

## Chapter 6

### Authoritarianism and Politics

#### *RWA, Social Dominance, and Political Preferences Among Ordinary People*

After all you've learned about right-wing authoritarianism and social dominance, you'll probably be disappointed to learn that these personality traits connect only moderately to the political preferences of ordinary people.<sup>1</sup> But the modest connections can be easily understood: people, darn it, are more complicated than psychologists want them to be.

First, a lot of people have as much interest in politics as I do in rutabaga--and for the same reason. These political drop-outs compose the bulk of that 40 to 60 percent of the population who do not vote in elections. That's an awful lot of people whose RWA and social dominance scores are not going to correlate with anything political. Then one has the virtuous, heroic, cream-of-the-crop, super- dooper, world class heros, the Independents. (Uh, see note 19 from chapter 5.) The personalities of these party-poopers also won't correlate with party preference, because they haven't got any party preference.

Then come the members of the electorate who support a party but have very little idea what it stands for. You might call them political nincompoopers, but we have to recognize that political parties often make it hard to find out what they stand for. But some folks--not as keenly interested as one might perhaps wish--support the Democrats because their parents were Democrats, or their union says they should vote Democrat. Or they support the Republicans because "all the right people do," or because they think the Republican candidate looks nice on TV. So with all these non-starters and breakdowns, you can expect personality and party preference to often be strange bedfellows.<sup>2</sup>

If you now have concluded that we could fit all the informed, concerned voters in your community into a phone booth, that's not true. For one thing, very few phone booths exist any more. But for another, pollsters regularly find that a significant number of ordinary citizens appreciate the importance of politics, and may even be involved in the political process. Generally, men are more likely to be interested than women are, well-educated people care more, and the older you get the more you scrutinize the candidates with your weary, wary eyes. Studies show that the more interested people are in politics, the more likely their party preference will correlate with their authoritarianism.

That implies the connection ought to be strongest among the biggest party animals among us, politicians. But how do you give personality tests to politicians? Well if you are willing to settle for studying lots of successful, important politicians, you can send surveys to legislatures and ask for the lawmakers' personal, honest, anonymous answers. So I did. I sent the RWA scale to at least one chamber of forty-two of the state legislatures in the United States (all except Alaska, Arkansas, Delaware, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Rhode Island, and West Virginia), mainly between 1990 and 1993. I also sent surveys to most of the legislatures in Canada, including the federal House of Commons. We'll spend the first part of this chapter digging around in those results. Then we'll talk about the biggest development in American politics in the past twenty-five years, the growth of the "Religious Right."

### *Authoritarianism among American State Legislators*

First of all, these studies all happened before the Social Dominance Orientation scale was available. So--because time-travel is strictly forbidden in social science research--I have no answers from legislators to that scale per se. But I do have some data almost as good, and they will tell us a lot when the time comes.

Next, you might rightly be wondering how state lawmakers had time to fill out surveys mailed to them by an obscure Canadian researcher, when they were supposed to be busy with The Public Business. Lawmakers *are* busy, and that's probably one of the reasons I only heard from 1,233 (or 26%) of the 4,741 U.S. legislators I sent surveys to. Such a low return rate immediately raises the question of a self-selection sample bias, right? What would the results have been if everybody had responded, instead of only one-quarter?

Luckily you can estimate this with one of the crafty stratagems in the survey-givers' bag of tricks. Let's say, just to pick a wild possibility, you're interested in whether Republican lawmakers score higher on the RWA scale than Democrats do. You look at the states you barely heard from, and then at the states where you got a much better return. Obviously you're inclined to trust the latter results more. Making this comparison, you find that the higher the return rate was, the more Republicans tended to differ from Democrats. The smaller samples tended to cloud this relationship--which is a major problem with small samples. But it also means that if I had heard back from *everyone*, the difference would likely be substantially *bigger* than what actually turned up.

We'll focus on the results obtained, not what I imagine they might be. But if you are admirably wondering about the response rate--which few readers do, and which few survey-takers even report-- a self-selection sample bias certainly compromises my lawmaker studies. The numbers I obtained are "low balls." Right-wing authoritarianism probably packs a bigger punch in American state legislatures than my data will show. We should keep that in mind. If I had heard from everyone, the bad things would likely be even worse.

Well, what differences did turn up? I sent the thirty-item RWA scale I was using in my research then to fifty legislative chambers, and in every single one except the Louisiana House, the Republicans scored higher overall than the Democrats.

Although the “right-wing” in right-wing authoritarianism refers to a *psychological* trait that endorses submission to established authority (see chapter 1), not a political ideology, the RWA scale finds significantly different levels of this trait in politicians from the two parties.<sup>3</sup> The Republicans scored almost 40 points higher than the Democrats on the average, on the 30-item scale.

Figure 5.1 shows the average score of each caucus in each of the chambers I approached (viz., eleven senates and thirty-nine lower chambers). (The *numbers* on the scale have been reset in terms of the twenty-item measure we have been talking about since chapter 1). Several things may leap out at you. First, the Democrats landed all over the place. The Republicans on the other hand crowd together so much that the person who drew this figure almost went crazy trying to jam all the names into such a small space. Second, as you would expect from the last paragraph, very few Democratic caucuses posted RWA scale scores as high as most of the Republicans did. The Democrats may be all over the place, but they’re mainly all over a less authoritarian place than Republican Country. Third, with the inevitable exceptions, southern legislators posted the highest scores.

