (Washington, 1987), p. 6; S. Sheinbaum to N. Sandberg, 27 Mar. 1981, IAD-New Christian Right/Moral Majority, AJC files.

2. William Bole et al., "The New Christian Right," *Present Tense*, Winter 1985, p. 30.

3. Leo P. Ribuffo, "Liberals and That Old-Time Religion," *Nation*, 29 Nov. 1980, p. 572; Seymour Martin Lipset and Earl Raab, "The Election & the Evangelicals," *Commentary*, March 1981, p. 28; Marc Stern, *Christianity in Politics,* Research Report for Institute of Jewish Affairs, October 1982, pp. 6-8; Milton Ellerin and Alisa H. Kesten, "The New Right," Trends Analyses Report, 18 Nov. 1980, pp. 9-10, AJC files; Jonathan D. Sarna, "Jews, the Moral Majority, and American Tradition," *Journal of Reform Judaism*, Spring 1982, p. 6; ADL news release, 7 June 1983, 8 Jan. 1987.

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5. *Baltimore Jewish Times*, 10 Jan. 1986.

6. *New York Times*, 5 Feb. 1981, letter to editor 13 Feb. 1981; M. Tanenbaum to D. Fore 12 Feb. 1981, IAD-New Christian Right/Moral Majority, AJC files; Joe Klein, "The Moral Majority's Man in New York," *New York*, 18 May 1981.

7. Bole, "New Christian Right," p. 27; Susan Morse, "The Christianization of America," *Jewish Monthly*, January 1987, pp. 19-28; *Newsweek*, 16 Feb. 1981.

8. Driver quoted in *Jewish Post and Opinion*, 20 Jan. 1981; *Christianity Today*, 24 Apr. 1981; Robert G. Grant, "The Christian Voice," *Liberty*, May/June 1982, pp. 18-21; Morse, "Christianization of America," p. 22; Jack R. Fischel, "The Fundamentalist Perception of Jews," *Midstream*, December 1982, pp. 30-31; Commission on Social Action of Reform Judaism, *The Challenge of the Religious Right* (New York [1982]), part 7.

9. *Report of the President of the UAHC*, p. 7; Morse, "Christianization of America," p. 20; M. Friedman to M. Tanenbaum, 2 Dec. 1980, IAD-New Christian Right/Moral Majority, AJC files; *Jewish Week*, 23 Nov. 1980; *AJYB* 82 (1982): 103; Aryeh Spero, "Jewish Fear of Fundamentalist Activism Exaggerated," *Fundamentalist Journal*, October 1986, p. 14.

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11. See for example Seymour Siegel, "Religion and Politics," *Commonsense* 4 (1981): 26-29; Balfour Brickner in symposium, *Reform Judaism*, March 1981, p. 12.

12. Robert Wuthnow, *The Struggle for America's Soul* (Grand Rapids, 1989); James Davison Hunter, *Culture Wars* (New York, 1991).

13. See important article by Jack Wertheimer, "Recent Trends in American Judaism," *AJYB* 89 (1989): 63-162.

14. Bole, "New Christian Right," p. 33; A. James Reichley, *Religion in American Public Life* (Washington, 1985), pp. 302-307. Sounding very much like the Christian Right, leaders of the small Orthodox community of Sephardic Jews asked both major parties in 1980 to acknowledge the rule of God in their platforms and to condemn abortion, pornography, and blasphemy (*Religious News Service*, 10 June 1980).

15. *Religious News Service*, 30 Apr. 1980.

16. Hertzberg "The Moral Majority -- Is It Good for the Jews?" p. 20 and seq.

17. "Religion in the Public Arena," *Jewish Observer*, October 1985, p. 4 and seq.

5. Religion and Politics

1. James E. Wood, Jr., "Religious Fundamentalism and the New Right," *Journal of Church and State* 22 (1980): 409-421; idem, "Church Lobbying and Public Policy," *ibid.*, 28 (1986): 183; E. Dionne in *New York Times*, 15 June 1989; *Religious News Service*, 21 Oct. 1980.

2. Brickner's piece was distributed by Reform's Commission on Interfaith Activities, 1 June 1974, New Christian Right/Correspondence, CLSA Reports, 4 Dec. 1980, CLSA binder, Congress files.

