A Rhetorical Analysis of the Political Preaching of the Reverend Jerry Falwell: the Moral Majority Sermons, 1979 (Electric Church, Demagogue).

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A RHETORICAL ANALYSIS OF THE POLITICAL PREACHING OF THE
REVEREND JERRY FALWELL: THE MORAL MAJORITY SERMONS, 1979

The Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical Col. PH.D. 1985

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A Dissertation

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in

The Department of Speech Communication

by

Vernon O. Ray
B.A., Harding University, 1975
M.A., Harding Graduate School, 1978
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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to analyze the speech practices and rhetorical strategies of the Reverend Jerry Falwell and to determine whether he was an effective public speaker. Falwell has risen in recent years from near obscurity as a Baptist pastor in Lynchburg, Virginia, to national celebrity as the founder and President of Moral Majority, Inc., the front-line political action organization of the new Religious Right. Limited to an analysis of his political preaching the study specifically discusses 1) Falwell's background and speaker preparation, 2) the historical setting surrounding the recent resurgence of Fundamentalism and its political involvement, 3) Falwell's audiences and occasions, 4) his use of evidence and lines of argument, 5) his style and delivery, and 6) his effectiveness.

The study is based on a series of sermons delivered on five consecutive Sundays beginning July 1, 1979. Each sermon announced the formation of a new political action group, Moral Majority, Inc., and contained lengthy appeals promoting membership in the new organization. Original transcriptions of these speeches were used in this study.
For the first thirty-five years of his life Falwell was a separatist. He viewed involvement in social or political movements as secular and improper distractions for a man of God. The Supreme Court decision in Roe v. Wade which legalized abortion brought Falwell out of spiritual separatism and into the political arena. His nationally syndicated television program, "The Old-Time Gospel Hour," has provided him media visibility and enabled him to coalesce a substantial and financially supportive national audience.

Falwell's audiences were primarily blue-collar, middle and lower-middle class, and both religiously and politically conservative. They were sympathetic to Falwell's views, and considered his attacks on secular humanism and liberal politics to be biblically based. Consequently, Falwell spent more time asserting his conclusions than he did justifying them.

Falwell relied heavily upon emotional appeals in his sermons. He gave heaviest treatment to those appeals classified as fear appeals. In addition, he employed logical proof in his sermons, but his sources of evidence were few. He relied heavily upon the Bible as an evidential source and as an absolute authority. He often employed quantitative supporting materials, but rarely substantiated them. His reasoning, almost without exception, was cast in syllogistic terms.
Falwell employed several rhetorical strategies, including that of the rhetorical demagogue. He employed this demagogic strategy by 1) intensifying a popular crisis psychology, namely that America is on a disastrous downhill trend, 2) defining the cause of the crisis as a single abstract evil, namely secular humanism, and 3) providing an equally simple escape from the crisis, a new faith, a new belief, with himself at the helm, namely Moral Majority, Inc.

This study reveals that Falwell's speeches were effective in mobilizing millions of his auditors to become members of the Moral Majority, Inc. Although some of his rhetorical strategies were questionable, his motivation appeared to be wholesome concern for America and her future.

It is doubtful that anyone would use the word eloquent to describe the preaching of Jerry Falwell. The sermons studied indicated a distinct preference for the simple and clear statement as opposed to erudite expression. However, if one can accept Emerson's assertion that the eloquent man is he who "is inwardly drunk with a certain belief," then Jerry Falwell, local preacher turned political activist, must be ranked among the most eloquent.
Chapter I
INTRODUCTION

There can be little disagreement with the statement that, during the past decade, the Reverend Jerry Falwell has become one of America's best known and most influential preachers.¹ Due primarily to his television program, "The Old-Time Gospel Hour," which is broadcast weekly over 392 television stations with an estimated viewing audience of eighteen to twenty million people,² Falwell is a household word and an international celebrity.³


² Telephone interview with Don Norman, Executive Producer of "The Old-Time Gospel Hour," Lynchburg, Virginia, 6 April 1982. No program, secular or religious, is carried on more North American television outlets than "The Old-Time Gospel Hour."

From his headquarters at the Thomas Road Baptist Church in Lynchburg, Virginia, which has 21,000 baptized members (one third of the total population of the city), Falwell serves as both Pastor and Chief Administrator of a large and diverse evangelical empire which has 2,100 employees and an annual budget of 100 million dollars. Falwell's empire consists of a Christian day-care center, a Christian academy (Kindergarten through twelfth grade), an accredited liberal arts college and graduate-level seminary, with a combined enrollment of more than 6,000 students; a 36 acre summer camp, Treasure Island, which provides a summer retreat for 6,500 inner-city children, free of charge; a working farm which serves as a treatment center for recovering alcoholics; and a Save-A-Baby Center, which has provided counseling, care and all expenses for 14,000 unwed mothers and their babies since 1982. Perhaps most important of all, however, Falwell's empire includes Moral Majority, a political action group comprised of 6.5 million Protestants, Catholics, and Jews, including 102,000 ministers, priests, rabbis, and Christian school administrators. Moral Majority has chapters in all fifty states and became a very

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Falwell currently ranks number one in fundraising among television evangelists with an annual budget of 80 million dollars, exclusive of the local ministries of the Thomas Road Baptist Church, which are self-supporting. More than 500,000 viewers of "The Old-Time Gospel Hour" contribute on a regular, monthly basis as they watch Falwell in his diverse roles as preacher, educator, administrator, theologian, and, though often disclaimed by Falwell himself, a political patriarch of stature and influence.

Above all, however, Falwell is a preacher, a public speaker. From the beginning of his professional career in 1956 until the present, Falwell's greatest forum, religious or political, has been afforded him in the pulpit. By the study of this preacher, his sermons, audiences and occasions, along with the known effect of his sermons, an attempt will be made to assess critically the effectiveness of Jerry Falwell as a public speaker.
Statement of the Problem

Although Falwell has been highly visible in the public arena during the past decade, particularly when he led the religio-political show of strength by the New Religious Right\textsuperscript{7} in the national elections of 1980 and 1984, and although he has been the subject of much writing and reporting (especially political), still this writer cannot find any reference to a systematic and thorough study of Jerry Falwell as a public speaker. Since Falwell's greatest influence has been as a preacher, a public speaker, this study seeks to determine the kind of public speaker Falwell was and is, and to assess his effectiveness as a speaker. Specifically, the dissertation examines a distinct portion of Falwell's preaching, which can best be called, perhaps, political preaching. The focus upon this type of preaching is fitting because it is so representative of Falwell's overall rhetorical style and is one of the primary reasons for his rise to popularity and power during

the past few years.\(^8\)

One part of Falwell's political preaching has been selected for detailed rhetorical analysis. On Sunday, July 1, 1979, Jerry Falwell began a series of five sermons which combined his peculiar brand of theology, patriotism, and politics. During the first sermon he announced publicly, for the first time, the formation of a political action group called Moral Majority.\(^9\) By the end of the series, five weeks later, Moral Majority, Inc., was a reality and Jerry Falwell had catapulted himself to national attention as the self-ordained leader of a very potent, though altogether new, political coalition: the New Religious Right.\(^10\) The sermons Falwell preached during this series were entitled:

1. America and Work
2. America and Government
3. America and the Family
4. America and the Local Church
5. America and Education.

These speeches will receive the major emphasis in the

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\(^8\) Since the conservative political stance taken by Falwell in those sermons reflected the conservative swing taking place in the American electorate. See *New Christian Politics*, pp. 98, 99.

\(^9\) The announcement, along with an appeal to become members of Moral Majority, was repeated in each of the four subsequent sermons.

\(^10\) Also referred to at times in this paper as the New Christian Right. See Bromley and Shupe, p. 58.
dissertation. The texts of the sermons used in this study were original transcriptions.

Contributory Studies

So far as this writer can ascertain, there has never been a thorough rhetorical study of Falwell as a speaker. Dissertation Abstracts lists only one dissertation involving Falwell, "A Descriptive Analysis of the Syndicated Religious Television Programs of Jerry Falwell, Rex Humbard, and Oral Roberts," by Mark Lewis Lloyd, 1980. Within the abstract however, Lloyd mentions the fact that "... this study is not a rhetorical analysis or an evaluation of psychological implications."\(^{11}\) Popular articles about Falwell of a semi-critical nature are to be found in abundance, but none is written from a rhetorical perspective.

Perhaps jaded at times, but of biographical value, are the two authorized works which furnish data about Falwell's life and ministry: Aflame For God by Gerald Strober and Ruth Tomczak, and Jerry Falwell: Man of Vision by Patricia Pingry. Of particular interest is Falwell's own work, Listen, America!, a religio-political manifesto with an autobiographical emphasis. Jerry Falwell and the Jews by Merrill Simon provides valuable insight into the development of Falwell's religious and political philosophy. Although

\(^{11}\) Vol. 41, November 1980, p. 1822-A.
few in number and limited in scope, these books, along with the multitudinous articles on Falwell and his activities found in popular periodicals and newspapers, as well as both telephone and personal interviews of Falwell and his staff by this writer, have provided valuable and diverse insight into Jerry Falwell and his speaking.

**Methodology and Plan of the Study**

This study attempts to analyze rhetorically selected sermons of the Reverend Jerry Falwell and draw conclusions about the speaker's effectiveness as a public speaker. The methodology used is that one delineated in Lester Thonssen, A. Craig Baird, and Waldo W. Braden's *Speech Criticism*. The elements of the speaking situation as listed by classical rhetoricians are described and analyzed in this dissertation: the speaker, the audience, the occasion of the speech, and the speech itself.

Historical and biographical research was of primary importance to an understanding of Falwell as a speaker, his times, and the audiences to which he spoke. Falwell's own writings in books and periodicals, as well as additional sermons he supplied the writer, were investigated in order to understand Falwell's relationship to the people.

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and events of his generation.

Heavy reliance upon articles and books by religious and political leaders was necessary to establish Falwell's influence and to measure his effectiveness with his audiences.

The treatment of Falwell and his political preaching is divided into two parts. The first part examines the speaker and his background. Chapter two contains biographical material which shows the development of Falwell as an individual and as a speaker. It includes information concerning his early childhood experiences, his formal education, his political views, and his rise to prominence via the Electric Church and Moral Majority. Chapter three deals with the socio-historical setting which both prompted and allowed Falwell's rise to power as primary spokesman for the New Religious Right. The chapter discusses Fundamentalism historically and sociologically and also examines the phenomenon of the Electric Church.

The second part focuses on the five political sermons chosen for reexamination. Chapter four analyzes the audiences to which Falwell delivered the sermons as well as the occasion on which they were delivered. Chapter five seeks to analyze Falwell's choice and use of supporting material in the speeches. Ethical, logical, and emotional modes of proof are described and examined. In chapter six Falwell's style and delivery are discussed to determine the clarity and impressiveness of his speeches. Different
stylistic devices are described and analyzed to evaluate their effectiveness. Falwell's delivery is analyzed by examining his methods of preparation and delivery as well as the physical and vocal aspects of his speaking.

Chapter seven constitutes a summary and a discussion of the writer's conclusions concerning Jerry Falwell's rhetorical style and his effectiveness as an oral communicator.
Jerry Falwell is fifty-one years old. In the past ten years he has become a national media personality. His religious and political views have gained him both admirers and detractors. Regardless of how one feels about Jerry Falwell, however, no one can afford to ignore him. A few examples of his rhetoric will suffice to show why:

If you would like to know where I am politically, I am to the right of where yer you are. I thought Goldwater was too liberal!

I'm for censorship of anything that is not fit for our children to see.

If a man stands by this book, (holding up a Bible), vote for him. If he doesn't, don't.

God has raised up America in these last days for the cause of world evangelization and for the protection of His people the Jews. I don't think America has any other right or reason for

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1 Jerry Falwell, America Can Be Saved (Lynchburg: Old Time Gospel Hour Publications, 1979), n. pag.


3 Jerry Falwell, in a speech at an "I Love America Rally," Richmond, Virginia, 13 September 1979.
existence other than those two purposes. 4

I don't know why every one of our Presidents thinks he has to wine and dine every drunk who comes over here from some other country and dances with his wife. It seems to me that if a President is a Christian, he can offer that head of state some orange juice or tomato juice, have a good minister come in and read a few verses of scripture, and if he doesn't like that, put him on the next plane home! 5

If God allows America to continue, He owes an apology to Sodom and Gomorrah. 6

Perhaps such statements could be dismissed as the typical overstatement of a zealous backwoods preacher except for the fact that the Reverend Doctor Jerry Falwell is the commonly acknowledged head of the New Religious Right and president of its front-guard, political action group, Moral Majority. A fundamentalist Baptist preacher for the past twenty-nine years, he became in the last four years a political powerbroker of stature. 7 As one political analyst


7 Jerry Strober and Ruth Tomczak, Jerry Falwell: Aflame For God (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1979), pp. 28,29. There are presently two extant, authorized biographies on Falwell, the Strober and Tomczak work cited above, and Jerry Falwell: Man of Vision by Patricia Pingy (Milwaukee: Ideals, 1980). A work dealing primarily with Falwell's evangelistic strategy, Elmer Towns and Jerry Falwell, Church Aflame (Nashville: Impact, 1971), contains one biographical
explained shortly after the 1980 election:

He may not exactly have delivered Washington to Ronald Reagan single-handed last November, but he and his Moral Majority did round up millions of votes for the victor.

Although many persons would debate Falwell's real impact in the political arena, Falwell himself is not doubting either the power of his constituency - the New Religious Right - or the leadership he maintains over it. Early in the fall of 1980, at the end of a Wednesday evening prayer meeting, Falwell told nearly 4,000 of his parishioners at the Thomas Road Baptist Church: "Senator Mike Gravel of Alaska was ousted last night. He lost the primary. And that's the beginning." Before the year was out, Falwell promised the demise of a half dozen additional liberal senators including George McGovern, Frank Church, John Culver, Birch Bayh, and Gaylord Nelson. "The Moralists in America have had enough," he proclaimed. "We are joining hands together for the changing, the rejuvenating of a nation." Falwell's predictions were fulfilled. Everyone on Falwell's "list" fell and more.

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These works, as well as a telephone interview with Don Norman, Falwell's Executive Administrative Assistant, constitute the main resources for this background chapter. Other articles and books are cited only where they offer unique material or a differing, more plausible account.


Traditionally, Fundamentalists have avoided the political bandwagon, insisting that the road to salvation is through the Bible, not the ballot box. But Falwell convinced the Silent Majority of the Nixon era that secular humanism will destroy first America's morals, then the country's families, and finally the nation itself. Although a neophyte in the political arena, Falwell has used his pulpit abilities to mobilize the once Silent Majority into the Moral Majority. Both he and his constituency are a major political force. This chapter will examine social, religious and educational factors that contributed to Falwell's development as a speaker.

**Childhood Years**

Jerry Falwell and a twin brother Gene were born in Lynchburg during the Depression, August 11, 1933. His father, Carey, was a successful businessman in Lynchburg. Carey owned "a restaurant, a trucking concern, and for a time during the thirties he operated all of the service...

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10 In the last 18 months, Falwell has appeared numerous times on such nationally syndicated programs as: "Face the Nation," "Meet the Press," Phil Donahue (eleven times to date), Tom Snyder, as well as being the cover story for both Newsweek (15 September 1980) and Christianity Today (4 September 1981), and front page coverage in The Wall Street Journal, 19 May 1978.

11 Towns, Church Aflame, p. 23. Falwell's brother Gene is neither a member of Thomas Road, nor a confessed believer.
stations in the city." Apparently a good father and provider, he had no interest in religion or the church. He died from cirrhosis of the liver when Falwell was fifteen.

Falwell's mother was a deeply religious woman who attended Sunday School each Sunday. Since her husband was not a church-goer, he would not allow his sons to be forced into going. Consequently, as teenagers Falwell and his brother seldom went to church on Sunday mornings.

For many years Mrs. Falwell would place the family radio in the boys' room on Sunday morning and tune in the "Old Fashioned Revival Hour," knowing that the boys would not turn it off. The preacher on the program was Charles E. Fuller of Long Beach, California. Falwell later confessed his fondness for the preaching style of Fuller. He felt Fuller presented his message in a sincere, kind way, but with authority. He attributes his conversion, years later, to the consistently biblical preaching of this man.

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12 Strober, Aflame For God, p. 15.

13 Pingy, Vision, p. 17,19 Largely as a result of Carey Falwell's drinking obsession, in 1959 Jerry Falwell and the Thomas Road Baptist Church began Elim Home, a 165 acre farm designed to treat alcoholics. The name was taken from the oasis the Jews came to after their flight from Egypt: "... for I am the Lord that healeth thee. And they came to Elim." (Ex. 15:26-27).

14 Strober, Aflame For God, p. 21.

15 Telephone interview with Don Norman, Executive Producer of "The Old Time Gospel Hour" and Falwell's Executive Administrative Assistant, Lynchburg, Virginia, 6 April 1982.
According to Falwell, Fuller's sermons created "a hunger so deep in me for religion" that finally at the age of eighteen he decided to attend church for the first time in his life.16

Falwell managed a respectable academic record as a student. At the advice of his teachers, he skipped the entire second grade. At seventeen he graduated from high school as valedictorian with a 98.6 average. Five years later he also graduated as valedictorian of his college class.17

**College Years**

After high school graduation in 1950, the seventeen-year-old Falwell enrolled in mechanical engineering at Lynchburg College. At the end of his first year he received the B.F. Goodrich Citation for his superior performance in mathematics, achieving the highest grade-point in the school. His plans were to transfer to Virginia Polytechnic Institute after his sophomore year, but an event occurred that prevented those plans from being realized. Falwell describes it as the "turning point" in his life.18

16 Mary Murphy, "The Next Billy Graham," *Esquire*, 10 October 1978, p. 27.
17 Murphy, p. 27.
On January 20, 1952, Falwell and his friend, Jim Moon, decided to take in the Sunday evening services at Park Avenue Baptist Church in Lynchburg. By their own admission, they were looking for pretty girls, not religion. They found both. The revival preaching that Falwell heard that evening sparked his memory of the weekly messages he had listened to, while half asleep, on Fuller's "Old Fashioned Revival Hour." At the end of the service the eighteen-year-old Falwell "gave his life to Christ." Only two months later he made the decision to make the ministry his full-time profession. Once the commitment to preach had been made, it remained only to choose the right school for proper preparation. The final choice was Baptist Bible College in Springfield, Missouri, an unaccredited church school operated by the Baptist Bible Fellowship (an association comprised of several thousand independent Baptist churches in the United States).

Falwell continued to fare well academically and eventually graduated as valedictorian of his class. Jim Moon, who accompanied Falwell to Baptist Bible College,

19 Moon is now Falwell's co-pastor at Thomas Road.

20 Strober, Aflame For God, pp. 21-23; Towns, Church Aflame, p. 26; Pingy, Vision, pp. 25-26. Falwell made his decision to enter the ministry while at the St. Louis' Cardinals try-out camp. His athletic prowess was reputed to be second only to his pulpit abilities. He was captain of his high-school football team and co-captain for two years of his college basketball team.
summarized Falwell's achievements at Springfield. According to Moon, "At BBC, Jerry rose to the top, even though there were people there who had been saved much longer. His thirst for Bible knowledge was unquenchable."21 Falwell demonstrated in his college program the determination and hard work that would characterize his subsequent ministry.

Return to Lynchburg

After his graduation from Baptist Bible College, Falwell intended to move to Macon, Georgia, to begin a new church in that community.22 But during a vacation stopover in Lynchburg, thirty-five disgruntled members of the Park Avenue Baptist Church invited him to stay and serve as pastor for a new congregation across town from Park Avenue.23 Falwell accepted their invitation, and on Sunday, July 21, 1956, he met with the thirty-five adults and their children for worship at the Mountain View Elementary School, where Falwell had attended grade school.24

Not long after, Falwell and his new flock found permanent quarters on Thomas Road in an old abandoned bottling company building.25 After several days of

22 Strober, p. 29.
23 Fitzgerald, "A Reporter at Large," New Yorker, p. 82.
24 Strober, p. 31.
25 The building is still standing and sits right in the center of the Thomas Road Baptist Church physical complex.
scrubbing to remove the cola syrup from the walls and floors, Falwell rented some folding chairs and the congregation moved in.\textsuperscript{26} The Thomas Road Baptist Church was born. By August the group had not only bought the building, but had purchased the adjacent lot along with five thousand dollars worth of building materials and were in the process of adding an educational wing to the church building.\textsuperscript{27} The Thomas Road empire had begun.

Only one week after organizing his church, Jerry Falwell launched a daily radio program. Six months later he began a television broadcast in Lynchburg.\textsuperscript{28} Both programs, though modified, continue today. Rather than being local in nature, however, they are now carried on more than 400 television stations and six hundred radio stations.\textsuperscript{29} That kind of media coverage makes Falwell's "Old Time Gospel Hour" more widely distributed and more widely viewed than the Johnny Carson Show.\textsuperscript{30}

Falwell began an intensive membership drive which utilized a technique subsequently labelled "saturation

\textsuperscript{26} Towns, Church Aflame, p. 29.
\textsuperscript{27} Pingy, p. 31.
\textsuperscript{28} Hadden, Prime Time Preachers, p. 27. The daily half-hour air-time cost for Falwell in those days was $7.00. Today, for radio time alone, Falwell pays more than $300,000 per week. Interview, Norman.
\textsuperscript{29} Interview, Norman.
\textsuperscript{30} Fitzgerald, "A Disciplined Marching Army," New Yorker, p. 54.
evangelism. He began by buying a city map and placing a large dot at the site of the church building. From that dot he drew several concentric circles. The first circle covered a ten-block radius, the second went twenty blocks, and the third reached to the outskirts of the city. Falwell personally visited every family within the first circle within a week after the church moved into its Thomas Road facility. By the end of the first year the regular attendance averaged more than three-hundred and fifty. Today the Thomas Road Baptist Church numbers more than twenty thousand members and is the second largest church in the nation.

The following is a brief summary of the accomplishments, milestones, and ministries of Falwell's Thomas Road Baptist Church in the last twenty-five years.

In 1957, for the anniversary service, 864 people were in attendance. Later that summer, work was begun on a new auditorium with a basement educational facility; it was occupied in 1958. It was only the first of four additional auditoriums that would be built to house the growing membership. In 1959 the church purchased a 165-acre farm to use as an alcohol rehabilitation center. It was named

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31 Towns, Church Aflame, pp. 43-96.
32 Strober, Aflame For God, pp. 32-33.
33 Mary Murphy, "The Next Billy Graham," Esquire, 10 October 1978, p. 28; Strober, p. 24; Fitzgerald, p. 82.
34 Telephone interview, Norman.
"Elim Home." During 1960-61, the church once again doubled in size, and by 1962, Thomas Road Baptist Church was fully supporting fourteen overseas missionaries as well as an ever-increasing broadcast ministry. Attendance continued to increase and blueprints were designed for a new building with larger seating capacity, more office space, and more classrooms.

In 1963, a new auditorium was begun, and "The Old-Time Gospel Hour" expanded its broadcasting to include stations in Richmond and in West Virginia. In addition, an island in the middle of the James River was purchased and turned into a free summer camp for thirty-five hundred inner-city children. It was called Treasure Island. By 1964 the congregation had moved into its new one thousand-seat auditorium. On opening day 1,865 people crowded in. Later during the year, Falwell revealed plans for a new structure to house more than a thousand additional Bible School students, and Lynchburg Christian Academy was begun. In 1965, the "Old-Time Gospel Hour" added an additional four stations and the two-story Spurgeon Building was opened as an additional educational facility. Attendance continued to increase during 1966 and another building project was started. Twelve months later the Brainerd Building with 56 classrooms was completed and opened. The Deaf Ministry was also begun in 1967.

In 1968, the Carter Building was constructed to accommodate more than two thousand. The "Old-Time Gospel
Hour" format was changed as the church purchased professional black and white television cameras and began taping the regular Sunday morning worship hour at Thomas Road. The Faith Partners program was started as a means of supporting the ever-broadening television ministry.

During 1969 ground was broken on Easter Sunday for a new, 3,200-seat auditorium and two additional educational buildings. Yearly income for the church surpassed one million dollars for the first time in 1970 and attendance in the new auditorium averaged over three thousand per week. The full-time staff had grown to eighty as well. Four new color cameras were purchased, and the "Old-Time Gospel Hour" moved into a more professional format.

In 1971, Thomas Road was proclaimed by Christian Life magazine to be "America's Fastest Growing Sunday School." Sunday School attendance had increased from 700 in 1967 to 6,400 in 1971. In addition, Liberty Baptist College was begun with an enrollment of 110 students. On July 24, 1972, Newsweek carried a story on Thomas Road Baptist Church as the fastest growing church in the United States. Enrollment at Liberty Baptist College had quadrupled to 484, and the number of television stations carrying the "Old-Time Gospel Hour" grew to more than two hundred.

In 1973 the Securities and Exchange Commission charged willful fraud in the sale of bonds by Thomas Road Baptist Church. A court trial took place. Falwell and his church
were exonerated from any wrongdoing, but the court appointed an independent board of five local businessmen to take charge of the church's finances until the total indebtedness of the church, the television program, and the schools had been completely eradicated (a feat which was accomplished less than three years later).  

Income for the next year, 1974, was far ahead of projections despite the SEC trial. A ministry to the mentally retarded and the handicapped was also begun. Liberty Baptist College continued to grow with an enrollment of more than twelve hundred on-campus students in the fall of 1975.

During 1976, Falwell and his "I love America" team from LBC performed in more than hundred major American cities. On July 4, more than twenty-five thousand people gathered on the newly acquired Liberty Mountain for a bi-centennial worship service. U.S. Senator Harry Byrd was the guest of honor and featured speaker.

In January of the next year, during subfreezing weather, Falwell and twenty-five hundred Liberty Baptist College faculty and students held a prayer meeting on Liberty Mountain in eight inches of snow for more than

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36 Liberty Mountain is actually Candler Mountain, a 3,500 acre parcel of land on the outskirts of Lynchburg. It is all owned outright by Thomas Road Baptist Church. It is presently the site of only Liberty Baptist College and
two hours. The purpose of the dramatic, televised prayer meeting was to ask God (and TV viewers) for $2.3 million to eradicate the remaining unsecured indebtedness of the Thomas Road Baptist Church,\(^{37}\) so that new construction work could be started on dormitory and classroom buildings for Liberty Baptist College (LBC). During February alone more than two and one half million dollars came in, all of it above and beyond normal revenues. By Christmas, two forty-eight room education buildings and twelve dormitories had been completed and paid for. Earlier, in June, LBC had been granted candidate status by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. Attendance at Thomas Road Baptist Church was averaging over seven thousand each Sunday.

At the invitation of both Anwar Sadat and Menachem Begin, Falwell made a trip to the Middle East in 1975, along with several other evangelical leaders, to communicate his ideas about a negotiated peace settlement. In addition, Falwell launched the first "Clean Up America" Campaign in national news magazines such as *Time*, *Newsweek*, and *U.S. News and World Report*. The results of the survey were sent to decision-makers and politicians all over the country.

Liberty Baptist Seminary, but someday Falwell hopes to have his entire enterprise (church, academy, counseling center, senior citizen housing development, etc.) located on the mountain.

\(^{37}\) Only three years earlier during the SEC scandal, the unsecured indebtedness had been more than sixteen million dollars.
In April of 1979, Falwell conducted an "I Love America" Rally on the steps of the Capitol in Washington, D.C. Scores of Congressional dignitaries were in attendance. The Thomas Road Baptist Church responded to the needs of thousands of "Boat People" off the coasts of Asia during 1979. The Religious Heritage of America Foundation selected Falwell as Clergyman of the Year and, perhaps most important of all, Falwell founded Moral Majority, Inc., a political activist organization.

In 1980, the Thomas Road auditorium was enlarged to a seating capacity of four thousand with four morning services each Sunday. LBC received accreditation by the Southern Association. Its enrollment neared three thousand. Falwell also published his book, *Listen America!* and became, as head of the Moral Majority and commonly acknowledged leader of the New Religious Right, a familiar and controversial figure on the national evening news during this same year. Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin presented Falwell with the Jabotinsky Award and *People* magazine proclaimed Falwell one of the 25 "Most Intriguing People of 1980."

Falwell was given the "Christian Humanitarian of the Year Award" by Food for the Hungry International during 1981. LBC was given membership in the NCAA Division II and membership at Thomas Road Baptist reached 10,000 as plans
were made for additional educational buildings.\textsuperscript{38}

Today, the Thomas Road Baptist Church is one of the most auspicious industries in Lynchburg. It is the city's largest church with twenty thousand members, equal to nearly one third of the city's entire population. In addition, however, with more than one thousand full-time employees, it is also the fourth largest employer in the city. Obviously the Jerry Falwell empire has experienced tremendous growth in the past ten years. The consensus among his staff is that Falwell is both the hub and the fuel behind the Thomas Road caravan. It is difficult, if not impossible, to separate Jerry Falwell the man from Jerry Falwell the religious entrepreneur. Falwell functions in many roles not only simultaneously, but also effectively. He has been severely criticized by the press and his colleagues for combining his clerical and political roles at the same time. Admittedly, the combination is something of a paradox, especially considering his hard-core, fundamentalist background.

\textbf{JERRY FALWELL TODAY: PASTOR/POLITICIAN}

As a pastor and as a parent I am calling my fellow American citizens to unite in a moral crusade for righteousness in our generation. It is time to call America back to her moral roots . . . I am convinced that God is calling millions of Americans in the so-often silent

\textsuperscript{38} Information and data for the yearly analysis was obtained in telephone interviews with Falwell staffers in January and April of 1982. Especially helpful by phone and via the mail were Kay Teboe and Diane Whitehurst, Administrative Coordinators for "The Old-Time Gospel Hour," Inc.
majority to join in the moral-majority crusade to turn American around in our lifetime.

With those words, Jerry Falwell has sought both to solidify and to mobilize the New Christian Right and in the process has become an influential political voice. How that feat was accomplished is considered in the next chapter of this study; why it was ever attempted (at least by Jerry Falwell) is a question of some import with an answer that at best is confusing.

Entrance Into Politics

Jerry Falwell plays many roles, but above all else he is a Fundamentalist.\(^40\) Even a cursory investigation of Fundamentalist theology presents the researcher with one tenet of Baptist doctrine that is antithetical to political involvement: the doctrine of separatism.\(^41\) If one is to remain "unspotted from this world" (James 1:27b), then


\(^40\) Both a definition and historical sketch of Fundamentalism is given in Chapter 3.

\(^41\) Separatism, simply stated, is the belief that in order to stay pure and unstained by this world's evil influences one must separate (isolate himself/herself) from as much of "this world" as possible. That separation includes (or has traditionally included) everything from short skirts, long hair, dancing and drinking to politics. For an indepth analysis of this fundamentalist trait, see J.I. Packer, *Fundamentalism and the Word of God*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964) and Richard Quebedeaux, *The Worldly Evangelicals*, (New York: Harper and Row, 1976).
involvement with the political forces that run this world is spiritual adultery. Such has been the traditional Fundamentalist position. Many (perhaps most) of the well-known Fundamentalist evangelists have always preached the "American civil religion" as Frances Fitzgerald puts it, "reverence for the flag, for freedom, for the American way of life." So in one sense, Fundamentalist preachers have been speaking out on certain political/social issues for quite some time. But to enter electoral politics as Falwell did in June of 1979 when he founded the Moral Majority via his Sunday morning "The Old-Time Gospel Hour," was to break with Fundamentalist tradition.

He also breached his own previously held and publicly enunciated belief on political activism. In a 1965 sermon entitled "Ministers and Marchers," he had expounded a position antithetical to his present stance. The following lengthy quote is from that sermon:

As far as the relationship of the church to the world, it can be expressed as simply as the three words which Paul gave to Timothy - "Preach the Word." We have a message of redeeming grace through a crucified and risen Lord. This message is designed to go right to the heart of man and there meet his deep spiritual need. Nowhere are we commissioned to reform the externals. We are not told to wage wars against bootleggers, liquor stores, gamblers, murderers, prostitutes, racketeers, prejudices, persons or institutions, or any other existing evil as such. Our ministry is not to reformation but transformation. The gospel does not clean up the outside but rather

regenerates the inside. While we are told to "render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's," in the true interpretation, we have very few ties on this earth. We pay our taxes, cast our votes as a responsibility of citizenship, obey the laws of the land, and other things demanded of us by the society in which we live. But, at the same time, we are cognizant that our only purpose on this earth is to know Christ and to make Him known. Believing the Bible as I do, I would find it impossible to stop preaching the pure saving gospel of Jesus Christ, and begin doing anything else - including fighting Communism, or participating in civil-rights reforms.

Falwell obviously changed his stance. So total has been his reversal, that today Falwell repudiates his former position as "false prophecy."

Falwell attempts to justify his political involvement in several ways. In response to a question from television personality Tom Snyder concerning the legitimacy of a religious leader's involvement in public, political issues, Falwell defended himself by declaring political issues to be moral issues:

Homosexuality was a moral issue long before it became political. I am against abortion-on-demand because I consider it legalized murder. Today, it is political, but it was a moral issue. We as ministers cannot withdraw from conflict. I was against the giving up of the Panama Canal, but I didn't get involved because that was solely a political issue. However, homosexuality, abortion-on-demand, pornography are issues which affect the lives of people and the moral posture of the nation. I have to lend my weight where

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43 "Ministers and Marchers," sermon delivered on "The Old-Time Gospel Hour," from Thomas Road Baptist Church, Lynchburg, Virginia, July 1965.

44 Telephone interview, Don Norman.
I have the biblical right to do so.45

In an interview with Eternity magazine in 1980, Falwell identified some of the issues that shaped his political activism.

Back in the sixties I was criticizing pastors who were taking time out of their pulpits to involve themselves in the Civil Rights Movement or any other political venture. I said you're wasting your time from what you're called to do. Now I find myself doing the same thing and for the same reasons they did. Things began to happen. The invasion of humanism into the public school system began to alarm us back in the sixties. Then the Roe vs. Wade Supreme Court decision of 1973 and abortion-on-demand shook me up. Then adding to that the gradual regulation of various things it became very apparent the federal government was going in a wrong direction and if allowed would be harassing non-public schools, of which I have one of 16,000 right now. So step by step we became convinced we must get involved if we're going to continue what we're doing inside the church building.46

Falwell sees America, like the Roman Empire of old, as on the decline. In fact, as far as Falwell is concerned, our nation is now in the most serious crisis it has ever faced. From homosexuality, to drugs, to rampant crime, to a national divorce rate of forty percent, to easily accessible pornography, to abortion, to illicit sex and atheistic humanism, the country according to Falwell is in

45 Strober, Aflame For God, p. 177. It is interesting that Falwell claims here to be uninvolved in purely political issues since a strong defense and military superiority are hallmarks of his political preaching.

unparalleled moral decline, with civilization itself at stake. In Falwell's view, "atheistic communism" threatens America. He asserts that if Christians do not rise up and fight with every ounce of political influence they have; if they do not register their anger and flaunt their determination at the ballot box - then the end is not near, it is here.47

The call for political action is a surprising reversal, but traditional Fundamentalists have always been prophets of doom, predicting ominous dangers ahead for the Christian world (i.e., America). Although the perceived threats have changed from period to period, the doomsday nature of those threats has not. In the late 1800's, the Fundamentalists were primarily concerned with theological issues, fighting liberalism in biblical scholarship. They saw theological liberalism as heresy, apostasy. In the 1920's they occupied themselves with an array of destructive issues, from German rationalism to dancing. In the fifties, they were preoccupied with Communism as the anti-christ. Communism was the root of all other evils and would first destroy belief in God and then destroy the nation itself. In the seventies and eighties Fundamentalists, especially the television evangelists, have focused on pornography, abortion, and homosexuality as the villains in American society. The umbrella under which these vices all hide and

47 Telephone interview, Don Norman; and Personal interview with Jerry Falwell, 26 July 1983.
thrive is "secular humanism". According to the Fundamentalist scenario, if not stopped, secular humanism will lead America into sub-Christian living and eventually into the hands of the godless communists.

Fundamentalists have always been rhetorical activists from the pulpit. The fact that such rhetoric is now being used to encourage the faithful to enter politics rather than separate from it is not as surprising as it first may seem.