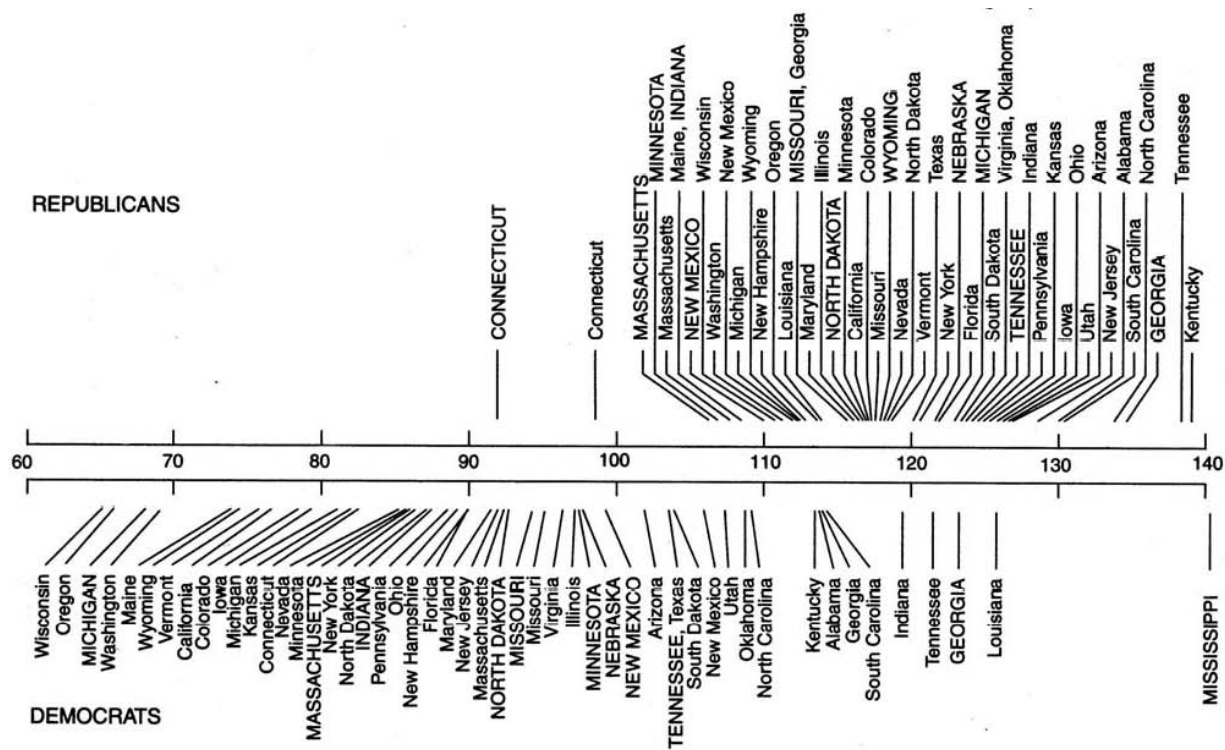
### *Other Issues*

I usually included some other measure besides the RWA scale on the surveys I mailed to the state capitols, and accordingly I found that high RWA lawmakers tended to:

- *not* think wife abuse was a serious issue (a *weak* relationship; see note 12 of Chapter 1)
- have conservative economic philosophies (a moderate relationship)
- score highly on items assessing racial and ethnic prejudice (a moderate relationship)
- reject a law raising the income tax rate for the rich and lowering it for the poor (a moderate relationship)

Figure 5.1

## Average RWA Scale Scores of American State Legislators, by State and Party



Notes: Scores have been re-scaled from a 30-item basis to a 20-item basis. The midpoint of the scale is 100. The sample includes 549 Republican legislators and 682 Democrats. Scores from upper chambers are presented in larger print (e.g. CONNECTICUT versus Connecticut). No Connecticut Democratic senator, and only one Mississippi Republican and one Wyoming Democratic senator answered, and hence no scores are given for those caucuses.

- favor capital punishment (a sturdy relationship)
- oppose gun control laws (a sturdy relationship)
- favor a law prohibiting television broadcasts from a foreign country's capital (such as Baghdad during the Gulf War) when the United States is at war with that country (a sturdy relationship)
- favor a law requiring Christian religious instruction in public schools (a sturdy relationship)
- score high in dogmatism (a sturdy relationship)
- oppose a law requiring affirmative action in state hiring that would give priority to qualified minorities until they "caught up" (a sturdy relationship)
- favor a law giving police much less restrictive wiretap, search-and-seizure, and interrogation rules (a strong relationship)
- favor a law outlawing the Communist Party "and other radical political organizations" (a strong relationship)
- oppose the Equal Rights Amendment (a strong relationship)
- favor placing greater restrictions on abortion than "Roe versus Wade" (a strong relationship)
- favor a law restricting anti-war protests to certain sizes, times, and places--generally away from public view--while American troops are fighting overseas (a very strong relationship)
- have a "We were the good guys, the Soviets were the bad guys" view of the Cold War (a very strong relationship)
- oppose a law extending equal rights to homosexuals in housing and employment (a very strong relationship)

If you have read the preceding chapters, or been paying attention to what's going on in your state capitol lately, none of this will astound you. What surprised me was how strong the relationships usually were. The RWA scale can predict what many lawmakers want to do about a wide variety of important issues.