3. NJCRAC, *Joint Program Plan*, 1980-81, p. 30; CLSA Minutes, 23 Oct. 1980, remarks of L. Pfeffer in "Political Activities of Religious Groups," 14 Dec. 1980, CLSA binder, R. Volpert to NJCRAC Commission on Individual Freedom, 6 Oct. 1980, New Christian Right/Correspondence, Congress files. A book issued by the UAHC, *Assault on the Bill of Rights*, did imply, however (pp. 1-4), that Christian Right activities were in violation of the free-speech clause of the First Amendment and the test-oath clause of Article VI.

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5. NJCRAC, *Joint Program Plan*, 1980-81, p. 43; AJCongress, "Where We Stand," October 1981, Congress files.

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W. Cohen, *Jews in Christian America* (New York, 1992), p. 74.

7. *U.S. News & World Report*, 24 Sept. 1979; David Saperstein, "The New Right Threat," *Reform Judaism*, September 1980; idem, "What's Wrong with the Religious Right?" *Pioneer Woman*, March/April 1982, p. 4; excerpt from speech by Saperstein to board of B'nai B'rith, New Christian Right/Statements and Reports, Congress files; Wood, "Religious Fundamentalism and the New Right," pp. 414-415; Balfour Brickner, "Turning Right and Thinking Wrong," *Jewish Spectator*, Spring 1981, pp. 15-16.

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9. Saperstein, "What's Wrong with the Religious Right?" p. 29; Muriel Bermar in *United Synagogue Review*, Winter 1981, p. 1; Aaron Rosenbaum in "A Symposium," *Dialogue*, Spring 1981; NJCRAC, *Joint Program Plan*, 1981-82, p. 31.

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13. Simon, *Jerry Falwell and the Jews*, pp. 116-117; see also references in n. 11, especially to *Jewish Veteran* and *Baltimore Jewish Times*.

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6. The Election of 1984

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1984, Church and State, AJC vertical files; Naomi W. Cohen, *Jews in Christian America* (New York, 1992), pp. 241-243.

4. Susan Morse, "The Christianization of America," *Jewish Monthly*, January 1987, pp. 19-20; *AJYB* 84 (1984): 127; Alan Fisher, "The Jewish Vote in 1982," *Jewish Social Studies* 47 (1985): 281-294.

5. *AJYB* 86 (1986): 65-66, 91; *New York Times*, 27 Feb. 1984; profile of Jackson by Marshall Frady, *New Yorker*, 17 Feb. 1992, pp. 45-50; *Jewish Week*, 27 July 1984; *Middle East Policy Survey*, no. 108, 13 July 1984; M. Ellerin to I. Levine, 10 Jan. 1984, I. Levine to area directors, 27 Feb. 1984, NAD-A, reports from E. Raab and M. Ellerin, DGX-Jesse Jackson, "Jewish Voting in the 1984 Democratic Primaries," DGX-Politics/Elections, AJC files.

6. Earl Raab, "Meaning of Jackson to Jews," 4 Sept. 1984, DGX-Jesse Jackson, Hyman Bookbinder, "Instant Commentary from San Francisco," [July 1984], DGX-Politics/Elections, AJC files; *AJYB* 86 (1986): 67.

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2. Yechiel Eckstein, "Understanding Evangelicals," National Jewish Resource Center *Perspectives*, May 1984, p. 24.

3. Yona Malachy, *American Fundamentalism and Israel* (Jerusalem, 1978), pt. 4; transcript of a gathering, 12 June 1981, IAD-Evangelical TAV Ministries, AJC files; David Rausch, "American Evangelicals and the Jews," *Midstream*, February 1977, pp. 38-41.

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9. Perlmutter and Perlmutter, *Real Anti-Semitism*, ch. 7; Arnold Forster and Benjamin R. Epstein, *The New Anti-Semitism* (New York, 1974), pp. 322-324; Judith H. Banki and Gary Wolf, *Israel at Risk: The Campaign to Erode Christian Support* (New York, 1990); National Council of Churches, Policy Statement on the Middle East, National Council of Churches, AJC vertical files; *JTA Daily Bulletin*, 10 Nov. 1980.

10. *Report of the President of the Union of American Hebrew Congregation*, 21 Nov. 1980, pp. 4-5, 7. Falwell was also honored by the Jewish National Fund, *Jewish Week*, 10 Feb. 1980.

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10. Conclusion

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