

Who Will Determine America's Future?

by Robert P. Jr Dugan

The sermon emphasizes the importance of standing firm on Judeo-Christian principles and traditional values in the face of cultural radicalism and the erosion of moral absolutes.

Scripture: 2 Chronicles 7:14, Proverbs 14:12, Isaiah 5:20, Ephesians 6:12, Revelation 3:8

Topics: "Cultural Renewal", "Christian Politics"

Description

Robert P. Jr Dugan preaches about the cultural crisis and the ongoing culture war in America, emphasizing the importance of evangelical Christians taking a stand to determine the nation's future. The sermon highlights the clash between cultural conservatism and cultural radicalism on various fronts such as radical feminism, abortion rights, government funding of the arts, and homosexual rights. It calls for evangelicals to engage in political life, uphold biblical values, and work towards spiritual and political renewal to counter the forces of decadence and ruin threatening the nation.

Transcript

When the founding fathers met in their 1787 Constitutional Convention, they quickly determined that the Articles of Confederation under which they had been operating were inadequate for a national government. As they set out to "invent" a new nation, they agreed to do so in utmost secrecy. George Washington one day scolded the delegates when a written resolution was found on the floor: "I must entreat, gentlemen, to be more careful lest our transactions get into the News Papers and disturb the public repose by premature speculations."

Given today's poking and prying media, electronic transmission of news, and politicians willing to leak inside information, it seems incredible that when the convention was over, an old lady could accost Benjamin Franklin just outside the doors of Philadelphia's Constitution Hall and ask: "Well, Dr. Franklin, what have we got, a Republic or a monarchy?" Franklin's reply was classic: "A Republic, Madam, if you can keep it."¹

For more than two hundred years we have maintained our Republic, even through difficult times of testing like a Civil War, two World Wars, the Great Depression following the stock market crash of 1929, and a fiercely unpopular war in Vietnam. Now, early in the 1990s, the United States of America confronts as severe a test as the nation has ever faced -- although some Americans scoff at such an

assertion and express pleasure at the direction our culture is moving. That doesn't surprise me. It has always been true that "There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death."²

Our nation's cultural drift has brought us to a cultural crisis serious enough to be called a "culture war." If it is true that God Almighty is the ultimate umpire over the nations, then losing that war of values could find us rereading *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* in an attempt to discover where we went wrong. We are engaged in a culture war for the soul of America.

Just a glance at the title of Charles Colson's *Against the Night: Living in the New Dark Ages* tells a great deal. Colson senses that a "crisis of immense proportion is upon us," and begins by mentioning others with similar forebodings.

Carl Henry writes of the twilight of our culture; Malcolm Muggeridge predicts the end of Christendom. Francis Schaeffer warns of the spiritual collapse of the West. Even secular journals sound the alarm. *Newsweek* declares "the American century . . . over," and *Time* decries a "moral malaise overhanging American life."

. . . the crisis that threatens us, the force that could topple our monuments and destroy our very foundations, is within ourselves. The crisis is in the character of our culture, where the values that restrain inner vices and develop inner virtues are eroding. Unprincipled men and women, disdainful of their moral heritage and skeptical of Truth itself, are destroying our civilization by weakening the very pillars upon which it rests.³

In an address to the 1990 convention of National Religious Broadcasters, psychologist James Dobson said that "We are engaged at this time in an enormous civil war of values." He portrayed Judeo-Christian values at loggerheads with a humanistic, avant-garde perspective that

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recognizes no absolute values, adding: "What most people don't realize is that our children are the prize. Those who control what children see, hear, and are taught control the nation." A *New York Times* feature on Dobson and his Focus on the Family ministry reported:

. . . an average of ten thousand often heart-wrenching letters a month [are sent to Focus on the Family].

"Through this department we are watching the unraveling of a social order," Mr. Dobson said. "Five years ago people wrote us about thumb-sucking and bed-wetting. Now they're writing about wife beating, child abuse, manic depression, suicide, and satanic cults."