Because they harbor so many authoritarian sentiments, Republican legislators naturally differed from Democrats overall on the matters above. But the differences were sharpest when you compared high RWA versus low RWA lawmakers, whatever their party affiliation. Many high RWA Democrats, and some low RWA Republicans appeared in these samples. The problem, as I see it, does not arise from Republicans per se but from the right-wing authoritarians on both sides of the aisle. But the data make it quite clear that when you see a bunch of Republican lawmakers huddling, you're probably looking at mainly high RWAs, whereas when (non-southern) Democrats cluster, they're probably a pretty *unauthoritarian* lot overall.

### *Double Highs in the Legislatures?*

I noted in chapter 3 that designing despots will usually slither over to the political right, not just because their hearts and minds lead them there, but because that's where the "easy sell" high RWAs congregate, wanting to play follow-the-leader. It's the easiest place to pick up a loyal following cheap, especially if you're a Double High. Therefore, were the high RWA state legislators in these studies not just high RWAs, but usually *Double Highs*? Were they social dominators as well?

Nothing would clarify that as quickly as scores on the Social Dominance scale. But, as mentioned earlier, the test had not been invented back then. However I did ask all the state lawmakers in Georgia, Indiana, Massachusetts, and New Mexico to rank nine values, such as Happiness, National Security, and A World at Peace. I included in the list two of the core values of democracy, Freedom and Equality. Almost everyone ranked freedom first, but no such consensus existed about equality. Low RWA lawmakers ranked it third on their list, on the average, while the high RWAs ranked it seventh out of nine. Recalling that we identify social dominators by their disdain for equality, most of the high RWAs in this study thus appear to be high social dominators as well--which makes them *Double Highs*.

This makes sense, doesn't it? Authoritarian *followers* probably don't run for public office very often. So ordinary high RWAs are not at all likely to become lawmakers, unless they are hand-picked for the role of Unquestioning Party Supporters by powerful leaders to run in safe, "yellow dog" districts. Thus when you find someone in a legislature who scores highly on the RWA scale, it figures that he's probably a *Double High*, as this study indicates.

*Authoritarian Lawmakers and Freedom.* Before moving on, let's consider that top ranking of freedom. You hear authoritarian leaders talk all the time about defending freedom, preserving freedom, exporting freedom and (somebody else) dying for freedom. They wear American flag pins in their lapels and give solemn renditions of the Pledge of Allegiance and the Star Spangled Banner. They may truly believe that they are the real, deep-down, freedom-fighter patriots.

I'm not so sure. Their vision of America seems quite different from that of Washington, Franklin, Jefferson, and most of the other framers of the Constitution. Despite their pronouncements about freedom-this and freedom-that, high RWA lawmakers would like to pass laws that restrict freedom of the press, the right to protest, the right to privacy, the right to belong to the political organization of one's choice, and they certainly would trample all over freedom of religion once they made the teaching of Christianity compulsory in public schools.

Such laws would hopefully be struck down as unconstitutional by the courts. But if a Supreme Court was assembled that opened the door to the destruction of the Bill of Rights--which could be just one justice away now--do you think authoritarian lawmakers would feign rushing through it? If so, let me tell you that you just won \$10,000,000 in a lottery you didn't even enter, but there are some administrative expenses you need to pay me first. And I just inherited \$30,000,000 from a rich uncle, and if you just send me \$3,000 to cover my legal fees, I'll give you \$3,000,000 in return! Oh boy!

*Stomp Out the Rot.* One last thing: an item on the RWA scale that I used in these legislator studies goes, “Once our government leaders and the authorities condemn the dangerous elements in our society, it will be the duty of every patriotic citizen to help stomp out the rot that is poisoning our country from within.” It’s a ridiculous statement, isn’t it? People usually laugh when I read it out loud to an audience. It sounds like it came out of some Nazi Cheer Book. And a solid majority of the legislators who wrote the laws in American states when I did these studies rejected it. But 26 percent of the 1,233 lawmakers in my samples *agreed* with this. That’s already half-way to a majority. And in terms of later developments, I’ll point out that these studies were all done before 1994.

### *Canadian Legislators*

The Canadian political system, you’ll be thrilled to learn, is more complicated than the two-party American arrangement. Federally, the “left” is anchored by the socialist-rooted New Democratic Party. It sticks by its guns, gathers its 12 to 20 percent of the votes each election, and dreams of the day when it will hold the balance of power in the House of Commons.

Next you have the Liberals, who too have a guiding principle by which they unflinchingly abide: getting themselves elected. Sometimes they act like liberals but they will also be conservatives if that will get them a majority government. Since they usually succeed, they attract a lot of the wrong sort of people: viz., politicians, and contributors looking to make a million or ten “on the side.”

When the Canadian electorate can’t abide the Liberals any more, they vote in the Conservatives, who have been Canada’s mainstream conservative party since confederation in 1867, when they were called the Conservatives. (Huh? Well you see, they changed their name to “Progressive Conservatives” for a while, but that party no longer exists, at least for the time being.)