From one perspective, it was natural and inevitable that both Falwell and his Fundamental compatriots abandoned their separatist views for electoral politics. For one thing, they had a rather complex, detailed, complete theory about society and how it should behave. Beyond that, they entertained no doubts that their theory was the correct one - and the only correct one at that. And since at the heart and core of their theology was an evangelistic mission, to seek-and-save the lost, why not, in the process of converting everyone in society, convert society itself? The potential means to achieve this end was available. Falwell's organizational and fundraising abilities, coupled with his weekly television audience estimated at more than twenty million viewers, form a powerful, political force. Perhaps the question which should be posed then, is not why Falwell left his separatist moorings and entered the
political arena, but rather what took him so long. In June, 1979, Falwell entered the political scene with the founding of Moral Majority, Inc., a political-action organization. The effects of that organization and its grass-roots efforts during the 1980 campaigns have been debated, but they cannot be denied. They are discussed in more detail in the next chapter. Falwell explains Moral Majority in Listen America. Christians must keep America great by being willing to go into the halls of Congress, by getting laws passed that will protect the freedom and liberty of her citizens. The Moral Majority, Inc., was formed to acquaint Americans everywhere with the tragic decline in our nation's morals and to provide leadership in establishing an effective coalition of morally active citizens who are (a) pro-life, (b) pro-family, (c) pro-moral, and (d) pro-American. If the vast majority of Americans (84 percent, according to George Gallup) still believe the Ten Commandments are valid today, why are we permitting a few leading amoral humanists and naturalists to take over the most influential positions in this nation?

Falwell still maintains a remnant of his previous separatist stance. He differentiates between political cooperation and religious separatism. The first is a necessary evil because of the prevalence of secular humanism in the political power structure of America; the second is a matter of theological purity. The irony of his position is that he would not think of inviting Billy Graham to preach at Thomas Road Baptist Church because of Graham's open fellowship with certain theological "liberals." On the other hand, however, he can walk into a Jewish synagogue and talk to Jews about Moral Majority. See Tom Minnery, "The Man Behind the Mask: Bandit or Crusader?" Christianity Today, 25, 4 September 1981, p. 28.

A politico/religious manifesto written by Falwell in late 1979 to delineate and propagate his views on certain issues.

Political Views:

As previously stated, members of the New Christian Right have a highly defined, comprehensive view of society: both what it should be and how it should work. As the leader of this constituency, Falwell has just as fine-tuned a view as his followers. There seems to be no socio-political issue on which he does not take a stand. The following is a brief overview of some of his political opinions on major issues emphasized by the New Religious Right.

On Communism, Falwell's views are simple and adamant. He does not believe Communism to be merely a political or economic system; he considers it the epitome of atheistic religion. Communism in Falwell's way of thinking is not only interested in global domination but also in the eradication of Christianity, especially in its American embodiment. Falwell's conviction becomes apparent in a statement in his *Listen, America*:

"... communism is more than a political viewpoint -- it is an atheistic religion. I must speak out against godless communism, which would seek to destroy the work of Christ that is going out from this base of America."

For Falwell, Communism is not to be viewed as a distant phenomenon separated from America by two vast oceans. Instead it is an insidious, malignant evil which has a distinct and determined design for the infiltration and

51 Falwell, p. 92.
destruction of American democracy. Secular humanism, the prevailing moral woe which Falwell often alludes to, has its conception in the amoral mindset of communist leaders. To Falwell, if communism can infiltrate the moral conscience of the American public, it will succeed in its desire for domination because once a nation's moral fibre is destroyed it has no stamina or will to fight its enemies. As Falwell himself later wrote: "Communists know that in order to take over a country they must first see to it that a nation's military strength is weakened and that its morals are corrupted so that its people will have no will to resist." 52

The intensity of Falwell's anti-communist stance, especially toward Americans with pro-communist sentiments, was made clear when he said: "... register all communists? Not only should we register them ... we should stamp it on their foreheads and send them back to Russia." 53

With regard to economics, Falwell is both a capitalist and an ardent advocate of a pure free enterprise system with little or no government intervention into the private sector. In spiritual matters Falwell believes and preaches that the strong must serve and support the weak. In economic matters, however, he is a hard-line supporter of the survival of the fittest. Falwell believes that the

52 Falwell, p. 95.
strong will survive in the market place without government intervention and the weak cannot survive even with such intervention.

Falwell relies on scripture to validate his economic views. He writes:

The free-enterprise system is clearly outlined in the Book of Proverbs in the Bible. . . . Ambitious and successful business management is clearly outlined as a part of God's plan for his people.

On the separation of Church and State, Falwell's theory is both simple and controversial. The First Amendment's sole intent, in Falwell's way of thinking, was to safeguard the Church from State interference, but not to keep the Church from influencing the State. The State should never interfere with the life, theology, or governance of the Church, but the Church (i.e., its individual members) not only has the right to be politically active but shoulders a solemn responsibility to be such.

Falwell's position on Church and State, as noted earlier in this paper, is a relatively new one both for him and for the Fundamentalist churches which he leads. The majority of his ministerial career must be characterized as separatist. He now believes and preaches, however, that the Church must serve as an instrument for spiritual checks and balances for bringing this nation back to righteousness and renewal.

54 Falwell, p. 12.
The First Amendment, to Falwell, means nothing more or less than the free and complete expression of religious ideals. Falwell, and Fundamentalists at large, became distressed, especially in the late seventies, with the common interpretation of the First Amendment, as well as with the breadth of its application. Whether the issue was prayer in school, the posting of the Ten Commandments in a classroom, or the small gathering of students for a time of Bible study in a public school facility, the First Amendment was applied to the situation and interpreted identically each time: since the First Amendment prohibits the establishment of religion, any trace of religion in any public school must be a constitutional trespass.

Students could meet to discuss the philosophies of Plato, Marx, even Hitler, but could not use the public school facility to discuss the philosophies of Moses, Jesus, or Paul. Those same students could pledge allegiance each day in a public school classroom to a nation under God, but could not meet to discuss the nature of that God. Such applications and interpretations moved Falwell into the posture he now takes. That posture, regarding separation of Church and State, is summarized in the following statements by Falwell:

The Founding Fathers, contrary to what our liberal friends believe, wanted to preserve and encourage the church, not to restrict it or its influence. For them, the separation of church and state was a check on the government, not the church. The First Amendment prohibits the government from
establishing a church (as had been done in England). It does not prohibit the churches from doing anything, except collecting taxes. Any person who suggests that separation of church and state requires more than this - that it requires churches to remain silent on "political issues" or preachers to be neutral on candidates or religious organizations, to pursue only "spiritual goals" - is simply grinding his own ax rather than reading the law.

It is not against separation of church and state to speak out or hold a rally. The Founding Fathers advocated separation of church and state so the state couldn't tell the churches what to do, and there could be no state church. That's healthy. They did not advocate separation of God and State; the day they passed the First Amendment, they called for a day of fasting and prayer.

On abortion, Falwell's view is explicit and harsh: abortion is murder. Unlike many clerics who agree that abortion is sometimes necessary, as in cases of rape or incest, Falwell takes an absolute stand against the practice. He will not even sanction abortion in situations where the mother's life is in danger if the baby is carried full-term, although he does believe that in such cases the mother alone must decide regardless of church dogma.

Perhaps more than any other one issue, the Supreme Court decision of 1973 (in Roe vs. Wade) that legalized abortion on demand brought Falwell out of his separatist stance and into political activism. He considered the

millions of legalized abortions that occurred following the Supreme Court decision to be inexcusable murder. Falwell believes that human life begins at conception and consequently believes abortion at any stage is tantamount to human slaughter. He often quotes Psalms 139:15-16 to prove his contention that life begins at conception:

My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being imperfect; and in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them.

Falwell believes that abortion is the epitome of the nation's spiritual demise, and the battle to bring America back to God must begin with a militant stand against its legal practice. To Falwell, the future of the nation depends on her doing penance for the slaughter of unborn babies by reversing the 1973 Roe vs. Wade decision. Falwell's views were made explicit when he wrote: 

"... it was sadly the decision of our U.S. Supreme Court that gave free license to the murder of 5 million to 6 million babies since January 22, 1973. America has the blood of all those babies on her hands... If we expect God to honor and bless our nation, we must take a stand against abortion."  

On government and the law, Falwell advocates non-intervention and non-interference by the government in

57 Pingy, p. 9.
58 Falwell, p. 155.
the private sector. The government's role is two-fold in Falwell's mind: protect the citizenry and mete out appropriate punishment on evildoers and criminals. The following statements are a synopsis of his view on the role of government and law in the life of the nation:

The role of government is to minister justice and to protect the rights of its citizens by being a terror to evildoers within and without the nation.

Individuals should be free to build their own lives without interference from the government. 60

It is interesting that, on the issue of God and government, Falwell believes that God intervened in a very specific and concrete manner: namely, the development of the American constitution. He believes that America has enjoyed such elaborate and abiding freedoms because God was directly involved in America's history. Falwell presents a slight paradox, however, by sometimes attributing America's greatness not to God's intervention but to the founding fathers' spirituality. The paradox is made obvious in the following two statements, each of which attributes America's good fortune to righteousness, but one attributes it to God's righteousness while the other attributes it to man's. Falwell never attempts to delineate the difference in the two positions nor does he seem to find any problem with their coexistence in his political theology:

59 Falwell, p. 98.
60 Falwell, p. 69.
I am positive in my belief regarding the Constitution that God led in the development of that document, and as a result, we here in America have enjoyed 204 years of unparalleled freedom.

I believe America has reached the pinnacle of greatness unlike any nation in human history because our Founding Fathers established America's laws and precepts on the principles recorded in the laws of God, including the Ten Commandments. God has blessed this nation because in its early days she sought to honor God and the Bible, the inerrant word of the living God.

On national defense, Falwell is an ardent hawk. He believes that America is God's chosen nation for evangelization of the world and therefore should be protected and defended at any cost. Falwell again summons a scriptural basis for his beliefs. Consider the following statements by Falwell:

The Bible says that a husband who does not protect his household is worse than an infidel. I'd like to extend that and say a government which does not protect its citizens is worse than an infidel.\(^\text{63}\)

The bearing of the sword by the government is correct and proper. Nowhere in the Bible is there a rebuke for the bearing of armaments. A political leader, as a minister of God, is a revenger to execute wrath upon those who do evil.\(^\text{64}\)

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\(^{61}\) Falwell, p. 19.

\(^{62}\) Falwell, p. 25.

\(^{63}\) Pingy, p. 11. Actually the biblical passage Falwell refers to here does not say "protect," but rather "provide."

\(^{64}\) Falwell, p. 85.
Falwell has no trouble with the killing of another human being if it is necessary for the preservation of America. As the statement above makes clear, Falwell considers the good soldier an extension of the arm of God. Since there is no prohibition in the scripture against the bearing of arms, Falwell concludes both that it is right and necessary.

The United States, in Falwell's mind, is far too weak militarily. He believes that America is severely inferior to Soviet nuclear capabilities. As the statement below indicates, Falwell believes that American strength has been undermined by liberal politicians who have fought against increases in the defense budget and who have brought about dismantlement of existing nuclear armaments.

The sad fact is that today the Soviet Union would kill 135 million to 160 million Americans, and the United States would kill only 3 to 5 percent of the Soviets because of their antiballistic missiles and their civil defense. Few people today know that we do not have one antiballistic missile. We had $5.1 billion worth of them, but Ted Kennedy led a fight in the Senate and had them dismantled and removed. From 1971 to 1978 the Soviets outspent the United States by $104 billion for defense and an additional $40 billion for research.65

It should be noted that Falwell sees no discrepancy between his belief that America is God's chosen nation, destined for world leadership and evangelization and consequently enjoying His constant care, and his conviction

65 Falwell, p. 98.
that she must still maintain a superior military strength
over her aggressor the Soviet Union.

It is characteristic of Falwell and the entire
Christian Right that the world is seen as a battleground
between light and darkness, good and evil. Everything is
described in absolutes, with no middle ground on any issue.

A Move Towards Moderation?

At times Jerry Falwell appears to be adopting a more
moderate stance. Recently his rhetoric has been less
adamant on certain issues. Whether or not his views have
changed is impossible to determine; perhaps he has adjusted
his statements to appeal to an international audience rather
than only to his Fundamentalist associates.

For example, Falwell has always denounced absolutely
alcoholic beverages. However, when the candidate Reagan
came to Lynchburg in October of 1980 to address a National
Religious Broadcasters convention, Falwell denounced
"excessive" drinking. On the issue of homosexuality, in an
interview with the Washington Post the minister said: "I
have no objection to a homosexual teaching in the public
classroom as long as that homosexual is not flaunting his
life-style or soliciting students."66

When asked in an interview about inserting Christian
doctrine into a Moral Majority speech, Falwell replied:

66 Frances Fitzgerald, "A Reporter at Large," New
If I want to be deceptive, I can. But I don't want to be deceptive. What we've said from the beginning is that the Moral Majority is a political organization. You're not going to hear doctrine there. We are not going to try to witness to you there. You come as an American who shares the moral views of the membership, and to fight together on a pro-life, pro-family, pro-moral, pro-American position.

He also said: "The largest synagogue in this country has invited me to come and speak on Moral Majority. As a gentleman, that is all I would speak on. I would not go there as pastor of Thomas Road Baptist Church, but as president of Moral Majority, sharing what I think would be our points of coalescence." This position contrasts with the statement by Falwell's friend and New York State Chairman of Moral Majority, Dan Fore. When asked by a Jewish writer: "As a Jew, if I don't accept Christ, I'll go to hell?" Fore replied, "Yes, but it's nothing personal or unique to Jews. The same goes for the Chinese, the Moslems, everyone ...." Falwell may still agree with his friend, but he has cushioned himself and his organization by softening his language and his adamant demeanor on several issues. Perhaps he is becoming more moderate. Perhaps he is adapting to his audience by reducing his dogmatism.


Falwell himself has made disclaimers recently about his perceived rigidity. In a *Newsweek* article he was quoted as saying: "We're not religious fanatics who have in mind a Khomeini-type religious crusade to take over the government. We support the separation of church and state . . . we want influence not control." In another statement, Falwell asserts: "It is time fundamentalists and separatists learned to be gentlemen. It is time we allowed others to think, preach, and write whatever they please and love one another in spite of it." All such disclaimers seem questionable when related to his oratory, but perhaps they are sincere.

Falwell's speaking schedule attests to his popularity among a sizeable constituency within the American public. Although he has almost no formal speech training, Falwell logs more than 200,000 miles of travel each year, en route to more than 1,200 speaking engagements (exclusive of his

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71 Strober, p. 170.


73 Personal interview with Don Norman, Executive Assistant to Dr. Falwell and Executive Administrator of "The Old-Time Gospel Hour" in Lynchburg, Virginia, 25 July 1983. His formal speech training consists of three courses in sermon preparation while a student at Baptist Bible College, Springfield, Missouri.
daily radio program). 74

In a front-page article entitled "The Electric Church," the Wall Street Journal not only gives a brief comparison of Falwell's abilities with regard to the other television evangelists but also places him at the head of that group of well-known personalities. That article's conclusion is a fitting way to end this chapter on Jerry Falwell and his mercurial rise to celebrity religiously, socially, and politically:

Each of these high-powered preachers projects a skillful blend of worldly and everlasting well-being. But none of them is doing it more successfully these days than Jerry Falwell. . . . His "Old-Time Gospel Hour" is probably the fastest-growing of any of the big-time religious shows. One reason is the 44-year old Mr. Falwell himself, a man of charm, talent, drive and ambition . . . He is a forceful administrator with a flair for organization and delegation of authority and with a keen understanding of income statements and balance sheets.

74 Telephone interview: Norman.

CHAPTER III
HISTORICAL SETTING

The religious climate in America changed significantly during the 1970's. A swing to the right affected not only the religious climate in America, but the political and social context as well. In fact, historian Joan Jacobs Brumberg concludes, "In the 1970's, evangelical Protestant expansion has become so notable that it is not unfitting to describe the period as a 'Fourth Great Awakening.'"\(^1\)

In their recent assessment of the current religious conditions in the United States, *The Search for America's Faith*, George Gallup and David Poling state:

> It would be difficult to identify a decade that incorporated more crises and change for the churches than the 1970's. Yet the 1980's may far surpass the tumultuous furor we have just completed. Staggering membership losses suffered by the mainline denominations have not yet turned around . . . . On the other hand, the conservative churches appear to be in an up period, with . . . a variety of

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\(^1\) Joan Jacobs Brumberg, *Mission for Life* (New York: Macmillan, 1980), p. 217. The First Great Awakening refers to the religious revival that took place in the New England states during the 1740's; the Second refers to the popular evangelicalism that enjoyed great vogue during the period 1790-1850; the Third Great Awakening commonly refers to the urban, Fundamentalist revivalism that America's large cities experienced during the last several years of the nineteenth century.
fundamentalist groups setting attendance and membership records almost hourly.\(^2\)

Statistics from a poll conducted by Gallup in 1979 for *Christianity Today* support the statement above. A brief summary of some of the findings reveals a conservative stance taken by the majority of adult Americans:

- 94% of all Americans believe in the literal existence of a personal god.
- Eight out of ten people believe that Jesus Christ is divine.
- Five out of ten believe in a literal Adam and Eve, created by God.
- 50% also believe in an inerrant Bible (i.e., 65 million adults).
- Seven of every ten adults believe that Satan is real and active.
- Nearly 70 million people over the age of 18 believe in a literal heaven and are hoping to go there eventually.
- More than eight out of ten Americans believe the Ten Commandments are God-inspired and binding today.

Other signs indicate a religious revival leading Americans back not only to the straight and narrow, but to the right as well. In the 1970's, books by conservative evangelical writers began to appear at the top of the best seller lists. By 1975, *Time* mentioned the phenomenon and


informed the public that fifty religious books currently in print had passed the million copy mark in total sales (most of them of an evangelical/Fundamentalist nature). In addition, Christianity Today (a conservative, evangelical magazine launched in the fifties to counter the impact of the more liberal Christian Century) came to have two hundred thousand subscribers in 1980, while at the same time the circulation of Christian Century dropped to a near-disastrous thirty thousand. In 1979, annual revenues from the sale of Christian books in America surpassed six hundred million dollars, and the Christian music and recording market is establishing new sales records weekly.

In sports, entertainment, politics, business, and nearly every other sector of American society, conservatives are claiming a "born again" religious status. The list of celebrities with ties to the New Religious Right is lengthy. Actors Efrem Zimbalist, Jr., John Travolta, and Buddy Ebsen; actresses Lynda Carter, Dale Evans, and Barbra Streisand; singers Donna Summer, Donna Fargo, Dionne Warwick, Natalie Cole, Johnny Cash, B. J. Thomas, Bob Dylan, and Johnny Rivers; athletes Rosie Grier, Roger Staubach, and Terry Bradshaw; politicians, John B. Anderson, Mark Hatfield, and Jesse Helms; presidents--past and present--Jimmy Carter and

5 Hudson, p. 443.
Ronald Reagan; criminals Charles Colson and Eldridge Cleaver—all claim to be "born-again" Christians. Both the list and categories of such celebrity Christians could be multiplied many times over.

Newsweek labeled 1976 "The Year of the Evangelicals," but certain trends indicate that the late seventies and early eighties should perhaps be earmarked "The Decade of the Evangelicals." Along with the resurgence of conservative Christianity in America has also come a resurgence of political involvement on the part of those conservative Christians. The extent of their impact is impossible to determine at the present, but that they have had and will have in the immediate future some kind of political impact is impossible to deny.

Firm evidence for the swing "right" by many in modern America, as well as evidence for both the New Right's

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9 It is worth noting that all three presidential candidates in 1980 (Ronald Reagan, Jimmy Carter, and John Anderson) were "born again" candidates.
interest and influence in political affairs, is readily available. On May 7, 1982, President Ronald Reagan called a press conference in the Rose Garden of the White House grounds to announce his proposal of and support for a new constitutional amendment allowing voluntary prayer in public schools. Invited guests at the Rose Garden affair included, among several leaders of the New Religious Right, the Reverend Jerry Falwell. Reagan stated that he wanted to promote "faith in a Creator who alone has the power to bless America." Sounding very much like some of the most ardent Religious Right advocates, Reagan asserted that "well-meaning" individuals had misinterpreted the First Amendment, adding, "I have never believed that the oft-quoted amendment was supposed to protect us from religion. . . . It was to protect religion from government tyranny." Obviously, Reagan is not leaning to the "right" by himself. According to recent Republican polls, some 75% to 85% of voting Americans are in agreement with him.

Vice-president Bush recently cast his lot with the New Religious Right as well. While speaking to a crowd of

10 "Reagan Endorses Voluntary Prayer," New York Times, 7 May 1982, p. B-10, cols. 1-3. Perhaps unwittingly, President Reagan gave testimony to the visibility and influence of Jerry Falwell during the ceremony by quoting one of his "favorite passages in the Bible," 2 Chronicles 7:14--"If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land." The passage has been an almost constant quotation in the preaching, lecturing, and media interviews of Falwell.
40,000 at the Southern Baptist Convention in New Orleans on June 13, 1982, Bush said he felt the conservative religious movement in America was a " . . . healthy development in our politics. I think wisdom counsels us not to fear it, or to condemn it, but to welcome it." 11

Recent attempts, some successful, at censorship of certain classics (from Brave New World to Catcher in the Rye and Huckleberry Finn,) in public schools also serve as evidence of a growing, influential New Christian Right. Religious Fundamentalists and political conservatives have coalesced to remove the influence of "secular humanism" from the library shelf. 12 Reasons for such efforts are discussed later in the chapter.

Along with other television evangelists, Jerry Falwell has ridden this wave of religious conservatism in his battle against liberal politics, which has been nearly unassailable for the last fifty years. 13 With the aid of the "electric church" 14 and the rightward momentum of a vast constituency


in the American public, Falwell has maintained his attack on "liberalism" longer than any of the other leaders of the New Religious Right.

An attempt to understand Falwell's rhetoric, and the religious trend that has catapulted him to celebrity both in the political and religious arenas must begin by examining the key movement behind his success: Fundamentalism. In order to provide a broad view of the historical setting in which Falwell's rhetoric operates, this chapter first takes a brief look at Fundamentalism—its beginnings, its earlier decline and its current resurgence. Secondly, the chapter investigates the phenomenon labelled the "Electric Church." And, finally, attention will focus on the primary political-action arm of the New Religious Right, the Moral Majority. These three areas will supply the socio-historical setting necessary for a rhetorical analysis of Falwell's political preaching.

History of Fundamentalism

Beginnings

The term "Fundamentalism," as well as the movement it signifies, was derived from a series of booklets entitled The Fundamentals: A Testimony to the Truth. Written by numerous conservative evangelists, such as R. A. Torey, G. Campbell Morgan, H.C.G. Moule, and B. B. Warfield, between
1910 and 1917, the booklets had as their primary purpose an orderly, often lengthy, presentation and defense of traditional Christian doctrine. More than three million copies were published and distributed in the first five years in order keep Christians from "... being seduced by biblical criticism and contemporary unbelief." The doctrines set forth as essential in The Fundamentals were:

-- the verbal and inerrant inspiration of the Bible,
-- the virgin birth of Jesus Christ,
-- the substitutionary atonement of Jesus
-- the literal, bodily resurrection of Jesus
-- and the imminent return of Jesus Christ.

The pamphlets also defended other beliefs and doctrines which were being attacked by the alleged liberal, modernistic biblical criticism of the day. The writers and readers of The Fundamentals saw Modernism (an undefined conglomeration of higher biblical criticism, Darwinism, and


16 Originally published in 12 volumes, they have recently been reprinted in a four-volume, paperback edition, R. A. Torrey et al., The Fundamentals: A Testimony to the Truth (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1970).

liberal theology) as a heresy of major proportions which threatened the very existence of the historical message of Jesus Christ and his Church. Consequently, The Fundamentals served to crystallize an otherwise fragmented movement by bringing together conservative, Bible-believing Christians from a broad spectrum of denominational backgrounds and unifying them with the threat of a common enemy—Modernism.

Fundamentalism can still be identified by the acceptance of the five tenets of faith listed above and defended in The Fundamentals. The movement has come and gone through the years, but the essentials of being a Fundamentalist have not changed at all. Perhaps the briefest and most workable definition of Fundamentalism is provided by George Marsden, a professor of history at Calvin College. Marsden writes:

18 Cf. J. Gresham Machen, Christianity and Liberalism (New York: Macmillan, 1923). Machen argues at length that the denial of the divine inspiration of the Bible as the Word of God was tantamount to the denial of the gospel and therefore of Jesus. Machen seems to have been the "Falwell" of his day in terms of stature and influence among his fellow conservatives. His book is still widely read and quoted in Fundamentalist circles.

19 Modernism had its roots in the teaching of Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834), a German theologian. Schleiermacher taught that the ultimate, absolute authority in religion was derived from the experience of the soul rather than the content of the Bible. See W. R. Hutchinson, The Modernist Impulse in American Protestantism (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976); G. G. Atkins, Religion in Our Times (New York: Round Table Press, 1932).

"Fundamentalism" refers to a twentieth-century movement closely tied to the revivalist tradition of mainstream evangelical Protestantism that militantly opposed modernist theology and the cultural change associated with it. Fundamentalism shares traits with many other movements . . . (such as pietism, evangelicalism, revivalism, conservatism . . . and the holiness and pentecostal movements), but it has been distinguished most clearly from these by its militancy in opposition to modernism.

During the 1920's, Fundamentalism's militancy led it to engage in a battle with the liberals for control of the mainline denominational machinery (schools, churches, publications). When those efforts failed, the Fundamentalists eventually pulled away and began practicing increased separatism, a kind of self-imposed isolation from the liberals and the world—both, in their opinion, servants of Satan. Paradoxically, their militancy apparently contributed both to the movement's downfall in society in the 20's and 30's and its resurgence in the past decade.

In Preaching in American History, Allan Sager suggests an evolution in the controversy between Fundamentalists and Modernists. In order to understand the controversy, one has to be aware of "the underlying tensions" behind it. Those tensions are described in the following statement by Sager:

In the nineteenth century, industrial changes had rapidly transformed post Civil War America from a predominantly rural, pastoral society, in which the bible as rule book and the church as judge and jury had made a near theocracy of early American life, to a rapidly growing urban,

industrial society. The social changes attendant to industrialization were aggravated by new and newly popularized theories in science, especially by the evolutionary hypothesis with its philosophical premise of inevitable progress. Here was cause for conservative religionists to become alarmed... While the teaching of the evolutionists raised questions about factual reliability of the Bible, religious modernists, armed with biblical criticism, a comparative study of religions, and a quickened social conscience, began to call into question entire bodies of teachings and practices which had long been regarded as sacrosanct and unchanging. Thus orthodox Christians felt the attack from two directions.22

This was the social milieu in which Fundamentalism was born and in which the controversy with Modernism began. That controversy exploded into open-warfare from 1918-1925. By that time both the Liberals and the Fundamentalists had crystallized their dogmas and organized their constituencies. The first major Fundamentalist conference took place in May of 1918. Five thousand delegates gathered together for that Philadelphia Prophetic Convention,23 their boldness having been stirred and their wills impassioned by the earlier publication of The Fundamentals. A pamphlet, Light on Prophecy, was issued by the conference. It discussed the second coming of Christ and also included a "Statement of Belief" which not only listed all the


essential, traditional doctrines, but also warned against the dangers inherent in Liberalism and Modernism.  

The theological controversy and its ultimate implications for the major denominations is illustrated dramatically in the confrontation that took place between Harry Emerson Fosdick, a liberal Baptist pastor who was by special arrangement the pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of New York, and Clarence E. Macartney, a conservative Presbyterian minister. On May 21, 1922, Fosdick delivered a sermon entitled "Shall the Fundamentalists Win?" Fosdick isolated three Fundamentalist issues—the virgin birth, the inspiration of scripture, and the return of Christ—and made a plea for more tolerance and flexibility concerning these issues. His thesis was that a person could be a true Christian yet not hold to these Fundamentalist positions. Although he intended the sermon to be a plea for greater understanding and unity, it had exactly the opposite effect. The address was viewed by the Fundamentalists as a "liberal counter-offensive." Fosdick not only aroused the ire of the Fundamentalists, he also obviously "captured the liberal sentiments of the moment," since his sermon appeared in "at least three journals as well as a widely


distributed pamphlet." He closed that sermon by saying, "I do not believe for one moment that the Fundamentalists are going to succeed." But events proved Fosdick wrong, at least with regard to their victory over him.

The Fundamentalists' David, who answered this call to combat by the Liberals' Goliath, was Clarence E. Macartney, a confirmed conservative, "and like Fosdick one of the famed preachers of the day." Macartney was pastor for the Arch Street Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia, and shortly after Fosdick's "Shall the Fundamentalists Win?," he led the conservative attack with a sermon entitled, "Shall Unbelief Win?" In that sermon he listed and elaborated the irreconcilable points of conflict between conservative Christianity and Liberalism.

Macartney carried the battle even further by presenting his case to the Presbytery of Philadelphia and pointing out that the First Presbyterian Church of New York City had a liberal Baptist minister preaching sermons that were far

26 Marsden, Fundamentalism, p. 171.


28 Marsden, Fundamentalism, p. 173.

from conforming to orthodox Presbyterian doctrine. Consequently, after nearly two years of lengthy proceedings, the General Assembly of the Presbytery demanded that the Presbytery of New York require Fosdick to be ordained a Presbyterian minister. Obviously this would necessitate Fosdick's acceptance of and conformity to the Presbyterian Confession of Faith (a conservative creed). Fosdick was, therefore, essentially forced to resign his pulpit.30 This was a round, one of many, which the Fundamentalists won. But the tide would soon shift and victories for the conservatives became fewer and much farther between. By the end of the thirties, they lost most of the control over the machinery of the major denominations and began to retrench, taking an isolationist approach to religious purity. But one final battle remained before separatism began.

Downfall

From 1915 to 1925 William Jennings Bryan, the frustrated presidential candidate, was the foremost spokesman for Fundamentalism. In fact, as Sager puts it:

Bryan's exodus from politics in 1915 was the signal for his giving increasing time to the expression of his religious convictions. On college campuses, before legislative assemblies, in large metropolitan auditoriums, at fundamentalist assemblies, at Bible conferences, and on extended speaking tours, Bryan popularized the cause of fundamentalism.


31 Holland, Preaching, p. 267.
Bryan saw the greatest threat to traditional, orthodox Christianity in the newly-popularized theory of evolution. He once claimed: "All the ills from which America suffers can be traced back to the teaching of evolution. It would be better to destroy every other book ever written, and save just the first three verses of Genesis."\(^{32}\) Bryan got his chance to "destroy" the theory of evolution and elevate biblical creationism to a place of acceptance in the world of scholarship during the Scopes Monkey Trial in Dayton, Tennessee, in the summer of 1925.

Dayton, Tennessee, found itself to be the center of attraction for the entire nation during the trial. John T. Scopes, a biology teacher and physical education instructor at Dayton's Central High School, was on trial for violation of the state ordinance making it illegal to "teach any theory that denies the story of the divine creation of man as taught in the Bible and to teach instead that man has descended from a lower order of animals."\(^{33}\) William Jennings Bryan served as the prosecuting attorney in the case while the articulate and equally brilliant trial

\(^{32}\) Quoted in Richard Hofstadter, *The Paranoid Style in American Politics and Other Essays* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), p. 125. Such explosive overstatement was typical of the early fundamentalist spokesman and can be seen still today in its outstanding proponents, including Jerry Falwell.

lawyer Clarence Darrow served as the defense attorney.

Scopes was declared guilty of teaching evolution during the trial, but the tide of public opinion shifted at the same time and began to flow against the hither-to unassailable, popular Fundamentalism. That shift began during the trial when Darrow unexpectedly called prosecuting attorney William Jennings Bryan to the witness stand to give testimony for the defense. The consensus among historians of this period is that Darrow's scourging cross-examination of Bryan proved to be not only Bryan's undoing, but the undoing of Fundamentalism as well. A segment, from the chapter entitled "Trial of the Century," in Kevin Tierney's biography of Darrow makes this very point:

Darrow had appeared in many trials in which more was at stake than this one. Scopes had little to lose. It was Bryan who would lose most in the end, for though he was not accused and suffered no legal penalty, he lost a reputation, was humiliated in public, and was shown to be a man of clay even to his ardent supporters. Darrow's cross examination and the scorn to which Bryan was subjected in the newspapers . . . broadcast to the nation that his time had passed . . . Bryan appeared trapped, like a dumb animal. The truth was that he was too far removed from the modern world, from intellectual exercise, to put up a decent fight . . . The Scopes trial was an ideal chance for him (Darrow) to defend science, revile

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William Jennings Bryan, and refute fundamentalism, the Bible Belt, and Southern justice all at once.\(^{35}\)

The judge in the case ordered Bryan's testimony stricken from the record the day after it had been given and refused to allow any further questioning. Darrow immediately requested that the jury issue a guilty verdict so that the defense could appeal to a higher court for a reversal. Darrow got his wish and later his reversal.\(^{36}\) Although Bryan had won the court battle, he had lost the war—and lost significantly. The tide of public opinion was with Darrow. Evidence that public opinion had shifted and Fundamentalism had lost face is seen in the fact that when the judge handed down the sentence and set bail at $500, the *Baltimore Sun* paid the bond.\(^{37}\)

Both Bryan and Fundamentalism were disgraced. He and his cause were laughed out of the courtroom and off the center-stage of American Christendom. Bryan died just a few days after the conclusion of the trial. According to Holland:

>Bereft of that charismatic leader who had supplied for their crusade many of the arguments, most of the aphoristic slogans, and certainly the inspirational dynamic, fundamentalists were unable


\(^{37}\) Weinberg, p. 228.
to sustain a unified offensive and progressively lost ground over the ensuing years.  

The fact, however, that Fundamentalism had lost more than just a spokesman during the trial is clearly stated by Holland in a footnote to the above observation: "It may, of course, be challenged that it was less Bryan's death than the devastating ridicule to which his beliefs had been publicly subjected that disheartened his followers and reduced them to relative silence."  

Historian Winthrop Hudson, in referring to this watershed event in the history of American religion, an event he refers to as "a national comedy acted out in the 'monkey trial' at Dayton, Tennessee," also declares that Fundamentalism had met its match and lost. He writes: "Fundamentalism had so alienated public opinion generally that there was little prospect that the Fundamentalists would gain control of any major Protestant denomination."  

Not only did Fundamentalists not gain control in the denominational superstructure, they were unable to maintain what control and influence they had previously enjoyed. The Scopes trial of 1925 and the adverse publicity that accompanied it had brought the Fundamentalist movement in America to an abrupt halt. Most observers thought it to be

38 Holland, Preaching in American History, p. 268.
39 Holland, p. 268.
a permanent one. Fundamentalism, for all practical purposes, seemed dead.

Fundamentalism, however, was not dead. It was injured, near death perhaps, but only in the leading protestant denominations. The Fundamentalists, admitting their defeat in those circles, altered their attack, changed their strategy. Instead of fighting the flow of Modernism in the now liberally-controlled churches, they withdrew. Practicing extreme separatism, they abandoned the liberal churches, abandoned their schools, their seminaries, their mission-boards. But although the Fundamentalist movement abandoned those bastions of liberalism, they did it with resolve—a resolve to establish and build their own independent seminaries and churches. And they did.

But the movement had lost its unity. Cooperation between the independent churches became almost non-existent. Though not dead, the Fundamentalist Movement was staggering, weak, and ineffective. Separatism had led to fragmentation of the movement and eventually to impotence. It remained in this fragmented state, except for a few isolated instances, throughout the thirties, forties, fifties, and much of the sixties.

Resurgence

Fundamentalism is back in the 80's however, and as Martin E. Marty has put it, "back with a
vengeance.  How a fragmented, ineffective movement that was nearly dead for four decades was revived and led to religious prominence and to the front of America's media stage is an intriguing question. It is also a necessary one in any effort to understand the influence and impact of Jerry Falwell and his rhetoric.

Ernest Sandeen, in his 1970 essay entitled "Fundamentalism and American Identity," alluded to the "paradoxical nature and history of American fundamentalism." He noted, "although it is described as a lost cause and a hopeless crusade in every scholarly analysis, it continues to flourish in defiance of the experts." Since Sanders wrote those words, conservative religion in America has continued to grow in size, affluence, influence, and national visibility.

In the last fifteen years, mainline churches (e.g., Methodist, Presbyterian, Episcopalian, etc.) who adhere to liberal Protestant theology have experienced defections and losses in membership resulting in as much as a twenty-five percent. Conservative groups, on the other hand, have been growing at rates as high as four percent each year, a

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rate faster than that of the national population. Consequently, one out of every five Americans today is a Fundamentalist of some persuasion, and Southern Baptist Convention, the nation's largest fundamentalist denomination, has thirteen million members. Even by a cautious estimate, there are at least some forty-five million conservative Christians in America today. And to say the least, they are making themselves felt and noticed.