Mr. Dobson has been worrying about the unraveling of the social order since the 1960s, when he said he was appalled by what he viewed as the impact of sexual and cultural permissiveness on people he was treating in family counseling.

America's and evangelicals' leading theologian, Carl F.H. Henry, has spoken with prophetic wisdom for decades. From the long perspective of history he wrote *Twilight of a Great Civilization* in 1988.

Never has the need for a culture enlivened by the moral law of God been more urgent than in our generation when social tumult obscures the very patterns of normalcy, and in fact increasingly champions the normless. In a culture dominated by a neo-pagan mind and will, deviation tends to become the norm,

and normalcy in turn is perversely declared deviant. That cultural condition is the midnight hour for an evangelical alternative that seeks to count for something significant before the collapse and ruination of the contemporary social scene.⁴

On Capitol Hill, Rep. Henry Hyde (R-IL) is one of Congress's most effective debaters and a champion of the right to life. He is known for his commitment to traditional moral values.

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. . . the Great Arts Controversy demonstrated that America is, in truth, involved in a Kulturkampf -- a culture war, a war between cultures and a war about the very meaning of "culture."

It is best to be precise about the terminology here. By "culture war," I don't mean arguments over the relative merits of Mozart and Beethoven . . . Nor do I mean the tensions between highbrows and lowbrows, between sports fans and opera buffs, between people who think Bruce Springsteen is the greatest artist alive and people who wouldn't know Bruce Springsteen if he rang their doorbell and asked to use the telephone.

No, by "culture war" I mean the struggle between those who believe that the norms of "bourgeois morality" (which is drawn in the main from classic Jewish and Christian morality) should form the ethical basis of our common life, and those who are determined that those norms will be replaced with a radical and thoroughgoing moral relativism. That the "relativism" in question is as absolutist and as condescendingly self-righteous as any sixteenth-century inquisitor is a nice irony. But that is the division in our house.⁵

Conservative columnist Patrick J. Buchanan in a March 26, 1990 column wrote of the root of the arts community's battle to secure unrestricted federal grants:

The arts crowd is after more than our money, more than an end to the congressional ban on funding obscene and blasphemous art. It is engaged in a cultural struggle to root out the old America of family, faith, and flag, and recreate society in a pagan image.

The maneuvering in America's Kulturkampf is over, the forces are now engaged; and, a bewildered and defensive Christian society is absorbing one blow after another.

. . . This is a war about the fundamental values of the country . . . the battle for America's soul.

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The idea that we are now absorbed in a civil war over cultural values is not contrived by paranoid religionists. One among numerous such references, the Washington Post recently emblazoned the front page of its "Show" section with the headline: "Who's Winning the Culture Wars?"⁶

Living in exile in the United States, one of the most courageous and perceptive men of our century thinks that the wrong forces are winning. In a Time interview, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn hit the nail on the head in responding to a question about the decline of the West's moral life:

There is technical progress, but this is not the same thing as the progress of humanity as such. In every civilization this process is very complex. In Western Civilizations -- which used to be called Western-Christian but now might better be called Western-Pagan -- along with the development of intellectual life and science, there has been a loss of the serious moral basis of society.⁷

It is important that no one think that by "culture" we mean preferences, tastes, and manners -- in the context of our nation, or any nation for that matter.

What is culture? It is the ways of thinking, living, and behaving that define a people and underlie its achievements. It is a nation's collective mind, its sense of right and wrong, the way it perceives reality, and its definition of self. Culture is the morals and habits a mother strives to instill in her children. It is the obligations we acknowledge toward our neighbors, our community, and our government. It is the worker's dedication to craftsmanship and the owner's acceptance of the responsibilities of stewardship. It is the standards we set and enforce for ourselves and for others: our definitions of duty, honor, and character. It is our collective conscience.⁸

By that or any other realistic definition of culture, our nation is sliding down a slippery slope toward decadence,

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gathering speed as it goes. Whether evangelicals will now seize the opportunity to steer America's course -- something potentially within their grasp -- remains to be seen. That possibility is the reason for this book.

