

**THE CHRISTIAN CONSERVATIVE AGENDA IN
THE UNITED STATES:
From 1980 to 2008**

Submitted by

Nathan Church, Bachelor of Arts (Hons.)

A thesis submitted in total fulfilment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
on 9 July 2011

Department of American Studies

School of International Studies

Faculty of Social and Behavioural Sciences

Flinders University

Bedford Park, South Australia 5042

Australia

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract.....	5
Acknowledgements.....	7
List of Acronyms Used.....	8
Introduction.....	9
Chapter One: “With friends like these...”: Christian Conservatives, the Republican Party and the Quest for the White House.....	22
Rallying the Troops: Christian Conservatives and the Election of Ronald Reagan, 1980 & 1984.....	24
“If You Want Anything Done... Do It Yourself”: Pat Robertson’s 1988 Bid for the Presidency.....	37
Four Years of Bush and Then Eight in the Wilderness: Christian Conservatives on the margins during the George H. W. Bush and Bill Clinton administrations.....	50
“God’s Man at This Hour”: Christian Conservatives and the Presidency of George W. Bush.....	70
Chapter Two: The private and the public: Christian Conservatives and Abortion Politics within the United States.....	89
Polarising the Nation: The evolving political climate surrounding Christian conservatives and abortion in the United States.....	90
From the Sidelines to the Frontlines: The rise of Christian conservative organisations against abortion.....	101
Getting the Numbers: The trials and tribulations of legislating abortion politics.....	113

Party Platforms and Single-Issue Politics: Christian Conservatives, Abortion and the Republican Party.....	120
“How will this affect your vote?” – Abortion politics and its affect at the ballot box.....	129
Chapter Three: A Faithful Partnership? The Involvement of Christian Conservatives in the Relationship between the United States and Israel.....	138
A Question of Faith: the Religious Culture of Christian Conservatism.....	140
A Question of Engagement: The Political Culture of Christian Conservatism.....	157
A Question of Strength: The Organisational Culture of Christian Conservatism.....	169
A Question of Power: The Legislative Culture of Christian Conservatism.....	185
Chapter Four: 12 months from the Bully-Pulpit: An analysis of sermons from Thomas Road Baptist Church, Lynchburg, Virginia.....	195
Thomas Road against Terrorism.....	197
Thomas Road United with Israel.....	210
In Praise of Reagan and the anti-Communist agenda.....	217
From the Pulpit to the Page: Christian Conservative Literature and the End of the World.....	224
John Hagee’s <i>Jerusalem Countdown</i> : Foreign policy through prophecy.....	225

Tim LaHaye and Ed Hindson's <i>Global Warning: The End</i> is Nigh.....	237
Conclusion.....	250
Bibliography.....	254

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this thesis is to analyse and assess the enduring nature of Christian conservatism within the United States, from 1980 to 2008. Under the direction of a core group of leaders, the movement has stepped out from its insular church base to project their ideals onto the American political and cultural landscape. This radical agenda has been largely motivated by a literal and highly prophetic interpretation of the Bible and this study aims to provide a detailed examination of the consequences of such a worldview. Through engaging with such issues as the presidential election cycle, abortion, the U.S. relationship with Israel and the a case study of a Christian conservative mega-church, this thesis demonstrates the maintained presence of Christian conservatives within U.S. politics and the problematic influence they seek to exert. The issues selected for this study are notable examples of foreign, domestic and cultural politics within the United States that reveal the breadth of scope incorporated within the Christian conservative political agenda.

Christian conservatism as a theology has existed within the United States for over a hundred years. However, this study is particularly concerned with its more recent politicisation and the subsequent mobilisation of its adherents into an influential constituency. The effects of this mobilisation and influence have continuously shifted over the scope of this study, and so a central theme of this thesis is the depiction of Christian conservatism as a continually evolving movement. Throughout this time, Christian conservatives have made some gains in seeing various elements of their agenda enacted, only to be disappointed by the ultimate limitations preventing the fulfilment of their goals. This thesis will critically evaluate these successes and failures, with a view to answering the important

questions of what motivates Christian conservatives, and why their influence endures, despite its fundamental flaws in significantly changing U.S. culture.

This study also offers a unique perspective of Christian conservatism by placing considerable emphasis on the theological convictions of its leaders, which overwhelmingly feed into their political agenda. The case study of Thomas Road Baptist Church is an integral component of this, in providing an understanding of Christian conservatism direct from many of the movement's key leaders, as delivered in sermons throughout 2006. However, all four of this study's chapters seek to articulate the essence of Christian conservatism as defined by its own leaders and spokespeople, working together in synthesis with other authors and commentators on the subject across nearly 30 years.