America has mixed reactions to Fundamentalism's revival. Some welcome it, some merely acknowledge it, and still others openly despise it. The second of these reactions can be seen in the following statement by Richard Newhaus, editor of the Lutheran Forum and project director of the council on Religion and International Affairs:

By the end of the 1920's, fundamentalism had been expelled from the circles of the influential and


respectable, and in truth, retreated almost faster than it could be expelled. . . . In exile, fundamentalism licked its wounds and nurtured its grudges—but it also set about building an alternative "righteous empire." Fundamentalism had lost touch with the elite, but not with millions of believers. After World War II, the mainline became uneasily aware that there was another world out there. The stirrings became, quite unmistakably, a movement. Soon fundamentalists had colleges impertinent enough to apply for accreditation. Some fundamentalists with Ph.D.'s called for dialogue in place of derision, and they seemed to have a knack for the technologies of communication. . . . I believe the New Religious Right is a long-term phenomenon in American life. These people must be engaged as partners in the process of redefining America. 47

On the far end of the spectrum of reactions is the outrage of Professor of Sacred History at the University of Chicago, Martin E. Marty, who sees little difference in the irrational militancy of the fanatical Shi'ite Moslems under the direction of the Ayatollah Khomeini and the Fundamentalist fanatics who follow Jerry Falwell and others. In fact, in describing the influence and antics of Falwell and his followers, Marty remarks, "The echoes of the Iranian militants are loud and clear." 48

More important than the reactions to Fundamentalism's resurgence, however, are the reasons for it. How and why did such a fractured movement unite again and begin exerting the social and political influence it has in the recent


past? In the twenties the unifying agent for the Fundamentalist Movement had been the threat of Liberal theology and Modernism. The commonly perceived threat of the past few years has been, according to the Fundamentalists, the permeating influence of secular humanism. Alarm over this destroyer of society has served to draw the splintered Fundamentalists back together again into the socio-political force they now are.

Especially among television evangelists, secular humanism has become the "talk of the tube." Falwell himself has warned his listeners that it "challenges every principle on which America was founded. It advocates abortion-on-demand, recognition of homosexuals, free use of pornography, legalizing of prostitution and gambling, and free use of drugs, among other things. . . ." 49

Jerry Falwell has since declared the 1980's the decade in which spiritual revival and political renewal will take place in America. "The time has come," says Falwell, "for the Fundamentalists and Evangelicals to return our nation to its spiritual and moral roots." 50 On another occasion, Falwell has stated:


As a pastor and a parent I am calling my fellow American citizens to unite in a moral crusade for righteousness in our generation. . . . I am convinced that God is calling millions of Americans in the so-often silent majority to join in the moral-majority crusade to turn America around in our lifetime."

Falwell has cast the gauntlet and made known his intention to make his movement's influence felt in the land, all the way to the highest political offices in the country. Millions of Americans have seemingly agreed with Falwell that secular humanism is destroying society and Christendom and therefore must be stopped. They have answered his call to engage in a so-called holy war. Again, however, reasons are important. Why have Americans listened to the Fundamentalist prophets of doom, much less responded to their message?

Catholic philosopher Michael Novak provides a partial answer. He sees the New Religious Right as a "natural," and even "healthy" phenomenon. Americans in the 80's have a desire to "get back to basics." The coming decade promises to be a decade inundated with crises of all shapes and sizes--political, economic, social. Consequently, people want to "batten down the hatches." And they are doing so by accepting the answers of the New Religious Right, that is, by accepting the message and the mandate of the Reverend Jerry Falwell. "Modern visions of social and theological

51 Jerry Falwell, Listen, America!, p. 266.
progress," according to Novak, "are giving way to a search for divine transcendence that will sustain people through a dark age of suffering in the world."

John Kater, in his, *Christians On The Right*, lends support to Novak's theory as well as enlarging it. He points out that even if certain Americans are not in complete agreement with the New Religious Right and its "vision for America," many of them have deep concerns about the direction moral and ethical relativism is taking them, their families, and their country. Many parents, especially, wish they had a clearer idea of what they should share with their children about being ethical and moral. There are so many alternatives once one abandons absolutist theology. Consequently, "they long for a way out of the complexities in which so many contemporary problems seem ensnared." And since simplicity is so attractive in these areas of concern, they turn right, because the religious right offers simplicity. Fundamentalism has often offered simplistic answers to simply stated problems.

A further impetus behind the current resurgence of Fundamentalism and the acceptance of that movement by many in America is revealed in the following remarks by Kater:

Most of all, the vision of the New Right is a complete worldview. It is a coherent whole, providing an all encompassing set of moral values, a political philosophy, a religious perspective, and a prescribed social structure—a complete culture—which hangs together, and from which nothing can be removed or altered without causing the whole to collapse. Perhaps this is the most significant aspect of the movement. It offers a total way of understanding and living in the world in which there are no loose ends, no uncertainties, no unanswered questions. No doubt this coherence is part of its appeal.

Other reasons have been offered for the resurgence of conservative Christianity in America. Falwell no doubt would give a theological reason, that is, God is behind it. Others would give political reasons. Some would explain the swell of the New Religious Right by saying it is not as "new" or as much to the "right" as certain of its leaders assert. Some would offer the suggestion that "... the greatest single reason for the growth of fundamentalism is the persistent decline in the habitual optimism of the American people." And still others, such as Dean M. Kelley, would attribute the growth of the New Religious Right to the several consistent and expected characteristics of any genuine Fundamentalist church: commitment.

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54 Kater, Christians, p. 8.
discipline, missionary zeal, absolutism, conformity, and fanaticism. These six characteristics enable a religious group to become strong and to have a major impact on society, Kelly says, and are missing in the liberal, major denominations.  

Obviously, Fundamentalism is back and thriving. Two of the most apparent demonstrations of that resurgence are to be found in the Electric Church and the Moral Majority. We now turn our attention to these two manifestations of the New Religious Right.

The Electric Church

Our churches today find themselves in a situation similar to that of the Roman Catholic Church at the time of the Protestant Reformation. A new expression of religion has come on the scene, and we don't know what to make of it. Five hundred years ago, Rome attempted to ignore it, with excommunication. But the Reformation wouldn't go away, and neither will the new evangelicalism--because the technologies that spawned each of these movements won't go away.

The Reformation could not have happened without the invention of printing, which put the Scriptures into the hands of the laity. Before Luther nailed his 95 theses to the door in Wittenberg, Gutenberg's Bibles had been in print for half a century. By 1500, at least 60 German Towns had printing presses; readers had access to at least 14 editions of the Scriptures. Put another way, the Reformation was the child of printing.

In much the same way, evangelicalism today is

a child of television . . . from a chronological perspective, I suspect television of being the cause, and evangelicalism the effect. Which came first—the resurgence of conservative Christianity or the age of television—is a controversy. Did the television industry give rise to the New Religious Right, or did the advocates of the new Evangelicalism manipulate the air-waves to meet their own needs? The answer suggests both movements fed each other. That is, television had been around for a long time when the leading evangelists began to use it as a means for spreading their "good news." They have had unprecedented success in utilizing the air-waves to build huge evangelical empires. Without television, the New Religious Right would not have the national celebrity that it does, and yet, without the message, conviction, and vision of the New Right's leading evangelists, as well as their original followers, religious broadcasting would still be floundering in the early hours of Sunday morning, with little or no cost to the sponsors—but little or no audience, and little or no effect on society either.

During the decades of the fifties and sixties, religious broadcasters were almost exclusively clergymen.

of leading denominations (Catholics, Protestants, Jews). They received public-service air time--free of charge--to broadcast their programs. The few exceptions included such evangelicals as Billy Graham, Rex Humbard, and occasionally Oral Roberts.

Suddenly, however, religious broadcasting came of age, became "big business." The "Electric Church," as it came to be called, grew in the '70s to be "a booming industry, generating thousands of jobs and an annual cash flow of hundreds of millions of dollars." And this new "big business" was being produced, controlled, and distributed by a cast of newcomers who, almost to a man, tended to be Fundamentalist in religious matters and conservative in political ones. From Jerry Falwell, to James Robison, to Jimmy Swaggart, to Jim Baker, to Pat Robertson, to Rex Humbard, to Kenneth Copeland, to Oral Roberts--their message smacked of Fundamentalism and right-wing politics. And America seemingly could not (and cannot) get enough.

In an average week, nearly 50% of this country's inhabitants turn on a religious broadcast either on television or radio. Only 42% attend a formal church service during that same week. Almost 130 million people are drawn to their radio and television sets each Sunday.

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morning alone.\textsuperscript{61} It is the largest religious gathering in history and it takes place each week in America. No wonder the media has designated this phenomenon, "The Electric Church."

Until the 1970s, local stations were not allowed to accept paid religious broadcasting, but had to provide instead a certain amount of free public-service time to religious broadcasts due to Federal Communications Commission (FCC) regulations. By the '70s, however, the FCC had changed its codes and decided that paid religious programming satisfied the public-service requirement. Consequently, one station after another began selling off its air-time, especially Sunday-slots, to religious broadcasters. At first, the time was cheap. There was little competition for the "religious ghetto" slots on Sunday mornings. Even as late as 1979, Jerry Falwell paid only nine million dollars to broadcast both his television and radio programs over most of the country for the entire year. But by 1980 conditions had changed. During the preceding decade, revenues for television ministries alone went from approximately fifty million to more than six hundred million dollars.\textsuperscript{62}


Not only are expenditures high in this field of religious broadcasting, so is the income. In 1980-81, Oral Roberts garnered $60 million from his television ministry; Pat Robertson $58 million; Jim Baker $51 million; Billy Graham some $30 million; and leading the group—Jerry Falwell with $70 million, "give or take a few dollars." The total amount of donations to the Electric Church last year was in excess of one billion dollars.\(^63\)

In addition to the network affiliates from which these television evangelists buy time and broadcast their programs, there are an additional sixteen hundred radio and forty television stations in this country with a religious format, operating on an independent basis.\(^64\) And religious radio stations are increasing at the rate of nearly one per week,\(^65\) with new television stations not far behind at one per month.\(^66\)

The Christian Broadcasting Network (CBN) fully intends to become the nation's fourth major network. Overseen by

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\(^64\) Tom Bisset, "Religious Broadcasting Comes of Age," Christianity Today, 4 Sept. 1981, p. 34.


its president and founder, Pat Robertson (host of "the 700 Club"—a leading program in the Electric Church repertoire), CBN was the first religious organization to buy and operate a satellite earth station in America. Today it has hookups across the country. CBN provides religious programming for more than three thousand cable systems around the country. In 1977, the industry journal, Broadcasting, named CBN the leader in satellite communications expertise among all stations, both religious and secular.67

Jeffrey K. Hadden and Charles E. Swann in their critical expose of the Electric Church, Prime Time Preachers, categorize the new religious celebrities with several descriptive terms. There are "The Supersavers," Billy Graham, Jerry Falwell, Oral Roberts, and Rex Humbard, whose delivery and methods vary, but whose primary message is salvation from sin. Next, there is "The Mainliner," Robert Schuller, the only mainstream protestant who is "on the marquee of religious broadcasting." The next category is "The Talkies," which includes Jim Bakker of "PTL" and Pat Robertson on "The 700 Club." Their programs constitute the Christian alternative to and version of Johnny Carson's "Tonight Show." In addition, there are "The Entertainers," Jimmy Swaggart, Ross Bagley, and others, who have developed a kind of "musical variety show," that reflects the maxim,

67 Quebedeaux, Authority, p. 57.
"If you can't beat 'em, join 'em." Then there are the "The Teachers," Richard De Haan, Frank Pollard, Paul Van Gorder, who try to deliver the gospel in low profile, with little or no entertainment. "The Rising Stars" category includes James Robison and Kenneth Copeland, newcomers who are talking loud and long, and rising fast to prominence in religious broadcasting. Last, but not least, there is "The Unconventional," a euphemistic term for what Hadden and Swann later refer to as the "lunatic fringe" of religious broadcasting (i.e., the faith-healers). The celebrities of the Electric Church come in all methodological shapes and sizes, but one thing is certain: they all come with the same (or very similar) ideology. They are all hard-core conservatives. Some refer to themselves as Fundamentalists, some as Evangelicals, but they all want and prescribe the same thing—a moral America, a conservative theology, a turn to the right.

Marshall McLuhan once wrote that the coming of television on the world scene is an event that ranks with Johann Gutenberg's invention of movable type. Not only does television make knowledge (as well as entertainment) more accessible and more transferable, it also reduces the world

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and its four billion inhabitants to a "global village." The New Religious Right has taken advantage of television's capabilities and manipulated the air-waves to their conservative ends and advantage. How long Fundamentalist preachers will control or maintain the Electric Church is impossible to tell. That they do now control it, however, is undeniable.

Although the Electric Church and its television/radio evangelists have weekly audiences near the one hundred million mark, they also have their detractors. Especially during and since the 1980 elections, critics of the television ministries have been vociferous in their denunciation of the movement. Some have criticized it from a political perspective and others from a religious one. From the viewpoint of the religious critics, the Electric Church is a menace because it has both depleted the coffers and the membership rolls of the regular churches. There may or may not be justification for making the Electric Church the culprit in the decline of mainstream Protestantism, but two facts continue to trouble traditional churchmen: (1) membership in most traditional, liberal churches is down, and (2) participation in the Electric Church is growing.

69 McLuhan, Understanding, pp. 308,337. Ben Armstrong says the gospel has been made available to 97 percent of the world's population through television and radio broadcasting, Electric Church, pp. 17-18.
steadily (both in number of viewers and dollars raised) and rapidly.\textsuperscript{70}

Everett C. Parker, Director of the United Church of Christ's Office of Communication, claims that "a lot of the money in their mail comes out of . . . liberal churches." And Professor Martin E. Marty, noting that the national headquarters of most major denominations receive about twenty to thirty million dollars a year from their member congregations, notes sarcastically, "Any self-respecting evangelist can do better than that on TV."\textsuperscript{71}

One scholarly Presbyterian churchman poses a criticism from a less material perspective:

What worries me is whether the electronic church is in fact pulling people away from the local churches, whether is is substituting an anonymous and therefore undemanding commitment for the kind of person-to-person involvement and group commitment that is the essence of the local church.\textsuperscript{72}

Falwell and other Electric Church evangelists dismiss such queries, saying that they consistently steer their viewers/listeners toward local churches. But it cannot be denied that involvement in a TV church is simpler, less demanding, and less confining than commitment to a

\textsuperscript{70} It was only 1970 when Falwell's church (including TV/radio broadcasts) had its first $1 million annual budget. Today the annual budget of the Thomas Road Baptist Church and "The Old-Time Gospel Hour" exceeds $100 million.


\textsuperscript{72} Quoted in "Catholic, Protestant, Electric," p. 211.
traditional local church. Perhaps that is part of the appeal of the Electric Church in this last quarter of the twentieth century. Yet, Falwell has built a local church of twenty thousand members in Lynchburg, Virginia, and he has done it by preaching a Fundamentalist gospel and by demanding commitment to and involvement in the local congregation. His record seems to support his denial of the accusation, but then no one has tried to account for the more than 25-50 million viewers Falwell claims are watching his "The Old-Time Gospel Hour" each Sunday. Are they watching it before or after they attend their own local church services?

William F. Fore, secretary for communications for the National Council of Churches, wrote a caustic criticism of the Electric Church in TV Guide in the summer of 1980. He labeled all Electric Church programming as "invisible religion." He contended in that essay that the essence of religion is real human contact. And since that is the one thing the Electric Church cannot provide over the air-waves, there really can be no Electric Church. "There is no such thing," Fore wrote, "as a TV Pastor."  

The strength and influence of the present-day phenomenon called the Electric Church is attested by Fore himself in a subsequent article in Christian Century. He received more than five hundred letters from individuals

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disagreeing with his comments in the TV Guide essay. Most letters criticized the mainstream churches. One person wrote, "When I needed Christ I got social and community planning programs and softball, but no Jesus. People want truth and salvation and assurance." And another said, "So many of the Starched Collar Ministers don't bother to help others after they preach their sermon and shake hands. It's a cold howdy-do and goodbye."74

There are really only two possibilities with regard to the controversy over the so-called Electric Church. Either it and its celebrity evangelists are saying what the people want to hear (i.e., an easy gospel, cheap grace, etc.), or it is telling them what they need to hear—and so they are listening. One thing is certain; given the tremendous resurgence and the wedding of conservative Christianity and conservative politics, as discussed earlier in this paper, as long as the TV Preachers continue to preach a message of "down with liberalism, up with conservatism", many Americans will continue to tune in.

Quebedeaux, in an attempt to analyze and explain the Electric Church, suggests that mass media in general perform various social functions that "influence popular culture as a whole." He lists four of these functions and points out the obvious—the Electric Church has manipulated

each of these functions to its own designs. The first social function that the mass media have the power to perform is the transmission and shaping of a detailed and complete popular movement. The "members" of such a movement do not have to congregate, in the traditional sense of that term, at all. Instead, the message is directed to them through television, radio, books, records, tapes, etc. The message is not only responded to, but financed by the "members" by way of mailed contributions and phone-calls on toll-free telephone numbers. The Electric Church employs this approach on an almost daily basis as it creates and maintains its new religious movement.

A second social function that the mass media are able to perform is "the enforcement of social norms" by its participants. For instance, the mass media expose certain prevailing social sins that are antithetical to the theoretical public morality. After these social ills have been publicized by the mass media, members must take a stand either for or against them. Theoretically at least, awareness of the evils of society, makes passivity impossible. Something must be done. Again, the Electric Church, and specifically its leading exponent, has utilized this function of the mass media to great effect. Falwell informs his TV parishioners about the satanic activities of society, and once informed, they are able to "take a stand." As Quebedeaux concludes, the Electric Church has at this juncture taken "private attitudes" and influenced them by
means of the mass media to "go public." Consequently, public religion becomes "civil religion," as in the case of the New Religious Right.

It is possible, in the third instance, however, for the mass media to perform a social function that in one sense nullifies the one just discussed. The media often create a "narcotic" effect that counteracts the potential for real activism on the part of its members. The message of the mass media often becomes the primary source for "entertainment and therapy" in society. Rather than activating the public to social service, it serves as a therapeutic escape from the real world. The individual mistakes "knowing about problems—being informed and concerned— for doing something about them." Thus, there is a movement, a constituency, in this case for the Electric Church, but how far or how often or how forcefully it moves is unpredictable. Frequent exposure to the Electric Church may, therefore, have either a stimulating or a narcotic effect on the TV parishioner.

Finally, the fourth social function of mass media, and for this study perhaps the most important, is their ability to "confer status on public issues, people, organizations, and movements."75 Certain aspects of society, certain people, certain issues, can actually grow in importance.

75 Quebedeaux, By What Authority, pp. 5-8.
merely because of the amount and kind of coverage given them by the mass media. Whether or not the men behind the Electric Church were aware of this power of the media when they began their onslaught of the air-waves, they have none the less reaped its benefits. They have succeeded in elevating not only their political viewpoints, their likes and dislikes, and their theology to a legitimate national standing, but even their evangelists have become celebrities of substantial renown. The purveyors of truth for the Electric Church may not be right, but they are not ignorant. They have manipulated and monopolized perhaps the most powerful persuasive force in the history of mankind—the electronic mass-media.

Much, if not all, of the success of the New Religious Right must be attributed to television and radio. The electronic media have made the difference. Fundamentalism has always had its outspoken giants: Charles Finney, Dwight L. Moody, William Jennings Bryan, J. Gersham Machen, Billy Sunday, even Billy Graham. They all spoke loud and long for "the faith," but their audiences, though large at times, were limited. Beyond that, they spoke primarily to sympathetic, highly supportive assemblies. Television and radio changed all that, for the better or worse. Television and radio made possible the Electric Church. The Electric Church took advantage of and made possible a weekly national audience, providing uninterrupted dissemination of
Fundamentalist theology and New Right politics in a traditionally reverenced context—the Sunday morning worship service.

Television made it all possible, and the celebrated evangelists of the Electric Church devised a strategy that would work if any would work. Where better to talk about how to heal a nation's spiritual, social, and political ills than in a setting where absolutism is not only typically acceptable, but often expected?

The Electric Church has been the salvation of Fundamentalism in the socio-political realm of the late 20th century. Whether or not it continues to serve the movement so admirably in the future, remains to be seen. It does offer Fundamentalists and their ultra-conservative worldview the ultimate in exposure. But that very exposure, if the country's mood ever begins to shift to the left again, could be Fundamentalism's undoing. It happened once before—in Dayton, Tennessee.

The Moral Majority

In an assessment of the socio-historical setting surrounding Falwell's political preaching, one other institution should be examined, the Moral Majority. It is a significant institution in the present social order of America if only because of the controversy surrounding the organization and its president-founder, Jerry Falwell. The fact that it even exists as a viable organization in
twentieth-century America attests to the conservative state of the American public's psyche.

Moral Majority, Inc., was created in 1979 by Reverend Jerry Falwell and several leading churchmen, as well as New Right politicians. Falwell claims that the crisis of secular humanism in American society made the formation of Moral Majority a necessity. Although created by and made up of religious Fundamentalists, it is, Falwell consistently maintains, a political organization and is not based on any one set of theological considerations.

Membership figures in the organization are controversial. Estimates range from 4,000,000 to 150,000 depending on whether the source is Jerry Falwell or a political adversary. The organization is supposedly a conglomeration of Fundamentalists, Catholics, Protestants, and Jews, including approximately 80,000 pastors, priests, and rabbis.

The organization maintains offices in both Lynchburg, Virginia, and Washington, D.C. Some eight lobbyists represent Moral Majority in the capital. The current annual budget of the organization is between five and six million dollars, which is raised primarily by a direct-mail operation that has become the hallmark of the religious and political entrepreneurs in the New Religious Right.

Moral Majority has taken well-defined and well-publicized stands on a multitude of issues. They make for a
kind of credal statement when viewed together. The organization and its admirers:

--believe in the separation of Church and state,
--are pro-life (anti-abortion),
--are pro-traditional family (anti-homosexual),
--are opposed to illegal drug traffic and usage,
--are opposed to pornography,
--are pro-Israel and Jewish people worldwide,
--believe in a strong national defense (as a deterrent to war),
--support equal rights for women, and
--are anti-Equal Rights Amendment (ERA).

In the same fashion, but much to the surprise of many of the Moral Majority's opponents, Falwell has made the following disclaimers about his organization. Moral Majority:

--is not a political party,
--does not endorse political candidates,
--has no hit lists,
--is not attempting to elect "born again" candidates,
--is not attempting, as a religious organization, to control the government,
--is not committed to denying homosexuals their civil rights,
--and does not view its opponents as an immoral minority.

Moral Majority, Falwell claims, is attempting to bring America back to her original moral, ethical, and religious moorings. The organization claims to attempt such a
restoration in the following manner:

--by educating the citizens of America concerning the important moral issues confronting them,
--by mobilizing the usually silent moral masses,
--by lobbying in the halls of congress,
--by keeping a performance list on the voting habits of American politicians and disseminating that record to the public,
--by training inactive, moral Americans to become moral activists,
--and by encouraging excellence in private schools, both academically and morally.

Moral Majority has not only served to pull divergent strands of religious and political conservatism together into a united front, but it has also succeeded in serving notice on many liberal members of congress that the New Religious Right has the weight of the country behind it.

Many Americans, including some prestigious politicians, are openly supportive of Falwell's Moral Majority. Vice-President Bush, for one, recently endorsed this new wave of religious and political conservatism. Speaking to the annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention in New Orleans, Bush encouraged the crowd not to "fear . . . or . . . condemn" the Religious Right, but to "welcome it" instead.

The vice-president counseled his audience "that careful analysis of the movement, as a whole, does not justify a conclusion that the Religious Right has a serious intention to impose its moral activity" on American society, in any way. In speaking of the Religious Right "as a whole," Bush obviously was including Moral Majority, which serves as the bastion of conservatism for the movement and as its leading political-action arm.

Another politician, Congressman William E. Dannemeyer, who serves California's 39th District in the U.S. House of Representatives, recently aired his views concerning both Moral Majority and the movement it symbolizes. He wrote:

The question of application of Judeo-Christian ethics to public policy has generated serious discussion as well as some shrill and sadly misinformed rhetoric over recent months. Moral Majority has been the most readily available target.

Congressman Dannemeyer continued his support for the Moral Majority:

"How dare they dictate their moral convictions to all Americans!" is the battle cry of those opposed to Moral Majority and similar groups. But if we do not base our legal and political decisions upon Christian morals, upon what morals are they to be based?

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77 "Bush Says Don't Worry . . .," p. 4-B.


79 Dannemeyer, pp. 33-34.
Although not all the founding fathers and authors of the Constitution were Christians, Dannemeyer reminded his readers, nevertheless they lived according to Christian principles and accepted Christianity as the necessary superstructure for society at large. The congressman also quoted John Adams: "Statesmen may play and speculate liberty, but it is religion and morality alone upon which freedom can securely stand. A patriot must be a religious Man."

To be sure two elected officials do not a true moral majority make. Yet these two isolated examples of support for the Moral Majority are significant in this investigation of the socio-historical setting in which Falwell and his associates operate. The fact that two politicians, two Americans who need the support of their American public in order to survive in politically would take such stands and only a few months before mid-term elections at that—is a significant fact. Both of these men, one a vice-president with probable presidential aspirations, are not braving the tide of American sentiment; they are flowing with it.

Conservatism has been revived in the 1980s, with the help of the Electric Church and its leading evangelists, and these men know it. Though there is no guarantee as to how long the New Religious Right will hold sway, the

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80 Dannemeyer, p. 33.
Vice President of the United States and a U.S Congressman of some stature apparently believe that the mood of the country at the present is both religiously and politically oriented to the right, and furthermore they are counting on it staying that way at least in the foreseeable future. As Richard Newhaus suggested recently: "The movement commonly referred to by the generic name Moral Majority is likely to be with us for a long time."  

None of this means, however, that Moral Majority is not being criticized from certain sectors. There are detractors, and they are numerous and vocal. Some are avowed religious conservatives themselves. For instance, Senator Mark Hatfield of Oregon, himself a "born again" Baptist, has mixed emotions about the Moral Majority. He is pleased that many religious conservatives are ceasing their separatism and getting into politics. But he responds to the sentiment of many in the New Religious Right that "liberal politics is inconsistent with Christianity" by

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81 Richard John Newhaus, "Who, Now, Will Shape the Meaning of America?", Christianity Today, 19 March 1982, p. 17. Newhaus makes a convincing case for the "sacred canopy" that exists over America in the minds and hearts of her citizens. Suggesting that the nation's people as a whole are not as religiously right as their general support for the platforms of the Moral Majority might at first imply, nevertheless they are supporting the general move to the moral right because their traditional, almost innate, Christian and Jewish perspectives have been consistently ignored by a liberal governmental machine for far too long. They are in rebellion. They do not seek a Christian kingdom, as Falwell, et al., but rather a kingdom reflective of their Christian traditions, etc.
denouncing such attitudes as "the height of arrogance" and "a throwback to the Middle Ages, when the church and state were welded." \(^{82}\)

Another leading evangelical, Billy Graham, is critical of the involvement of Jerry Falwell and other ministers in the political sphere. Such a stance, however, is quite a reversal for the Reverend Graham. In fact, the rhetoric that catapulted Graham to widespread prominence in the '50s and '60s was anything but apolitical. "Communism is inspired, directed and motivated by the Devil himself," Graham once proclaimed from his pulpit. "America is at a crossroad," he continued. "Will we turn to the left-wingers and atheists, or will we turn to the right and embrace the cross?" \(^{83}\)

Graham's message has obviously changed. He now claims: "It was a mistake to identify the Kingdom of God with the American way of life." "Evangelists," he says, "can't be closely identified with any particular party or person." \(^{84}\)

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\(^{84}\) Graham claims in this article that his views have mellowed concerning the role of religion in politics. It is legitimate, however, to suspect that since he did not mellow until the post-Watergate era, perhaps his naive, embarrassing, and personally damaging support of Richard Nixon during the scandal taught him a practical lesson: religion and politics do not mix—not for an evangelical leader who tries to enlist financial support from a multitude of differing public sectors.
In the reference to Falwell and the New Religious Right, Graham remarks:

liberals organized in the '60's, and conservatives certainly have a right to organize in the '80's, but it would disturb me if there was a wedding between the religious fundamentalists and the political right. The hard right has no interest in religion except to manipulate it.

The critical objections and reservations of the Reverend Graham concerning Falwell and his Moral Majority seem genuine enough, even altruistic. Most of Falwell's detractors are neither as gracious or as accommodating. Some are bitter; many are overtly hostile. Few have anything positive to say about the man, his methods, or his Moral Majority. One bumper sticker, extant since the 1980 elections, reads: "The Moral Majority is neither." The slogan may describe the feelings of many liberal politicians and churchmen, as well as higher-ups in Hollywood. They see Falwell's tactics as high-handed, narrow-minded, and surprisingly enough, unethical.

Television producer Norman Lear, creator of "Soap," "All in the Family," and "Mary Hartman, Mary Hartman," has founded an organization called "People for the American Way." Its sole purpose is to stop movements like Moral Majority. Lear has gathered into his anti-Falwell fold such luminaries as Father Theodor Hesburgh, president of Notre Dame University; Reverend William Howard, president of the

85 Michaels, p. 6.
National Council of Churches; Lady Bird Johnson; Walter Cronkite; and former president Gerald Ford. Lear so opposes Falwell and the Moral Majority that he put up $200,000 of his own money and raised several million more to finance television commercials that attack the New Religious Right by advocating and promoting diversity of conviction and freedom of thought.

One of Lear's commercials is called, "Eggs." In it, various faces are flashed across the television screen, uttering such words as:

"What kind of eggs do I like? I'll tell you what I like. I love Western omelettes."

"Eggs with onions in 'em. That's a horrible thought."

"I like eggs with cream cheese."

"That's kind of disgusting."

"I can't eat eggs."

"They're loaded with cholesterol."

"I still prefer my omelette."

"Okay, you could, but I still like 'em sunny side up, and I'm not going to change."

As the commercial ends, a voice says: "The right to have and express your own opinions. Freedom of thought. That's the American way."  

Again, most of Falwell's detractors are not nearly as ingenious, or indirect, in their criticisms. The American

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Civil Liberties Union, for example, views the religious patriotism of the Moral Majority as un-American and in violation of certain Constitutional rights and freedoms. In their opinion, the Moral Majority:

violates every principle of liberty that underlies the American system of government. It is intolerant. It stands against the First Amendment guarantees of freedom of expression and separation of church and state. It threatens academic freedom. And it denies to whole groups of people the equal protection of the laws. . . . In fact, the new evangelicals are a radical anti-Bill-of-Rights movement. They seek not to preserve traditional American values but to overthrow them. 87

Even some of the Jewish leaders in the country have begun to castigate Falwell and the Moral Majority. Although Falwell has been consistent in his proclamations that the Jews are God's chosen people and Israel his favored nation, some Jews hear his pro-Jewish statements but fear an innate racism because of his affiliation with the political right. Rabbi Alexander Schindler, the president of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, has openly appealed to both Jews and Christians to oppose "the chilling power of the radical right." He has attacked the platform policies of the Moral Majority and encouraged

Jewish people to fight to "try and stem the influence of fundamentalism" in America. Schindler told the board of directors of Reformed Judaism that it was "no coincidence that the use of right-wing Christian Fundamentalism has been accompanied by the most serious outbreak of anti-Semitism in America since the outbreak of World Way II" (referring to a remark by Reverend Bailey Smith, then president of the Southern Baptist Convention, that "God Almighty does not hear the prayer of a Jew.").

The liberal religious journal, The Christian Century, has also lashed out at Falwell's Moral Majority. "Behind the Moral Majority's principles lurks the whip hand of a coercive government." writes editor Allan J. Lichtman. He adds:

To be "pro-life" in the New Right's scheme is simply to deny women the right to choose an abortion; to be "pro-family" is to crush the women's movement, manipulate education, and censor the media; to be "pro-morality" is to jail homosexuals, pornographers and drug users; to be "pro-American" is to suppress dissent against the favored policies of business and the military.

Apparently many people in American society are either frightened or threatened by Falwell and the movement he

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symbolizes. Much of the anti-Falwell, anti-Moral Majority rhetoric rivals the caustic style and bitterness of Falwell's own speech habits. The controversy brewing between conservative and liberal forces in the country cannot be ignored or easily dismissed. It is a conflict of ideologies that runs deep into the nerve-endings of both constituencies.  

And yet, the ideologies and the conflict between them have been present in America since the government began and politicians started wooing the public. Why now, in the last two decades of the twentieth century, has the controversy soared to unprecedented levels? There is no simple answer to that question. This chapter has attempted to provide strands of the answer while at the same time pointing out the paradox of the socio-political scene in America today.

One thing is certain, the New Religious Right, aided by the Electric Church and spearheaded by the Moral Majority, is a powerful force in the 1980's. It is a force to be contended with (as the present controversy proves). It did not arise overnight; it will not dissipate that way. Jerry Falwell has captured a national forum, the Electric Church; through it he has built a moneyed power base; and

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90 See Everett Ladd, Jr., "What the Polls Tell Us," The Wilson Quarterly 3, (1979), 73-83, for an interesting compendium of polling statistics gathered from non-religious sources indicating a drastic shift to the right by the American public.
consequently he has quickened the conscience and the pace of a great conservative electorate. He intends, through "The Old-Time Gospel Hour" and the Moral Majority, Incorporated, to make a difference. Towards that end Falwell has come a long way. How far and how long he will travel is a matter yet to be determined. The following chapters will analyze a part of his rhetoric, his political preaching, that has brought him and his movement to their present position in American culture.


CHAPTER IV

AUDIENCES AND OCCASION

One of the first duties of the public address critic, if he is to comprehend the efficacy of a speaker, analyze his rhetoric, or judge and assess the speaker's prowess, is to evaluate the nature of a specific audience... and to unearth the nature of the occasion

Brembeck and Howell make it clear why such an analysis is imperative as they describe the preliminary activities of the public speaker with regard to invention and arrangement. They write:

Any speech must be centered on the audience and occasion. It must be developed and presented in terms of the experiences, attitudes, sentiment, emotions, and desires of the audience and with full regard for the convention, purposes, and physical setting of the speech occasion. Analyses of these factors are prerequisite to the selection of attention elements, basic appeals, and type of organization to be used in the speech. In short, a speech must be tailored specifically in order to fit the peculiar demands of each occasion and audience.

Did Falwell know his audiences? Had he analyzed them?

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Did he adapt to their peculiar needs and dispositions? This chapter will analyze the audiences to which Falwell delivered the five sermons examined in this dissertation. In addition, the specific occasions on which they were spoken will be described.

**Audiences**

Rhetorical criticism demands that attention be given to the specific audience in a speech transaction. Thonssen, Baird, and Braden write:

> responsibility of critical appraisal depends heavily upon the critic's ability to understand the historical trends, the motivating forces, the immediate occasion, and most of all the composition and demands of the audience.  

What was the composition of the audiences to which Falwell spoke and what were the demands they placed upon him? On each occasion as Dr. Falwell spoke he was actually addressing two distinct audiences: the immediate audience comprised of the members at Thomas Road Baptist Church in Lynchburg, Virginia, and the remote audience composed of those viewers across the country who were watching the nationally televised broadcast of "The Old-Time Gospel Hour." Each will be examined, first the immediate (congregational) audience and then the remote (national audience. What was the composition of those

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audiences? How did they view Falwell and his propositions? Were they hostile, sympathetic, neutral, or apathetic? Were the audiences homogeneous in composition or were they comprised of auditors of disparate backgrounds and philosophical disposition? These questions must be answered to evaluate Falwell's rhetorical adaptation to his listeners.

Lynchburg, Virginia, is a city of 66,000 people. Falwell's Thomas Road Baptist Church is a congregation of more than twenty thousand members, today. At the time the speeches were delivered its membership numbered nine thousand. Since nearly one of every three citizens of Lynchburg today is also a member of Thomas Road (and one of six was in 1981), a demographic overview of the city is a reasonable place to begin an analysis of the immediate audience.

Located in the geographical center of the state, Lynchburg is a town of blue collar workers. It is "... Virginia's most industrial city. A higher percentage of workers are involved in manufacturing than in any other Virginia city." Lynchburg began as a tobacco trading center in the 1800's. Modern industry in the city includes

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6 Lynchburg was named for John Lynch who operated a ferry on the James River and owned the original townsite.
nuclear energy, communications systems, paper products, textiles, metal castings, pharmaceuticals, shoes, metal products, machinery, and roto gravure printing, as well as twenty trucking firms. More than 29,000 adults are employed in more than 200 manufacturing concerns.

As one might expect in a "blue-collar" town, conservative religion plays an important role in the life of its citizenry. There are 141 churches in Lynchburg. Fifty-three of those institutions are Baptist. Another thirty-five consist of Pentecostal churches, Christian churches, or Churches of Christ, institutions more conservative in many ways than Baptist groups.

Lynchburg is also a conservative community politically. The state senators and representatives from the three districts covered by the city are all Republican. The predominantly conservative vote in Lynchburg helped to elect the state's two U.S. Senators as well. 7

Educationally, Lynchburg is a conservative city, too. 8 Of the nine private elementary and secondary schools in the

Charles Lynch, John's brother, later established a court of sorts which tried suspected tories and doled out savage punishments, usually hangings. The practice gave rise to the terms lynching and lynch law.