Before the final challenge, let's look at the competing philosophies behind this civil war within our culture. Reduced to bare bones, the battle is between cultural conservatism and cultural radicalism. The conservative approach ascribes great value to the accumulated wisdom of the culture, and considers disciplined behavior most likely to bring happiness in the long run. The radical approach gives great worth to novelty and diversity, and tends to find its satisfaction in immediate gratification.

The founding fathers assuredly would have taken sides with cultural conservatism, for they often insisted that Christianity and government must work together "to raise the virtue and morality of the people to a level at which they are sufficiently public-spirited and self-restrained that republican government can work."⁹

This distinction becomes more pointed when one realizes that the ethical standard of Western civilization was the Bible. Cultural radicals are often in direct rebellion against those Judeo-Christian values, unwilling to discipline themselves by any standard beyond themselves. The founders made social compacts or covenants with each other, God being their witness, and those commitments were a sufficient glue to hold their nation together. By contrast, cultural radicals abhor moral limitations, that is, religiously based values, and exalt the quest for individual rights as their greatest good. But 250 million people pursuing their own rights simply will not produce a glue that can hold their society together.

In a speech addressed to a small group of political strategists, conservative political thinker Paul Weyrich developed the case for cultural conservatism:

Democracy is the one form of government which depends for its success and existence upon a virtuous

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people. Democracy works only so long as a sufficient proportion of the people are willing to place the common good above self-interest, and only so long as there is a broad consensus on what constitutes value.¹⁰

Once again, Aleksandr Sozhenitsyn touches the sore spot of excessive individualism:

. . . we have two lungs. You can't breathe with just one lung and not with the other. We must avail ourselves of rights and duties in equal measure. And if this is not established by the law, if the law does not oblige us to do that, then we have to control ourselves. When Western society was established, it was based on the idea that each individual limited his own behavior. Everyone understood what he could do and what he could not do. The law itself did not restrain people. Since then, the only thing we have been developing is rights, rights, rights, at the expense of duty.¹¹

America's younger generation is conditioned toward cultural radicalism today by public education. Allan Bloom's book, *The Closing of the American Mind*, to widespread astonishment established itself on national best-seller lists in mid-1987. This was neither a fluke nor a public relations triumph, but testimony to the force of Bloom's message. The University of Chicago professor attacked liberalism for selling collegians a bill of goods, namely, that there is no standard for distinguishing between right and wrong, or good and bad:

. . . today's university student believes one thing deeply. It has reached the status of an axiom. He is absolutely convinced that truth is relative, and he is astonished if anyone is foolish enough to challenge the point.

This relativism is not the product of theoretical reasoning. It is, so the student believes, a moral postulate of a free society. He has been taught from childhood that the danger of absolutism is not error

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but intolerance. Thus in our democratic society, says Bloom, openness is the highest virtue . . . the supreme insight is not to think you are right at all.¹²

The other side of the coin of tolerance is to repudiate the conclusions of "true believers" of any sort -- including evangelicals with their belief in revealed truth and moral absolutes. No wonder evangelicals are called narrow-minded, religious zealots, bigoted fundamentalists, censors, or anti-choice activists. And all of that just for failing to smile upon promiscuity, drugs, euthanasia, homosexual lifestyles, or taking the life of an unborn child for convenience -- at the same time trying to get government not to condone such practices.

Popular campus speaker Josh McDowell says that in the 1940s, "the three most common [school] disciplinary problems were talking, chewing gum, and running in the halls. In the 1980s the statistics say the most common problems are rape, robbery, and assault."¹³ Our society is paying the price of the sexual revolution, enhanced by values-clarification teaching techniques that undermine values transmitted by home and church, along with the refusal of teachers to take moral positions. A recent cartoon spoofed this educational craziness under the title, "If drug education were taught like sex education." In the cartoon's four frames, the teacher speaks to the children seated before her:

I would like to encourage all of you not to use drugs at all. But since this is a public school and I'm not allowed to inflict my own puritan beliefs on you . . . and since I know that many of you will be active with drugs from time to time, today's class will be on how to practice safe drug use . . . This is a hypodermic syringe. You should use this if you want to inject drugs directly into your veins. Notice how it is sealed so the user can tell the needle is clean . . . It's important you use clean needles when you inject drugs into

your body. If you don't have clean needles, check with the school nurse and she will give you some. Now, let me show you how to find the vein.