Then you have the Far Right Party from Alberta, the province whose Bible belt and oil reserves remind some people of Texas. This party sticks to its guns too, but not its names. It has used a million different titles in the past thirty years as it keeps reinventing itself. Most recently it called itself the Alliance Party and it allied with the Progressive Conservative Party to become the Conservative Party. (Isn't this fun?) At the time of this writing the latest wave of Liberal corruption has enabled the Conservatives to form a minority government in Ottawa.

Finally there is a Quebec separatist party, the Bloc Quebecois, which the cunning voters of Quebec send to Parliament in sufficient numbers each election to scare the hell out of the rest of the country. You don't want to know about all the different provincial parties, believe me. And now the Green Party's in the game too.

In a *two*-party system each party contains various factions. You have right-wing Democrats in the United States and left-wing Democrats, right-wing Republicans and the left-wing Republicans who have not been burned at the stake yet by the right-wing Republicans. However both parties, for all their factions, have to capture the "political middle" to win an election. But in a three-, four-, or five-party system the factions usually form their own parties, so in Canada only the Liberals have any sort of wingspan. That means most of the parties do stand for something distinctly different from each other, at least between elections. And that means you can put the RWA scale to a stiffer test in Canada than you can in the United States, because there's more to predict. Will it reflect the more distinct points of view of Canada's spread-out political parties?

Between 1983 and 1994 I sent the RWA scale to the legislative assemblies of most of Canada's provinces, and to the members of the federal House of Commons who represented the western provinces of Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta and British Columbia. (That was the only region in the country that had any diversity in its elected federal representatives at the time of the study; almost all the other

Anglophone Members of Parliament were Liberals.) Altogether I received completed surveys from fifty-six members of the New Democratic Party, sixty-seven Liberals, and seventy-eight conservatives. The average RWA scores for the left-wing and right-wing caucuses are presented in Figure 5.2, with the wide-ranging Liberals tabulated on the side.

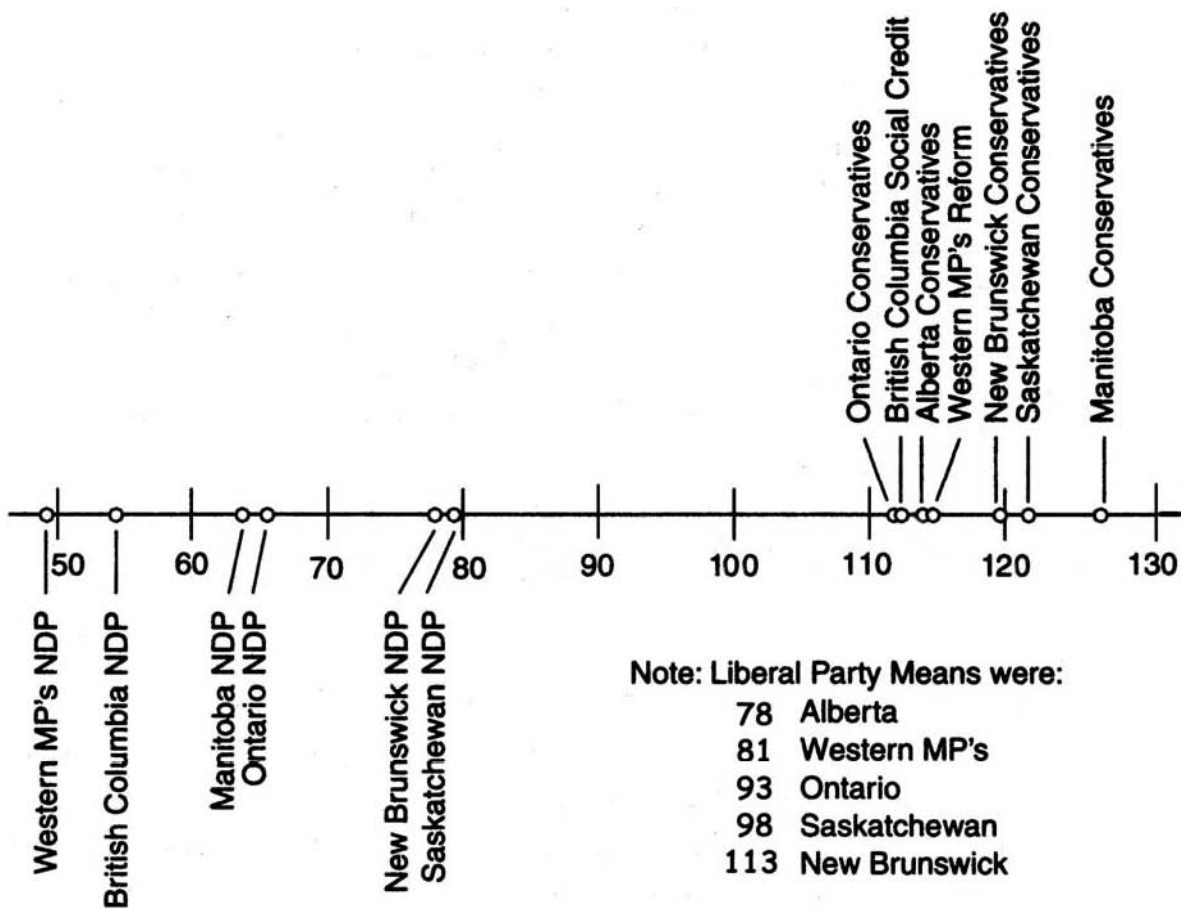
You can see that the conservatives' scores nestle very comfortably into the Republican Country staked out in Figure 5.1. The politicians in the right-wing parties seem to be cut from much the same authoritarian cloth in both countries. But the New Democrats set camp to the left of the American Democrats in Figure 5.1--even to the left of the Democrats' left-wing. A large chasm yawns in Canada between the New Democrats and the conservatives, a gap the Liberals are happy to cover with a wing and a prayer, as you can see, by flying hither and yon.