8 Lynchburg is progressive with regard to its completion rate. More than 90% of the high school students graduate, and 68% of those who graduate continue their studies at institutions of higher learning. Lynchburg Life, p. 52; and Interview: LaLone.
town, seven are religiously affiliated. More than 3,500 of the total student population of 13,000 attend private, church-sponsored academies (1,430 at Falwell's Lynchburg Christian Academy). In addition, of the seven colleges and universities in Lynchburg, four are religiously affiliated.

Thomas Road Baptist Church reflects the basic composition of the community in which it is located. It is largely a "blue-collar" congregation with regard to its resident-members. Due to its ministries at Liberty Baptist College and Liberty Baptist Seminary, however, there is also a large constituency of college students, professors, and staff. The church is largely a "white" church. Very few blacks attend Thomas Road. Those who do are usually students at LBC. In this respect, Falwell's congregation is not representative of the community, since twenty-three percent of Lynchburg's citizens are black.

Falwell's immediate audience numbers approximately 12,000 each Sunday morning. 9 Two thirds of that number are blue-collar, the final third either students or white-collar professionals. The entire 12,000, however, are ardent conservatives religiously, politically, and considering the absence of blacks and minorities, probably socially. They clearly appreciate Falwell. His preaching is too narrow and too demanding for casual followers. The members of Thomas Road Baptist Church think as Falwell thinks. He does not so

9 Although in 1979 when the five sermons being analyzed were delivered, it numbered approximately 10,000.
much convince them of his positions as he confirms their own. It is a loyal, receptive audience.

There is, however, another audience to which Falwell preached in 1979 and to which he still preaches. According to Falwell and his associates, it is an audience twenty-five million and growing, which includes both the believer and the cynic, the theist and the atheist. In truth, however, it is an audience nearly identical to the one at Thomas Road: conservative, blue-collar, theistic, and fanatically loyal,\(^\text{10}\) and perhaps much smaller than claimed.

There is considerable confusion and contradiction concerning the actual size of Falwell's television audience. In *Prime Time Preachers*, authors Hadden and Swann write:

During the winter and spring of 1980, Jerry Falwell proclaimed widely that 25 million people watched "The Old-Time Gospel Hour" every week. Then, in the middle of July, at the Republican National Convention in Detroit, while Falwell was engaged in some heavy politicking over the platform and the vice-presidential choice, the word slipped out from one of his associates that "OTGH" really had an audience of 50 million viewers! How did Jerry Falwell get a viewing audience of 50 million? The same way he got 25 million: by proclamation.\(^\text{11}\)

Arbitron, a television research organization cited by Hadden and Swann, give Falwell a weekly audience of 1,455,720 in February of 1980. There is an obvious

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\(^{10}\) Evidenced by the more than 80 million dollars they will contribute in 1983; Telephone interview: Norman; Interview, Kay Teboe.

discrepancy between the twenty million viewers Falwell suggests and the figure Arbitron projects. However, one reason for the difference becomes obvious when one analyzes Arbitron's system of rating approach. Arbitron's numbers are undoubtedly low since their service uses negligible data from the cable systems. In 1980 there were nearly 4,200 operating cable systems in the United States. Those systems account for fifteen million subscribers, almost twenty percent of all American households. Add to that the viewers gained from Armed Services broadcasts, and Falwell's audience grows enormously. It is impossible to number Falwell's T.V. audience accurately. Since the vast majority of his $80 million annual budget is supplied by $10 and $20 contributions, one would suppose an audience considerably larger than one-and-a-half million viewers.

The size of Falwell's audience is difficult to confirm; its composition is not. It is, like the Thomas Road audience, a homogeneous group. According to a 1980 Gallup survey, eighty-five percent of electric church viewers profess "born-again" status. The unconverted and

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12 Hadden and Swann, p. 51.

13 The weekly contribution of more than $50,000 of the Thomas Road Baptist Church is not a part of Falwell's $80 million annual operating budget.

14 Even among Falwell's critics there are discrepancies. Hadden and Swann, based on Arbitron data rank Falwell sixth in media visibility (p. 52) while Richard Quebedeaux ranks hims first, By What Authority: The Rise of Personality Cults in American Christianity (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1982), p. 56.
unchurched are a tiny minority.  

Beyond this, Falwell's greatest audience is southern, fundamentalist, located demographically in the smaller towns and rural areas of America, white, middle to lower class blue-collar workers. They almost undoubtedly, like their Thomas Road counterparts, have a homogeneity of beliefs and convictions. They accept the inspiration, authority, and infallibility of the Bible. They believe in a literal sinners' hell and saints' heaven. They believe in the deity of Jesus Christ and the atoning efficacy of his death on a Roman cross.

Perhaps as important as the religious homogeneity of Falwell's audience is their political oneness. They, and other electric church viewers like them, have been tagged "the New Religious Right." They are religiously conservative and politically stand far right of center. They think government is too liberal, too restrictive, and too big. The greatest point of agreement is found, however, in the conviction that politicians have become too much concerned with what their immediate constituents think and too little concerned with what God thinks.

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16 More than 65% of Falwell's T.V. audience is found in the south or southwest, Telephone interview: Norman.

They are convinced that either politicians become more God-fearing and America becomes more righteous or else the end is near. Their rallying point is based on Proverbs 14:34, "Righteousness exalteth a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people." Righteousness, to this audience, is a very definable term. It means being anti-abortion, anti-ERA, anti-welfare, anti-labor, anti-pornography, anti-homosexuality, anti-nuclear disarmament, pro-defense, pro-family, pro-moral, pro-American, and pro-Israel.18

In summary, Falwell knew his audiences, both immediate (Thomas Road) and remote (T.V.). They were virtually the same. Their composition was similar, their presuppositions alike, their hostility toward the established liberalism of the past two decades identical.

Greater than their affinity for each other, however, was their initial agreement with Falwell. They were with him. Falwell knew it. He spent much more time asserting than justifying his conclusions. His audiences were already aligned with him. They were not looking for proof but for confirmation. Falwell gave them what they were looking for.

Wayne Minnick, in The Art of Persuasion, writes: "Men are strongly inclined to accept as probably true, statements made by persons whom they admire and respect."19

18 Telephone interview: Norman; Falwell.

converse of that statement also seems reasonable: Men are strongly inclined to admire and respect that person who makes statements they accept as true. By using material which his hearers were not only well-acquainted with but also well-disposed to, Falwell gave his audiences what they expected (because they knew him), what they wanted (because of their philosophical stance), and what they needed (to solidify and mobilize the forces of the New Religious Right). He no doubt increased his credibility as well.

Falwell described his audience best when he told this writer:

I think the country has been moving to the right morally, spiritually, politically, and theologically since 1960 or the early sixties anyway. I feel that the seventies, the late seventies, were the era, the time of the nation's bottoming out of its moral tail-spin and moving upward, back towards traditional values. I feel that with every passing day the country's becoming more conservative on these views and values. I feel that I have become one of the prime spokesmen because I was able, I had been preaching these things through the years, I was able to see where the wind of God was blowing and to articulate what people were thinking but did not know how to define. When I began to say the things I was saying from a national platform, the nation began to say many of them. That's what I believe. That's what I feel we must do. So, as a result we have twenty million people who support us, who write to us, who pray for us and consider themselves a part of our movement.\(^{20}\)

\(^{20}\) Personal interview: Falwell.
Occasion

Since every judgment of a public speech contains a historical constituent, the critic is peculiarly concerned with determining the nature of the setting in which the speaker performed.\textsuperscript{21}

The broad socio-historical setting of Falwell's preaching was discussed in the previous chapter. The remainder of this chapter, then, delineates the specific occasion involved. Falwell had two major objectives as he preached the corpus of sermons being analyzed in this dissertation: he wanted to present his religio-political views and programs (specifically Moral Majority), and he wanted to discredit the programs and views of his opponents and detractors. In addition, a prevailing theme was ever present: repentance. But Falwell's call to repentance was a national altar-call, not merely an individual one. He finds both his proof-text and his motivation for the theme of pentitence in II Chronicles 7:14. It reads:

\begin{quote}
If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.
\end{quote}


\textsuperscript{21} Thonssen, Baird, and Braden, p. 347.
Falwell verbally painted his prophet of doom scenarios to shock his audiences into awareness and to mobilize support for his newly organized Moral Majority.22

An excerpt from Aflame for God provides insight into Falwell's thinking and motivation as he moved toward political involvement and announced the creation of his political action group, Moral Majority.

Back in the sixties I was criticizing pastors who were taking time out of their pulpits to involve themselves in the Civil Rights movement or any other political venture. I said you're wasting your time from what you're called to do. Now I find myself doing the same thing and for the same reasons they did. Things began to happen. The invasion of humanism into the public school system began to alarm us back in the sixties. Then the Roe vs. Wade Supreme Court decision of 1973 and abortion-on-demand shook me up. Then adding to that the gradual regulation of various things it became very apparent the federal government was going in the wrong direction and if allowed would be harrassing non-public schools, of which I have one of 16,000 right now. So step by step we became convinced we must get involved if we're going to continue what we're doing inside the church building.23

Again, in a lengthy but insightful quotation from the very first sermon in this corpus, Falwell's motivation for preaching this series of political sermons and for urging his hearers to join hands with him in Moral Majority, is evident. Falwell's first words were:

There are many of us at this time in the history of our nation who share a deep concern and

22 The first sermon, "America and Work;" announced the formation of Moral Majority and invited listeners and viewers to become members.

a deep burden for our country. I don't think that we are unduly concerned when we say that we see on the horizon some very dark clouds. We see our country for the first time becoming a second rate nation militarily. We hear all kinds of explanations and excuses for our failure to keep up with the Soviet Union. We are told that there's not going to be a war anyhow and we need to unilaterally disarm and trust the communists.

We're also concerned about the economic disintegration of our country. There are only three nations in the world where the American dollar is worth more than the local currency. All the rest of the nations have currency that supercedes the value of ours. The dollar used to be something special in the world. Economically, you know and I know, our country is faltering.

And then we look at the social problems in America. We see on every hand an almost impossible situation. The home is falling apart. The U.S. Census Bureau reports that of all the children born in the United States last year, 1978, forty-five percent of them will grow up in broken homes. And the home is the bullwark of a civilized society.

And then more important and more serious than all of that. We see the spiritual decay of our country. And we see that values, moral values that were once sacred and dear to this republic are now laughed at and in prime-time television they are made parts of situation comedy.

Homosexuality is considered an alternate life style instead of perversion as it is. And the home is a trial and error sort of thing, some kind of thing. Marriage, well it's been completely laughed out of style by many and what used to be called common-law marriage is even considered old-fashioned. Why have any marriage at all. Just live together. And so today our country is becoming very immoral. Situation ethics, is replacing Bible morality.

And we look at all of our various areas in America where once we were strong and see that our flanks are open. I do not believe that America has any particular claim on God and God's protection except as we fit into God's plan for world evangelization. The only thing that's dear to God is giving the Gospel of His dear Son to every creature, every person. And if in fact we are not a free land, a free nation, in which there is an active vital Bible believing constituency of people who are distributing the Gospel to the world then I think we will cease to be important to God.
I'm saying that I think it's high time that the people of God in America, the grass roots Christian family in America, joined hands and hearts together and said we're not going to have this anymore. . . . I think the Christian public in America is the hope of reversing the trends of decay in our republic. We didn't expect the liberals to do it and the left wingers certainly aren't going to do it and the pornographers and the smut peddlers aren't going to do it. So we've got to get the preachers of the Gospel to begin preaching the right things, and many of them are. And we've got to begin organizing God's people everywhere. And for that reason I'm announcing today that we're organizing a group called the Moral Majority. . . . We're asking people everywhere to join hands with us in this Moral Majority . . . who will stand on the side of sensibility, Bible morality, in calling this nation back to God and back to values, because as far as I'm concerned, Proverbs 14:34 is the key. Solomon said, "Righteousness exaltesth a nation but sin is a reproach to any people."  

Falwell felt compelled to speak out against the moral decline he believed the nation was experiencing and to suggest a remedy for such spiritual malaise. He believed the occasion called for strong medicine. His prescription was two-fold: repent (give up evil) and get involved in the moral crusade for right (fight evil). Moral Majority, in Falwell's way of thinking, was the necessary instrument for accomplishing the latter objective.

The general nature of the occasion of the "America" sermons having been discussed, it remains to describe the specific nature of it as well, including a description of

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24 Copy of speech entitled "America and Work," delivered on "The Old-Time Gospel Hour," from Thomas Road Baptist Church, 1 July 1979, Lynchburg, Virginia, hereafter referred to as "America and Work" Speech.
The sermons were delivered during the regular, Sunday morning worship services of the Thomas Road Baptist Church in Lynchburg, Virginia and were then aired on more than 320 television stations and 270 radio stations through her national, weekly broadcast, "The Old-Time Gospel Hour." Unlike many other Electric Church broadcasts, "The Old-Time Gospel Hour" is an unedited program. Although the hour-long broadcast did include a fair share of soloists, ensembles, and guest testimonials, it was still essentially nothing more than the regular Sunday morning service of a Baptist congregation.

There was no special introduction of Falwell except the familiar, "Our Pastor, Dr. Falwell," by the song director and co-pastor, Jim Moon. After the initial introduction, Falwell was up and down, back-and-forth to the pulpit a half dozen times or more before he delivered the prepared sermons. Each trip to the pulpit would involve a request for funds or a public relations brief, a mini-sermon or sermon preview, or an introduction of some visiting luminary. Once Falwell began to preach, his sermons, as always, were twenty-five to thirty minutes in length.25

The viewers of "The Old-Time Gospel Hour" broadcast heard the same message as those seated in the Thomas Road church. They also saw virtually the same thing. The Thomas Road Baptist Church is a very functional, but very simple

25 Personal interview: Falwell.
structure. There are no ecclesiastical icons evident. Within the octagonal walls of the auditorium approximately 4,500 people can be seated. The auditorium is elegant, but not high-church. Decorated in pastel blues, the pews are tiered and sloped toward the focal point at the front of the auditorium: the massive pulpit which sits elevated on the large three-sided podium. There is little doubt about where attention should be directed inside Thomas Road. The pulpit, and whoever occupies it, is the center of attention.

Falwell used that highly visible pulpit in 1979 to deliver the "America" sermons in hopes of salvaging the country from the ravages of humanism. The next chapter of this paper will investigate and analyze the forms of support Falwell used to accomplish his goal.
CHAPTER V
FORMS OF SUPPORT

This chapter attempts to analyze Jerry Falwell's choice and use of supporting materials in his speeches. Aristotle acknowledged three modes of proof available to the speaker. His classification of the forms of support included ethos, pathos, and logos:

The first kind resides in the character of the speaker [ethos]; the second consists in producing a certain attitude in the hearer [pathos]. The third pertains to the argument proper [logos]. . . . The character [ethos] of the speaker is a cause of persuasion when the speech is so uttered as to make him worthy of belief; . . . Secondly, persuasion is effected through the audience, when they are brought by the speech into a state of emotion; . . . Thirdly, persuasion is effected by the arguments, when we demonstrate the truth, real or apparent, by such means as inhere in particular cases.

This three-fold Aristotelian division of ethical [ethos], emotional [pathos], and logical [logos] proof provides the framework for the analysis of the forms of support which Falwell employed.

Ethical proofs are those appeals which are designed to improve the speaker's image or credibility before his audience. Aristotle listed three sources of personal credibility. He wrote, "... the sources of our trust are three, ... namely intelligence, character, and good will." Modern rhetoricians add two others: reputation and personal appearance. Falwell's use, then, of ethical appeal will be discussed according to the following classification and in this order: character, intelligence, good will, reputation, and personal appearance.

Character

For persuasion of an audience to occur, they must be convinced that the speaker is a man of virtue and honesty. Robert Cathcart alludes to this need for probity on the part of the speaker when he writes:

The very situations which produce persuasive discourse - doubt, controversy, alternatives, contingencies - frequently make it impossible to produce agreement by reasoning and evidence alone. Audiences, feeling this and knowing that they must get most of the facts from others, depend a great amount on the reputation of the speaker.

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2 Aristotle, pp. 91-92.

deal on the trustworthiness . . . of the communicator.

Aristotle elaborates further on the persuasive appeal of the speaker's character:

It is not true, as some writers on the art maintain, that the probity of the speaker contributes nothing to his persuasiveness; on the contrary, we might almost affirm that his character is the most potent of all means to persuasion.

Did Falwell attempt to enhance his ethos with his audiences by presenting himself as a man of character? Thonssen, Baird, and Braden list at least six ways in which a speaker may focus attention on his good character:

In general, a speaker focuses attention on the probity of his character if he (1) associates either himself or his message with what is virtuous and elevated; (2) bestows, with propriety, tempered praise upon himself, his client, his cause; (3) links the opponent or the opponent's cause with what is not virtuous; (4) removes or minimizes unfavorable impressions of himself or his cause previously established by his opponent; (5) relies heavily upon authority derived from his personal experience; (6) creates the impression of being completely sincere in his undertaking.

Falwell's sermons are examined according to these principles in order to determine the extent to

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4 Cathcart, pp. 46-47.
5 Aristotle, p. 9.
6 Thonssen, pp. 458-459.
which his perceived character functioned as an ethical appeal.

In none of the five speeches which form the basis of this study did Falwell ever directly praise his own character. He did, however, on numerous occasions employ the means just listed in order to focus attention on his good character. Although he especially favored two, linking the opponent with that which is not virtuous and removing or minimizing unfavorable impressions of himself or his cause, he used them all to his advantage.

Falwell often associated himself with that which is virtuous and elevated. For example, in the sermon "America and Work," as he discussed unemployment and the economy, he associated himself with the hard-working, God-fearing, responsible citizen who is going to find a way to support himself and his family even when times are difficult.

I think that generally speaking in North America there are enough jobs to go around. There are not enough positions, but there are plenty of jobs. And many people today who are drawing rocking chair money, something for nothing, could have had a number of jobs but felt those jobs would be below their dignity. . . . I want to tell you that I'd rather dig a ditch and earn money for the food for my family than to get a handout when that job was available and I wouldn't take it. There is nothing wrong with blisters on your hands.7

In the same sermon he identified his teaching with "Bible morality" and himself as a preacher who stands against the evils of society. At the same time he

7 "America and Work."
associated his opponent with that which was not virtuous: limitation of first amendment rights.

Would you believe that in a free land when I mentioned homosexuality stations cut us off the air? When I mentioned abortion stations cut us off the air. In a free land. At night time, in prime-time, the immoral side of every issue is presented, but when a preacher of the Gospel preaches Bible morality on national television, somebody out there who doesn't believe in freedom of speech except when they're talking, pulls the plug and you're off.

Falwell occasionally, though much less frequently, bestowed praise upon himself and his cause. On most occasions, the praise is indirect yet obvious. A case in point is found in the sermon "America and Government" as he attempts to deal with his critics and their commitment to destroy his ministry.

It isn't Jerry Falwell you need to stop. It's this Bible that you need to burn. There are lots of folks who've tried to do that. They're all dead and in Hell. You need to stop God.

In other places, however, he relied on direct praise of both himself and his ministry, as in this lengthy statement concerning a Wall Street Journal article about the Electric Church which featured the work of Falwell and "The Old-Time Gospel Hour."

The question that has been asked in many articles since then, magazines, newspapers, etcetera, has been, "Do you think that the Electric Church is

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8 "America and Work."

9 Copy of Speech entitled "America and Government" delivered on "The Old-Time Gospel Hour," from Thomas Road Baptist Church, 8 July 1979, Lynchburg, Virginia, hereafter referred to as "America and Government."
damaging and injuring local churches anywhere?"
My answer is just the opposite. I believe with all my heart that any pastor, such as is the case right here, who faithfully preaches the Bible as the word of God and is inviting men and women to know Jesus Christ, any pastor that exalts Christ and honors the word of preaching on television and radio is strengthening the hands of pastors all over the land.

Later, in the same sermon, Falwell continued to praise the work of himself and the Thomas Road Baptist Church, becoming even more direct.

I have a friend in New England who went there to start a church. One of our boys. And he said, "You know, I'd go out and knock on a door and right away the person who would answer the door would say, 'Now what are you?'" And for fear that this might be some cult person knocking on the door the one who lived there would say, "I don't know whether I want to let you in or not. Tell me what you believe." And he said, "I always say to that person, "Well, have you ever watched The Old Time Gospel Hour on television? Have you ever listened to Jerry Falwell from Lynchburg?" And almost invariably they'd say, "Yes, I've seen that program." "Well that's what we believe and that's what we teach and preach. That's the kind of church we want to start." And almost every time, they get invited in because they're able to identify that we are not a cult. We're not some religious nuts. We are traditional Bible-believing people who are committed to winning this world for Jesus Christ through the local church.

Still later in the same sermon, Falwell displayed no moderation at all when he praised the immensity of his broadcast. "We're on two-hundred-and-seventy-radio
stations every day, Monday through Friday," he claimed. "We're on three-hundred-and-twenty television stations." He then continued: "Lawrence Welk has the second largest network of stations in the United States with two-hundred-and-four outlets. So a hundred-sixteen more outlets carry 'The Old Time Gospel Hour' than the next largest program of any kind, secular or religious."

An examination of the five sermons in this study suggests that Falwell often enhanced his own character by linking his opponents with that which was not virtuous. He employed this device more than any other in his attempt to present himself and his cause in the best possible light. He most often associated the liberals in the country, both political and theological, with the unvirtuous. For example, in "America and Work," he grouped all liberals in the same camp with smut peddlers and pornographers when he said: "I think the Christian public in America is the only hope of reversing the trends of decay in our republic. We didn't expect the liberals to do it and left-wingers certainly aren't going to do it and the pornographers and smut-peddlers are not going to do it."

In another sermon, Falwell, in an effort to castigate the leaders of the gay-rights movement, associated them with the destructive elements in society. He said:

Thank God what I saw on television the other day is not really what America's like. A man got

12 "America and the Local Church."
seven years for murdering the mayor and a supervisor of the city of San Francisco, a homosexual supervisor. He got seven years in a penitentiary. I'm not going to debate whether that was enough or not enough time, but it was the homosexual community that came out and burned the police cars, and injured the police, and destroyed buildings; those very kind, gracious, non-militant homosexuals who cannot reproduce and who are against the home, the family, the church, and everything that's high and holy and sacred.  

Many other examples of Falwell linking his opponents with that which is not virtuous occurred in other sermons. In "America and Education" he discounted sociologists and humanists by suggesting that they regarded school children as "nothing more than high-grade animals" who should be "trained the same way you'd train a good bird dog." He referred to them as "idiots" who "pretend to be educators" because they rejected biblical creation and accepted Darwinian evolution.

One reason why the sociologist and humanist today are wrecking our children is because they believe that students are nothing more than high-grade animals. They accept the Darwinian theory of evolution and other fallacious theories of evolution, therefore, believing that man evolved from some lower form of animal life, from somewhere out there in a little piece of amoeba or protoplasm, and eventually we evolved and arrived at the place where we are today. It takes an idiot to believe that in the first place, but

13 Copy of Speech entitled "America and the Family," delivered on "The Old-Time Gospel Hour," from Thomas Road Baptist Church, 15 July 1979, Lynchburg, Virginia, hereafter referred to as "America and the Family."

14 Copy of Speech entitled "America and Education," delivered on "The Old-Time Gospel Hour," from Thomas Road Baptist Church, 5 August 1979, Lynchburg, Virginia, hereafter referred to as "America and Education."
beyond that . . . when they think that these children are nothing more than high grade animals the result is that they've got to . . . teach these young people that their brain is just a physical organ and that . . . they've got to be trained the same way you'd train a good bird dog. . . . "15

In yet another sermon Falwell attempted to enhance his probity by suggesting that Chicago theologian Martin E. Marty had completely rejected the biblical mandate for the church and that his criticism of the Electric Church as a phenomenon that is robbing the mainline protestant coffers was merely the criticism of a far left, unbiblical theologian. He linked Marty, and critics like him, with that which is not virtuous when he said:

Now it's a fact that when some theologians who are interviewed, and there's one in Chicago who's interviewed quite regularly, and when he says that these electric churches are taking people and money out of other churches, it is a fact that if a church has gone liberal and does not believe the Bible, this book, is the word of God any more, and they're not getting people saved, and they're denying the virgin birth and the deity of Christ, and so on, it is true that people are leaving those kinds of churches and are getting into Bible believing churches, and thank God they are. Now I would say then that gospel preaching ministries on television are not damaging good local churches but helping them, and if your church is being damaged that way it could be that you've gotten

15 "America and Education."
away from the book and maybe if you'd really pastor, get on your knees and ask God to help, you might find he leads you right back to the book and gets you back in gear and just that quickly, since your people are not going to leave a trough in which they're getting fed. 16

In this case, rather than attacking Dr. Marty directly, Falwell equated him with the unvirtuous pastor who has led his flock away from Bible teaching and consequently away from the God-given mission of the church. He attempted to refute his opponents' criticism by attacking their character.

On numerous occasions in the five sermons studied, Falwell associated his opponents with that which is not virtuous by labeling them with negative, caustic, emotionally toned words. He referred to critics and opponents, for example, as "commies," "godless theologians," "better red than dead" educators, "liberal hypocrites," and "baby killers."

Falwell also attempted to enhance his perceptions of his character in other ways. He focused on the unfavorable impressions of himself or his cause which had been previously established by his opponents. In the sermon "America and Government," he attempted to answer those critics who had accused him of being overly negative, saying: "I'm not anti-anything. I'm just pro-liberty,

16 "America and the Local Church."
pro-freedom." And in response to the frequent criticism that his television ministry robbed local churches of both members and funds, Falwell said: "... when people get saved watching our program we do all we can, immediately, to refer them to a Bible believing church in their area so they'll get into that church, begin serving God there, and paying their tithes and offerings there. We teach, preach and practice that." The examination of the five sermons suggests that Falwell was particularly sensitive to this criticism. He often alluded to it and attempted to minimize it. In another sermon Falwell attempted to remove the impression cultivated by his critics that he is an unfeeling and uncaring individual with respect to the poor and underprivileged.

Now let me say quickly that I believe we ought to take care of those who need help and who cannot care for themselves. I am not anti-welfare. I don't even like the word welfare because that doesn't have the dignity it needs to have. If someone is aged, and we have some here today eighty and ninety years of age, I believe we ought to take care of those dear people. It is right and God will bless our country for doing that. There are many who are sick and indigent that we ought to care for. ... I say that there are times when I believe we ought to help those people who are able to work but who simply cannot.

17 "America and the Local Church."

18 "America and Work;" even in this attempt to remove an unfavorable impression of himself, two sentences later he says: "But I have to be fair with you and say this...I think that generally speaking in North America there are enough jobs to go around. There are not enough positions but there are plenty of jobs."
Falwell relied heavily upon authority derived from his personal experience as he attempted to project and enhance his character. The use of the pronoun "I" is dominant throughout the sermons studied. One passage in particular displays Falwell's use of his own experience and thinking to inspire credibility. The use of "I feel," "I think," and "I don't think" is obvious and almost certainly by design.

I personally feel that in America the home, the family, is still held in reverence by the vast majority of the public. I feel that in America today this country is still loved by a vast majority of the public. I don't think that patriotism is that far out of, out of the question any more. I think that there are those people who are simply looking for leadership and guidance. . . ."

In the sermon "America and Education" Falwell relied upon authority derived from his own experience when, in speaking about the need for a return to more traditional educational values and arguing for the right to pray in schools, he reminisced about his own grade school experience.

I remember when I was attending that little Mountain View Elementary School. I enrolled up there in 1940 . . . I remember in 1940 coming into the first grade in the Mountain View Elementary School and I remember spending six years in that school. Mr. Thomas Finch was our principal. . . . And every week we'd have chapel. Somebody would read the scripture to all of us and we'd have prayer. We'd sing the hymns and it was a time when all of us were introduced to reverence for God, to reverence of the Bible, to reverence for prayer. And although I was not a Christian and

19 "America and Work."
although I didn't know the Bible and I didn't have any real religious knowledge myself, I gained a respect for God, the Bible, the church, for that which is holy, in a public school because a principal made time for Bible reading and prayer and hymn singing. . . .

Later in the same sermon, Falwell once again relied on his own experience to increase his authority when he said: "I look back on that nearly forty years ago and I don't think it did anything but help me. I cannot think of one adverse result of being under that kind of principal and that kind of public school leadership." 21

Finally, in an effort to enhance the audience's perception of his character, Falwell attempted to create the impression of being completely sincere in his undertaking. In promoting Moral Majority and his reason for being involved, he used this tactic, presenting himself as a lover and defender of all that is good and right.

So we've got to get the preachers of the Gospel to begin preaching the right things, and many of them are. And we've got to begin organizing God's people everywhere and for that reason I'm announcing today that we're organizing a group called Moral Majority. . . . We're asking people everywhere to join hands with us in this Moral Majority . . . who will stand on the side of sensibility, Bible morality, in calling this nation back to God and back to values. Because as far as I'm concerned, Proverbs 14:34 is the key. Solomon said, "Righteousness exalteth a nation but sin is a reproach to any people." And I'm going to spend the next few years of my life, still doing the things I'm doing, pastoring, preaching, all the rest. But I'm going to spend the next few years of my life trying to gather together

20 "America and Education."

21 "America and Education."
millions of people in that Moral Majority . . .
who will help us bring this nation back. . . .
I'm asking thousands . . . to join me. . . .
Let's bring this nation back. 22

Later in this same sermon Falwell created the
impression of being completely sincere as he admitted to the
audience that he himself had repented of past apathy and
uninvolvement. He said, "A long time ago I said I didn't
want to get involved in that; that's too volatile. And God
has simply broken my heart over the fact that if I don't get
involved in it I'm not going to have the right to stand
behind this pulpit and preach much longer, and other
preachers are not going to have that right." 23

Perhaps the most convincing tactic, certainly the most
consistent, in Falwell's preaching is the lengthy prayer he
issues at the end of each sermon. It creates the impression
of his complete sincerity as he prays for the spiritual
healing of every honest listener. Although he moves into
the prayer a bit differently each week, the primary
substance is always the same: (1) glorification of Jesus;
(2) an invitation to wayward Christians or those with heavy
burdens to reach out to Jesus; (3) and an invitation for
alien sinners to accept Jesus as their Lord and Savior.
There is never any request for money during or after this
point in the sermon. Everything Falwell does and says at
this juncture is audience-oriented and suggests his sincere

22 "America and Work."

23 "America and Work."
concern for them. The prayer at the end of "America and Education" is typical:

Let us bow our heads together in prayer. Two millenia ago Jesus died upon a cross to keep us out of hell, to save us from our sins and to give us a home in heaven. And right where you are seated there in that pew, upstairs and down, while no one is moving or irreverently disturbing the service in any way, how many of you will say there in your seat or there by the television set, I'm a sinner. I deserve hell, but I believe that Jesus died for me and I take him now as my personal Lord and Savior. Would you raise your hand right now? God will see it wherever you are. God bless everyone of you. How many of you will say, I'm a Christian but my life isn't what it ought to be and I need prayer. Pray for me as a Christian. Raise your hand. Amen. . . . Father help men, women, boys and girls to do right now what they'll be glad they've done when they stand in your presence one day. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

Falwell followed the prayer with an even more personal request for those in the auditorium who had made the decisions mentioned in the prayer to come to the front.

While our heads our bowed, eyes are closed, our pastors are here at the front, I want every man, woman, boy and girl in this building who wants to trust Jesus as your personal Savior, I want you to step out right now and come down the nearest aisle and meet us here at the front, go with us to the prayer room where we can pray together and help you from an open Bible. Those who need to rededicate your lives, you are a Christian, you need to come, God's leading you to join this church today, whatever, while we sing, please come.

There is little doubt that Falwell consciously and consistently sought to enhance the perceived probity of his character by the above mentioned means. In addition, throughout the sermons examined in this dissertation Falwell

24 "America and Education."
developed for himself a specific persona which added to this impression of character. It is the persona of the ancient, biblical prophet. Falwell not only presented himself as such, but actually considers himself to fill that role.25

Assuming the role of a prophet aided Falwell with regard to perceived ethos, especially character. It gave him historical, biblical precedent and enabled him to locate himself in a tradition, a biblical one, of social-civil activism. Beyond that, as a prophet, in lamenting and lambasting the sinfulness of America and in calling her back to God, he was carrying out a historically revered and expected role in the minds and hearts of evangelical Christians. In addition, his sincerity and probity of character were enhanced because Falwell represented himself as persecuted and reviled exactly like the biblical prophets of old, not for any wrong he has committed, but entirely for the message of truth he had brought.

One final observation about Falwell's development of the prophet persona is necessary. The prophetic role most certainly aided his ethos because it enabled his message of doom to become, at the same time, a message of hope. Thonssen, Baird, and Braden wrote: "The audience must be convinced that the speaker is virtuous."26

25 Personal interview: Falwell.
26 Personal interview: Falwell.
The image Falwell tried to project probably achieved that objective. One could hardly indict the virtues of a prophet.

Falwell's speeches enhanced the probity of his character first, by associating him and his message with the virtuous and lofty; second, by bestowing tempered praise upon both his cause and him; third, by linking his opponents with the less-than-virtuous; fourth, by minimizing unfavorable impressions of him and his cause which had been previously established by his opponents; fifth, by relying heavily on the authority of his own experience; and sixth, by creating the impression of being completely sincere in his undertaking.

The evidence indicates that although Falwell employed all of the above-mentioned methods, he most often relied on the third and fourth methods.

Intelligence

Did Falwell attempt to establish the impression of intelligence in the minds of his auditors? Thonssen, Baird and Braden suggest five avenues by which a speaker may establish himself as sagacious or intelligent: "... if he (1) uses what is popularly called common sense; (2) acts with tact and moderation; (3) displays a sense of good taste; (4) reveals a broad familiarity with the interests of the day; and (5) shows through the way in which he handles speech materials that he is possessed of intellectual
integrity and wisdom." Falwell's sermons will be examined according to these principles to determine to what extent he used the impression of intelligence as an ethical appeal for persuasion.

First, in Falwell's sermon, "America and the Family," he displayed common sense as he discussed the role of mothers in the home. Although one might take issue with his decree that mothers should stay in the home, he showed that he had the intelligence to realize that even those who stay home are still "working mothers" and that there are times when mothers have to go outside the home and find employment. He said:

The second threat is the threat of employed mothers. I didn't say working mothers. Mothers have always worked. But I said employed mothers, employed outside the home. I want to say, also I believe there are situations where mothers have to work outside the home. Sometimes to put hubby through college, sometimes it's because of physical disabling of her husband, sometimes it's because one person cannot make enough money for the family to eat. There are genuine reasons often for wives and mothers to work outside the home but I want to say that isn't ideal either.

Falwell also displayed common sense in his approach to unions and strikes, especially as they intersected with school and a child's education. He became bold and practical as he said:

You know I couldn't imagine thirty-five years ago when I was in school, a teacher going out on

27 Speech Criticism, p. 459.
28 "America and the Family."
strike. I couldn't imagine a fireman or a police officer going out on strike. Can you imagine a preacher going on strike? Now some have, in my opinion, at least from preaching anything worthwhile. But can you imagine, can you imagine school teachers who have a call from God to teach, pastors who have a call from God to teach, going out on strike because you're not paying us enough . . . . Every school teacher ought to consider those little children as their prime responsibility under God almighty. Well, you say, I went on strike for the benefit of my children. Baloney, you went on strike for the benefit of more dollars and you put those dollars ahead of your little children. If this pastor or any preacher, I want to say this to pulpit committees all over the country and deacons, if your preacher ever threatens to strike because he's not making enough money, don't let him strike, fire him. Strike him forever and get somebody who believes something, who stands for something!

In another sermon, Falwell enhanced the impression of intelligence by displaying common sense as he spoke realistically about the church's impact on society, as well as the reaction of society to his own ministry.

Now that's what the church is supposed to be, the conscience of society. We're not going to change everybody and everybody isn't going to love us. Now I tell our preacher boys who are going out planting churches, any time half the town isn't mad at you, you're not saying anything. In our town, Lynchburg, whenever somebody comes here to write an article, they'll interview all of us and then they'll go out in the town to interview somebody. I tell them before they do, hey, when you ask somebody what do you think of Thomas Road Church or Jerry Falwell you'd better pucker up or duck because they either love us and they're going to kiss you, or they hate and they're going to slug you. One of the two.

Tact and moderation were demonstrated by Falwell in the sermon "America and the Local Church" as he spoke of church

29 "America and Education."
30 "America and the Local Church."
plantings and foreign mission work being sponsored by the Thomas Road Baptist Church. He showed sensitivity as he spoke of the universal nature of the church.

But worldwide we want to send out thousands of missionaries who will wherever they go do exactly the same thing. God's plan is the same for every place. For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten son. The local church is not a North American institution. Long before North America existed as we know it today, the church was. And Jesus said, "Upon myself," speaking of himself, Christ, "I will build my church," not yours. And pastors, I would challenge you, don't ever refer to the church you pastor as "my church." It's His church and you're His steward, His pastor, His servant. . . .