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Since cultural values are no longer being conserved through public education, and because all that remains to be taught is a value-system of secular humanism, society is terribly weakened -- the consequences seen in multitudes of individual students pursuing intense sexual experiences, drug episodes, and materialism. Worst of all, many will hear their parents' "dogmatic religion" mocked, and parental authority undercut.

By far the greatest cost of cultural radicalism can be found in damaged families. Society's acceptance of relativism and individualism, portrayed and subtly advanced through much of television's banal programming, has led to practices that can demolish the marriage bond: use of pornography, permissive sex, and easy divorce. What will it take to restore the life-long, faithful marriage of a man and woman as America's most honored lifestyle? What will it take to restore respect for parental values to that children will ignore the siren lure of heavy metal or rap music which centers on satanism, suicide, deviant sex, drug usage, or sadomasochism?

Some years ago, I recall D. James Kennedy suggesting that in our nation the cold air mass of unbelief had collided with the warm air mass of Christianity, to produce a severe storm front. One system of thought begins with God, the other in unaided human wisdom, assuming that it will be able to discover everything it needs to know in time -- that is, before death. The apostle Paul contrasts those views:

Where is the wise man? Where is the scholar? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe.

We do, however, speak a message of wisdom among the mature, but not the wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing. No, we speak of God's secret wisdom, a wisdom that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory before time began. None of the rulers of this age

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understood it, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.¹⁴

Insofar as thought leaders continue to rebel against the Judeo-Christian principles commonly accepted by the founders, our nation is in increasing peril. As much as evangelicals deplore the cultural crisis, they do discern its source:

For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world . . .¹⁵

To see the progress of the culture war, let's look at several fronts where cultural radicalism is attacking cultural conservatism today. Battles are being fought over radical feminism, abortion rights, arts funding, and homosexual rights.

- Radical Feminism must be distinguished from feminism spelled with a lower case f. I applaud the many break-throughs women have achieved in our time which give them equal dignity and opportunity with men.

Legitimate feminism squares with the biblical assurance of equal worth before God:

There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.¹⁶

On the other hand, when one understands the implications of the "patriarchal oppression" claimed by many feminists, one realizes that radical feminism bluntly rejects the will of the Creator who made male and female, and who stipulated the nature of the marriage relationship.

The bottom line of the Feminist agenda is this: For women to be liberated they must be relieved of the responsibility of childcare; the nuclear family must metamorphose.¹⁷

Beyond insisting that the sex/gender system is of crucial importance, and that women must break away from male domination by controlling their own reproduction and work role, radical feminism is capsuled in the hateful aphorism, "A woman needs a man like a fish needs a bicycle." In feminist literature one finds suggestions for abolishing

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marriage, preferring bisexuality or androgyny, and hoping for the day when science will make it possible for women to impregnate one another.¹⁸

Such thinking runs in many perverse directions. In 1983, the New York City Council passed an ordinance requiring public places selling alcoholic beverages to post warnings that drinking while pregnant can cause birth defects. The president of the New York chapter of the National Organization for Women shocked Mayor Ed Koch by her letter urging him to veto the ordinance. She complained of "discrimination" in singling out pregnant women as a class, and then objected to "protecting the unborn at the expense of women's freedom."¹⁹ NOW's national office refused to verify or deny that the morally bankrupt reasoning of that New York letter represented the organization's official position.

Radical feminism positions itself in opposition to Judeo-Christian principles. Tragically, with the aid of the media, some of our daughters and granddaughters are being radicalized, to their personal detriment and that of their family and nation.