I certify that this thesis does not incorporate without acknowledgment any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any university; and that to the best of my knowledge and belief it does not contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text.

Nathan Church

PhD. candidate

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In writing this thesis, I have been supported by a number of individuals who have helped me in making it possible.

First and foremost I need to thank my supervisor and long-time teacher Dr. David Palmer. His enthusiasm to understand social change has been a truly positive influence on me, alongside his other virtues of an objective focus and capacity to challenge himself and others. I also acknowledge his tireless work in helping to improve my writing, both in terms of clarifying my argument, and also the less-than-enjoyable task of copy editing. Spending numerous years on a single project is never an easy thing, however the task has been made all the more bearable by having the constant support and encouragement of a great mentor, and I thank him here.

I have also sincerely appreciated the interest, ideas, and constructive criticism offered by my great friend and colleague, Gareth Sobey. Despite his relocation to Melbourne and busy schedule writing his own thesis, I have consistently valued the opportunity to share ideas with him and utilise his uncanny ability to get to the underlying point of things. For all this and more, I cannot thank him enough.

A number of other people have also been important in helping me in my understanding of the problematic influence of religion in politics. Simeon Jones, Chris Olver, Joel Small and Max Jeganathan have all over the years shared their unique perspectives with me and I sincerely appreciate this, and also their encouragement and support of my own work.

Finally I want to thank my wife Justine, my parents, family, and other close friends, for all of their love and support throughout these past years. I cannot thank you all enough for the encouragement and generosity you show each and every day.

LIST OF ACRONYMS USED

ACTV – American Coalition for Traditional Values

ADL – Anti-Defamation League

AFC – American Freedom Coalition

AIPAC – American Israel Public Affairs Committee.

AWACS – Airborne Warning and Command Systems

CBN – Christian Broadcasting News

CIA – Central Intelligence Agency

CIPAC – Christians' Israel Public Action Campaign

CPC – Crisis Pregnancy Centre

GOP – Grand Old Party; a common term for the Republican Party within the United States.

ICEJ – International Christian Embassy - Jerusalem

IDF – Israeli Defence Force

IFCJ – International Fellowship of Christians and Jews

LAPAC – Life Amendment Political Action Committee

NCC – National Council of Churches

NRB – National Religious Broadcasters Association

NRLC – National Right to Life Committee

PAC – Political Action Committee

PLO – Palestinian Liberation Organisation

RNC – Republican National Committee

WMD – Weapon(s) of Mass Destruction

INTRODUCTION

This thesis deals principally with the cultural phenomenon and political ramifications of Christian conservatism. Although this term has been intermittently used by academics and journalists alike since the 1980s, it remains distinctly under-utilised as a means of articulating the composition and methodology of one of the United States' most significant constituencies. Throughout this study, the ideology and instigators of Christian conservative values will be assessed through the lens of three key issues: the campaign cycle of presidential elections, abortion politics and the United States relationship with Israel. Christian conservatives have also shown a vested interest in many other issues, such as the public education system, same-sex marriage and more recently stem-cell research. However, over the scope of this study spanning the presidencies of Ronald Reagan through George W. Bush, the issues of electioneering, abortion and Israel have been consistently placed at the top of the Christian conservative agenda and thus demand specific attention.

As a starting point, the question of how Christian conservatism is defined is crucial. Over the years, adherents to this religious, cultural and political ideology have been labelled collectively as the "New Christian Right", "Evangelicals", or "Christian Fundamentalists." However, all three of these terms are largely insufficient as appropriate descriptions. Firstly, the former can be largely regarded as steeped in the awkward and largely out-dated political polarities of "left" and "right." In his 1996 book *Onward Christian Soldiers*, Clyde Wilcox defines the "Christian Right" as a primarily "social movement" which seeks to mobilise "evangelical Protestants and other orthodox Christians into conservative political

action.”¹ Here Wilcox makes the important point that the movement *incorporates* rather than *differentiates* various Christian groups, however he nonetheless reinforces terminology which, while continuing to remain in the political lexicon, nevertheless offers little insight or accuracy of definition for the movement’s current form.

Similarly, the title “Evangelical” inherently denotes a theological principle accepted by many Christians regardless of political persuasion: that being an obligation to evangelise to others regarding their beliefs, at least to some extent. The concept of ‘Evangelicalism’ was borne from the revivalist movements of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, where stump preachers would “elicit dramatic conversion experiences” from people hearing their “evangel” – translated from the Greek as “good news.”² While this practice continues today in a more contemporary form, the movement itself has become far more complex and increasingly politicised.