Later, in the same sermon, Falwell enhanced the impression of intelligence as he spoke with tact and moderation regarding the debate over which version of the Bible one should read. "We've got to bring people back to the Bible," Falwell said. "In our part of the world we'll bring them back to the King James Version. . . . I'm not a nut that the King James was good enough for the apostle Paul and it's good enough for us . . . I'm just for the Bible, back to the word of God." 32

Whether or not Thonssen, Baird, and Braden's suggestion that displaying a sense of good taste enhances the intelligence of the speaker is applicable in the case of the particular sermons studied is difficult to ascertain. Many in the general populace would doubtless find many of Falwell's harsh, straightforward, and sometimes crude

31 "America and the Local Church."
32 "America and the Local Church."
descriptions of his opponents rather tasteless. Yet, considering the homogeneity of his audience, Falwell was most probably viewed as being adequately tasteful.

Falwell revealed a broad familiarity with the interests of the day in the corpus of sermons investigated. From the Panama Canal conflict, to Gay rights, to national defense, to marriage and the family, he appears not only to be familiar with and interested in the dominant interests of twentieth-century American life, but also well-informed about those issues and the sub-issues surrounding them.33

Depending on one's perspective, Falwell often failed to enhance his impression of intelligence by showing, through the way in which he handled speech materials, that he was possessed of intellectual integrity and wisdom. For example, in the sermon "America and Education," Falwell fell into a typical misapplication of scripture as he promoted the concept of Christian education. He relied heavily upon the authority of Scripture in the five sermons studied, which, given the composition of the audiences, would enhance the impression of his intelligence. But his abuse and misinterpretation of the authority cited must, even to his devotees, have raised eyebrows concerning his integrity, as

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33 See the section on "Use of Evidence" in Chap. V of this dissertation for a discussion of Falwell's obsession with details and statistics. In addition, the titles of the sermons themselves reveal at least a vague familiarity with leading social issues of the day: "America and Work," "America and Government," "America and the Family," and "America and Education."
Deuteronomy chapter six and verse seven. "And thou shall teach them diligently unto thy children and shall talk of them when thou sittest in thine house and when thou walkest by the way and when thou liest down and when thou risest up." The Christian is commanded to educate his children. In the text I've read you . . . the man of God said that we are to teach our children diligently and we're to talk to them constantly regarding the necessary information for successful living. So the Christian has a mandate from heaven to educate his own children. Secondly the church is likewise commanded to educate. In Matthew 28:18-20, what we call the great commission, Jesus said to the church, "Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost and teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you. . . . Later they put that in practice because in Acts 5:42 they were described as teaching and preaching Jesus Christ in every house as well as in the Temple. Teaching the facts, educating children, is the obligation of the Christian family and of the Christian church.34

This excerpt is typical of Falwell. He often took a passage out of context and subsequently used it as a proof-text for something with which it had absolutely no relationship in its original setting. In the above instance, Falwell was talking about formal, academic training, while the Bible passages he quoted for support pertained solely to spiritual training. The verses cited dealt with teaching the commandments of God, not reading, writing and arithmetic. Such handling of speech materials surely had a negative effect with regard to his perceived intelligence.

Falwell also failed to enhance the impression of his

34 "America and Education."
intelligence on numerous occasions in the five sermons by failing to provide proper documentation. Much of the data used in support of his arguments was non-verifiable. For example, when advocating the right to pray in public schools, Falwell stated:

You say we are intimidating and discriminating against atheistic young people. What would that percentage be. Well one percent, two percent. What would be the percentage of atheists in America? Very, very small. My contention is when you outlaw Bible reading and prayer and hymn singing and Christmas hymns and so forth from public schools, you are discriminating against 98 to 99 percent of the boys and girls who do indeed believe in God. And the question is, is it better to discriminate against one percent or ninety-nine percent.  

In the sermon, "America and the Family," Falwell once again provided the hearer with non-verifiable information in his argument against the Equal Rights Amendment. He claimed there was no need for the E.R.A. because, "I believe and I think every Christian believes that women deserve more than equal rights. And in families and nations where the Bible is believed ... Christian women are honored above their men. In America that's true." Later in the same sermon he said, "Any place you go where the Bible is believed, the women receive more than equal rights. They are honored above the men and that's the way it ought to be."

Not only did Falwell rely on simplistic reasoning in such instances, he also relied on subjective data.

35 "America and Education."
At such points, he appeared at the best naive, and at the worst intentionally misleading. If a speaker is to enhance his perceived intelligence, he must show through the way that he handles evidence that he is guided by intellectual integrity and wisdom.

Ironically, even though Falwell often mishandled speech materials, the fact that he quoted so often from the Biblical text was probably evidence enough for most that he possessed intellectual integrity and wisdom. All five of Falwell's sermons included in this study were based either directly or indirectly on scripture. In those sermons, he quoted, read from, paraphrased, and made application of the Bible and its principles. Again, considering the homogeneous composition of his audience, perhaps that in and of itself demonstrated to them that he possessed intellectual integrity and wisdom.

It is to Falwell's credit that his speeches were always well organized. He always gave adequate time to the development of each of his major points. He never lacked adequate materials to support his points. These techniques of handling materials probably assured, in the mind of his audiences, Falwell's intellectual integrity and wisdom, even in light of his use of non-verifiable data at times and his misapplication of scripture.

**Goodwill**

Aristotle lists good will as the third constituent of
ethical appeal. According to Thonssen, Baird, and Braden there are six ways a speaker may exude good will to his listeners. The speaker should "... (1) capture the proper balance between too much and too little praise of the audience; (2) identify himself properly with the hearers and their problems; (3) proceed with candor and straightforwardness; (4) offer necessary rebukes with tact and consideration; (5) offset any personal reasons he may have for giving the speech; and (6) reveal, without guile or exhibitionism, his personable qualities as a messenger of truth." Falwell displayed good will toward his audiences primarily in three ways: by identifying himself with his hearers and their problems, by demonstrating candor and straightforwardness, and by revealing his personable qualities as a messenger of truth.

First, Falwell was candid and straightforward in each of the five sermons studied. Consequently, his audiences grew in their appreciation for his character and goodwill. For example, in "America and the Local Church" Falwell said, "There are atheists today, and infidels, and infophobes who don't like the church and don't like the message we preach and who get furious when some school teacher leads a class in prayer or reads the Bible, but I would say to those agents that you are in the greatest nation and the greatest

36 Rhetoric, pp. 91-92.
37 Speech Criticism, pp. 459-460.
land on earth because the church was one of God's primary instruments for creating this free land. You're enjoying the benefits of God's church although you deny that its founder, the Lord Jesus, even exists."

Later in the same sermon he displayed his candor and straightforwardness again saying:

A local church that honors God has got to take a positive stand on this matter of sin. We cannot pussyfoot around. And if we're accused of being controversial, so what? Anything, everything important is always controversial. Right and wrong is always controversial. But the Bible is not controversial. It's just dogmatic. This is the word of God. Let God be true and every man a liar. And if you'll live by the Book, you don't have to read the newspapers to see where the world is today. The world changes. He changes not.

Not every stand Falwell took in these sermons was popular, even among the conservative evangelical Christians to whom he spoke. There is no evidence, however, that Falwell ever held back on his convictions. Regardless of the potential repercussions, financial or personal, he seemed always to speak what he thought to be the truth.

Second, Falwell sought to identify himself with his hearers and their problems. In "America and the Family," Falwell showed empathy for the plight of many modern families when he discussed the woman's role in the family. "I want to say also, I believe there are situations where mothers have to work outside the home.

38 "America and the Local Church."

39 "America and the Local Church."
Sometimes to put hubby through college, sometimes it's because of physical disabling of the husband, sometimes it's because one person cannot make enough money for the family to eat. There are genuine reasons often for wives and mothers to work outside the home, but I want to say that isn't ideal either.  

Falwell showed his familial side in "America and the Local Church" when he spoke of his son Jerry, Jr. and his recent accomplishment. In so doing, he placed himself side-by-side with those in his audience who were parents. He said, "I forgot to mention, when I mentioned Jerry's birthday, he was elected president of his student body this year and he'll serve that way next year. He acted very much like a politician during the campaign. Maybe he will be."

Identifying with one's auditors develops a perception of good will and Jerry Falwell knew it. That becomes obvious in the lengthy passage that follows:

I was asked by an interviewer recently, "What is the uniqueness of the Old-Time Gospel Hour? How would it differ from some other religious programs on T.V.?" And I would say, I answer it this way and I would say it to you, that we are a local church. If these television cameras were not in this building we'd still be conducting our service basically like we're conducting it right now. It happens that our congregation here of several thousand people is our congregation and that I'm preaching and teaching and our singers are singing just as if there were no cameras here. All we do is allow the cameras to look on and take what's happening here outside. . . . This is not a slick

40 "America and the Family."

41 "America and the Local Church."
Hollywood production. We don't do that. We have camera members back here. Every so often you'll notice one of them must have an itch or something and they'll scratch. We try to keep them from doing it. Don will chew on his thumb sometimes. That came from a habit when as a child he sucked his thumb... he quit that, but we try to get him not to do it. But I'll tell you, when they do that we don't cut that out of the tape. We leave it in because that's the way it happens in everybody's church and you can identify with somebody yawning. One of my best men up here was sleeping last week while I was preaching. I asked him about it later. He said, "I was meditating." . . . If a baby cries, it stays on the tape. You know why? People all over the country say, "Hey, that's like it is down at my church. They're not trying to produce anything."

Third, Falwell occasionally stimulated goodwill in his auditors by offsetting any personal reasons he may have had for giving the speech. For example, in "America and the Local Church," he explained to his audience "sometimes an issue arises and there's nobody around but you to stir up the dust and you've got to forget what it's going to cost you financially." Later in the same sermon, Falwell reiterated his case for altruism:

You're going to lose some members from your church once in a while. I remember a couple years ago that a certain fellow doing some things, a real high fellow in political office doing some things and saying some things he shouldn't have been saying, and I just happened to say so publicly. It has nothing to do with democrat or republican. It has to do with right or wrong.

Fourth, Falwell exuded goodwill by displaying a sense of...
of humor which revealed, without guile or exhibitionism, his personable qualities as a messenger of truth. Two examples from the sermon "America and the Local Church" will suffice. In developing the thought that sowing strong convictions always reaps controversy, Falwell said: "Now I tell our preacher boys who are going out planting churches, any time half the town isn't mad at you you're not saying anything. In our town, Lynchburg, whenever somebody comes here to write an article they'll interview all of us and then they'll go out in the town to interview somebody and I tell them before they do, 'Hey, when you ask somebody what they think of Thomas Road Church or Jerry Falwell, you'd better either pucker up or duck, because they either love us and they're going to kiss you or they hate us and they're going to slug you, one of the two.'"

Falwell's use of humor was always well-placed, yet totally spontaneous. On one occasion there was a power failure that blacked-out both the lights and the cameras in the Thomas Road auditorium. When the power was restored Falwell recovered quickly and humorously with the statement: "Are you back on? Amen! You Okay? You got power upstairs? Something's coming on the screen. I made a liberal mad somewhere and he pulled the switch."

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46 "America and the Local Church."

47 "America and the Local Church."
As has been shown, Falwell consistently exuded goodwill toward his audiences by being candid and straightforward, by identifying himself with his hearers and their problems, and by revealing his personable qualities as a speaker. He occasionally attempted to further the demonstration of goodwill by offsetting any personal reasons he may have had for giving the speech.

It could be argued that on occasion Falwell fell far beneath Thonssen, Baird, and Braden's standard of offering necessary rebukes with tact and consideration. However, several observations are in order. First, Falwell knew his audiences' primary composition was blue-collar and conservative wing, both biblically and politically. Given the overwhelming homogeneity of his auditors, it would have been difficult for him to offend them with his rebukes of those that his audiences considered the enemy. Second, tact and consideration are highly relative terms. What is harsh to one constituency is weak to another. And third, considering the less-than-tactful and far from considerate accusations that have been levelled against Falwell, he showed remarkable restraint. This writer has watched Falwell dozens of times on televisions talk-shows and has interviewed him personally. During the roughest of interviews Falwell consistently and convincingly

48 For example, "Face the Nation," "Meet the Press," "Crossfire," "Tom Snyder," and "Donahue" (Falwell has appeared on Phil Donahue's program eleven times).
demonstrated a courtesy and kindness that were admirable.

**Personal Appearance**

Falwell's physical appearance contributed favorably to his ethical appeal. As a *Time* magazine correspondent put it, "The figure is imposing - tall, a bit jowly, dressed like a businessman in a dark three-piece suit."\(^{49}\) Falwell always preaches in a navy-blue three-piece suit with a striped, yet subdued, neck-tie. There is nothing about his clothing that draws undue attention to it. Falwell stands nearly six feet, four inches in height, and although once "a bit jowly," he recently lost more than fifty pounds.\(^{50}\)

There is a handsomeness about Falwell that is undeniable. He has a certain "eye appeal." He is of athletic proportions well-built, thick-set, and firm-looking. With the speaking schedule that Falwell follows,\(^{51}\) he would have to be physically fit. His graying hair and obvious crow's-feet add to his appearance a sense of sagacity. He is a man who speaks well and looks good. There can be little doubt that his physical appearance provides enhancement of his ethical appeal.

**Reputation**

Because of his high national visibility nationwide on

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\(^{50}\) Personal interview: Falwell.

\(^{51}\) He speaks more than 1,000 times per year.
"The Old-Time Gospel Hour"\textsuperscript{52} and his position as president of the political activism organization, Moral Majority, it is probable that wherever and whenever Falwell has spoken in the last five years, his reputation has preceded him. His audiences no doubt view him as the figurehead of the "New Religious Right" and as the outstanding spokesman of American Fundamentalism.\textsuperscript{53}

Many viewed him as the prime mover behind and the leader of the Thomas Road empire with its worldwide television and radio ministries; its massive physical plant which houses its 20,000 members; its own grade school, high-school, college, and seminary with nearly 6,000 students; and various other industries and ministries. They see him as a man of God who has stood against a corrupt world and has stemmed the tide of atheistic humanism, at least in Lynchburg, Virginia. There is little doubt that many believe he could do it nationwide.

\textbf{Emotional Appeal}

Authorities in the field of speech criticism have long agreed that emotional proof is not only a recognized mode of persuasion, but a necessary one as well. Thonssen, Baird, and Braden suggested that, to persuade an audience, the

\textsuperscript{52} The program is carried on more than 670 radio and 400 television stations with a weekly audience estimated at 25 million in Canada and the U.S.

\textsuperscript{53} Interview: Falwell.
speaker must present more than an "error-free demonstration; there must also be judicious appeal to the feelings."  

Robert Cathcart wrote: "It is practically impossible for people to believe that something is true or that some course of action is correct without having some feeling about it. Thus persuasive discourse, to be effective, must appeal to the whole person by using strategies which appeal to both the heart and the head."  

Brembeck and Howell referred to the emotions as "the chief foundation stones for human behavior" and said that they "constitute the springs of human response." Consequently, it is necessary that the rhetorical critic analyze emotional proof since it is in many instances the decisive factor in audience response.  

What types of pathetic proofs did Falwell employ and what was their effectiveness? Aristotle's classification of the emotions mentions anger and mildness, love and hatred, fear and confidence, shame, benevolence, pity, indignation, envy, emulation, and contempt. It will be seen that Falwell made appeals to several of the motives mentioned above. It is difficult to draw exact lines of distinction. At times Falwell's appeals were aimed at more than one

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54 Speech Criticism, p. 420.
55 Post Communication, p. 53.
emotion, and often there was an appeal within an appeal. Primarily, however, Falwell made four basic emotional appeals: an appeal to fear, an appeal to pride, an appeal to contempt, and an appeal to patriotism.

Appeal to Fear

First and foremost in every sermon, Falwell appealed to fear. In "America and the Family" he relied almost exclusively on emotive proofs based on fear. He sought to persuade his hearers to protect and exalt the traditional family unit by convincing them it was on the brink of extinction:

Before a nation can fall apart it is necessary for her families to fall apart. That happened in China, that happened in Rome, that has happened in many other countries in history. It must not happen in America. It is my conviction that the 1980's will be a decade of confrontation, struggle and war for the family. . . . We, the pastors and Christians, the moral majority of this land have got to come to the defense of the family and the home.58

In one instance he builds in a minor way on the motives of love and pride as he mentions performing a wedding for a couple in the church one day earlier. He follows that positive pathetic appeal immediately, however, with a more base appeal to fear, again:

And for every marriage in America, I had one yesterday - Scott Payne and Patty Graham. That was one of my goals the first of this year to see that couple to the wedding altar. They'd been talking about it for six years. Two of our kids here, formerly in the Chorale. Thank God for marriage. But for every marriage ceremony in

58 "America and the Family."
America there are 1.9 . . . or for every 1.8 marriage there's one divorce. . . . Divorce has increased in this century by seven-hundred percent. Would you listen to that. In America, divorce has increased by seven-hundred percent in this century.

Falwell later characterizes the Equal Rights Amendment as an attack against the family. He appeals to the fear motive once again:

Textbooks today in public schools and private schools too often illustrate the husband washing dishes and doing the house chores while the wife is up mending the roof or doing some chore the man normally would do. The idea being to create a unisexual philosophy for boys and girls. And that is a very dangerous thing and I would say that this attempt by sociologists now to create federal nurseries and federal day care units is a dangerous thing. The idea is to get the mothers out of the home, get the children away from the families, away from the parents, get them under federal instruction. The bureaucrats want to teach our children, the sociologists and the liberals want to train our children and Doctor Spock and his vintage would like to teach our children and that is a disaster by anybody's description. So the E.R.A. delusion is a very dangerous one.

Falwell stimulated both fear and pity in his argument against abortion as an enemy of the family. He suggested through the reading of a letter that abortion not only threatened a mother's eternal security but the eternal security of the aborted fetus as well. Although Falwell himself never specifically made such pronouncements the letter he read supplied the suggestion:

Abortion is a terrible thing. It creates guilt, creates sin, creates murder. . . . This is a

59 "America and the Family."

60 "America and the Family."
letter and I'm not going to read the name of 
course. "Dear Dr. Falwell. I just viewed your 
telecast on abortion. I'm so ashamed to admit 
that in April of 1973 my baby became a part of the 
unwanted generation that you spoke of. At the 
time I could only think of ridding myself of this 
problem and over the years, even though knowing it 
was wrong, I convinced myself that I would do the 
same thing again if I had to live it over. I had 
a saline abortion but the doctor told me nothing 
of what really happened other than simply 
expelling the fetus. Listening to your program 
today that problem that I had became a helpless 
baby, not a fetus . . . I only pray that my baby 
is with Christ and that maybe someday I can be the 
mother in heaven that I should have been on earth. 
Do you think that could at all be possible. . . ."

Now I want to tell you something. Abortion, 
regardless what the Supreme Court thinks about it, 
regardless what the Congress, the president, 
anybody else things about it, it is murder and we 
had better get this country turned around towards 
God.

Essentially, the sermon "America and the Family" is one 
emotional appeal after another, each of them aimed at 
persuading the audience by frightening them. One final 
example will suffice to show Falwell's heavy dependence on 
this particular motive appeal:

Finally, I see the threat of the decade ahead of 
us, the International Year of the Child. It's 
called I.Y.O.C. This is the capstone of all 
threats to the family . . . because it comes by 
United Nations order, it comes through the 
Congress. . . . It sounds like it's for the child 
and everybody says that's wonderful. I'm for the 
child too, but I want you to know that the 
International Year of the Child, the I.Y.O.C., is 
not for the child.

I have a letter here from Senator Orin Hatch. 
He's that great senator from the state of 
Utah. . . . Just let me give you the summary of 
what he says I.Y.O.C. is. The International Year 
of The Child first of all will give the children

61 "America and the Family."
the right to sue their parents if later they felt they were not given good parental care. That's happening right now in, there is a lawsuit being practiced or exercised right now where parents are being sued three-hundred-and-fifty-thousand dollars in Boulder, Colorado, by a child who says he got inadequate parenting.

Secondly, I.Y.O.C. would make it possible for children to get minimum wage for performing household chores. How stupid! It would take a bunch of liberals to give birth to something like that. I mean it would take a bunch of idiots to even talk about something like that.

Then you go past that, the children's right to choose their own parents if they don't like the parents they're living with. They can apply to a federal agency and be taken out of that home and select another set of parents. And if parents paddle their children they can to told on and put in jail... It will take the ownership of the child away from the parent and take it into the hands of the government. And they've bankrupted everything else they've ever owned, they certainly would bankrupt the home. It will legalize homosexual marriages and homosexual adoptions.

Falwell gives virtually no documentation for the allegations contained in this and other passages; yet his audience obviously listened and responded in the manner expected and hoped for. 62

Perhaps the most obvious emotional appeal made by Falwell, and certainly the most consistent, was the prayer of invitation given at the end of each sermon. Although there was an overlapping of appeals, the prayer was aimed primarily at the fear motive as Falwell pondered the eternal with his auditors:

62 That is, they continued to watch Falwell and contribute funds to the cause (more so after this series of sermons than anytime before) and four million plus enrolled as card-carrying members of Moral Majority, Inc.
Let us bow our heads in prayer. While our heads are bowed how many of you will say, "Brother Jerry, thank God I'm saved and I know it. If I should die in the next five minutes I'm as sure for heaven as if I were already there." Would you raise your hand high right now, saved and sure. Thank you. God bless you. Take them down.

If you could not lift your hand would you allow me the privilege of praying for you. God answers prayer. If you're watching by television and you're not a Christian you can raise your hand, too. If you're not saved or you're not sure you're saved would you slip your hand up right now and let me pray for you. Just put it up long enough, high enough. God bless you, God bless you. How many others? Pray for me, I don't know for sure. Upstairs and down, pray for me. Just raise your hand. God bless you in the back, and there by the television set.

Jesus died for you upon the cross, shed his blood for you, was buried for you, rose from the dead for you, and if you'll right now confess to God, oh God I'm a sinner and I deserve Hell but I take Jesus into my heart as my savior right now, he'll save you. Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. He'll forgive you your sins, He'll give you a home in heaven and he'll put his Holy Spirit within you to help you live the life you're receiving. Just bow your head and ask Jesus into your heart, sitting there in the pew, watching by television! And then write me if you're watching by T.V. and ask for a free copy of my booklet, "How to Get Started Right," to help you begin growing in the grace and knowledge of our Lord.

And if you have a prayer request, many of our people are in trouble, millions who are watching right now. If you're in trouble, if you've got a prayer need you'd like for me to pray for . . . God answers prayer. . . .

While our heads are bowed and eyes are closed, how many will say I'm a Christian but my life isn't what it should be, I'm saved but I'm not living for God as I ought to and I need prayer and help? Pray for me as a Christian. Raise your hands high please, all over the building. God bless everyone of you. . . .

Father in heaven, through the shed blood of your Son cleanse those who need cleansing, give pardon and forgiveness to those who need forgiveness. Oh God help Christians who've slipped away from fellowship with you to repent
and come back and those who are very near committing suicide God, help them to know that you love them and help them to know there is an answer to their problem. In Jesus name, Amen.

While our heads are bowed, eyes are closed, no one is moving about or disturbing the service in any way, I want every man, woman, boy, girl, in this building who lifted your hand saying pray for me and were sincere about it I want you to step out and come and meet our pastors here at the front. Let us pray with you. If you want to unite with this church, you've already become a Christian, you'd like to be a member here, you come. Whatever God's saying to you, if you want to rededicate your life as a Christian come. Let us pray with you and help you. While we sing, will you come?

The effectiveness of such appeals can hardly be disputed. Scores of auditors, the newly converted and the seasoned church member, flow down the sloped aisles after each such altar-call. Falwell consistently reached his audiences by striking a familiar yet always frightening chord.

**Appeal to Contempt, Disgust**

Falwell also made judicial appeal to his audiences' sense of contempt and disgust. Although used much less frequently than the fear appeal, the appeal to contempt and disgust motives are a consistent mode of proof in every sermon studied. In "America and Work" Falwell sought to convince his auditors' of the moral decline in America by arousing their contempt and disgust:

moral values that were once sacred and dear to this republic are now laughed at and in prime time television they are made parts of situation comedies. Homosexuality is considered an

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63 "America and the Local Church."
alternate life-style instead of perversion as it is. And the home is a trial and error sort of . . . thing. Marriage, well it's been completely laughed out of style by many, and what used to be called common-law marriage is even considered old-fashioned. Why have any marriage at all? Just live together . . . situation ethics is replacing Bible morality.

He continued to try and shock his audience into acceptance of his allegation that America's morals were at an all time low by appealing to their sense of shame and disgust in "America and the Family." He described the wife beater and the child abuser as the "neurotic . . . psychotic product of our mixed up society." He claimed:

Any man who would beat up on a woman is lower than an animal. It doesn't matter to me what she has done or is doing. A man who would use physical force against a woman is an animal or worse. And likewise, a man who would be guilty of child abuse . . . physically hurting a child, allowing his stupid uncontrolled emotions to allow him to hurt a child, or a woman who would hurt her child is worse than an animal because animals don't do that . . . you know it used to be that it was the drunk who came home and beat his children up. Today it's the neurotic and psychotic that we've produced in this mixed up society . . .

When Falwell sought to castigate homosexuality and any basis for its acceptance, he once again attempted persuasion of his auditors by appealing to their sense of contempt. "God put one man and one woman together," Falwell said, that they might " . . . be fruitful and multiply." He continued:

Homosexuality is a sterile relationship and we as Christian leaders had better stand against it as a condemned, reprobate relationship, and help

64 "America and the Family."
65 "America and the Family."
homosexuals to find deliverance in Christ, forgiveness from the Lord. But call it what it is - perversion, sin, reprobate. I see the homosexual revolution as a threat against the family in America. We are legalizing in many places today homosexuals adopting children and becoming parents. . . . And they're talking now about allowing lesbians to have a child, that is, artificial insemination. . . .

In addition to the specific, direct appeals to contempt and disgust, it should be pointed out, Falwell employed a device throughout the speech which is commonly used by communicators to excite the emotions: what can be termed "snarl" terms. Such terms are actually "cluster-symbols" which bring to the auditors' mind not merely one literal referent, but rather an entire gamut of harsh perceptions. For example, by using repetitively such emotionally charged phrases as "better-red-than-dead" liberals, to speak of advocates of the Equal Rights Amendment; "murderers" and "atheists, infidels, and infi...hells" to refer to proponents of legalized abortions; and "dead-beats and bums" to refer to welfare recipients-- Falwell manipulated the already negative dispositions of his right-wing audiences against such issues and individuals.

Although the use of such emotive language, in and of itself,

66 "America and the Family."
67 Term employed by Dr. Waldo Braden during lectures in Speech 4160, "Persuasive Communication," Summer, 1979, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, Louisiana.
68 "America and Government."
69 "America and the Family."
70 "America and Work."
did not accomplish total persuasion, it did enable Falwell to gain greater control of his audience by manipulating their negative predispositions to his predetermined ends.

Falwell's effective use of these and other emotionally-toned words is evidence that he had done his homework with regard to audience analysis. He was aware of many of their attitudes, predispositions, and prejudices. He made consistent and effective use of that knowledge.

**Appeal to Patriotism**

Several specific appeals are made to patriotism in the sermons studied. In attempting to promote capitalism and democracy, Falwell struck at the patriotic tendencies of his audiences, when he claimed:

> I feel that in America today this country is still loved by a vast majority of the public. I don't think patriotism is that far out of the question any more. I think that there are those people out there who are simply looking for leadership and guidance and who want to see this country come back to basics, back to values, back to biblical morality, back to sensibility, back to patriotism. There used to be a time when, when the American flag was raised everybody saluted, and the quoting of the Pledge of Allegiance brought goose pimples. There was a time when Kate Smith would sing "God Bless America." Everybody thought that was good. I still do.

In "America and Government," Falwell relied on an appeal to patriotism in an attempt to dissuade any tolerance, much less acceptance, of communism. He asserted:

> I submit to you that there never has been a time when citizenship was so precious and valuable and important as is that thing called American

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71 "America and Work."
citizenship. Nobody in the world knows the freedom we do. And those who are attempting to tear down this country, who are anti-capitalism, anti-establishment, anti-American, anti-military, et cetera, et cetera, ought to realize that the very freedom that allows you to do that is the freedom you're trying to destroy. And when I see a Jane Fonda on the steps of the nation's Capitol crying out anti-American slogans, and when I see demonstrators and the marchers and the Spocks and the Gregorys and all the rest out there spewing out hatred towards our government and our free country. I think how that if they could try that one time on Red Square they'd be cured of sucking eggs forever. That doesn't happen at the Kremlin. They disappear. . . . I want to tell you I hate communism and I don't mind being branded anti-communist . . . you don't have to brand me. I am anti-communist . . . I'd rather be dead-than-red. And I think that any true Christian will take that position.

It must be noted that Falwell's appeals in these instances were not aimed at promoting or producing patriotism, but at manipulating it as a pre-existent motive. Falwell presents few arguments in favor of patriotism but instead links Christianity and consequently Moral Majority, to patriotism symbiotically. One cannot exist without the other. To this end Falwell effectively manipulated the patriotic tendencies of his conservative, right-wing audiences.

**Appeal to Pride**

The only other major emotive appeal Falwell attempted was an appeal to pride. He sought to reinforce the loyalty of his radio and television audiences, as well as that of the Thomas Road members, by comparing "The Old-Time Gospel

72 "America and Government."
Hour" to Lawrence Welk. He said: "We're on two-hundred-and-seventy-seven radio stations every day Monday through Friday with a half-hour Bible study. We're on three-hundred-and-twenty television stations. Lawrence Welk has the second largest network of stations in the United States with two-hundred-and-four outlets, so a hundred-and-sixteen more outlets carry "The Old-Time Gospel Hour" than the next largest program of any kind, secular or religious.\footnote{73}

Later in the same sermon, Falwell again attempted to build support for his programs by identifying those who stood with him and his ministry as standing with God:

> A local church that honors God has got to take a positive stand on this matter of sin. We cannot pussyfoot around. And if we're accused of being controversial, so what. Anything, everything important is always controversial. But the Bible is not controversial. It's just dogmatic. This is the word of God. Let God be true and every man a liar. And if you'll live by the book you don't have to read the newspapers to see where the world is today. The world changes, He changes not.\footnote{74}

In "America and Work" Falwell tried to persuade "the grass roots Christian" to rise up and stem the tide of atheistic humanism by appealing to their sense of pride. Claiming that there were more than fifty million adult Americans who profess born again status, he challenged his audience: "I think that it's high time that the people of God in America, the grass roots Christian family in America joined hands and hearts together and said we're not going to..."
have this anymore."  

His appeal to the pride motive was measurably effective. Six months later the "grass roots Christian family" had become the four-and-a-half-million member Moral Majority.

Falwell obviously relied heavily on emotional appeals to aid persuasion. He gave strongest emphasis to those appeals classified above as fear appeals. It is difficult to analyze the effectiveness of fear appeals since research on the subject is inconclusive at best and seemingly contradictory at certain junctures. Some studies have shown that fear appeals, especially in the extreme, can be counter-productive in terms of attitude change and behavior modification, while other studies suggest that even harsh fear appeals are useful in both areas of persuasion.  

Despite certain negative research indications concerning the effectiveness of fear appeals, it is most probable that Falwell's appeals were quite effective. The audiences to which he spoke were operating under what could be called "siege mentality" before they began to listen. Their country, their families, their economic

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75 "America and Work."

security, their educational institutions, their well-being in general were under attack by the forces of atheistic humanism from their point of view. Falwell's fear appeals did not create this "siege mentality," they solidified it and reinforced it. The harsher, more fearful the appeal, the greater the sense of rightness on the part of his audiences. Falwell's fear appeals served to confirm the listeners' previously held convictions. To this degree, Falwell's appeals must be viewed as effective.

There is at least one other sense in which Falwell's emotional appeals were effective. Falwell is an arch-advocate of civil religion, although he never uses the specific term itself. Civil religion views America and God as having a special, unique relationship. That relationship binds the nation to a particular role in history, namely, to preserve intact the heritage of the nation's Fathers, whose inspired dream it was that America endure forever as a beacon of liberty, morality, and strength in an otherwise corrupt and dark world. God led stout-hearted, Bible believing pilgrims to the American wilderness and raised up great leaders and mighty institutions to accomplish this mission. Everything America needed to fulfill her divinely appointed task was provided. Deity expected much from her in return.

The realities of modern domestic and international

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politics mandate that the above civil religion must almost always become a recipe for disappointment. For advocates of American civil religion, this realization is not only painful, but also a source of guilt. Such persons consider themselves guardians of the sacred trust and consequently cannot help but blame themselves for failing to stem the tide of secular humanism or godless communism.

Guilt is inherent within the system of American civil religion. Someone must be blamed. Adherents hold themselves most responsible for the fact that the nation is failing to live up to her divine mission.

The irony, however, is not that such guilt exists but that it serves as a major source of motivation for the believers and therefore is a mainstay of the entire system. In an attempt to struggle for redemption for not having fulfilled their God-given values and mission, they further sanctify those values and consequently begin the whole process over again.

Into all of this malaise comes Jerry Falwell and his emotional call for a return to values of God and the establishment of Moral Majority as a means to that end. His appeals were indeed effective in the birth and establishment of Moral Majority, but the most significant effect of his appeals is to be found in the fact that, whether Moral Majority ultimately changes the face of American society or not, still in the effort to do so, Moral Majority performs a vital function in American civil religion: It reestablishes
the ideals. His emotional appeals; therefore, were not only effective in the short term, their effectiveness may be active for years through Moral Majority.

**Logical Appeal**

The first two sections of this chapter examined Falwell's use of ethical and emotional appeals. It remains to examine his use of logical appeal. Logical appeal can be defined as the attempt by a speaker to use reasoning and evidence to support the main tenets of his speech or sermon.

Aristotle believed rational demonstration of one's arguments to be the most important ingredient in a speech. He wrote his *Rhetoric* as a protest against those who elevated emotion and technique and consequently failed to give logic and reason their proper place and value in the speech act. Although Aristotle understood and accepted the important place of ethical and emotional appeals, he nonetheless gave preeminence to those appeals to reason.

Thonssen, Baird and Braden concur with Aristotle's analysis of the role and place of logical appeal. They write, "although language, emotional appeals, and delivery complete the process, intellectual substance (knowledge, meaning, thought) has been and continues to be the core of communication."

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79 *Rhetoric*, pp. 8-11; 91-92.
80 *Speech Criticism*, p. 388.
The constituents of logical proof are evidence and argument. The remainder of this chapter will analyze Falwell's speeches to determine the extent to which he based his appeals to action on reason. His use of evidence and his use of reasoning will be analyzed.

**Use of Evidence**

According to Thonssen, Baird and Braden: "Evidence is the raw material used to establish proof. It may include the testimony of individuals, personal experiences, tables of statistics, illustrative examples, or any so-called 'factual' items which induce in the mind of the hearer or reader a state of belief. . . ." What use did Falwell make of evidence in his attempt to persuade his audiences? Was he consistent in his handling of "factual" information? What were his primary sources of evidential information?

Falwell's sources are few; he consistently returns to them both in his speaking and writing. A cursory reading of his *Listen America!* tells one much about Falwell's information sources. If the issue is economics, the expert is Milton Friedman. If the issue is the military or a matter of defense, the expert is General Lew Walt of the United States Marine Corps. When the issue is politics, Falwell almost always relies on the testimony of Senator Jesse Helms.

Primary, however, in both his sermons and his writings

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81 *Speech Criticism*, p. 399.
82 *Speech Criticism*, p. 399.
is Falwell's strict adherence to the Bible as the absolute authority regardless of the issue. He makes no excuses for such biblicism. He expressed his biblicism when he wrote: "The Bible is absolutely infallible, without error in all matters pertaining to faith and practice, as well as in such areas as geography, science, history, etc." Because Falwell accepts the Bible as the inerrant word of God, he finds it to be the definitive word on every aspect of human life, both individual and corporate. Consider the following excerpt from one of Falwell's sermons:

I'm saying that we need to stick by this book (Bible) right here. And if you'll stick by the book, the God of the book will stick by you. America's greatness in the future depends upon her commitment to that book.