If you look at just the New Democrats' and the conservatives' scores on the RWA scale, party affiliation correlates .82 on the average with authoritarianism, which is one of the strongest relationships ever found in the social sciences.<sup>4</sup> The RWA scale divides these two groups almost as cleanly as a vote in the legislature would.

Nothing else, so far as I know, correlates so highly with left-wing versus right-wing politics, anywhere. In Canada at least, when you are talking about the "left-to-right" political dimension among politicians, you are talking about the personality trait measured by the RWA scale. At least until something sharper comes along. This might be true in the United States as well, but it doesn't show up nearly as crisply in terms of party affiliation mainly because the Democrats have a lot of high RWAs in some of their caucuses, particularly in the South.

Figure 5.2

## Average RWA Scale Scores of Canadian Legislators



Note: Scores have been re-scaled from a 30-item basis to a 20-item basis.

As was true with the American legislatures, I tacked on some items measuring other things besides right-wing authoritarianism in my last two Canadian studies, done in 1994 with the Alberta Legislature and the Members of Parliament. In Alberta, RWA scale scores had a moderate connection with having a conservative economic philosophy. In the House of Commons, authoritarianism was strongly correlated with racial and ethnic prejudice. As you would predict from the findings above, politicians from right-wing parties had the most conservative economic outlooks, and proved the most prejudiced.

I also was able to include, thanks to Felicia Pratto, some Social Dominance items in the survey I sent to the Alberta legislature and the House of Commons. The average correlation between RWA scores and answers to these items equaled .54 and confirms the presence of a lot of Double Highs in those chambers. Almost all of them belonged to the conservative party in those assemblies. In Canada as well as in the United States then, when you're talking about "conservative" members of legislatures, the data we have so far indicate you're usually talking about those fine power-hungry, amoral, manipulative, deceitful, highly prejudiced, dogmatic folks we met at the end of chapter 5, the Double Highs.

### *Religious Conservatives and the Republican Party*

These legislator studies are now more than a decade old, and any politician who did not like the results could argue "Things have changed a lot since then." And things probably have changed. There are probably a lot *more* Double Highs in American legislatures now than there were in the early 1990s. Probably more than 26% of the lawmakers in the United States would agree with that "Nazi Cheer Book" item today. In many states, the Double Highs and their minions appear to have formed the majority, and as we noted in chapter 5, have sometimes set about reducing the opposition to permanent impotence through unprecedented levels of gerrymandering, not to mention voter fraud.

For much of its history conservative American Christianity stayed out of politics. Politics was seen as corrupting and the abiding principle was to be “in this world, but not of it.” Even the rise of the evangelical movement under Billy Graham, beginning in the 1950s, was nonpolitical. But in 1969 a young political analyst with considerable foresight in the Nixon administration, Kevin Phillips, published *The Emerging Republican Majority* in which he identified various developments in the country that he believed would create a boon for Republican candidates for decades to come.

Phillips said the new GOP coalition would include increased numbers of both Catholic and Protestant conservatives, and he says today, “This troubled me not at all.”<sup>5</sup> It was just part of the coalescing “mix.” Now he is greatly troubled because--as he explains in his 2006 book, *American Theocracy*--religious conservatives have taken control of the Republican Party, turning it into the first religious party in U.S. history and endangering everyone else’s rights, the future of the country, and that of the world.<sup>6</sup> How did this happen?

With astonishing speed. To give just the highlights, in the late 1970s a group of conservative political organizers persuaded Jerry Falwell to lead the Moral Majority, which found Ronald Reagan much more to its liking in 1980 than the Baptist (but moderately liberal) Jimmy Carter. As Reagan’s second term drew to a close in 1988 the highly successful Christian broadcaster, Pat Robertson, marshaled his followers in a bid to become the Republican presidential nominee. But George Bush (the first one) countered by making special appeals to conservative Christians, especially Southern Baptists who did not like Robertson’s Pentecostal practices, and Bush won the nomination.

At the 1988 Republican convention Robertson urged his supporters to work for Bush. But he then used remnants of his campaign apparatus to found the Christian Coalition in 1989, whose purpose was to get conservative Christians of all

denominations involved in a voter mobilization movement. He knew an intense effort could pay big dividends, as he wrote in *The New Millennium* in 1990, “With the apathy that exists today, a small, well-organized minority can influence the selection of (political) candidates to an astonishing degree.” Two years later he wrote in *The New World Order*, “The Christian Coalition is launching an effort in selected states to become acquainted with registered voters in every precinct. This is slow, hard work. But it will build a significant database to use to communicate with those people who are regular voters. When they are mobilized in support of vital issues, elected officials listen.”