- The battle over Abortion Rights involves "the greatest civil rights issue of our time and defines our national character," according to Catholic lay theologian George Weigel.²⁰ It is shocking to realize how far our nation has drifted from its historic respect for the God-given right to life. According to Harvard professor of Law Mary Ann Glendon, to find a nation "as indifferent to unborn life" as the United States, it is necessary to look beyond the West, beyond Europe, and even beyond the Soviet bloc. Only in nations such as China, where concerns about economics and population growth supersede all else, will an equally disdainful attitude toward life be found.

Paul Weyrich places this into the context of our cultural clash:

Defense of the right to life responds to such basic American values as compassion for the weak, equality of rights, and reverence for life . . .

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Abortion is not an issue in a vacuum. It is the symbol for a cultural cleavage between those with a sense of community and responsibility and the votaries of imperial individualism; between . . . those who worship in

churches and those who mock religion; those who accept our culture and those who seek to tear it down.²¹

Charles Colson quotes Pat Buchanan as underlining America's lack of a moral consensus:

Americans of left and right no longer share the same religion, the same values, the same codes of morality; we only inhabit the same piece of land.

The cultural radicals have been winning the popular battle over abortion, although there is hope that the Supreme Court may before long reverse the infamous 1973 Roe v. Wade decision that opened the door to abortion on demand. Pro-abortion rights forces have succeeded, with the all-too-willing connivance of the media,²² in couching the issue in terms either for or against the right of choice -- never mind the nature of the choice, in and of itself, is neither good or bad. It would be admirable in many situations. But would anyone argue that Americans should be pro-choice on slavery, burglary, or racial discrimination?

- Government funding of the arts provided a fierce firefight at the turn of the decade from '89 to '90. The battle erupted over the so-called "art" of Andres Serrano, featuring a photograph of a crucifix submerged in a jar of the artist's own urine. What made the matter incredible was that Serrano's work was funded by taxpayers' dollars through a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts.

That was just the beginning. Over the next months, we would discover that the NEA had funded live sex act performances, homoerotic displays, and other sacrilegious and salacious "art." The arts community resisted any restrictions whatever on its creativity, charging cultural conservatives

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with attempts to censor creativity. The arts elite steadfastly refused to concede that sponsorship was the issue, not censorship. One columnist imagined the liberal elite boasting, "You pathetic peasants. We're not only going to produce works which offend your deepest sensibilities, but we'll force you to pay for them as well."

As painful as it is to admit it, Ken Myers is probably correct. The cultural chasm in America today may be so wide that cultural radicals cannot comprehend why pornographic or blasphemous art is so troublesome to cultural conservatives.

If Jesse Helms and Don Wildmon were shocked on first seeing "Piss Christ," the arts community, which takes such work for granted, was just as shocked that anyone minded, like perplexed cannibals wondering why the missionaries want to tamper with their menu.²³

- Finally, Homosexual Rights may provoke the bitterest and most prolonged battle of all. Homosexuals seem determined to make this decade "The Gay Nineties" in a manner unthinkable a century ago. Their agenda? Jeffrey Levi, of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, was frank in his address to the National Press Club on October 9, 1987. He spoke of demanding passage of a federal gay and lesbian civil rights bill:

But our agenda is becoming broader than that; we are no longer seeking just a right to privacy and a right to protection from wrong. We also have a right -- as heterosexual Americans have already -- to see government and society affirm our lives. Now that is a statement that may make some of our liberal friends queasy. But the truth is, until our relationships are recognized in the law -- through domestic partner

legislation or the definition of beneficiary, for example -- until we are provided the same financial incentives in tax law and government programs to encourage our family relationships, then we will not have achieved equality in American society.²⁴

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Gary Bauer, president of the Family Research Council, summarized the threat to society. The pattern?

The abnormal seeks tolerance, then demands acceptance, and, finally, argues for government subsidies and the granting of special rights.²⁵

If the current situation doesn't remind you of Isaiah's prophecy, it should:

Woe to those who call evil good

and good evil,

who put darkness for light

and light for darkness,

who put bitter for sweet

and sweet for bitter . . .