Falwell begins every sermon with a scripture reading. Sometimes the passage read is brief, sometimes it is rather lengthy, but the pattern is always the same. Consider the introduction of "America and Government":

Deuteronomy chapter six. For all our Faith Partners that is page three-hundred-and-six . . . Deuteronomy chapter six. Now these are the commandments, the statutes and the judgements which the Lord your God commanded to teach you that ye might do them in the land whither you go to possess it. Thou mightest fear the Lord thy God to keep all his statutes and his commandments which I command thee. Thou and thy son and thy son's son all the days of thy life and that thy days may be prolonged. Hear, therefore, O Israel, and observe to do it that it may be well with thee and that you may increase mightily as the Lord God of thy Fathers hath promised thee in the land that

83 Listen America!, p. 63.
84 "America and the Family."
floweth with milk and honey. Hear, 0 Israel, the Lord the Lord our God is one Lord and thou shall love the Lord thy God with all thine heart and with all thine soul and with all thy might. And these words which I command thee this day shall be in thine heart and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children and shall talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand and they shall be as frontiers between thine eyes and thou shalt write them upon the post of thy house and on they gate. And it shall be when the Lord thy God shall have brought thee into the land which he swore unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give thee great and goodly cities which thou buildest not. And houses full of all good things which thou fillest not, and wells digged which thou diggest not, vineyards and olive trees which thou planted not, and thou shall have eaten and be full, then beware lest thou forget the Lord which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt from the house of bondage. Thou shall fear the Lord thy God and serve Him and shall swear by His name. Ye shall not go after other gods of the gods of the people which are round about you. For the Lord thy God is a jealous God among you lest the anger of the Lord thy God be kindled against thee and destroy thee from off the face of the earth. Let us pray.

Falwell not only had great confidence in the Bible as a credible authority; he also had confidence in his audiences' enshrinement of that same source. He would not venture such a lengthy reading of scripture were he not certain that such a reading would not distract his hearers, but attract them. However, he often chastised his auditors for taking too negotiable a stand on the Bible as the Word of God, infallible, inerrant, and authoritative.

The church isn't taking a strong enough stand on

85 "America and Government."
the inerrancy of Scripture. This book is not, it does not contain the Word of God. It is the Word of God. This is the Bible, the Word of God, from Genesis 1:1 through Revelation 22:21. It's absolutely inerrant, infallible, and it's impossible to find an error in it whether in science, history, or theology. Now if I didn't believe that I'd stop preaching and we've got to bring people back to the Bible.

Falwell displayed his use of the Bible as sole authority in all areas of life in one of his opening prayers. Whether the concern is one's personal life or the continued existence of America as a nation, the Bible has the answer. It almost seems that Falwell was saying the Bible is the answer.

Our Father we are thankful that in this book, the Bible, we have instructions on how to live, how to love and how to serve. We are thankful that the answers to our problems are here, the solutions to all of our difficulties are here. . . . We thank you that we have not only in this Bible instructions on our personal lives and how to be successful, but we find instructions for our nation, for our land.

Falwell has sometimes denied it, but he has more often affirmed his conviction that our national leaders must also adhere to the Bible as God's final, authoritative word to humankind. In fact, those leaders must not only subscribe to the view that the Bible speaks to spiritual, political, and economic issues; they must accept those biblical views in order to be fit for office. Consider these statements by Falwell:

86 "America and the Local Church."
87 "America and Work."
If a man is not a student of the Word of God and does not know what the Bible says, I question his ability to be an effective leader. . . . Only by godly leadership can America be put back on a divine course.

If a person is not a Christian, he is inherently a failure.

We must, from the highest office in the land right down to the shoeshine boy in the airport, have a return to biblical basics. If the Congress of our United States will take its stand on that which is right or wrong, and if our President, our judiciary system, and our state and local leaders will take their stand on holy living, we can turn this country around.

When we as a country again acknowledge God as our creator and Jesus Christ as the Savior of mankind, we will be able to turn this nation around economically as well as in every other way.

In Falwell's eyes, to be unbiblical is to be godless and consequently unfit for public office. Only those who accept the Bible as God's word and his blueprint for America are truly fit to govern.

Strict adherence to the Bible as the highest authority applies in the area of economics as well. In one sermon Falwell used the Bible as evidence that a six-day work week should be the norm. In the same passage he denounced

88 *Listen America!*, p. 17.
88 *Listen America!*, p. 62.
90 *Listen America!*, p. 18.
91 *Listen America!*, p. 81.
92 For a critical analysis of Falwell's biblicity and of his *Listen America!* see Robert McAfee Brown, "Listen, Jerry Falwell!", *Christianity and Crisis*, 40 (1980), 360-64.
welfarism and the labor movement on the basis of biblical teaching. He said:

A lazy man is very difficult to help. The fellow who doesn't like to work, you know they're always going to doctors to get certification to prove they're not able to work and they're always getting a report that they ought to slow down, which if they do they'll be in reverse. And you know what the Bible standard for work is—it's six days a week. You read the word of God and you'll find that God ordered us to six days a week of work and one of rest... I'm saying that the Biblical standard is six days. Maybe not all six days in the plant, but we are given six days in which to labor and a seventh day in which to rest. And here we are at five days trying to go back to four, trying to go back to three and increasing wages all the time and wondering what in the world has happened to our economy. You can't be taking out all the time and never putting anything in without sinking the ship, and that's what we're doing.

Falwell's belief that the Bible is the final authority and offers the best evidence even in the matter of economics was apparent again later in the same sermon. While speaking of the Christian work ethic, he pleaded for biblical principles, saying:

I'm saying that we need to go back to work. Thank God for labor unions, thank God for management, thank God for free enterprise, thank God for government. We've got the whole thing fouled up and we've got to get off this philosophy of something for nothing. We've got to get back to the book, back to what the Bible says.

Falwell consistently relies on biblical evidence and authority. He never apologizes for his biblicity. In all matters the "Word of God" is the last word.

93 "America and Work."
94 "America and Work."
Falwell does, however, misuse biblical authority at times. For instance, in the sermon "America and the Family," his biblical text—his evidence—was Genesis chapter two, verse twenty-one and following:

And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam and he slept and He took one of his ribs and closed up the flesh instead thereof. And the rib which the Lord God had taken from man made he a woman and brought her unto the man. And Adam said, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh. She shall be called woman because she was taken out of man." Therefore shall a man leave his Father and mother and shall cleave unto his wife and they shall become one flesh.

When Falwell began his sermon, however, the biblical text he read was not the subject of investigation or study. He announced: "We, the pastors and Christians, the moral majority of this land have got to come to the defense of the family and the home. There are ten major threats as I see it to the family's existence during the 1980's." He proceeded to discuss in detail those ten threats. Unfortunately, none of those "threats" was mentioned in the passage he read. The sermon had virtually nothing to do with the biblical passage Falwell read. The biblical passage was merely a springboard to propel him into the subject he wanted to discuss. Falwell is obviously not an

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95 Genesis 2:21-24, as quoted by Jerry Falwell in "America and the Family."

96 "America and the Family." The 10 major threats were (1) quick and easy divorces, (2) employed mothers, (3) Equal Rights Amendment, (4) television, (5) sex, (6) lack of communication, (7) child and wife abuse, (8) abortion, (9) homosexuality, and (10) The International Year of the Child.
expository preacher. He abandons his highest authority with this kind of topical-textual preaching which uses the biblical text as a springboard into the topic of his choice but abandons the original meaning and context of the passage.

Another example of Falwell's misuse of the Bible as evidence is found in the sermon "America and Education." He cites two biblical precedents for Christian education. The first is Deuteronomy 6:7, "And thou shall teach them diligently unto thy children and shall talk of them when thou sittest in thine house and when thou walkest by the way and when thou liest down and when thou risest up." The second passage quoted was Matthew 28:18-20, "Go ye therefore and teach all nations baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost and teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you and lo I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

In this instance, Falwell did not abandon the biblical passages in his sermon; instead he grossly misapplied them. Falwell was promoting formal academic Christian training in his sermon. He was trying to convince his listeners that "Christian schools" were both godly and needed, and that public schools were evil and inferior. The biblical texts he had quoted as evidence and authority for his argument, however, were referring to spiritual training, the teaching of the commandments of God, not reading, writing, and arithmetic. This kind of total misapplication of biblical
texts is common in Falwell's sermons; such misapplication occurred at least once in each of the five sermons analyzed, and more than once in three of the five. It is an illegitimate use of the Bible and could promote cynicism on the part of those auditors who are not already in full agreement with Falwell's views. As mentioned in the chapter on audience and occasion, Falwell can effectively make such use of biblical texts because of the nature and predisposition of most of his listeners. They already agree with what he is saying. He is, in most cases, not convincing them but reinforcing the beliefs they already hold.

It is readily apparent in the sermons studied that Falwell's reliance on supporting materials is narrowly focused. Monroe and Ehninger in their book Principles and Types of Speech discuss seven forms of verbal support which may be used evidentially. 97 They are: 1) explanation, 2) analogy, 3) illustration, 4) specific instance, 5) statistics, 6) testimony, and 7) restatement. Although Falwell used each of these forms of support at one point or another in the sermons, he showed a distinct preference for the statistical or quantitative material. His sermons are filled with detailed figures. His tendency to quantify was second only to his penchant for the biblical witness.

A few examples will illustrate this tendency to quantify. In "America and the Family" Falwell claimed, "There is a wave going across the land today and there are three new Christian schools being born every day in America. We've grown from 1400 to 14,000 in eighteen years and in total number of Christian schools by the year 1992, thirteen years away, we will equal the public schools in number."

Later, in the same sermon, he lamented the divorce rate in the country saying, "There are thirteen million children today in America with a missing parent, living with either Mom or Dad, thirteen million! No wonder we have a juvenile delinquency problem. Divorce has increased in this century by seven-hundred percent in America . . . and for every 1.8 marriages in America there's one divorce."

Falwell continued to quantify as he dealt with the issue of working mothers:

Thirty years ago . . . eighteen percent of mothers were employed outside the home. Today, forty-three percent. That has to be a threat against the family and I see in the 1980's that figure of forty-three percent going on up to sixty, seventy, and eighty percent and I have to see the disintegration of the home in a commensurate way. . . . There are six-million pre-school children today whose mothers are employed outside the home. That hurts and that's an assault by . . . Satan on the family. 98

Falwell displayed his tendency toward quantification when he denounced government intervention in the school prayer controversy. Citing the percentages involved, he

98 "America and the Family."
attacked the argument that school prayer discriminates against atheistic children:

You say we are intimidating and discriminating against atheistic young people. What would that percentage be. Well, one percent, two percent? What would be the percentage of atheists in America? Very, very small. My contention is when you outlaw Bible reading and prayer and hymn singing and Christmas hymns and so forth from public schools you are discriminating against ninety-eight to ninety-nine percent of the boys and girls who do indeed believe in God. And the question is, is it better to discriminate against one percent or ninety-nine percent?

Whether it is a list of "threats to the family," a series of homiletical suggestions, or a string of facts and figures, the tendency of Falwell to quantify is obvious in the sermons studied. One further observation about this tendency. The facts, figures and statistics given by Falwell in the five sermons studied are never documented or substantiated. They are presented as given facts that are not to be questioned. Such arbitrariness would be harmful to most speakers' credibility and effectiveness. But as mentioned in an earlier chapter, Falwell's credibility and believability factors are so high with the majority of his audiences that his unsubstantiated quantifications are rarely questioned. Such non-critical analysis on the part of an audience may seem irrational, but it is often the case. Brembeck and Howell point this out when they write: "... our treatment of critical thinking in persuasion

99 "America and Education."
assumes that the response of a receiver results from what he believes to be true more than from what is true. For him, perception is meaning."\textsuperscript{100}

In summary, Falwell's sources of evidence are few. As has been shown, he relies most heavily on the Bible as an evidential source. Whether the issue is politics, science, history, or religion, the Bible has the only answer and provides Falwell with absolute authority. At times, he uses the biblical text illegitimately, offering no explanation for the unusual application he has made. In addition to the Bible Falwell employs various types of additional supporting materials. His tendency, however, is to quantify. His use of statistics, lists, figures, and quantitative illustrations obviates the tendency. He rarely, if ever, substantiates such quantifications. They are stated as facts. Falwell relies on his high credibility to convince his hearers to accept them as such.

**Use of Reasoning**

It would be difficult to analyze Falwell's use of argument in the sermons studied without first examining the main purpose of his delivering those sermons. That purpose was stated early in the first sermon of the series and repeated throughout the four that followed:

I'm announcing today that we're organizing a group called the Moral Majority. . . . We're asking people everywhere to join hands with us in this Moral Majority . . . who will stand on the

\textsuperscript{100} Brembeck and Howell, p. 176.
side of sensibility, Bible morality, in calling
this nation back to God and back to values.
Because as far as I'm concerned Proverbs 14:34 is
the key. Solomon said: "Righteousness exalteth a
nation but sin is a reproach to any people."
. . . I'm asking thousands of pastors to join me,
and Sunday School teachers, and mothers and dads
and young people from all walks of life. Let's
bring this nation back.101

Falwell's rhetorical strategy for accomplishing this goal
was to convince his audiences that America was on a downhill
trend morally, socially and politically because of the
influence of secular humanism. In Falwell's mind, secular
humanism had led America and Americans away from God and his
will as revealed in the Bible. His arguments are
constructed and employed to support that idea.

Falwell depended almost exclusively on the deductive
process. His reasoning can with slight effort usually be
reduced to a formal syllogism. The order—major premise,
minor premise, and conclusion—was generally obvious and
recognizable. For example, in his discussion of the school
prayer issue his reasoning process could be cast in the
following form:

Major premise: If prayer and Bible reading are removed
from the public school then public
education becomes worthless.

Minor premise: The Supreme Court removed prayer and
Bible reading from the public school.

Conclusion: Therefore, public education is
worthless.102

101 "America and Work."
102 "America and Education."
Falwell's reasoning is cast in a sound hypothetical syllogism because the minor premise affirms the antecedent and the conclusion affirms the consequent. If the auditors agreed with the major premise, then Falwell's reasoning must be considered clear and logical. Despite the seeming logic, however, Falwell's argument is faulty should many auditors refuse to accept the major premise that the absence of prayer and Bible reading in public schools nullifies their worth.

In his attempt to involve Christians in government and politics through membership in Moral Majority, Falwell employed two other forms of syllogisms, one categorical and the other hypothetical. The terms of the first syllogism may be arranged thus:

Major premise: Good citizens should get involved in government and politics.
Minor premise: Christians are to be good citizens.
Conclusion: Christians should get involved in government and politics.

The major premise would be a generalization widely accepted by the public while the minor premise would be debated by some. Falwell marshalled biblical evidence, however, from the New Testament book of First Timothy to support his minor premise. Since his audiences believed the

103 See Speech Criticism, pp. 408-411, and The Art of Persuasion, pp. 144-148, for detailed discussion and analysis of syllogistic reasoning.
104 "America and Government."
Bible to be inspired, infallible, and authoritative, their acceptance of the minor premise necessitated their acceptance of the conclusion since the logical form of the syllogism was sound.

The terms of the second syllogism aimed at convincing Falwell's hearers to become actively involved in the Moral Majority were cast in the following form:

Major premise: If the church was integrally involved in the government and politics of America at one point in history, then she still should be.

Minor premise: The church was integrally involved in the government and politics of America at one point in history.

Conclusion: Therefore, the church should still be integrally involved in the government and politics of America.

The conclusion of a syllogism can be no more true than its major premise. Since Falwell's major premise was not shown to be and indeed could not be shown to be true, this argument fails the test of absolute logical cogency. But in terms of persuasiveness, his audience would likely believe his conclusion. If one accepted the major premise of Falwell's argument he would almost certainly accept the conclusion, since Falwell adequately displayed his minor premise as fact. He went all the way back to the historical beginnings of Jamestown to prove that the church had at times been integrally involved in the governmental and

105 "America and the Local Church."

106 The Art of Persuasion, p. 143.
political life of the nation. Most of Falwell's audience, both local and national, considered him the established leader of the New Religious Right. They considered him both an able and credible spokesman for the movement. They most certainly supported what he was trying to do and consequently would feel compelled to accept his major premise as truthful. His argument was therefore cogent, logical and persuasive.

Perhaps the most striking example of formal syllogistic reasoning was the string of arguments Falwell employed in the speech "America and Work." In an effort to discredit welfare practices in America, he reasoned in the following terms:

Major premise: If we would allow the bums in America to get hungry enough they would look for a job and find work.

Minor premise: We have not allowed the bums in America to get hungry enough.

Conclusion: Therefore they do not look for jobs or find work.

Falwell's argument appeared sound but its formal validity was questionable. In addition, is doubtful that all his hearers would accept his major premise, since some would likely believe that the problem was not that the "bums" had been overfed but rather undereducated, undertrained, or underprivileged. Some perhaps would object

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107 The conclusion of a conditional syllogism is reliable only if the minor premise affirms the antecedent or denies the consequent. In this instance, Falwell denies the antecedent thus invalidating the formal structure of the syllogism as well as the reliability of the conclusion.
on the grounds that even if welfare programs were disassembled and every "bum" in America was starving, there would still be the major problem of too few jobs for too many applicants. On the other hand, for those auditors who accepted Falwell's major premise, the argument most probably provided a powerful reinforcement for their disdain of national welfare practices.

A second argument blamed the increasing crime rate on welfare practices that provide much but require little. When people are given food, shelter, and money without being required to render service in return, the result is "an indigent society, a lazy society, a non-working society" that finds more opportunity to do evil. The argument was cast in the following syllogistic terms:

Major premise: If people don't work they will do more evil.
Minor premise: People aren't working.
Conclusion: Therefore, they are doing more evil.

The major premise could have appeared arbitrary and indefensible to certain auditors. Perhaps in anticipation of such skepticism, Falwell buttressed his argument with the authority of scripture as well as common sense. First, he quoted from the Apostle Paul in Second Thessalonians 3:6 ff, "Now we command you brethren in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly . . . if any would not work, neither should he eat. For we hear that there are some which walk..."
among you disorderly working not at all." Falwell hoped to convince his hearers that the disorderliness the Apostle Paul was referring to was caused and exacerbated by a man's unwillingness to work. In addition to the biblical evidence, Falwell marshalled the support of traditional common sense, when he said:

The old folks used to say idle hands are the devil's workshop. Do you know when people get in trouble? You get people out of work with a lot of spare time and invariably with that spare time they won't serve God, they won't catch up on reading their Bible, they'll do something they ought not to do. Disorderly, that means lawless. The first thing that an indigent society finds itself in is lawlessness, riot. That's the trouble in our country today.  

The biblical evidence, as well as the common-sense evidence, probably strengthened the audience acceptance of Falwell's major premise. Since the minor premise affirmed the consequent, the syllogism was sound and was doubtless accepted by the majority of his auditors as a conclusive two-fold argument. It both debunked the welfare practices of that time and explained the escalating national crime rate. It must be noted, however, that Falwell engaged in overstatement when he described American society as an "indigent society . . . in lawlessness" and "riot." But, again, considering the makeup of his audiences and their disdain for welfarism in general, such overstatement probably had little negative impact on their acceptance of his argument.

109 "America and Work."
Falwell presented other arguments against welfare practices of the federal government, each of which could be cast in syllogistic forms. His overall stance on the issue and the perspective from which he began his arguments each time is capsuled in the statement: "I think that generally speaking in North America there are enough jobs to go around. There are not enough positions, but there are plenty of jobs."\textsuperscript{110}

Falwell's arguments were almost exclusively cast in syllogistic terms. On most occasions Falwell supplied both major and minor premises. Occasionally, however, his arguments presented his audiences with an enthymematic contention that would provide one of the premises and the conclusion and leave the framing of the other premise to the audience. It is most certain that the majority of his auditors easily and agreeably provided the missing premise. Their sympathies lay with Falwell. They were predominantly loyal to his cause. Although the objective critic might find numerous fallacies in the syllogistic reasoning of Falwell, it is doubtful his immediate audiences did.\textsuperscript{111}

On occasion, Falwell's reasoning was self-contradictory. A striking example is found in the speech "America and the Family." In an effort to warn his hearers about the demise of the family and its effect on the

\textsuperscript{110} "America and Work."

\textsuperscript{111} For detailed analysis of Falwell's auditors see chapter IV, "Audience and Occasion."
nation, as well as to convince them of the divine origin of the family, he twice in succession contradicts himself. His reasoning in each of three arguments can be cast in syllogistic form: The first argument contains the following terms:

Major premise: If families fall apart, the nation falls apart.

Minor premise: Families are falling apart.

Conclusion: Therefore, the nation is falling apart.

The second argument seemed to contradict the first and can be cast in the following terms:

Major premise: If God ordained the family, then nothing can destroy it.

Minor premise: God ordained the family.

Conclusion: Therefore, nothing can destroy it.

In the third argument Falwell proceeded to contradict the contradiction by returning to the basic premise of the first argument (i.e., families are indeed falling apart). He warned of the future failure of the family even though he had just argued for the indissolubility of the family in his second argument. This final argument can be stated in the following syllogism:

Major premise: If families do not have biblical knowledge, morality, and love, they "will pass by the wayside."

Minor premise: Many families do not have biblical knowledge, morality, and love.

Conclusion: Therefore, they "will pass by the wayside."
Although it seems apparent to the detached critic that Falwell has engaged in faulty logic, it most probably passed unnoticed by most of his devoted listeners. The reasons for such uncritical acceptance are many. Some have been mentioned earlier in this paper (e.g., the fanatically loyal composition of his audiences). In addition, all three arguments are couched in sound syllogistic form. Their contradictory nature is overshadowed by the apparent soundness of their deductive form. Falwell's audiences are so familiar with his deductive strategies that acute analysis of the major or minor premises of the deduction is rarely pursued. Falwell promotes such non-critical acceptance of his premises by periodically providing his usual and typical forms of evidence: biblical and quantitative. In support of his second argument he affirms, "If God has built the house, nothing can prevail against it." His first and third contentions are supported by quantitative evidence:

- Nearly forty percent of American couples today are divorced and remarried.
- There are thirteen million children today with a missing parent, living with either a mom or dad.
- Divorce has increased in this century by seven-hundred percent in America.
- For every 1.8 marriage in America there's one divorce.
- Thirty years ago, eighteen percent of mothers

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112 For further discussion see "Use of Evidence" in Chapter V, "Forms of Support."
were employed outside the home. Today forty-three percent. . . . There are six-million preschool children today whose mothers are employed outside the home.\footnote{\textit{America and the Family.}}

Such quantitative and biblical information probably reinforced the beliefs of Falwell's auditors. Close examination of the arguments and the evidence did not verify any of the three consequents contained in the major premises. It was left to the predisposition of the audiences to accept or reject the truthfulness of those premises. Falwell's quantifications and his paraphrased biblical truths probably aided his persuasion of the audiences by deflecting any tendency to question his syllogistic assertions.

In summary, the speaker's use of reason was most certainly adequate for both his local and national audience which were comprised largely of supporters. His tendency toward deductive reasoning that employed unsupported contentions and unsubstantiated evidence was probably inadequate for most of those who were not already in agreement with him.

The next chapter deals with matters of style and delivery.

\footnote{\textit{America and the Family.}} It should be noted that neither the biblical nor the quantitative evidence in these arguments is documented.
CHAPTER VI

STYLE AND DELIVERY

"The effectiveness of . . . speaking depends upon both what you say and how you say it."\(^1\) The preceding chapter analyzed the substance of the Falwell speeches under consideration in this study. The purpose of this chapter is to analyze his style and delivery in those speeches. Modern rhetorical critics believe that clear and impressive style as well as an intelligible and pleasing delivery are essential to effective speaking.\(^2\) Because of the obvious logical connection between style and delivery in speech making, these two elements of Falwell's speaking are justifiably considered in one chapter.

Style

Thonssen, Baird, and Braden point out that style refers primarily to the way in which a speaker "clothed his ideas with language."\(^3\) The present analysis of Jerry Falwell's


\[^{3}\] *Speech Criticism*, p. 489.
speaking style will focus on Falwell's use of language and rhetorical devices to convey his ideas.

An effective analysis of style can be accomplished if the critic considers two bodies of material in the discourse: 1) elements that enhance clarity, and 2) elements that enhance impressiveness. These two concerns serve as the primary criteria for this investigation of Falwell's style.

**Elements of Clarity**

The first element of clarity is the appropriateness of the language. Did the speaker use the right words at the right time and in the right way? An examination of Falwell's speeches reveals that he was principally concerned with being understood. His speeches were not completely innocent of rhetorical embellishment, but his style was for the most part simple and direct. He rarely employed words of more than two or three syllables, and his language was typically the language of the common working man rather than the intellectual sophisticate. His sentences were brief and concise for the most part although he did occasionally run several sentence fragments and phrases together in convoluted fashion. Even then, however, the thoughts contained in the lengthy sentence were clear.

Despite his usual simplicity, Falwell on occasion employed abstract terms. In "America and Education" he

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4 *Speech Criticism*, pp. 498-508.
spoke of "reverence of God, reverence for the Bible, and reverence for prayer." Such terms certainly conjured up immediate feelings and thoughts in the minds of his auditors, but even the homogeneous composition of Falwell's audiences could not ensure that these terms were understood uniformly. They served as cluster symbols which would bring to the mind of the listeners a certain group of referents. For each listener, however, the exact referents would differ, drastically in some instances. For example, "reverence for God" might demand a political referent such as patriotism or capitalism in the mind of one auditor, while at the same time evoking a more mystical, spiritual concept that would demand an apolitical stance in the mind of another.

Other abstract terms used by Falwell included "faith of our fathers," and "premises upon which this country was established," "freedom in Christ," "pro-liberty, pro-freedom," and "revival in our country," "holy living" and "inferior education." At best these words mean slightly different things to different persons. At worst they are highly vague and probably did little to augment

5 "America and Government."
6 "America and Work."
7 "America and Education."
The preacher turned political activist also fell prey to erudite expression on occasion, although as stated earlier such departure from a simple style was a rarity. Some of the technical terms Falwell employed were "unilaterally disarm," "humanism," "vanguard," "libertarian," "oligarchy of communism," and "unisexual philosophy." Falwell's audiences were by no means illiterate, but were predominantly blue-collar, middle income, moderately educated Americans who probably had heard such terms before but were not sure of their exact meanings and did not employ them in their own day-to-day conversations. The one possible exception might have been the immediate audience to which these sermons were delivered, the Thomas Road Baptist Church in Lynchburg, Virginia. Because of the unusually large number of college professors and students in that particular audience, comprehension of such terms was probably greater than for

8 One might argue that the demographics of Falwell's audiences were so identical that such phrases were not abstract but highly refined symbols of the New Religious Right with definite and specific referents. Such a conclusion is doubtful especially given the incipient nature of the movement at the time of Falwell's speeches.

9 "America and Work."

10 "America and Education."

11 "America and Government."

12 "America and Family."
the national television audiences. Most of Falwell's audiences however were most certainly not comfortable with such technical terms. Such terms, consequently, probably served as a deterrent to clarity rather than an aid. It is possible, however, that those very words might have served to impress certain members of his audience with Falwell's level of erudition.

On the whole Falwell's language was clear. His vocabulary and sentence structure were both simple and direct. He intended to be understood, and his style reflects that objective. Falwell's major concern, however, was not to enlighten but to mobilize. The speeches studied were not so much intended to inform but to mobilize a "silent majority" into a "moral majority." To that end, Falwell's ability to impress his audience with the seriousness of his message, the sincerity of the messenger, and the need to act, was crucial. In the next section an analysis will be made of Falwell's rhetorical attempts to impress his audiences.

Elements of Impressiveness

Impressiveness of language, rhetorical embellishment, has to do with the judicious use of language to make ideas more palatable, persuasive, emphatic, or colorful. The rationale for employing such devices is that the public speaker seeks not only a clear style, but also a style which

\[13\text{ See Chap. IV of this study.}\]
serves to the fullest his persuasive ends. Falwell used several stylistic devices, the most prominent of which were repetition, humor, connotative terms, and an eclectic use of biblical allusions.

Falwell obviously placed great confidence in the persuasive effect of emotive language. As noted earlier the use of "snarl and purr" terms was one of his chief devices for enhancing the impressiveness of his thought.¹⁴ Such terms are "loaded" words in that they have both a denotative and connotative meaning. Even the shortest and simplest of them often serve as cluster-symbols which bring to the auditor's mind not merely one literal referent but rather an entire gamut of perceptions, either negative or positive. Consequently, with one or two words or phrases an entire argument is essentially made because of the preconceived beliefs and attitudes conjured up by the particular "snarl" or "purr" term.

Falwell was adept at using such symbols to accomplish his persuasive ends. For example, in speaking about the Department of Education and its negative effect on children and parents, he referred to the department as a "bureaucratic monster" which had turned children into "undisciplined animals" while "choking to death" taxpayers.¹⁵ In regard to abortion, five million babies were "murdered" in

¹⁴ See section on "Emotional Appeal" in Chap. V of this study.

¹⁵ "America and Education."
1978, while the welfare rolls swelled with "deadbeats and bums." Falwell's attempt to convince his auditors that the family was in crisis was enhanced by the impressive use of such terms as "juvenile delinquency," "missing parent," and "runaway sex."\(^1\)

Many other examples of highly connotative terms were found in Falwell's speeches, including the use of positive, "purr" words. In "America and the Local Church" he spoke of "traditional Bible believing people" who wanted nothing more than the right to worship freely. He pleaded for his auditors to turn America back to God by believing in and practicing "biblical morality," "sensibility,"\(^1\)\(^2\) and "patriotism."\(^1\)\(^9\)

By using such emotionally charged phrases Falwell sought to manipulate the already held opinions of his conservative auditors against certain issues and in favor of others. This stylistic device in and of itself is not sufficient for total persuasion. Falwell's aim was to mobilize by reinforcement. Rather than trying to change anyone's mind, Falwell was trying to get his audiences to act on their current beliefs system. To that end such connotative "snarl and purr" terms almost certainly aided

\(^{16}\) "America and Work."
\(^{17}\) "America and the Family."
\(^{18}\) "America and Work."
\(^{19}\) "America and Government."
his efforts by enhancing the impressiveness of his ideas and arousing the auditors to action.

Another device employed often by Falwell was repetition, both of single words and entire phrases. For example, in "America and Education" he spoke of the weekly chapel in the elementary school he had attended as a boy. "Every week we'd have chapel . . . it was a time when all of us were introduced to reverence for God, to reverence for the Bible, to reverence for prayer." Later in the same sermon, he emphasized the values that should be taught in school, saying: "We believe in God, we believe in the Bible, we believe in the monogamous Christian family, we believe in holy living."

As he encouraged people to enroll in the new "Moral Majority" he used repetition to heighten the interest in and sense of need for the organization:

I think there are those people who are simply looking for leadership and guidance and who want to see this country come back to basics, back to values, back to biblical morality, back to sensibility, back to patriotism.  

He spoke of "an indigent society a lazy society a non-working society" produced by the welfare programs of the government. He criticized those who attacked the American way of life, saying:

Nobody in the world knows the freedom we do and those who are attempting to tear down this

20 "America and Work."

21 "America and Work."
country, who are anti-capitalism, anti-establishment, anti-American, anti-military, etcetera, ought to realize that the very freedom that allows you to do that is the freedom you're trying to destroy. 22

Another example of this repetitive approach was observable later in "America and Government" as Falwell pleads for revival:

We've got to have an awareness of sin. We've got to realize where we've gone astray. . . . We've got to have a revival of prayer. We've got to get the people of god praying and asking for revival . . . we've got to be willing to stand and pay the price. . . .

And as he asserts the need for the local church to become the "standard of righteousness" in the community, he once again resorts to repetition to gain momentum and heighten emotion. The church must set the standard so that:

even though people are not Christians they know that it's right to have family. They know that it's wrong for a man to be unfaithful to his wife or a wife to be unfaithful to her husband. They know that immorality is wrong. They know, whether it be heterosexual or homosexual, sin is sin. They're taught that by the church. 23

Many other instances of the employment of this stylistic device could be cited, but these suffice to show Falwell's reliance upon it for rhetorical embellishment. Given Falwell's heavy ethical and emotional orientation in the speeches studied, the staccato-like cadence of such repetitive wording added impressiveness to his language.

22 "America and Government."

23 "America and the Local Church."
Falwell also employed with some frequency the stylistic device of alliteration. He referred to advocates of abortion as "infidels and inforhells" and encouraged those opposed to abortion to "join hands and hearts" together to stop pro-abortion legislation. He classified homosexuality as a "reprobate relationship" and applauded the local churches and preachers for providing "the strength, the spirit, the moral fibre and the fabric with which America was built. Later in the same sermon he referred to local churches as a "body of born again, baptized believers banded together" for the purpose of evangelizing the world.

Although perhaps not as striking as the use of repetition discussed earlier, Falwell's use of alliteration no doubt enhanced the impressive nature of his language. It is more flowing and smooth and for those reasons perhaps not as frequently used by Falwell, who sought to excite rather than woo his audiences. Nonetheless, such alliteration was almost certainly not by accident nor without positive consequences. It could only have served to convince his audiences that he was not just a country preacher but an accomplished orator. Falwell's extemporaneous style of preaching without notes or manuscript precluded an

24 "America and the Local Church."
25 "America and Work."
26 "America and the Family."
27 "America and the Local Church."
over-abundance of alliterative phrases since such stylistic devices, unlike repetition, call for detailed forethought and outlining before being used. Alliteration is a useful device but difficult to employ correctly and effectively.

Falwell's rhetorical arsenal included the use of humor as a stylistic device. He breaks up intense, often rather negative arguments with a judicious injection of humor. For instance, in a lengthy, pejorative, mentally taxing section of discourse on the welfare debacle in America, he told the following anecdote that not only served to relieve the tension and give the audience a mental breather, but also aptly summed up his argument:

We have four dogs at our house . . . two of them are watchdogs and they live in the house. They're little poodles. If they hear something at night they jump in bed and watch with us. One weighs two pounds and one about four pounds. Buffy and Jody. Then we have two dogs that live outside. They are Irish Setters. That's a bird dog Dr. Wemp. You're a city-slicker and didn't know that. But that's a bird dog, we have two of them, big beautiful Irish Setters.

The fellow who gave them to us is a dear friend of mine who owns a supermarket and he was telling me what kind of meat that they gave them, what kind of meat they eat and so forth. And the more he talked the more I realized I couldn't afford those dogs. When he left I went to the store and I got some Purina. That's those little brown chunks that only a dog would eat. And I brought out a big bag and dumped them out two pans and sure enough, they would not eat it. But four days later they did. If you get them hungry enough they'll eat.

And if we could get the bums in America hungry enough they'd start looking for a job and might go beneath their dignity to work for a
Falwell's humor is not always lengthy or anecdotal. He knows the value of the one-liner. Later in the sermon just cited he asserted: "I believe we ought to let those bums who wouldn't work in a pie shop eating the holes out of doughnuts starve to death." And again, "A lazy man is very difficult to help. The fellow who doesn't like work, you know they're always going to doctors to get certificates to prove they're not able to work and they're always getting a report that they ought to slow down which if they do they'll be in reverse. . . ."

A study of Falwell's use of humor, as well as the passages just cited, reveals that his use of this device can be biting and severe. It allows him to say harsh things without doing damage to his persona as a prophet, preacher, and friend. To some, such a cynical display of humor might be offensive, but again, given the homogeneous nature of his audiences, such displays of humor, biting as they might be, probably served only to increase his credibility and ethos.

His ability to use humor to endear himself, his cause, or his television program must also be noted. On such occasions Falwell's humor is much more sensitive and much less aggressive. The following excerpt concerning the public perception of "The Old-Time Gospel Hour" will demonstrate this more modest style of humor:

28 "America and Work."
All we do is allow the cameras to look on and tape what's happening here outside. Now some programs have elected to go another route. Some have elected to use the audience, the congregation, as a studio audience and to give out a television production. We don't do that. This is not a slick Hollywood production. We have camera members back here. Every so often you'll notice one of them must have an itch or something and they'll scratch. We try to keep them from doing it.

Don will chew on his thumb sometimes. He sucked his thumb and he quit that, but we try to get him not to do it. But I'll tell you when they do that we don't cut that out of the tape. We leave it in because that's the way it happens in everybody's church and you can identify with someone yawning. One of my best men up here was sleeping last week while I was preaching. I asked him about it later. He said he was meditating. Some have developed the art of sleeping with their eyes open. You cannot tell that they're asleep. But regardless, we leave it in. You know why? People all over the country say, "Hey, that's like it is down at my church. They're not trying to produce anything. They're just having an old-fashioned, Bible-preaching, soul-winning, hell-fire-and-damnation church service and I relate to it." 29

One final stylistic device was used consistently in the speeches studied. As was mentioned earlier in this paper, Falwell relied heavily on the biblical text in his sermons. He began each sermon with a lengthy reading of scripture as well as quoting portions of that passage repeatedly throughout the sermon. 30 This type of usage in itself could be considered a stylistic embellishment.

The type of stylistic device to be considered at this point in the study, however, is not the direct biblical

29 "America and the Local Church."

30 See Chap. V of this study.
quotation, but rather the biblical allusion. It is a consistent device in each of the sermons and entails the stringing together of several biblical phrases or principles. Falwell's reliance on this device is obvious and yet hard to isolate at times since in many passages entire paragraphs are comprised almost entirely of Biblical allusions so that only the person extremely familiar with the exact wording of the Bible could separate that language which is Falwell's (adapted from some biblical passage) and that which is a direct biblical quotation.