The Christian Coalition, composed of thousands of members burning with zeal, began distributing hundreds of thousands of bulletins *in churches* to help elect approved candidates. At the same time conservative Christians began taking control of state Republican organizations, by joining the party and showing up for meetings, from the precinct-level up, so that eventually *they* decided who would run for the state legislature, for governor, and for the Congress. Kevin Phillips notes, “By the end of the 1990s more than half of the fifty Republican state committees had been taken over by the religious right at least once.”<sup>7</sup>

In 1994 the hard-working religious conservatives played a pivotal role in electing a GOP majority in the House of Representatives. By 2000 they were able to make one of their own, George W. Bush, the Republican nominee for president, and the expanding ranks of the Christian Coalition distributed over *70 million* voter guides in Catholic as well as Protestant churches, and elsewhere across the country. This effort enabled Bush to come close to Al Gore’s popular vote totals, and ultimately to win the electoral college vote after the Supreme Court ruled in the Republican Party’s favor in Florida. Everyone knows Bush would have lost his re-election bid in 2004 without the support of tens of thousands of devoted workers recruited by his chief campaign strategist, Karl Rove, through their churches.

By most estimates the religious right constitutes about 40 percent of Republican supporters nationwide, which means that most of the people who vote Republican do *not* belong to the movement. But that 60 percent has almost no say in what the party does, because the 40 percent constitutes by far the largest *organized* block of voters in the party, and in the country.

How organized are they? After their leaders have decided who will run on the Republican ticket in an election, religious fundamentalists donate money, work the phones for hours on end, canvass night and day, bring the candidate to their social groups, talk to their neighbors, and drop leaflets over and over again to win the race. After all, proselytizing is one of the things they do best, and politics is now directly connected to their religion. In fact political “education” and “guidance” come directly from the pulpit in many churches now.

Authoritarian followers will thus do everything humanly possible to “get out their vote” and send more of “their kind” of people to the school board, state legislature, the statehouse, Congress and the White House. Unfortunately, “their kind” of candidates will usually be Double Highs--about the last people you would want in positions of power in a democracy.

The leadership of the religious right--a mixture of established politicians, prominent religious figures, and behind-the-scenes organizers--can firmly control a legislator it helped elect--even if most of the lawmaker’s votes came from non-fundamentalists. The legislator realizes that if the power brokers pull the plug on him and put someone else up for the next election, he’ll likely be out of a job.

The religious right can also put a lot of pressure on those it did not help elect. It can bury a “swing-vote” senator or a representative with letters, emails, telegrams and petitions in a flash. As Ted Haggard, the soon-to-be-disgraced president of the National Association of Evangelicals says on Alexandra Pelosi’s documentary film,

*Friends of God*, “We can crash the Capitol switchboard system. That’s power.” Fundamentalist organizers thus will try to carry almost any contentious issue by storm today, if they have to, from whether to keep Terri Schiavo on life support to the next nomination to the Supreme Court. <sup>8,9</sup>

### *The 2006 Mid-Term Election*

But didn’t the Religious Right abandon the Republican party in the November 2006 mid-term election? And didn’t the rest of the country firmly repudiate the Republicans too?

You may have seen headlines to this effect, but some ugly facts say otherwise. In the 2004 federal election, when the Religious Right made an all-out effort to re-elect George Bush and support Republican candidates, the big “exit poll” study done by a consortium of major news organizations found that 74% of white evangelicals voted for the Republican candidate for the House of Representatives in their district. (It was, far and away, the biggest demographic advantage the GOP had in the election.) In the 2006 mid-term election, the figure dropped, but only to 70%, and white evangelicals again provided the Republicans their most solid, unswerving base of support. Despite all the moral scandals and unfulfilled “value” promises, the high RWAs turned out in goodly numbers--especially given that it was a mid-term election--and staunchly voted Republican.

Let’s zoom back and look at the electorate as a whole. As voters went to the polls in November 2006 the war in Iraq was clearly becoming unwinnable, one corruption scandal after another had rocked Republicans in the Congress,<sup>10</sup> the national debt was shooting out of sight, the Bush administrations’ use of domestic spying in violation of the Constitution had been well-documented, as had its systematic program of torturing people it suspected of terrorism, evidence was piling up that the Republicans had stolen the 2004 presidential election through voter fraud

and dirty tricks in Ohio, the economy was slowing down, “Robocall” was hammering away at the phone lines, and the final two nails, named Representative Mark Foley and the Reverend Ted Haggard, had just been nailed into the GOP coffin.

With all that happening, only 40% of the eligible voters went to the polls, and 45% of them voted Republican. If the war in Iraq had just taken a few more months to become transparently disastrous, or if there had been just one or two fewer scandals in the last weeks of the campaign, America would still have a monolithic federal government controlled by a pack of Double Highs. Maybe you take some comfort from November 7, 2006. I think the bullet just missed us.