Therefore, as tongues of fire lick up straw

and as dry grass sinks down in the flames,

so their roots will decay

and their flowers blow away like dust;

for they have rejected the law of the LORD Almighty

and spurned the word of the Holy One of Israel.²⁶

Homosexuals have made significant gains in recent years. They have managed to make AIDS a politically protected disease, giving it more of a civil rights emphasis than that of a public health issue. They have thrown some denominations into turmoil by demanding ordination to the ministry. In 1988, they secured the support of all the potential Democratic presidential nominees. In 1990, to their great surprise, several gay activists were invited to the White House for bill-signing ceremonies. But the most significant part of their battle in the culture war was fought in the District of Columbia.

In 1988, homosexuals employed a D.C. human rights statute to force Roman Catholic Georgetown University to grant space and funds to a gay rights group on campus. After a two-year effort, thanks to the leadership of Sen. Bill Armstrong, Congress acted through the appropriations bill

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to allow church-affiliated schools to decide for themselves whether they would give money or recognition to groups promoting or condoning homosexuality. Twice during the battle NAE pulled together a press

conference, with a broad supporting coalition, to urge passage of the Armstrong amendment and to clarify that this was a religious liberty issue, no gay-bashing as alleged.

Our press conference statement suggested that requiring Georgetown to fund gay rights advocates made as much sense as compelling Hebrew Union College to fund a campus chapter of a neo-Nazi group, or black Howard University to support a chapter of the Ku Klux Klan.

No conflict better illustrates the clash between cultural conservatives and cultural radicals. Stripped of all emotion and posturing, the issue was this: Can religious schools be forced to subsidize groups promoting beliefs and practices contrary to the schools' religious beliefs? The Roman Catholic university believes homosexual behavior to be sin. Sad to say, although cultural conservatives won this time, about one-third of the senators and representatives showed by their votes that they preferred gay rights over religious freedom. Can we allow their kind of thinking to become the majority mindset in the Congress of the United States?

Pressure for gay rights never seems to let up. Senator Armstrong again had to do battle in the summer of 1990. The D.C. government required organizations like Big Brothers and Girl Scouts to admit homosexuals into their ranks as counselors, coaches, and leaders. Armstrong finally prevailed, after losing the first time around, as the Senate by 54-45 decided on September 12 that such organizations should have the right to exclude homosexuals as role models, if they wished to do so. The frightening aspect of the vote is that a minority of forty-five believe the District of Columbia should be allowed to force youth organizations to include homosexuals in their leadership.

In the civil war of the '90s, government must uphold conservative cultural values if our society is to endure.

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Unfortunately, government's resolve is weakening. Cultural radicals are winning many battle on the major fronts described above -- although not on all fronts, by any means.

The question at the beginning of this chapter demands an answer: Who will determine America's future? Who will win the coming civil war?

Ronald Reagan was fond of saying, "The greatest revolution in history began with the words, 'We the people.' " I believe the greatest revival of a nation in history must begin with the words, "We the evangelicals."

To bring spiritual revival to the United States will require the commitment of millions of Christians who take the Bible seriously. To bring political renewal to that nation will require those same people. One of the Scripture's most significant texts ties the two together:

If my people, who are called by my name, will 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.²⁷

Spiritual and political renewal will not come when only the three conditions of personal piety are met. There is a fourth condition, involving repentance and changed lives, an abrupt swing away from sinful ways. As evangelicals, our most common political sin is not one of commission, but of omission -- remaining aloof from politics, uncaring about the culture war, selfishly tending our own homestead. When we reject our own ignorance and apathy and start actively working for righteousness in politics and

government, then, just then, God may act to heal our land. And in years when political leaders struggle with "the vision thing," who but the church can offer a moral vision to society?

This is the time for evangelicals to grab history's helm and to determine America's course. When they do, they should not be surprised to find millions of cultural conservatives -- whether they would call themselves that or not -- willing to follow. Evangelicals have sufficient reason,

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adequate resources, and every right to attempt to take the political lead.

Evangelicals have multiple reasons to engage in the political life of the nation in an unprecedented way. They are beginning to understand the current crisis, they know that God is honored when they work for righteousness in society, and they have every reason to believe that God can multiply their efforts just as surely as Jesus multiplied a boy's bread and fish to feed five thousand.