For example, the following excerpt is made up almost entirely of biblical allusions:

It was God who took the rib out of the side of Adam and created Eve and brought them back together. It was God who established the family and if God has built the house nothing can prevail against it. . . . God ordained that the husband and wife should be bone of bone, flesh of flesh. . . . It was God who said a man shall leave his father and mother and shall cleave unto his wife and they two become one flesh. It was God who ordained child bearing. . . . God ordained one man for one woman for one life time. And that born out of that husband and wife would be part of both of them. It was God who told them to reproduce.

The biblical allusions included in this excerpt are to Genesis 2:21-22, Psalms 127:1, Ephesians 5:31, Genesis 1:28, Matthew 19:8-9; 5:31-32, respectively. Although each of

31 "America and the Family."

32 Falwell never supplies the specific references in such cases. The fact that his language has the "sound" of a biblical quotation satisfies his audiences. There is an apparent symbiotic relationship between Falwell's
the phrases Falwell used contained some of the wording of the scriptural passages alluded to, none of them is an exact quotation. Falwell does not intend them to be. This rhetorical device allows him to speak with biblical authority (because his words sound biblical) and yet inject his own thoughts and arguments simultaneously. Such passages occur frequently throughout the five sermons studied. Consider the following examples:

The Old Testament scripture says that we're not to muzzle out the ox that's treading the corn and the laborer is worthy of his hire. So Paul said I had that right, that scriptural right not to work with my hands. Yet Paul said he was a tentmaker. I worked with my hands. I earned my own bread. I took care of the whole company of people who were with me. We were not deadbeats and bums in your midst. We were chargeable to none of you . . . I determined not to leave myself open to criticism but to work with my hands and thereby set the example for some of you who have been guilty of laziness.

These allusions are to Deuteronomy 25:4, I Thessalonians 2:9, Acts 18:3, II Thessalonians 3:89, and I Timothy 5:18. This multiplication of familiar biblical phrases no doubt strengthened the impact of Falwell's argument against excessive and extravagant welfarism. His audiences were already opposed to welfare. It remained

credibility and his use of the biblical allusion as a rhetorical device. His high credibility factor with his auditors enables them to accept his eclectic use of biblical phrases and his own human wisdom as if it were all biblically authoritative, and the fact that he alludes so often to the biblical text and sounds so biblical at the same time increases his credibility.

33 "America and Work."

34 See Chap. IV of this study.
only for Falwell to reinforce and manipulate their preconceptions by providing an apparently biblical base for their stance. The intertwining of biblical vocabulary and Falwell's personal interpretation of the passages enhanced the impressiveness of Falwell's speech as well as his position on welfare.

Falwell's propensity for the biblical allusion as a stylistic device is evident in other aspects of his sermons. Even his prayers often include the biblical allusion. In "America and Government," for instance, a brief opening prayer of only six sentences contained allusions to John 8:32, Deuteronomy 12:8, I Corinthians 15:1-2, and Deuteronomy 6:13. Given the nature and composition of his audiences, the biblical allusion is not only the most obvious of the stylistic devices employed by Falwell, but it is almost certainly the most effective as well.

It is doubtful that anyone would use the word eloquent to describe the preaching of Jerry Falwell. As has been stated, the sermons studied indicate a distinct preference.

35 It should be noted that although there is an Old Testament passage which claims that the ox must not be muzzled out while treading the grain (Deut. 25:4), there is not any specific Old Testament verse which states that the "laborer is worthy of his hire." There is, however, a New Testament reference, I Timothy 5:18, which combines the two. The misrepresentation doubtless slipped by most of his auditors unnoticed. That the allusion to the Bible had been made was sufficient for them.

36 Falwell might be regarded as eloquent in one sense: he seemed never to be at a loss for the right word. An analysis of the original, non-edited transcripts of the five sermons provides virtually no verbal pauses or vocabulary corrections.
for the simple and clear statement as opposed to the erudite expression. Since his aim was to be understood, his word choice reflected that objective. Falwell's perception and analysis of his own speaking style is insightful and agrees with this writer's analysis:

in order to get someone to do something, to make a decision, to launch out into something, it is necessary to challenge them as an individual. You must convince your hearers that what you're asking is realistic and within their reach. Therefore, I try to deliver every message so that an elementary student in the audience as well as a college graduate can perceive what I am saying. I've heard some speakers say that they deliver their messages at an eighth grade level. I'm not sure I try to do that, but I do try to speak so that the uneducated know what I am talking about. 37

In addition, since Falwell also sought to mobilize a large constituency of people with strong beliefs but historically passive political involvement, 38 his language was intentionally biting and emotional at times. His use of such stylistic devices as alliteration, repetition, connotative terms, humor, and the biblical allusion served his purposes well by enhancing the impressiveness of his thought and thereby positively promoting the acceptance of the argument he put forward.

Delivery

The rhetorical critic needs to examine at least four aspects of a speaker's delivery: the speaker's method of delivery.

37 Personal interview: Falwell.

38 See Chap. II of this study.
preparation, the method of delivery, the physical aspects of the delivery, and the vocal aspects of the delivery.\footnote{Speech Criticism, pp. 522-530}

Tape recordings of the speeches under consideration were not available for detailed analysis. The writer, however, did see and hear the speeches as they were televised. In addition, the writer has seen and heard Falwell speak many times, including several in person, and is able to make several specific judgments about his delivery.

\textbf{Method of Preparation}

Don Norman, Executive Assistant to Dr. Jerry Falwell and Executive Director of "The Old-Time Gospel Hour," reported that Falwell is completely responsible for the writing, editing, and rewriting of all his sermons. He does rely on research assistance from individuals such as Dr. Harold Wilmington, Dean of Liberty Bible Institute, Mr. Nelson Keeners, administrative assistance officer, and certain others, who collect both biblical material and social data for him. According to Norman, however, these individuals function only as information gatherers. They do absolutely no speech writing for Falwell. The composition of each of his sermons is entirely his own from beginning to end.

Norman explained the process in the following manner:

\begin{quote}
To keep abreast of what's happening across the country we have readers that, they look at all the major newspapers, all the major periodicals,
\end{quote}
all the major magazines, daily, not just weekly . . . and keep him abreast of the happenings that may not have made the news, that could be way out there somewhere in the west, that would not make AP back here, or UPI . . . they keep him well informed of all the news happenings that would be pertinent . . . .

Most of the folks . . . as far as sermon material is concerned . . . give him suggestions and ideas and some pertinent type of information he could bring together to solidify his thoughts and make the impression he really wants to make with the sermon. The final, bottom-line, is always his.

Falwell's analysis of his sermon preparation is similar to Norman's. He mentions the help of research assistants and in addition claims to use certain biblical reference works, saying:

I try to use, first of all, the Bible itself as the source text of my message. I pray about what my topic should be. I try to bring the message that God lays upon my heart to bring . . . . I use a number of concordances, Greek and Hebrew concordances. I use other Bible study helps, such as commentaries by men I respect . . . . My personal experience is entered into the compilation of a message and generally, since I speak twenty times weekly, I also have others who are helping me on research. We have a number of men and women who put together support information that would fit into some particular message I might be bringing. I incorporate all of that for the message or messages I'm delivering.

It is assumed, for the purpose of this dissertation, that Falwell followed the same or quite similar method of preparation for the five speeches under consideration.

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40 Personal interview: Don Norman.

41 Personal interview: Falwell. It should be noted that Falwell does not quote from or refer to a single commentary in the five "political sermons" studied.
Method of Delivery

In regard to Falwell's method of delivery, Norman stated that Falwell is an extemporaneous speaker and none of his speeches are ever written out. In fact, Falwell rarely uses any notes in the pulpit. Occasionally, he will scribble a few memory "bumpers" or an acrostic in the margin of his Bible. If there is ever a manuscript, according to Norman, "it's after the fact, rather than before the fact." The only time any paper of any sort is visible during Falwell's speaking is when he is giving statistical material. Norman explained:

When you see him go to the platform you don't see any notes in paper form; once in a while. When that is prevalent it's because there are statistics that he wants to be sure that he gets right . . . he's got those down there so he doesn't misquote them. That is important because there are a lot of people that are listening to everything he says and . . . if you make a mistake it will be all over. But, when it comes right down to doing the message, he normally speaks right from the Word, with the hand written notes in the margin.

Falwell concurred with Norman's analysis of his method of delivery. Although he has a remarkable memory, he never memorizes a speech. He characterizes himself as an extemporaneous speaker who prepares but does not usually use notes. On occasion, however, he jots down a few memory aids:

42 Personal interview: Norman.
43 Personal interview: Norman.
44 Personal interview: Falwell.
I do have somewhat of a photographic memory. I can look at a page and pretty well capture what is there with one reading. I also use memory helps. I will sometimes use acrostics. Sometimes I will jot down, on the page of my Bible three or four words which would be meaningless to anyone else, but which are bumpers for me.

Because of his extemporaneous style and the general absence of notes, Falwell maintained near constant eye-contact with his audiences. His lack of notes in no way interfered with the smoothness of his delivery. As observed earlier, Falwell was rarely at a loss for the right word and almost never employed a verbal pause. His fluency, especially in light of the some twenty speeches he gives each week, is impressive, and aids his attempts to influence his audiences. In 1979 such smooth delivery served to reinforce the audiences' perception of Falwell as credible and competent.

Vocal Aspects of Delivery

Although he was born and raised in the small, hill country town of Lynchburg, Virginia, there is nothing

45 Personal interview: Falwell.

46 See Paul Heinberg, "Relationships of Content and Delivery to General Effectiveness," Speech Monographs, 23 June 1963, 105-107. Heinberg's research suggested that delivery was almost three times as influential as content in determining the effectiveness of persuasive appeals.

47 See Gerald R. Miller and Murray Hewgill, "The Effect of Variations in Non-fluency on Audience Ratings of Source Credibility," Quarterly Journal of Speech, 50 (1964), 36-44. Miller and Hewgill's experimental research suggested that an increase in non-fluency results in a decrease of the audiences' perception of the speaker's credibility and competence.
particularly noticeable about Falwell's voice. There is neither the refined sound of Virginia aristocracy nor the substandard pronunciation and nasality of the Appalachian hillsmen. Falwell's voice is typically pleasant and easy to listen to. The absence of any recognizable geographical accent, in the writer's opinion, pushes Falwell's voice into the realm of the comfortable. Considering the heterogeneous geographical composition of Falwell's national audiences, such neutrality is doubtless an advantage. He cannot be categorized merely on the basis of his vocal accent. He is just an American, speaking his mind.

Although neutral in accent, Falwell's voice is anything but monotonous. He never shouts, but uses a broad range of volume in his speaking. He typically raises the volume of his voice and increases its tempo when he is bringing an argument to a close, but there is no unusual rhythmical pattern beyond this. However, regardless of the volume, Falwell's voice is always full and clear. In addition, his diction and pronunciation are distinct and deliberate. He never runs words together or mumbles while speaking.

Falwell's vocal variety with regard to volume, pitch, and intonation is rhetorically sound and advantageous. Research has shown that monotonous or monoratous delivery results in decreased comprehension. Glasgow's study for example, found that listeners' comprehension of material was

48 See interview: Norman.
at least ten percent greater when that material was delivered with "good intonation," varied pitches, stresses and rates, than when it was delivered in a monotonous or monoratous fashion. 49

The paralanguage employed by Falwell was especially effective because it conveyed a directness, almost an intimacy with the audience. It has been written about the speaking of the abolitionist orator, Wendell Phillips that "the character of his voice—the man in it—had the effect of 'finding' its auditor. It has an intimate tone, as if he were speaking to each one as an unknown friend." 50

Falwell's speaking voice is conversational in character, but beyond this, he appears to be so completely caught up in his message that his vocal inflections and tones do not communicate a studied or rehearsed approach. His concentration on the content of his message seems so focused that his vocal delivery, especially paralanguage, relays a sense of spontaneity and naturalness that establishes and maintains an intimacy between him and his audiences.

It should be noted that Falwell's conversational style of delivery most probably enhanced his already high credibility with his audiences. Communication studies


have shown that speakers who employ "conversational" delivery styles receive higher credibility ratings from listeners than speakers who employ "hard sell," overly energetic delivery styles. ⁵¹

In summary, Falwell has a pleasing, resonant voice that avoids extremes while still exercising variety of pitch, volume, and inflection. The volume and pitch control Falwell has over his voice is probably one of his most effective tools of delivery. According to Thonssen, Baird, and Braden, a speaker's delivery should be "clear, intelligible, and pleasing." ⁵² The vocal aspects of Falwell's delivery meet each of these criteria.

Physical Aspects of Delivery

The question that should be answered at this point is: Did the speaker's appearance and physical characteristics while speaking contribute to his overall effectiveness? Certainly the way Falwell looks in the pulpit is an asset. He stands well in excess of six feet in height and is well-proportioned. Although not outstandingly handsome, there is a definite "boyish charm" about Falwell's face that encourages acceptance.


⁵² Speech Criticism, p. 530.
Falwell's manner of dress is conservative. One could rarely, if ever, find him in the pulpit or behind the speaker's lectern without his traditional attire: navy-blue suit, solid-colored tie, and white shirt. There is nothing distracting about Falwell's clothes. In fact, they probably enhanced his credibility with the conservative audiences which he addressed. He had not only spoken conservatively but had dressed conservatively as well.

Kinesthetically, Falwell's delivery is reserved, yet natural. His facial expressions while speaking are generally limited to a concerned frown and an impish grin. Both aid his delivery since the expressions appropriately and adequately reflect the meanings, intellectual and emotional, of the words being spoken. In addition, Falwell's facial expressions never appear contrived. When speaking quickly and loudly about the debacle of humanism and its consequences, Falwell employs the frown. When employing humor, wit, or a biting, cynical remark, Falwell uses the quick grin to his advantage. While speaking harshly, he can often reinforce his claim that he is only a man of God who is trying to help—by looking the part. How could an individual with such a boy-like charm on his face be anything but sincere?

As Falwell speaks he stands very still. There is very little body movement. He occasionally gestures with his hands, but even then it is a restrained movement. He never paces or leaves the pulpit. His messages are always meant
to move his audiences, to "obtain a decision," but such persuasion is accomplished through the movement of the message, rarely the messenger. The few gestures Falwell does employ are natural and display an impressive control of the body even during the more vocally emphatic portions of his sermons. Falwell's former athletic ability and training probably give him an advantage in this control of bodily action in different rhetorical situations. He displays no random action, and, as in his vocal delivery, his gestures always complement and aid rather than detract from the meaning of his words.

In addition, Falwell's posture while speaking probably aids his effectiveness. His stance, both in the pulpit and as he rises from his chair on the podium and approaches the pulpit, expresses a self-control and friendliness. His approach is energetic yet not militant. There is always a bounce in his step. His posture in the pulpit is tall, firm, and athletic. It exudes a physical confidence that doubtless aids his ethos with the audience and conveys a message of discipline in itself.  

In summary, Falwell's method of preparation included the research assistance of others but was totally independent in terms of composition. His method of delivery

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53 Personal interview: Falwell.

occasionally allowed for brief notes in his Bible margin or a slip of paper containing exact statistical data, but was generally extemporaneous without notes. Falwell's voice was neutral in accent and pleasant to hear. Although he changed pitch, tone, and volume often in his speeches, he avoided extremes, neither shouting nor whispering. His speech was always clear, intelligible, and pleasant. His conservative appearance and his facial expressions aided his message. Reserved bodily gestures punctuated his remarks but never detracted from them. Falwell knew what he wanted to say and apparently knew how he wanted to say it.
CHAPTER VII
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This dissertation is a study of the Reverend Jerry Falwell's "political preaching" as manifested in five consecutive Sunday sermons which began July 1, 1979, and resulted in the formation of Moral Majority, Inc. The study has focused on Falwell's use of invention in the sermons he delivered at the Thomas Road Baptist Church in Lynchburg, Virginia and broadcast nationally on "The Old-Time Gospel Hour" television program. The background of the speaker and an analysis of the historical setting were also included and enhanced the scope of the study.

Falwell was born in Lynchburg, Virginia on August 11, 1933, into an upper-middle class family. His father was a successful businessman but totally irreligious. His mother was a devout Baptist. Falwell himself was disinterested in religion until his eighteenth year when he attended church for the first time.

The young Falwell was a bright student. At the advice of his teachers, he skipped the entire second grade. He graduated from high-school at seventeen as valedictorian with a 98.6 average. He enrolled as a mechanical engineering major at Lynchburg College with plans to
transfer to Virginia Polytechnic Institute the following year. On January 20, 1952, however, Jerry Falwell attended Sunday services at the Park Avenue Baptist Church in Lynchburg. At the end of the service he "gave his life to Christ" and two months later made the decision to enter the ministry full-time.

Once the decision to preach had been made, it remained only to choose the right school for proper preparation. He chose Baptist Bible College in Springfield, Missouri. His training took four years (the only years of his life spent outside of Lynchburg), and he eventually graduated as valedictorian once again.

After his graduation from Baptist Bible College, Falwell returned to Lynchburg and began a new Church with thirty-five charter members. The small group began meeting in an abandoned bottling company building on Thomas Road. One week after beginning his new church, Falwell launched a daily radio program. Six months later he began a television broadcast as well.

Eight hundred and sixty-four persons attended services on the first anniversary of the church. Today the Thomas Road Baptist Church numbers more than twenty thousand members and is the second largest church in the nation. Falwell's daily radio program is now carried on more than six hundred radio stations and his "The Old-Time Gospel Hour" program is broadcast live from the Thomas Road Baptist Church to more than four hundred television stations nationwide. The program has an annual budget of eighty
million dollars. In addition, Falwell serves as Chancellor of Liberty Baptist College and Graduate Seminary, accredited schools which boast a combined enrollment of more than six thousand full-time students.

Perhaps most important of all, Falwell is founder and President of Moral Majority, Inc., a political action group of more than six million registered members. The membership is comprised of Protestants, Catholics, and Jews, including 102,000 ministers, priests and rabbis. Moral Majority reflects the religio-political beliefs of its founder and consequently is pro-life, pro-family, pro-moral and pro-American (national defense). The effects of Moral Majority, Inc., and its grass roots efforts during the 1980 general election have been debated, but, as shown in this study, cannot be denied.

Falwell declared war on secular humanism and liberal politics in 1979 with the five sermons which form the core of this study. With the aid of his Moral Majority, Inc. and the visibility afforded him by his "The Old-Time Gospel Hour", he became one of America's best known and most influential preachers as well as the acknowledged leader of the "New Religious Right."

Although Falwell's formal speech training was minimal, he became an accomplished public speaker as evidenced by the rhetorical analysis of the five "political" sermons which comprise this study. He was an astute student of the audiences to which he spoke, both local and national. Both
audiences were predominantly working class and conservative, both religiously and politically. They had a homogeneity of beliefs and convictions including belief in the inspiration, authority and infallibility of the Bible, in a literal sinner's hell and saint's heaven, in the deity of Jesus Christ and the atoning nature of his death.

There was a similar political oneness about them as well: government is too liberal, too restrictive, and too big. The greatest point of agreement was found, however, in the common conviction that politicians had become too concerned with what their immediate constituents thought and too little concerned with what God thought. They felt an urgent need for a return to biblical morality.

Falwell, knowing his audiences' initial agreement with him on basic issues, offered those audiences exactly what they wanted. He spent much more time asserting his conclusions than he did justifying them. His audiences were not looking for proof but for confirmation and direction. Falwell provided both. He spoke out against the moral decline he believed the nation was experiencing and suggested a remedy for such spiritual malaise. He believed the occasion called for strong medicine and he knew his audiences would take it. His prescription was two-fold: repent (give up evil), and get involved in the moral crusade for right (fight evil). Moral Majority, Inc., in Falwell's mind, was the necessary instrument for accomplishing the latter objective.
The rhetorical forms of support Falwell used to accomplish his goals were three-fold: ethical, emotional, and logical. With regard to ethical proof, Falwell attempted to enhance his perceived character with his audiences in several ways. Most apparent and predominant were his attempts to link his opponents with that which was less virtuous and to minimize unfavorable impressions of himself and his cause which had been suggested previously by his opponents.

In addition, the development by Falwell of a prophet persona was an obvious attempt to enhance his perceived character. It gave him historical, biblical precedent and enabled him to locate himself in a biblical tradition of social-civil activism. Beyond that, as a prophet, in lamenting and castigating the sinfulness of America and in calling her back to God, he was carrying out a historically revered and expected role in the minds and hearts of evangelical Christians. In addition, his sincerity and perceived character were enhanced by this prophet persona because he, exactly like the biblical prophets of old, had been persecuted and reviled not for any wrong he had committed, but merely for the message of truth he had delivered. And finally, Falwell's development of this prophet persona most certainly aided his ethos because it enabled his message of doom to become, at the same time, a message of hope.

Falwell consistently exuded goodwill toward his
audiences by being candid and straightforward, by identifying himself with his hearers and their problems, and by revealing his personable qualities as a speaker. He occasionally attempted to further the demonstration of goodwill by off-setting any personal reasons he may have had for giving a speech.

It could be argued that on occasion Falwell fell far beneath the accepted standard of offering necessary rebukes with tact and consideration. However, several observations are in order. First, Falwell knew his audiences' primary composition was working class and conservative, both biblically and politically. Given the overwhelming homogeneity of his auditors, it would have been difficult for him to offend them with his stinging rebukes of those that his audiences considered the enemy. Second, tact and consideration are highly relative terms. What is harsh to one constituency is weak to another. And third, considering the less-than-tactful and far from considerate accusations that had been levelled against Falwell, he showed remarkable restraint. He predominantly, in a consistent and convincing manner, demonstrated a courtesy that was admirable.

Falwell relied heavily on emotional appeals in his sermons in an attempt to aid persuasion. He gave heaviest treatment to those appeals classified as fear appeals. It is difficult to analyze the effectiveness of fear appeals since research on the subject is inconclusive at best and contradictory at certain junctures. As noted in this
dissertation, some studies have shown that fear appeals, especially in the extreme, can be counterproductive in terms of attitude change and behavior modification, while other studies suggest that even harsh fear appeals are useful in both areas of persuasion.

Despite certain negative research implications concerning the effectiveness of fear appeals, it is most probable that Falwell's appeals were very effective. The audiences to which he spoke were already operating under what could be termed a "siege mentality" before they even began to listen. In their minds, their country, their families, their economic security, their educational institutions, their well-being in general, were under attack by the forces of atheistic humanism. Falwell's fear appeals did not create this "siege mentality," they solidified it, reinforced it, and exploited it. The harsher and more fearful the appeal, the greater the sense of rightness on the part of his audiences. Falwell's fear appeals served to confirm their previously held convictions. To this degree, Falwell's appeals must be viewed as effective.

With regard to logical proof, Falwell's sources of evidence were few. He relied most heavily on the Bible as an evidential source. Whether the issue was politics, science, history or religion, he viewed the Bible as offering the only real answer. From Falwell's perspective the Bible provided him with absolute authority. At times he used the biblical text illegitimately, offering no
explanation for the unusual application he made.

In addition to the Bible, Falwell employed various other types of supporting materials such as illustrations, analogies, explanation, and testimony. His tendency, however, was to quantify. He consistently employed statistics, lists, figures, and quantitative illustrations. He rarely if ever substantiated such quantifications. They were stated as facts and Falwell relied on his high credibility to convince his hearers to accept them as such.

Falwell relied almost exclusively on the deductive process in his reasoning. His arguments, almost without exception, were cast in syllogistic terms. On most occasions, Falwell supplied both major and minor premises. Occasionally, however, his arguments presented his audiences with an enthymematic contention that provided one of the premises and the conclusion but left the framing of the other premise to the audience. It is most certain that the majority of his auditors provided the missing premise. Their sympathies lay with Falwell. They were predominantly loyal to his cause. They were ready and willing to fill in the gaps.

Falwell occasionally engaged in faulty logic. Such abuses probably passed unnoticed by most of his immediate audiences. The reasons for such uncritical acceptance were many. As mentioned earlier, there was the fanatically loyal composition of his audiences. In addition, since even his
faulty arguments were couched in sound syllogistic form, their contradictory and fallacious nature was overshadowed by the apparent soundness of their deductive form. In each instance, the minor premise did affirm the antecedent and the conclusion did affirm the consequent. Falwell's audiences were so familiar with his deductive strategies that acute analysis of the major or minor premises of the deduction was probably rarely pursued.

Such non-critical acceptance of his premises was periodically promoted by Falwell in each speech by providing the audience with his usual and typical forms of evidence: biblical and quantitative. Such quantitative and biblical information undoubtedly had great reinforcement value for Falwell's auditors. Close examination of the arguments and the evidence offered, however, revealed that the additional evidence, although impressive at times, did not verify the suspected premises. In reality, it was left to the predisposition of the audiences to accept or reject the truthfulness of such premises. Falwell's quantifications and paraphrased biblical truths probably aided his persuasion of most in his audience by deflecting any tendency to question his syllogistic assertions.

Falwell's use of logic and reason was most certainly adequate for both his immediate local and national audiences which were comprised largely of supporters. His utilization of deductive reasoning that employed unsubstantiated evidence and unsupported contentions was probably inadequate
for most who were not already in agreement with him.

It is doubtful that anyone would use the word eloquent to describe the preaching of Jerry Falwell. The sermons studied indicated a distinct preference for the simple and clear statement as opposed to erudite expression. Since his aim was to be understood, his word choice reflected that objective.

The Reverend Falwell, however, made obvious efforts at accomplishing a certain style in his speaking. Since he sought to mobilize a large constituency of people with strong beliefs but historically passive political involvement, his language was intentionally biting and emotional at times. His use of such stylistic devices as alliteration, repetition, connotative terms, humor, and the biblical allusion served his purposes well by enhancing the impressiveness of his thought and thereby positively promoting the acceptance of the arguments he put forward.

With regard to his method of preparation, Falwell employed the aid of research assistants but composed each of his speeches independently. His method of delivery occasionally allowed for brief notes in his Bible margin or a slip of paper containing exact statistical data, but was generally extemporaneous without notes.

Falwell's voice was neutral in accent and pleasant to hear. Although he changed pitch, tone and volume often in his speeches, he avoided extremes, neither yelling nor whispering. His speech was always clear, intelligible and
pleasant. His conservative appearance and calculated facial expressions aided his message. Reserved bodily gestures punctuated his remarks but never detracted from them. Falwell knew what he wanted to say and apparently knew how he wanted to say it.

Effectiveness can be examined and measured from two points of view: individual and societal. From the individual perspective Falwell was an accomplished and effective speaker. His speechcraft skills were both sound and well-developed, especially his cognizance of the nature of his audiences and speaking occasions, his speech preparation, his projection of a positive and credible image, his development of a sound deductive strategy, and his employment of highly refined motive appeals.

The societal perspective, however, provides a fuller more complete measure of effectiveness. As Thonssen, Baird and Braden suggest, "... the success of oratory must be evaluated in terms, not of the speaker alone, but of the larger social sphere within which he functions. Thus the speech is studied in its possible relation to social change."¹ Falwell's craftsmanship was very good, but the question that remains is what impact did he have on society?

There are some who maintain that Falwell's impact has been at best minimal. Shupe and Stacey, sociologists at the Center for Social Research at the University of Texas at

¹ _Speech Criticism_, p. 539.
Arlington, conducted a social survey of 711 white, middle-class homeowners in the Dallas-Fort Worth metroplex in 1980. Since 26 percent of the 711 people polled claimed they had never heard of Moral Majority, Inc., and those holding unfavorable sentiments outnumbered the favorable respondents by two to one, Shupe and Stacey concluded that Falwell's efforts were a failure; he had no substantive, cohesive constituency and consequently no influence; and the New Christian Right did not really exist but was nothing more than a "media hype."^3

Citing two other polls by the Washington Post-ABC News and Gallup, each of which revealed that half of the samples surveyed had not heard of the Moral Majority and only twenty to twenty-five percent supported it, Shupe and Stacey felt their findings were accurate. 4 They discounted, however, a nationwide survey which indicated that substantial, at times majority, percentages of the American voting public were in agreement with the basic elements of Moral Majority's pro-family, pro-life, pro-morality platform. 5

Claiming that "... we have in this Bible-belt, urban

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3 Born Again Politics, pp. 96, 97.
4 Born Again Politics, pp. 30, 31.
5 Born Again Politics, p. 5.
location a population to provide the 'acid test' for uncovering what support exists for the New Religious Right" nationally,\textsuperscript{6} they concluded that virtually no support existed and that Moral Majority, Inc. and its founder and leader Jerry Falwell were politically insignificant.

This writer must take issue with the conclusions of the Shupe and Stacey survey. First of all, a fifty to seventy percent name recognition factor, cited in the three surveys taken, suggested not minimal but substantial success for Falwell's rhetoric. His achievements are all the more impressive since Falwell only founded Moral Majority in mid-1979 and the surveys were conducted less than two years later.

Second, even the twenty to twenty-five percent of respondents who indicated support for Moral Majority implied a substantive, powerful constituency. Falwell's own analysis of his socio-political influence suggests that he would be quite pleased with the statistical data summarized above:

\begin{quote}
To suggest that I am a modern-day Pavlov who, upon ringing my bell, causes million of Americans to salivate to whatever political tune I am playing is as illogical as it is ludicrous.
\end{quote}

One cannot rely on statistical data in evaluating

\textsuperscript{6} Born Again Politics, p. 15.

Falwell's rhetorical effectiveness on the contemporary political and social scene. Reliable statistics (reliable both in the sense that they were reliably gathered and that they asked the right questions) are difficult to come by. There are some concrete expressions of Falwell's effectiveness, however, that are difficult to disregard.

The President of the United States, Ronald Reagan, considers both Falwell and Moral Majority to have considerable socio-political influence. Reagan's appreciation for that influence was made obvious by his personal call to Jerry Falwell in 1981 to explain his decision to nominate Sandra Day O'Connor (a moderate with a questionable record on abortion and ERA) to the Supreme Court. Falwell had made it clear that he opposed the nomination. The President obviously did not view Jerry Falwell or his Moral Majority constituency as mere "media hype."

In addition, Reagan appointed Robert Billing, former Executive Director of Moral Majority, Inc. as White House liaison to the Religious community. Such an appointment makes clear that what Falwell had begun to do in the five sermons analyzed in this dissertation, namely to create Moral Majority, Inc., as a vehicle for mobilizing religious peoples into a political force that would help "bring America back to God," had not only been noticed in the highest echelons of American politics, but had been assessed as powerful.
A third, and even more concrete evidence of Falwell's long-term rhetorical effectiveness was made obvious at the 1984 Republican National Convention in Dallas. Falwell had said earlier in a 1981 sermon:

The time needs to come in this nation when the preachers so take their stand, not controlling the country but providing a conscience for the country, that you cannot be elected to any governing position, any elective office, at any level, unless you are willing to live and die for the protection of the human and civil rights of unborn babies.

The 1984 Republican National Platform included a plank requiring any future nominees as justices to the United States Supreme Court to be thorough going pro-life, anti-abortion advocates.

One question remains. Did Falwell's rhetoric shape the cultural setting in which it existed or did it simply reflect it? This writer is compelled to accept the latter. Falwell solidified a movement through the electronic machinery of his "The Old-Time Gospel Hour," but he did not create the conservatives and Fundamentalists who comprise the movement. He mobilized them, but he did not shape their views. They were already present in American society along with their peculiar opinions. There is no indication that Falwell was successful in persuading the unchurched or the irreligious. He promoted unity of

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direction and purpose among divergent strands of religious conservatives, but he has had few new converts.

Falwell and his political preaching most certainly served to crystallize the New Christian Right, but he did not create it. It was a passive constituency, hidden to most. Falwell's rhetorical skills mobilized that constituency so that it is no longer passive or hidden. One can argue with Falwell's religio-political stance, but not with his effectiveness as an orator.

One final, and perhaps controversial, observation is in order. The strategy which Jerry Falwell employed to mobilize a conservative constituency that would "turn America back to God" placed him squarely in the mold of the rhetorical demagogue. There are usually three steps in the psychological strategy of the demagogue according to Sterling Fishman. First, "he intensifies a 'popular crisis psychology'; next he defines the cause of the crisis as being a single and simple abstract or concrete evil; and, finally, he provides an equally simple escape from the crisis, 'a new faith, a new belief', with himself as the leader."  

Falwell employed this demagogic strategy by, first, intensifying a "popular crisis psychology," namely that

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America is in a disastrous decline. Second, he defined the cause of the crisis as a "single, . . . abstract evil," namely secular humanism. And third, he provided an equally simple escape from the crisis, "a new faith, a new belief" with himself at the helm; namely Moral Majority, Inc.

Unfortunately, this identification of Falwell as demagogue immediately conjures up the traditional pejorative connotations of deceit, hypocrisy, and opportunism that seem inextricably bound up in the term. This writer, however, accepts the position of Allan Larson, who maintains that the term demagogue does not need to bring to mind an automatic association with sleazy politics or ethics. Instead, to Larson, a demagogue is merely "a political leader or public figure which operates through appeals to the passions." If one views the term in this manner, the analysis of Falwell as demagogue is not an indictment of his motives or sincerity, but simply a further, more defined description of his rhetorical approach.

Regardless, Jerry Falwell, as observed in this study, is an effective orator. He has risen from obscurity to national prominence by means of a radical, yet well-stated rhetoric dispensed weekly through his effective employment of the electronic media. And, if one can accept Emerson's assertion that the eloquent man is he who "is inwardly drunk

10 Allan L. Larson, Southern Demagogues: A Study in Charismatic Leadership, as cited in Logue and Dorgan, p. 5.
with a certain belief,"\textsuperscript{11} then Jerry Falwell, the local preacher turned political activist, must be ranked among the most eloquent.

\textsuperscript{11} As quoted in \textit{Speech Criticism}, p. 391.
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APPENDIX A

Taped Interview With Jerry Falwell
July 20, 1983
Lynchburg, Virginia

VR: What kinds of formal speech training have you had?

JF: Very little except for the usual speech classes in college. I am a graduate of Baptist Bible College, Springfield, Missouri. I took three years of speech there. That would be the extent of my formal speech training.

VR: What kinds of help do you receive when you are preparing a sermon or a speech?

JF: Well, it is always a sermon. Well, it's usually a sermon since I'm a minister of the Gospel. I try to use, first of all, the Bible itself as the source text of my message. I pray about what my topic should be. I try to bring the message that God lays upon my heart to bring. Sometimes it's topical. Sometimes it is an expository message from scripture, chapter by chapter, verse by verse; that kind of thing. Sometimes it's thematic, a series of messages on one particular theme. I use a number of concordances, Greek and Hebrew concordances. I use other Bible study helps, such as commentaries by men I respect. Some are older books from other centuries; some current ones. My personal experience is entered into the compilation of a message and generally, since I speak twenty times weekly, I also have others who are helping me on research. We have a number of men and women who put together support information that would fit into some particular message I might be bringing. I incorporate all of that for the message of messages I'm delivering.

VR: Would you characterize your speaking as heavily rehearsed, extemporaneous, or impromptu?
JF: I am an extemporaneous speaker. I prepare for what I am saying, but I don't use notes usually. I try to be informal at the same time. With the use of illustrations, current events, personal experiences, I try to make Bible messages practical for today.

VR: What type of design or organization do you strive for in your speeches and why? For instance, is there an abundance of statistical information in your sermons for a specific reason?

JF: Well I use, generally, as simplistic a structure as possible so people will remember what they've heard. I don't use an over abundance of statistics, numbers, facts and figures because people don't remember that. I may purely for the purpose, for the substance spend a couple minutes in that area. I, however, try to keep my messages simple and easily remembered. I use, generally, an introduction during which time I establish the purpose and goal of my message. I try then to bring the message in two, three, four, five points. Then I try to summarize what has been said so that, again, there's a recap of the subject matter.

VR: What role do you see humor playing in serious speaking?

JF: I think humor plays a very important role. It is a mistake to be intense for thirty minutes. I seldom speak more than thirty minutes. Most people, most listeners, tune you out when you go past that length of time. I try to have enough levity, and sometimes just plain fun in the message, that people get relaxed, after they have had maybe a few minutes with very serious material. The last few minutes of a message I usually reserve for matters of gravity and use very little humor there.

VR: With regard to audience adaptation, do you try to adapt to your audience while you are preparing your speech or do you adapt while you are speaking.

JF: As a born again Christian minister, who believes in the indwelling of God's spirit and the leadership of the Holy Spirit, I find that adaptation is something that occurs in almost every message. It may well be that I sense a need of the audience that I have not previously
prepared the message to address. Sometimes in speaking a particular though will come to my memory that likewise was not a planned part of the message. I use it anyway because I feel that it is affective. I sometimes, while speaking, will see a person in the audience that is going through a difficult time. That will often remind me that there are, no doubt, many like this person in the building that need encouragement of a certain kind. Many times I'm prompted to address needs of people. I call it attacking needs.

VR: You have an unusually good memory, obviously. Did you develop it or is it a natural gift?