#### *A Bit of Modest Speculation*

One of the easiest mistakes to make when judging a threatening movement is to perceive it as being more unified and monolithic than it really is. So let’s do a little speculating here. Let’s suppose the Religious Right gains long-term control of the executive, legislative and judiciary branches of the federal government and accomplishes its common agenda. Which is, for starters, to outlaw all abortions, outlaw homosexuality, stomp out feminism, make female subjugation to males the law of the land, keep holy wars going, especially in the Middle East, using nuclear weapons as needed, withdraw from the United Nations, smack the hell out of France and any other country that isn’t automatically on America’s side, censor virtually every movie, television program, magazine, newspaper and the internet in any way possible, install the teaching of Christian fundamentalism in public schools, forbid the teaching of evolution, make scientific judgments on the basis of conservative Christian ideology, and so on--complete with the death penalty for various violators, possibly by public stoning. (I hope you don’t think I’m making this all up. Google “Religious Right Agenda,” “Christian Reconstructionists,” and “Dominionists.”)

Would the victors then all clap each other on the back and live happily ever after in Taliban America? Maybe they would. But recalling what we know about the dominance drives and prejudices of Double Highs, wouldn't a subsequent Catholic versus Protestant struggle for control be just as likely? Coalitions last only as long as the common enemy does, and few things provoke animosity the way religious differences do among the very religious. And if the Protestants subdued the Catholics, would that be the end of religious warfare, or the beginning of the next round? After all, Baptists and Pentecostals don't really like each other all that much.

Well of course this is all wild-eyed speculation, isn't it, and we're talking about things that may have occurred elsewhere, but are absolutely unprecedented in American history. So there is little reason to think this would indeed happen. OK, I hear you. Now tell me why all of this will *not* happen.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> But not so in Canada, where about 60 percent of the Manitoba parents in my samples who support the conservative political party are either high RWAs or high social dominators (or both). But the multi-party Canadian political system, we shall see, tends to line people up more by their political ideology than the two-party American system does. [Back to Chapter](#)

<sup>2</sup> In McWilliams and Keil's 2005 nationwide survey of American adults, mentioned in Chapter 1, the 406 Democrats averaged 76.9 on the RWA scale, and the 393 Republicans, 104.2, following conversion from a -3 to +3 response scale to the -4 to +4 format. An appreciably bigger difference appeared in terms of respondents' self-

classification as liberals or conservatives. The 275 persons who called themselves liberals averaged 61.8, while the 356 self-described conservatives had a mean of 111.1. The Democratic vs. Republican RWA scale correlation was .34. [Back to Chapter](#)

<sup>3</sup> The Democratic vs. Republican RWA scale correlation in the American legislatures was .44. [Back to Chapter](#)

<sup>4</sup> This is only the beginning. One of the things a researcher looks at when using a survey such as the RWA scale, as explained in note 3 of chapter 1, is how well responses to each item go along with the responses to all the other items on the scale. The politicians I studied, both in the United States and Canada, showed an incredible amount of inter-item agreement on the RWA scale. The “alpha coefficient” of internal consistency in these responses was .95 in the United States and .94 in Canada. Most researchers have never seen values that high, anywhere, with anything. The only thing I know that beats it is the internal consistency of a scale Tim Fullerton and I developed based on the Nicene Creed that measures Christian orthodoxy, and there one is measuring an ideology that people were taught and frequently memorized.

But in this case the RWA scale uncovered an ideology almost as strong as a religion among North American legislators--one I am sure no one ever taught them, one they certainly did not have to memorize, but one almost as tightly interconnected as a religious creed. [Back to Chapter](#)

<sup>5</sup> Phillips, K. *American Theocracy*, 2006, New York: Viking, p. xiii. [Back to Chapter](#)

<sup>6</sup> Phillips, K. *American Theocracy*, 2006, New York: Viking, p. 188. [Back to Chapter](#)

<sup>7</sup> If anyone ought to be interested in understanding authoritarianism, it's the mainstream conservatives who used to form and control the Republican Party. They have seen their political party hijacked by the most radical element in their party, and it's anybody's guess whether they can get it back. The takeover has been so complete that many people have forgotten what “conservative” meant before it became

“authoritarian.” I don’t look forward to “conservative” becoming a dirty word the way “liberal” did. Until we find someone who’s always right, democracy needs both traditional and progressive voices to choose from. But the principled conservative options have been badly tarred lately by authoritarianism.

I can’t imagine Senator Barry Goldwater agreeing with, “Our country desperately needs a mighty leader who will do what has to be done to destroy the radical new ways and sinfulness that are ruining us.” As John Dean points out, Goldwater was quite apprehensive about what the “cultural conservatives” would do to the Grand Old Party. “Mark my word,” the former senator said after the 1994 mid-term election, “if and when these preachers get control of the party, and they’re sure trying to do so, it’s going to be a terrible damn problem. Frankly, these people frighten me.” (*Conservatives Without Conscience*, p. xxxiv.)

And yet, if you go through the “Comments” that have been posted so far on this book's website, there's little evidence that conservatives are reading a book that might help them understand who the hi-jackers are and why they have been so successful. And that, I believe, is most unfortunate. [Back to Chapter](#)

<sup>8</sup> Want to play the “Guess Who?” game again. This chapter’s mystery guest sought the Republican nomination for president and told Americans he had been a combat Marine in Korea and been awarded three battle stars there. But those who knew him then, including Republican Congressman Paul McCloskey, Jr., said “X” had done nothing of the kind. Instead “X” had always been stationed far out of harm’s way because his father, a U.S. Senator, pulled some strings. “X” instead was known as the “liquor procurement officer” in his outfit, and he never came within miles of a shot fired in anger. (“X” sued McCloskey for saying this, but then dropped the suit and agreed to pay McCloskey’s court costs.)