Not long after he had been released from prison for a Watergate-related offense, Charles Colson chanced upon an interview with Carl Henry in the Washington Star. The words, he testifies today, hit him powerfully and deeply affected his understanding of the "continuing conflict between our Christian values and modern culture . . ." This was the heart of the interview:

The intellectual decision most urgently facing humanity in our time is whether to acknowledge or disown Jesus Christ as the hope of the world and whether Christian values are to be the arbiter of human civilization in the present instead of only in the final judgment of men and nations.²⁸

Evangelicals clearly have the material resources to exert a decisive influence upon this nation. To counter cultural radicalism, there are more than 1,100 Christian radio stations and over 350 Christian television stations in the country. Thirty million people, according to researcher George Barna, read Christian magazines regularly. Over \$30 billion is donated to Christian churches every year, with \$8 to 10 billion more given to parachurch ministries.²⁹

More Americans attend church or synagogue on any one weekend, four of ten,³⁰ than attend all professional football, baseball, and basketball games in an entire year. George Gallup asserts that "America is unique in the world for the high levels of religious belief among its educated people." His mid-1990 research shows that 38 percent of Americans describe themselves as evangelicals, or born-again

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Christians, while his annual report shows 33 percent. Gallup explains that some people may be hesitant to use those terms of themselves, but that "alternatively worded questions have yielded similar results." High percentages hold conservative theological views, for example, regarding the deity of Christ or his resurrection from the dead.

At the same time, almost half of Americans (48 percent) see religion as losing influence in society. With the right kind of leadership, many could be mobilized. Even allowing for exaggerations in the numbers -- although Gallup's reputation as a pollster is impeccable -- evangelicals have the potential resources to change the nation.

They also have the spiritual resources. Their confidence in the sovereignty of God was reaffirmed by the crumbling of communism in Eastern Europe in 1989. They believe with many of Israel's kings in the Old Testament, that "the battle is the Lord's."³¹

Happily for them, evangelicals have the right to advance their convictions in the public square. They have not been gerrymandered out of the political arena because they bring religious beliefs into the battle. Under the Constitution, they have full freedom to use their citizenship rights. Evangelicals are likely to recall a vivid biblical image: "See, I have placed before you an open door that no one can shut."³²

The door may be open at just the right time. Declining voter turnout over the last two decades plays into the hands of evangelicals, provided they can mobilize their constituency better than others. After all, the value of a vote is relative to the total number of votes cast. To illustrate, 24,000 voted in my 1976 primary election in Colorado, while 240,000 voted in November. A vote in September thus had ten times the clout of a vote that November. Further, America has never had as high a percentage of older people as it has today. Those people are most likely to have conservative cultural values, and they go to the polls in greater numbers than any other age group. On the other hand, the eighteen to twenty-four

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generation "knows less, cares less, and reads newspapers less" than any generation in the last fifty years.³³ Especially vulnerable to the individualistic, relativistic, and hedonistic spirit of the times, it is fortunate that, unlike their elders, they send a low percentage of their number to the polls.

In spite of my optimism, the future may seem dark. No matter. Consider this moving incident discovered by Alistair Cooke in the records of the Connecticut House of Representatives:

The time was the 19th of May, 1780. The place was Hartford, Connecticut. The day has gone down in New England history as a terrible foretaste of Judgment Day. For at noon the skies turned from blue to gray and by mid-afternoon had blackened over so densely that, in that religious age, men fell on their knees and begged a final blessing before the end came. The Connecticut House of Representatives was in session. And as some men fell down and others clamored for an immediate adjournment, the Speaker of the House, one Colonel Davenport, came to his feet. He silenced them and said these words: "The Day of Judgment is either approaching or it is not. If it is not, there is no cause for adjournment. If it is, I choose to be found doing my duty. I wish, therefore, that candles may be brought."³⁴

Evangelicals must do their duty. They must take the lead to determine America's future. Over the years, the familiar voice of Billy Graham has forcefully reminded hearers that "This is your hour of decision." By the same token, in this closing decade of the twentieth century, this is America's decade of decision. If God allows, we may have ten more years to make our national choice.