JF: It is a natural gift, but I have also spent a great deal of time developing it. During high school and college days, like any student, I learned to memorize. I do have somewhat of a photographic memory. I can look at a page and pretty well capture what is there with one reading. I also use memory helps. I will sometimes use acrostics. Sometimes I will jot down, on the page of my Bible, three or four words which would be meaningless to anyone else, but which are bumpers for me.

VR: When do you perceive yourself as having become a "national figure" and why?

JF: Our radio/television ministry really launched nationally in 1970-71. We had been regionally covering part of the nation before then. Throughout the seventies the media ministries snowballed. I don't know when in that period of time that I became a national voice. I imagine some of it is perception. Some may have felt I was a national voice before I felt I was, and vice versa. It is clear that the national media recognized our impact in 1979 and 80. The Moral Majority, which is a political lobbying organization which I organized in June of 1979, caused some of that. But the foundation was layed through the Christian ministry of some twenty-five years prior. We used the radio and television extensively. We used the printed page extensively. We always have. So when I began addressing moral and social issues from what the media perceived as a political platform, named the Moral Majority, the national prominence exploded.

VR: What "principles of persuasion" or rhetorical devices do you consciously use in your preaching?

JF: Repetition is a vital tool. Illustration is very important. Personal experience, relating personal
experiences is very important, but in order to get someone to do something, to make a decision, to launch out into something, it is necessary to challenge them as an individual. You must convince your hearers that what you're asking is realistic and within their reach. Therefore, I try to deliver every message so that an elementary student in the audience as well as a college graduate can perceive what I am saying. I've heard some speakers say that they deliver their messages at an eighth grade level. I'm not sure I try to do that, but I do try to so speak that the uneducated know what I am talking about.

VR: How do you adapt; and I know you can do this because I've watched you. How do you adapt to a hostile audience?

JF: Hostile audiences challenge me. I first of all pray before I speak to any audience. I ask the Lord to magnify Christ in the way I act, speak and behave. That is very important. You lose a debate when you become hostile. You have a real advantage over a hostile audience if you will use it. No one ever wins anything when they are mad. You have the advantage of being cool while they are angry. Therefore, there should never be any question if you can win any argument if you, uh, find audiences that are not under control. It is not as it was once at college campuses, but five years ago, five to ten years ago, it was nothing unusual to be booted down where you could not speak, or have people throw things. Dr. Kissinger will not go back to Harvard because of that. Jean Kirkpatrick was booted down in, I believe Berkley, recently. I've never had it happen to me, but I have been in many talk shows and college platforms where I was aware the majority of the people there not only disagree with me, but detest me because of my position. For example, my position against abortion would be a very volatile position I've taken. My antipornography stand creates a lot of reaction. And then my belief in the Judeo Christian tradition and moral absolutes stirs a lot of hatred. It has been my experience that in most of those situations I will make converts. I go in with the determination to address the facts, not to attack people. I go in with determination that I'm going to enjoy this, not get angered by it, and I also determine I will be kind to everyone. I may be forceful. I may break in. I may overtalk someone. I may be very forthright in saying something they don't want to hear. But I would never do it with a vendetta or a personal malice coming out from a bad spirit. You make those decisions before you go into the ring. You determine I will not become angry, I will not be unkind, but I will
firmly, no matter how unpopular the position, speak the truth even if no one wants to hear it. And in most cases we've been able to win that way.

VR: What role do you think you have played in the rapid rise of the New Religious Right. In other words, did Jerry Falwell create the New Religious Right or did the New Religious Right create Jerry Falwell, specifically by giving him a mouthpiece through the electric church?

JF: I think the country has been moving to the right morally, spiritually, politically, and theologically, since 1960 or the early sixties anyway. I feel that the seventies, the late seventies, were the era, the time of the nation's bottoming out of its moral tail-spin and moving upward, back towards traditional values. I feel that with every passing day the country's becoming more conservative on these views and values. I feel that I have become one of the prime spokesmen because I was able, I had been preaching these things through the years, I was able to see where the wind of God was blowing and to articulate what people were thinking but did not know how to define. When I began to say the things I was saying from a national platform, the nation began to say many of them. That's what I believe. That's what I feel we must do. So as a result we have twenty million people who support us, who write to us, who pray for us and consider themselves a part of our movement.

VR: What role do you expect Moral Majority to play in the 1984 elections and what role will Jerry Falwell play in the making of the president in 1984?

JF: Well, Moral Majority is three times larger now in number and in financial support than it was in 1980. We also now have a political action committee called that I Love America Committee. We did not have that in '80. We will spend millions of dollars in attempting to support pro-family, pro-moral candidates at every level across the nation, state and national candidates. I will personally be speaking out in support of President Reagan or who ever the most committed candidate is as far as the pro-family issues are. I do not plan to abandon my pulpit or cease to be pastor here, but I will be very open in support of those candidates that espouse the Judeo Christian tradition.
VR: What is your official position and role in "The Old Time Gospel Hour?"

DN: I'm Executive, well first of all, I'm Executive Assistant to Dr. Jerry Falwell and my position as far as "The Old Time Gospel Hour" program is I'm Executive Director of the program and the television broadcast is part of my responsibilities here at Thomas Road Baptist Church. I also sing in the program.

VR: How long have you known Dr. Falwell?

DN: Fifteen, no let me see, I've known him longer than that, well I've known him about fifteen years.

VR: How long have you been on staff?

DN: I'm in my twelfth year here as a staff member. So I probably better change that, I've known him I guest twenty years; at least I've known of him. I actually met him about sixteen or seventeen years ago. But really have been part of the ministry here for twelve years.

VR: What kinds of formal speech training has Dr. Falwell had whether in high school or college or otherwise?

DN: I don't know the answer to that with the exception of just the basic pastoral speech training he had to have at Baptist Bible College when he was in Springfield, Missouri.

VR: When did his "speaking career," outside the classroom, begin?

DN: Immediately upon graduation from college, he came back here and formed his church in June of 1956. Now he had
been a part of the staff in Kansas City, Missouri where he had taught a class of boys there. And he had taught a class in Springfield, and then one in Kansas City also; young people in Kansas City. So I believe his first teaching and speaking would have been with a group of eleven year old boys in Springfield, Missouri and then he taught during his second or third, his third college year in Kansas City. He traveled there each weekend and worked as an associate pastor there and taught the young people and directed the young people there for Wendall Zimmerman, who was at that time pastor for Kansas City Baptist Temple. But immediately upon graduation he came here and with thirty-five charter members started the church here in June after his graduation out there in May.

VR: Do you have any idea when his first formal sermon was delivered, or when he actually preached to a congregation?

DN: Yes, yes. It was done in probably 1955 or 56 in Kansas City Baptist Temple because that's when God really, he didn't know exactly what he wanted to do and even though he was completing his college education, he didn't know exactly the way he wanted to go, when he spoke he'd been praying that God would just do something unusual in the service and some of the people who had been members of the church there came forward during his sermon and were saved, that were actually members of the church, one lady in particular. That seemed to give him, coupled with a lot of other things, but that seemed to put the icing on the cake supposedly that he was to be pastor and preacher.

VR: What kinds of help does Dr. Falwell receive when he's researching and writing his sermons and speeches?

DN: What do you mean? Be more specific.

VR: From research assistants to secretaries that actually do research or editing.

DN: Sometimes he asks for the assistance of people like Dr. Harold Wilmington, who's head of our Liberty Bible College, Liberty Bible Institute. And others have helped him at specific times, but I really don't know the answer to that totally. I just know that Harold Wilmington has been involved in doing some research for him.

VR: Is the final composition of Dr. Falwell's sermons primarily his own, or again does he have research assistants here or anywhere else in the country for
that matter who help in the composition of those sermons?

DN: Everything's his own. Everything, from the letters that are written to the sermons that he preaches, are all his own. What most of these folks do in the way of letter writing and for information as far as sermon material is concerned is that they give him suggestions and ideas and some pertinent type of information he could bring together to solidify his thoughts and make the impression that he really wants to make with the sermon. The final, bottom-line is always his.

VR: What is the process he usually follows when preparing a sermon or a speech?

DN: Oh, that's hard to say because it varies to the need of a particular congregation, if he's going to speak in a church outside of this church and its particular need. Then he researches that type of material, or he calls on the wealth of knowledge he's had in his own church of that type and makes it happen in that particular setting. He doesn't have any basic pattern that he follows. We teach on stewardship two or three times a year. All his messages are, uh, end with a gospel invitation. We plan a salvation call at the end of them, even on T.V. There's never a service here that the invitation is not given. So, uh, the leadership of the Holy Spirit of course figures into that greatly and strongly and then the surrounding needs of a particular situation whether here or at other places.

VR: When I talked to you about a year ago you mentioned a network of fellows across the nation who would read material and sift through information for Dr. Falwell. Does he still use that network?

DN: Yes, that's the Moral Majority basically, and, and then of course whatever is applicable on the platform here from his church of the information they get. But to keep abreast of what's happening across the country we have readers that, they look at all the major newspapers, all the major periodicals, all the major magazines daily, not just weekly, but daily, and keep him abreast of the happenings that may not have made the news, that could be way out there somewhere in the west, that would not make AP back here, or UPI back here. And, uh, so, they keep us well and keep him well informed of all the new happenings that would be pertinent to his meetings with whomever. President, on up and down.
VR: How does that material and information funnel down? Do they call in daily or do they?

DN: Uh, it comes through, yes it comes through Nelson Keener, who's his administrative assistance officer. Nelson's responsible for getting all that to him.

VR: Would you characterize Dr. Falwell's speaking as heavily rehearsed or extemporaneous or impromptu?

DN: Extemporaneous and Impromptu. Just because of the demand as far as going into different parts of the country he does preach the same sermon sometimes in different areas, particularly if it's related to current issues. And, uh, the Bible reflection of these current issues. But, uh, I've never heard him preach the same sermon twice. You know what I mean is he uses the same text, he uses basically the same outline, but it's just that it never comes out the same way, because he makes it applicable to the particular part of the country or a particular need there. Extemporaneous would be the one.

VR: But it's never impromptu? I mean he never gets up unprepared.

DN: No, never. I've never seen him get up unprepared. I've never seen him. I don't know if you've heard the term of preachers "rabbit hunting." You know, I've never heard him do that in the twelve years I've worked here.

VR: What type of design or organization does he strive for in his sermons and why? For instance, is there an abundance of statistical information in his sermons for a specific reason? Because it's often there.

DN: Yes, he's trying to, we really believe that uh, and he really believes, that people aren't informed. Basically uninformed. And you, you'll hear him many times on T.V. repeating the same statistics because we just don't, he doesn't believe, that people get it the first time. And so, uh, its for impression, for information and to make the people aware. Particularly he's trying to make the American public aware of, of uh, what we believe God's relationship is to our country, and what we believe the woes and the fears and ills of our country are. He continually hits those and tries to give warning against those and, uh, the best way to make the impact is with those large statistics, cause there are large amounts out there can be used.
VR: What types of support materials does Dr. Falwell prefer: statistics, illustrations, anecdotes, analogies, historical data?

DN: Well, he really combines all of those. It would be really hard to designate one or the other and again it's according to the sermon and to whom he's speaking. If the statistics are needed then he has that message saturated with statistics and historical data of course when he's preaching on our country being God ordained through the person, and really God moved when he moved Columbus to come here. He used to go back in Columbus' own diary and pull out those type, that type of information, historical information to really solidify, verify that what Columbus himself said was that he was led by the Holy Spirit to come to America. And, uh, so he uses all of those. It's just a matter of what's necessary and what can be used best in the particular setting.

VR: You don't find one of those particular kinds of support materials being predominate in his sermons?

DN: I would say statistics probably. On T.V. statistics is much, I think is as much prevalent as any. When he's preaching to his local church here, uh, that would not necessarily be the fact. Of course, the local church is a T.V. message, at 11:00 on Sunday morning but I mean on Sunday night or Wednesday night it's more of a local congregation oriented sermon.

VR: With regard to that, how many times does he preach on Sunday?

DN: Now he's only preaching twice. But starting in August he'll be preaching three times on Sunday. And even if we have five services on Sunday, we have an 8:15 service, a 9:45, and 11:00 and then a 5:00 and 6:00 and then the fall/winter months he preaches also at 8:15.

VR: I've heard the number I've seen it in print and heart it bandied around, 18,000 members here at Thomas Road. Is that realistic?

DN: Yeh, we have over 20,000 members now. And, uh, ah, I guess that average attendance at this point is, probably in the summer time we're averaging around 10,000 people. Winter time we average around 12,000 people.

VR: On a Sunday?

DN: Yeh, on a Sunday.
VR: Is that all five services combined or just the three morning services?

DN: Three morning services. The five services combined of course we'd be duplicating a lot of people because the one service on the mountain all the kids are required to come here and about three-thousand-five hundred of those are counted at the 8:15 service of course and then, it is repetition to count them again, because even though some of our local people go to the 5:00 service it's basically a college crowd there, and the 6:00 is just local church here. But the 8:15 service is for the people who want to come early and we bust the young people from the college in to here and that's normally more jammed than any of the other services. And the 11:00 service is comfortably full but normally we don't, I would say no more at the 11:00 service as the 8:15 service. It seems like a lot of people like the 8:15 service. They come at 8:15 and stay through Sunday school at 9:45 and they go home at 11:00 and they've got an hour jump on everybody else in the local area who has 11:00 services to 12:00, 12:15. So that tends to be a popular service.

VR: But it is the 11:00 service that's televised?

DN: Correct. Most generally. Once in a while we'll duplicate and uh, not duplicate, we'll double up and do two programs in one Sunday. We do that particularly at the end of the year because a lot of people are gone and we give our T.V. crew a break. And our Christmas tree is up and that type of thing and that interferes with doing the national T.V. broadcast. We are four weeks delayed and so we will do an 8:15 service and then an 11:00 and both of them will be televised or 11:00 and a 6:00 and both will be televised. Two or three times a year we'll do that.

VR: When you do that, does that allow Dr. Falwell ever to be gone on a Sunday?

DN: Yes, but he's very rarely gone on a Sunday morning. Sunday. Sunday nights he'll take. He does, he gets so many invitations, and he takes just very few, but some times on Sunday evenings he is away from his local pulpit. And sometimes on Wednesdays, but very rarely on Sunday mornings. Maybe if he's in the Holy Land or something like that, overseas somewhere. Ah, normally he called in at that time, 11:00, and talks to the congregation at that time. We hook it up through out T.V. It's just a brief word of what's happening. He doesn't preach to us he just talks to us.
VR: He still feels very much the pastor then even though he is a celebrity.

DN: Oh yes, and the people here feel that he is definitely the pastor even though we have a lot of good able assistants. He is the pastor, and that's, no question about that. That's his first love I would say.

VR: With regard to audience adaptation, does Dr. Falwell try and adapt to his audience while preparing his speech or does this usually take place during the presentation.

DN: During the presentation. Basically, I would say during the presentation because many times when you go into an area he doesn't know the need until he gets there. Ah, if he knows, if he's going to speak to a group of business men he normally speaks on the economy in relationship to the word of God, and what we think in a biblical perspective that we can do to help get our nation back on firm footing, and that type of thing. So in those cases he does prepare in advance that way, but uh, if we're going out to an area to a local pastor, um, sometimes the pastor would call and say "Hey I'm having a problem in this area, this is what I'd like for you to emphasize, if the Lord will lead you that way." They'll call, but not very often. Normally you get that in the car on the way to church. So he just works that into the message that he already feels he's about, what he's going to bring.

VR: Do you find any significant differences between Dr. Falwell's writing a speech to be given orally, and his writing something for the print media?

DN: Yeh, it's a lot different because he never write anything that needs to be given orally. He doesn't, I mean he may have a few notes, but he never writes anything like that out. If, it's ever a transcript it's after the fact, rather than before the fact. And in his letter writing they would vary quite a bit. Now, if you know that he wrote the letter and if that pertains to some particular situation we're talking about correlating the two together on T.V. you can hear parts of that letter in the message because it weighs so heavy on his mind. But, uh, I've never seen a written sermon before the fact.

VR: That's interesting. What effect do you think writing for the print media has had upon his sermon preparation? Has it made it easier? Has it changed his style?
DN: Hasn't changed his style any. I would say yes. I would say that the thing that makes it easier for him is just doing it more. I think now it comes easier for him because he's done it a long time and he's experienced in it and, um, as I said the information that has been gathered can many times be used in both writing and preaching and that in itself would make it easier for him.

VR: In what way does he usually deliver his speech, and you've answered this partially: read from a manuscript, memorize a manuscript, speak from notes or speak, as they say, from the "overflow"?

DN: The way he makes notes generally is in the margin of his Bible. Normally when you see him go to the platform you don't see any notes in paper form, once in a while. When that is prevalent it's because there are statistics that he wants to be sure that he gets right, and he's got those down there, ah, so he doesn't miss quote them. That is important because there are a lot of people that are listening to everything he says and validating that one way or the other and if you make a mistake it will be all over. But, when it comes right down to doing the message, he normally speaks right from the Word, with the hand written notes in the margin.

VR: Well then, in relation to that, you don't think that he ever writes out a detailed manuscript or detailed sentence outline and then memorizes it?

DN: Uh-uh, absolutely not. Now he will, when he begins to prepare jot down topics or things he wants to be sure he includes there. But it's just thoughts that he jots down; never full sentences that he would memorize or anything like that.

VR: His messages seem so well thought out in terms of organization. Most of us who preach do all our research, read the Word, meditate, and then we start jotting. Then we may have twenty pages of notes and eventually we reduce that to a broad outline and then maybe fill in that outline. You don't think he goes through that process?

DN: If he does I've never known of that to happen, I have seen him start and like I say jot down thoughts, topics. But that's basically it. Maybe two pages; not anything like twenty pages. Now he may have done that in the earlier days when I wasn't here, but in the last twelve years I've never known him to do that. If he does he does it somewhere I've never been.
VR: Off the record, has anyone tested his I.Q.?

DN: Ya, and it's super, super high, but I don't know how high it is. He's got an almost photogenic memory. If you tell him your telephone number today, he could give it to you ten years from now.

VR: Well that was my next question. Does Dr. Falwell have an unusually good memory? If so, did he develop it or is it a natural gift:

DN: I think some of both. I think it's a natural gift, but I think he works at it. He works at names, you know, he likes to call people by their first name, and he just, uh, that is his entire personality though is just being friendly and speaking to everybody. For instance yesterday, we went to the hospital together to make a couple visits to some people, and you know, I speak to several people, he speaks to everybody. You know what I mean, that's just, that's just the way he is. And, of course, everybody knows him; that type of thing too. So, uh, he has a phenomenal capacity for names and verses, numbers, particularly numbers, just like his mind's like a computer.

VR: How many speaking invitations does Dr. Falwell receive in a year and how many is he able to accept?

DN: The number that he is asked to do is just unheard. I don't even know. I can hardly even guess at that. He speaks twenty times a week counting his broadcast and, uh, many times, sometimes he speaks everyday somewhere outside of here. And some weeks he speaks only two or three times. But an average I would say of uh, three to four times a week out of the city somewhere.

VR: Those twenty times here in town, what are those?

DN: Well when he's in town, you're talking about five broadcasts. That's radio. You're talking about three services on Sundays, that's eight. You're talking about two chapel programs, three chapel programs, that's eleven. Then nine others in various and sundry, uh, prayer groups, particular classes, or teaching the preacher boys or whatever, bus ministry, even the home for alcoholics; all the collective ministries that we have. Now I would include in the twenty times a week his outside engagements also, not twenty times here, basically, even though he does do that sometimes. But I would say that he does average a thousand times a year.
VR: And during the week then many of those things, especially his radio broadcast and chapel talks, are different messages?

DN: Oh, absolutely, absolutely. Once in a while he'll duplicate because, particularly, if he's out of town a lot, and if he runs into some unusual situations in either an interview or Donahue or something like that he'll relate that within the context of his message on the mountain where he preaches the chapel on Wednesday. And Wednesday night he very likely will reiterate the same thing here. So that would be in itself somewhat duplication, but that's about all the duplication that I know of. He speaks every Wednesday, and he used to then stay there and teach a preacher boys class on Wednesdays also. Sometimes he speaks on Monday/Friday chapel. Basically Wednesday is designated for him so he tries to be here for that day to speak here and then that evening speak here also. It doesn't always happen, but it does most of the time. And then we try to have a guest in, our real good speakers, on Mondays and Fridays. The young people, even though they hear him on Sunday mornings, and hear him at least once a week he gets more results out of them than anybody, you know, and it seems like they would get tired of him, but it doesn't happen that way. I guess it's because the ministry is so broad and so inclusive in so many areas and as he's relating much of his travels, his people, his interviews with the president, on down type of thing, seems to really captivate those young people. He's able to challenge them with that.

VR: When do you think Jerry Falwell became a "national figure" and why?

DN: It really started in 1976 when we began to go across the country with the "I Love America" program. We did the state capitols rallies. We went on the stairs of state capitols and tried to talk about the ills of America and what we as a Christian community needed to do and basically at that point there was very low Christian involvement in "politics" or natural policy or anything. We're just letting it all go the way of politicians even though all we were doing was complaining about the problems rather than trying to be a solution, or a solvent for the problems. So he, he took a team of young people called the "I Love America" singers. And we did fifty states, all fifty state rallies. I say fifty. We did combine a couple in the Northeast just because it wasn't feasible to go to those smaller states. We did this normally around noon time and on a weekday. People would get off work downtown and come, or schools and churches would bus
people in, that type of things. But we didn't have the measure of success that we hoped. It was not disappointing to us, but it didn't reach quite the anticipated results. But we know now that it began to do the ground work of what eventually flourished into bringing together Moral Majority. And then when he really began to speak out through Moral Majority on the issues and against abortion and against all the homosexuality and all these things that seem to be national sins of America today, people began to pick up on all these. He's been on Donahue eleven times now and all the other real top talk shows, with the exception of Carson and all across the country. The reason Carson isn't using him is just, off the record, last week Carson punned him three times, three different nights. It's funny to us, we don't dislike that. I kinda enjoy it myself. So does Dr. Falwell. But if he came on with the spirit Dr. Falwell has, it's almost impossible not to like him, and if Johnny came to that point then he would surely loose a national figure that he could punch at. I think Johnny really does like him but rather than becoming friends with him he'd rather use him on the program. And it's probably better for us, too. But when Moral Majority was formed, I guess that was in 1979, we actually became formally formed. That's when he began to become the national, well it started back in '76, but it really, the big thrust was in '79 on to the present time.

VR: What role do you think his public speaking played in his rise to national prominence?

DN: It played a very relevant role in his national rise because he's such a good public speaker. He has such a brilliant mind. He's able to extemporaneously speak on issues of today, without ever looking down. He knows what's happening. He's well informed, and he articulates so well, and basically nobody else from the religious community has the understanding, the knowledge of what's happening, nor are they willing to stand up and take the guff that he's getting. So that's what really projected him way out in front of the others. When everybody else was soft-peddling he was willing to call a spade a spade, call sin a sin, call black and white black and white, and so on.

VR: Would you characterize Dr. Falwell's speaking as informative or persuasive?

DN: Well, I don't know how you're successful in any particular speech without both. I don't think I can persuade anybody to do anything unless you have some good information to back that up.
VR: What "principles of persuasion" do you think he consciously employs when he's speaking? Rhetorical techniques?

DN: In his preaching, again, he points out the faults or the wrongs of a situation, points out the need of straightening a situation out and then gives the how to, uh, he's been very successful in, in uh, we can get information that is documented, and even um, through the national media, he picks up on all types of information and just reiterates that in a louder form and then gives God's answer to it, from his perspective. Now for that he's gotten terribly criticized by the liberals, ah, because they claim he's taking things out of context and calling wolf when there is no wolf type of thing. But the conservatives are saying, "Say it louder, and say it again and give us more so we can have more ammunition to do the same thing you're doing." They're looking for a leader and then they want to get on the band wagon and do the same thing. I think that's basically the way he does it.

VR: What would you consider to be the best speech Dr. Falwell has ever given? And was it the most effective?

DN: Nationally speaking, I would say that his sermon on the "Seven Principles that made America Great" was probably, had more impact than anything else. Then after that he went back and preached a series of seven sermons hitting them all eventually. I don't know if you knew that or not. But he did that I would say that, off the top of my head, rather than thinking about it, that's the first thing that comes to my mind. There's been several things. His most recent message on "America Back to God" was a powerful message, ah, when he is comparing the American flag and the Russian flag, I don't know if you say that program on July 4th or not, that was a powerful message. Probably the July 4th message which was aired this year was one of the most powerful messages ever done, nationally speaking. Where I like him best is when he gets down on the day-to-day living of the Christian and gives you just, he opens the book and preaches out of Psalms thirty-seven or he goes into some of the Pauline epistles and just extemporaneously teaches those. That's where I think that he really, he's got a great insight into why troubles come and how to handle them, and what's the result of troubles, and how to accept trouble. To a Christian it's a great comforting type of a message. And he's got, ah, one of the best messages I've heard on I Kings, when the brook worms arrived talking about Elisha in the Old Testament. How God took care in favor of the ravens and all that, the
whole frame work of all that. Its just a great message to parallel with Christians having problems and how that God even cared about the hairs on your head. Because I think we as individuals, we have a comparatively easy time in receiving Christ as our personal savior. It's not so easy to receive him as Lord and make Him master of everything and trust Him in every situation. The Bible says that if we are trusting in all things and we are praising in all things and thanksgiving in all things that we can do that when things are going right, but when they're going wrong it's hard to do, because you've got that flesh that fights against the spirit. But Dr. Falwell's got some great teaching on that. We have great results in peoples lives when teaches about that type of scripture.

VR: That's a concern I've had as I've watched him. I see Dr. Falwell probably two or three times a month late at night Sundays and it seems like he's always dealing with the political issues. Does he do much of the kind of preaching you're talking about anymore here at Thomas Road?

DN: Yea, all the time. Here at Thomas Road he feeds the family. Yea he does. He brings it right down to where we need to be and therefore, many of our people like the Wednesday night services or the Sunday night services much more than they do the 11:00 service on Sunday. We're trying to get into a situation now where he's preaching a series of messages that we'll start airing the week after next, "The Champions," Bible champions. He started with Abraham, and to Moses to right down to last week was Joshua. And again he's pointing out the strengths that made those people great because there were weaknesses in all of them. So he's pointing out strengths compared to weaknesses and how God was able to use them and how they responded to God to make them usable. So that type of thing where he's going to start preaching more on theme than just political issues and then he'll work those issues within the messages, so to speak. At least that's the way we're heading right now.

VR: Does Dr. Falwell have specific ideas about the use and effectiveness of gestures and/or facial expressions in speaking?

DN: If he does, I've never heard him say that, I don't think he uses gestures to a great benefit. He becomes very natural in his gestures, but he is not a James Robison, who gets down and points, that type of thing. I would say that everything he does just comes
naturally. He doesn't really consciously do any of that and whether or not it's beneficial I don't know. It doesn't seem to affect me, I listen to what he says and how he says it.

VR: What about vocal aspects of his speaking such as the volume or the rate at which he speaks or the tone or pitch, do you think he has any conscience design about those things.

DN: Yes, I do. But his main point is that he speaks correctly. He is a fanatic on grammatical correction. And, ah, in writing an in, he can pick up a sheet like this and it seems like the error, typing error, just jumps out at him. Or a misspelled word just jumps out at him. I've seen him do it hundreds of times. Everybody else has proofed it, that type of thing. He'll say, "Hey, we can't let this go out. They spelled this word wrong." He's a tremendous speller. He can spell anything. In fact, ah, I lost my train of thought, what did you ask?

VR: I was asking about volume, pitch.

DN: Oh, ah, understand his diction and being grammatically correct are two really important things to him because if you can't understand what he's saying. And then a compilation of thoughts and organizational thoughts, those are the three things I think he'd be interested in more than voice raising, up and down, and he doesn't do a lot of it as you well know. He's doing that more now than he used to. He used to, he never spoke in a monotone, but he just never did get boisterous, loud, like a lot of pastors do, to the point of getting red in the fact and all that kind of thing. He's always pretty calm, cool, collected, and he lets the words speak for themselves.

VR: How does Dr. Falwell adapt to a hostile audience?

DN: Well, he, ah, the great thing about, the great advantage that he has is certainly the Holy Spirit, but let's discount that. We, you and I, know we can't discount that, but when you're talking to a secular audience many times they won't understand that. But he has that confidence and he has the right information and he has the Word of God which he's very knowledgeable of and so, therefore, ah, and he has been in debate enough now to know how to debate. He doesn't like debate, because he has to be, particularly he doesn't like debating women, because he has to be rude to them to get his points in sometimes and that's against his nature. Totally against his nature. His
nature is to be gentle, loving, but in debate, they won't give you time to come across that way. You've got to be almost rude. But his main weapon is that he has the truth and just like, ah, the truth is what's going to set everybody free, you know that, and ah, more than the Word of God he's got his stats right and he's got the information that he's talking about right. And he just won't when he first started, um, probably he, many times he had to speak off the top of his head, hoping that he was right, but he doesn't do that any more.

VR: What role do you think Dr. Falwell has played in the rapid rise of the "New Religious Right" and is that phenomenon, the "New Religious Right," a religious renewal or a political backlash against liberal politics over the last two decades?

DN: I think its a combination of both. I think basically fundamentalists, Bible believing Christians across the country would agree with that. The BF84, "Baptist Fundamentalism '84," which is coming up in April, we'll see all of the fundamentalist leaders. I say all of them, but Bob Jones University will not be there, neither will Tennessee Temple. Dr. Robertson will not get involved but a lot of his people are getting involved, not that he didn't want to, just the thought, and then the Jack Hayes camp is not getting involved but those three segments are the only three that are not involved in all of that from the World Baptist Fellowship, Southern Baptist, from the Baptist Bible Fellowship type of program from a, the GAORB segment, General Association of Regular Baptist, up north. And so a lot of believers are involved in all of that. They proclaim certainly that Dr. Falwell was the leader among what has happened here. But it certainly is a combination of the, of really being willing to step out there and preach the Gospel, the death, burial, resurrection of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, but also trying to get, where as, and Dr. Falwell would tell you himself, that fifteen, twenty years ago, he would say the church had not need to be involved in politics. And he'll say that was the worst mistake I've ever made. See, because when you leave politics and the leadership of our country to the people of the left, liberals, that's the way it's going to go. And when you say "Well we still can handle it," say, "Well, God's in control," and don't put feet to your prayers, that's a mistake in any situation. Same way with politics. We, ah, Jonathan Edwards was too involved in politics when he was a Christian in the Northeast and really anytime, anytime that we've had a national rebirth so to speak it's come at a time of calamity
with, ah, in and around Lincoln's presidency and the Civil War and, ah, and really Jerry believes, I think he'd say it out loud, if you really think that we've had two great awakenings, we need a third, the only way it's gonna happen is when the people of God become informed of the issues concerning your country and begin and do something about it. And not just cluster back in their local church and do nothing and expect a few to do it all. So it's really a combination of a revival, and a backlash to the political situation that has gone so liberal.

VR: Did Jerry Falwell create the "New Religious Right" movement or did that movement create Jerry Falwell, i.e., by giving him a mouth-piece through the Electric Church?

DN: Uh, the story, the real story behind, of course being a part of the Electric Church, being visible as he was, ah, to so many people and having a strong foundation and a vehicle for the mouth piece through writing into those homes and through radio ministry, five hundred stations five days a week and four hundred T.V. stations certainly set the stage. Jerry will tell you that his son asked him a question one day at the breakfast table that, ah, he said, "Daddy," they were talking in relationship about how our country was just going the wrong way so fast and that, that you could just see communism everywhere which is just Godlessness, of course, we understand that, and he said "Dad, why don't you do something about it?" And his son was, what, thirteen near then maybe not that old, his son's eighteen now probably five or six years ago, and a couple three or four days later he asked him the same question. And he began to think well somebody has got to do something. Then God, he said, it seemed as if God kept bringing that back to his mind as if He was saying Himself, "Why don't you do something about it? You do something about it. I'll help you do something about it." And, ah, that's not published, we're not interested in it being published as such, but he felt that it was God's direction for him even though that was not his first love. Again his love is the local church, building local churches but, he felt that communism was coming so fast on us that the church had been suppressed. That in a decade or so that if someone didn't stand up for the church it wasn't going to have any church to speak through, and that the next generation, his son, may not be able to stand up and preach the Gospel without fear of government interference or whatever. So that in itself sparked the whole thing and then I think God just had everything prepared, ah, for Jerry to become the
spokesman at a time that it needed a spokesman. At a
time that people would follow. We found, as I said, in
'76 that people didn't get excited and in '79, three
years later, they fell behind us and got involved. Now
there have been splinters off of Moral Majority and
there's been a lot of other things. A lot of Moral
Majority chapters within local churches, I mean local
states, I mean states varied throughout the country
have become what we call redneck organizations which
have made statements that never would Dr. Falwell make,
against everybody and everything, and that's one of the
problems you have when you don't have a governing body
to govern every state. But we just couldn't do that.
Because it was based on local church involvement, the
pastors of local churches. And most of those guys are
independent. And when they become, they will follow at
leisure but they won't follow at demand, and so that's
the reason that the organization is quoted as loosely
as it is. Yet the ones that are in there are in there
with both feet and they're fighting to the death so to
speak. So, it's really a combination of him feeling and
seeing, feeling the responsibility and seeing the
problem and feeling that if he doesn't, God just kept
saying "Why don't you do something about it?" that if
he didn't in the next decade or so, that we wouldn't
have the opportunity to do it anywhere at all. So, ah,
he stepped up.

VR: Two more questions. What role do you expect Moral
Majority and does Dr. Falwell expect Moral Majority to
play in the '84 elections?

DN: I think it'll play a very strong, ah, we have a game
plan now, of again informing the people of the issues
of the candidates and we don't know who the candidates
are. We have already started trying to get more people
registered to vote than we did last time, in '80. And
we did get some, a couple million or so, I don't know
how many, involved in voting, and then ah, after we get
them registered we're hoping through the churches and
through mass media and through meetings to inform the
people of the issues. Ah, you know when you, in this
thing called life, you know there's a lot of ups and
downs, and there's a lot of battles to be fought and
some battles can be won but you can't rest on the
victory of that battle, you've got to keep on going.
Like Paul said you can't, certainly, you've got to
press to the mark, forget those things behind, even the
victories, because those victories can become a form of
resting for you when everybody else is going ahead.
And the failures can be a form of depression for you
that would say it's no use for me to try. So you've
got to forget all of those, get all that out of the
blood and keep on going God's direction. I believe that two things we have to do is involve more people and work harder than we did last time because if we do any less the enemy now knows we're there. We kind of slipped up on them last time on their blind side. They didn't believe we could do what we said we could do and we did. And it was certainly, media wise anyway, played a great part. We didn't want to take any credit for that, and still don't. But the media said we did. But because of the fact we are quote, marked, at this point. They know we are a point of contention. They know that we are in the race and so that's going to encourage them to work harder and more fervently than ever before. Therefore, making it very necessary for us to out work them. And that's where it's gotten down to. If we don't stay active, if we don't work harder, politically speaking, we're going to get beat.

VR: What role will Jerry Falwell play in "the making of the president - 1984?"

DN: That again is hard to say. The die is cast as far as his, if in fact President Reagan runs again, and we believe that he will, we'll certainly be working hard for him because we believe he's been a great force, ordained of God by the way, to help turn this country around. Politically, spiritually, he came out real clear, militarily, and ah, so therefore we'll be saying to our constituency and to everybody who'll listen we'll be on the bandwagon for Nixon. I mean, Nixon, for Reagan if he runs again because that's what we believe in. If he would not run, we would certainly think that God would raise up a man of like-thinking because we believe if our country goes the other way we are going to lose many of our freedoms that we've enjoyed for over 200 years. We would be behind any conservative man who ran, we believe at this point, because, and certainly time will bear us out, that Reagan certainly is the man to do it. If for some reason, I'm making a bold statement here, Reagan doesn't win - or somebody comparable to him, with his understanding of scripture and understanding of America's part in the destiny of this world is not involved, then our country is going to go through great, great hardships. And maybe never recover. That's my gut-level thought.

VR: What kind of access does Jerry Falwell have to the President or to his cabinet officers?

DN: He has pretty good access. He never takes advantage of that and he never takes it for granted either. If Jerry really needed to talk with him it could be worked out, that type of thing. He is in touch with some of
the top aids through our office at Moral Majority and through Dr. Ron Godwin, who is executive Vice President of Moral Majority. Many times Dr. Godwin keeps Jerry informed of what's happening in the Oval office and that type of thing. But when it comes down to where the rubber meets the road...if he needs to talk to the President, normally it can be worked out satisfactorily in the very near future.
VITA

Vernon O. Ray was born in St. Louis, Missouri, February 7, 1954. He received his Bachelor of Arts from Harding College, Searcy, Arkansas, in 1975 and his Master of Arts in Religion from Harding Graduate School, Memphis, Tennessee in 1978.
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EXAMINING COMMITTEE:

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Date of Examination:

May 7, 1985