After returning from the Far East, “X” got a law degree from Yale but could not pass the bar exam--which must have thrilled his former profs no end. He converted

to the Pentecostal movement at this crossroad in his life and moved into religious broadcasting. He proved to be a shrewd businessman, accumulating a large network of stations around the world and considerable wealth.

Beginning in 1985 “X” claimed God had moved hurricanes away from his neck of the Virginia woods in answer to his particular prayers. He also wrote that, if Americans didn’t watch out, the United Nations would disarm the country, and the rest of the world would take over the United States. Like many fundamentalists he welcomed the Gulf War, viewing it as one of the signs that the “End Days” were nigh and the Kingdom of God was at hand. But the “Rapture” did not occur. Then he said the events of 9/11 were God’s punishment of the United States for its immoral behavior--leaving unexplained why, if this was the point the Almighty wished to make, such a traumatic disaster did not occur during President Clinton’s presidency instead. "X" went on to declare Islam "satanic."

“X” has railed against hypocrisy on many occasions. Yet in 1994 when he was making emotional appeals on his television program for donations to fund Operation Blessing, which he said would transport refugees from Rwanda, it turned out the money was mainly used to transport diamond mining equipment for a company he owned in Zaire. Caught owning a race horse, when many evangelicals disapprove of gambling, he explained that he bought it simply because he liked to look at it. Like Oral Roberts, he preached faith healing to others, but got himself to a hospital quickly when he was diagnosed with prostate cancer in 2003.

Every few months “X” makes an outrageous statement that he later apologizes for, claims was misinterpreted, or doggedly sticks to with mind-bending elaborations and rationalizations. In August 2005 he opined that the CIA ought to assassinate Venezuela’s president. In January 2006 he suggested God had smote the prime minister of Israel with a stroke because his government had withdrawn its troops from the Gaza Strip. In May 2006 he said that God had told him that storms will hit

America's coastlines, including "possibly" a tsunami in the Pacific northwest. Later in May he announced that, thanks to the "age-defying protein shake" he hawks on his evangelistic TV show, he had leg pressed 2,000 pounds at age 73—about a thousand pounds more than the strongest football players can do in their prime. In January 2007 he told his enormous and faithful television audience that God had warned him that a terrorist attack on the United States would cause a mass killing late in 2007. "Something like a nuclear attack." (If "X" is God's prophet, why doesn't the Almighty give him more specific information so we can see a real honest-to-God prediction confirmed? Why does God play "I know something you don't know" through "X"?)

Because of "X's" several scandals and many outrageous declarations, some observers think his influence among conservative Christians is waning. But the money keeps pouring in from his devoted followers. [As the scandal-plagued faith-healer Aimee Semple McPherson said decades ago, "If the papers tomorrow morning proved that I had committed eleven murders, (my followers) would still believe me."]

Who is "X"? Oh heck, everybody knows that this, believe it or not, is *the* person most responsible for the formation of the Religious Right. Look to you like a Double High? [Back to Chapter](#)

<sup>9</sup> A telling example of how the piper must be paid when it comes to the Religious Right appeared on May 13, 2006 when Senator John McCain accepted an honorary degree and delivered the commencement address at the late Jerry Falwell's Liberty University in Lynchburg, Virginia. During his 2000 campaign to become the GOP nominee for president, McCain had called Jerry Falwell an "agent of intolerance" and said Falwell and Pat Robertson had an "evil influence" in the Republican Party. But McCain is given no chance to become the Republican nominee in 2008 without the support of the Christian Right.

When asked about his appearance at Liberty University the next day on “Meet the Press,” Senator McCain said, “I believe that the ‘Christian Right’ has a major role to play in the Republican Party. One reason is because they’re so active and their followers are. And I believe they have a right to be a part of our party. I don’t have to agree with everything they stand for, nor do I have to agree with everything that’s on the liberal side of the Republican Party.” [Back to Chapter](#)

<sup>10</sup> On September 20, 2006 an independent Congressional-watch organization called Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington released its second annual “Most Corrupt Members of Congress Report.” Three senators and seventeen members of the House were named, most of them hold-overs from the first annual report (although the news release noted with some glee that two of the previous winners were already on their way to jail).

I found it instructive to look up the ratings these 20 lawmakers' voting records received from the Family Research Council, the successor to the Christian Coalition as the major lobbying organization for the Religious Right. The average was 80%. Eight of the “most corrupt” had perfect 100% endorsements from the Family Research Council. The lowest score was a 64% posted by the Democratic Representative Alan Mollohan from West Virginia. (Seventeen of the twenty “most corrupt” were Republicans.)

To be sure, many other lawmakers who got high scores from the Family Research Council did not get named as most corrupt. But I think I read somewhere that there’s this interesting connection between being a lying, dishonest, amoral manipulator and becoming a leader of right-wing political/religious movements.

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