The coming civil war is at hand. The soldiers of decadence and ruin are marching, grimly determined to reshape the nation in their own image. They can be stopped -- but not without a fight. Who will respond to God's trumpet blast to battle? This is the evangelical hour. The time to choose has come.

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History awaits your decision -- or the United States awaits God's judgment.

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Notes

1. Alistair Cooke, *America* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1974), 136. [BACK]
2. Proverbs 14:12. [BACK]
3. Ann Arbor, Michigan: Servant Publications, 1989, 9-11. [BACK]
4. Quoted in Steve Halliday and Al Janssen, eds., *Carl Henry at His Best* (Portland: Multnomah Press, 1990), 46. [BACK]
5. Henry J. Hyde, "The Culture War," *National Review*, 30 April 1990, 25. [BACK]
6. Sunday, 15 July 1990. [BACK]
7. Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn in an interview with David Aikman in *Time*, 24 July 1989, 60. [BACK]
8. *Cultural Conservatism: Toward a New National Agenda* (Washington, D.C.: Free Congress Research and Education Foundation), 4. [BACK]
9. Eidsmoe, 295. [BACK]
10. Paul Weyrich, memorandum dated 18 April 1990, Free Congress Foundation. [BACK]
11. Solzhenitsyn, 60. [BACK]
12. Bruce L. Shelley, *The Gospel and the American Dream*. (Portland: Multnomah Press, 1989), 109. [BACK]
13. Josh McDowell, "The Gap Widens," *Eternity*, June 1987, 15. [BACK]
14. 1 Corinthians 1:20-221; 2:6-8. [BACK]
15. Ephesians 6:12. [BACK]
16. Galatians 3:28. [BACK]
17. Terri Graves Taylor, "Genesis," 9 April 1990, 6f. [BACK]
18. See Christina Hoff Sommers, "Feminism and the College Curriculum," *Imprimis*, June 1990, 1. [BACK]
19. NAE Washington Insight newsletter, January 1984. NAE Washington Insight was born in March, 1979, as an evangelical equivalent of the Kiplinger Washington Letter for businessmen. It tries to make clear by disseminating pertinent and accurate information what government is doing (or threatening to do). One small-town pastor said the newsletter was ". . . long overdue. It is like having a hotline to Washington." [BACK]

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20. Speech given by Weigel, President of Washington's Ethics and Public Policy Center, at NAE Washington Insight Briefing, 1990. [BACK]
21. Weyrich, 8. [BACK]

22. Media bias on the abortion issue was undeniably demonstrated by a 1-4 July 1990 series of articles in the Los Angeles Times. We noticed a significant admission along those lines weeks before, when the Washington Post's ombudsman admitted that his paper had not distinguished itself with its biased reporting on pro-life events. [BACK]
23. Kenneth A. Myers, "Holy Excrement," Genesis, 9 April 1990. [BACK]
24. Reported in the Washington Post, 13 October 1987. [BACK]
25. Rolf Zettersten, "Something Worth Saving Again," Focus on the Family magazine, September 1989, 23. [BACK]
26. Isaiah 5:20, 24. [BACK]
27. 2 Chronicles 7:14. [BACK]
28. Halliday and Janssen, 11. [BACK]
29. Data in this paragraph from National & International Religion Report, 30 July 1990, 6. [BACK]
30. This fact and other data in the immediately following paragraphs are taken from George H. Gallup, Jr., Religion in America 1990 (Princeton: Princeton Religion Research Center, 1990) and Gallup Poll News Service release dated 27 June 1990. [BACK]
31. 1 Samuel 17:47. [BACK]
32. Revelation 3:8. [BACK]
33. "The Tuned Out Generation," Time, 9 July 1990, 64. [BACK]
34. Living With Our Differences: Religious Liberty in a Pluralistic Society, First Liberty Institute (Boston: Learning Connections Publishers, Inc., 1990) upper elementary edition, 183. [BACK]

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