It is also important to note that not all contemporary evangelicals subscribe to a right-wing brand of politics, as the term “evangelical” has increasingly come to alienate those with politically liberal but theologically conservative views.³ Political and social commentator Tom Sine has argued that the evangelical community has instead had its movement “hijacked” by the “Religious Right.” By thrusting their own agenda into the political mainstream, Sine argues that “[the Religious Right] have...determined what the politically correct issues are...and decided that the correct political identity of Christians should be conservative Republicanism.”⁴ The force behind this identification was clearly apparent at both the 2000 and 2004 U.S. Republican Party Conventions, where on the back of distributed programmes a

¹ Clyde Wilcox, *Onward Christian Soldiers?: The Religious Right in American Politics* (Boulder, Co: Westview Press, 1996) p. 5.

² George M. Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1991). p. 2.

³ See Amy Johnson Frykholm, *Rapture Culture: Left Behind in Evangelical America* (New York, Oxford University Press, 2004) p 22.

⁴ Tom Sine, ‘A Hijacked Heritage’, *Sojourners Magazine* 24.1 (March-April 1995) p. 20.

slogan declared “What Can 80 Million Evangelicals do for America? Anything They Want!”⁵

The nature of “Christian fundamentalism” as a definition is similarly problematic. George M. Marsden defined a fundamentalist as “an evangelical who is militant in opposition to liberal theology in the churches or to changes in cultural values or mores.”⁶ Alternatively, Amy Johnson Frykholm has suggested that first-wave “fundamentalists” have in fact invoked “evangelicalism” as a means of increasing their contemporary visibility while simultaneously removing themselves of the negative connotations surrounding “fundamentalism.”⁷ Acknowledging the diverse nature of both evangelicalism and fundamentalism as movements containing at best *informal* organisations, Marsden has also invoked “fundamentalism” as an evolving movement. From its origins in the 1920s, as a label for those who sought a return to the literal “fundamentals” of the Bible, Marsden argues its modern meaning has grown into a “rather specific self-designation” of predominately separatist Baptists.⁸ Steve Bruce has also highlighted what he classifies as strains of “super-patriotism” within Christian fundamentalism, bluntly claiming that “fundamentalists are American jingoes.” As evidence of this he cites the thousands of U.S. citizens who attended Reverend Jerry Falwell’s “I Love America” rallies; assessing their core theology as being “pro-family, pro-life...pro-moral...pro-America.”⁹

According to Richard John Neuhaus, this fundamentalist theology has significant ramifications in U.S. domestic and foreign policy, as he suggests that:

In a curious way, fundamentalism today is most assertive about the public meaning of the gospel...Their interpretation of prophecy does not shy away

⁵ Cited in Barbara Victor, *The Last Crusade: Religion and the Politics of Misdirection* (London: Constable and Robinson Ltd., 2005) p. 167.

⁶ Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism*, p. 1.

⁷ Amy Johnson Frykholm, *Rapture Culture...* p. 22.

⁸ Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism*, pp. 1-4.

⁹ Steve Bruce, *Pray TV: Televangelism in America* (London: Routledge, 1990) p. 81.

from specifics. They are quite prepared to match Bible passages with historical peculiarities as specific as Israel's occupation of the West Bank, Soviet rearmament, and the incidence of drug addiction in America.¹⁰

Incorporating elements of all of the above, Christian conservatism remains the most appropriate description available for the purposes of this study. The reason for this is because, more than anything else, the movement is essentially concerned with *conserving* certain values and principles, existing within an (often imagined) history of the United States. The belief that the United States is a "Christian nation" is mired in a sense of patriotic mythology; however it remains one of Christian conservatism's central tenets and is often acted out in their desire to "take back America for God." Many of the values lauded by Christian conservatives are derived specifically from their interpretation of religious theology, such as their anti-abortion stance and pro-Israel position. However, certain other values, such as support for limited government and a hawkish foreign policy, can be equally couched in a purely secular framework.

While this is not a uniquely American phenomenon, the sheer density of Christian conservatives within the United States and their capacity to be mobilised as agents of change is significant. Facilitating this has been the foundation of organised church bases, which have been described as "fantastic contexts for mobilization because they combine culture, leadership, money, facilities, infrastructure, an audience, and a communications network."¹¹ Within this framework, Christian conservatives have been able to reach into the country's political, cultural and social arenas to engage with issues and, where they have deemed necessary, act upon them.

¹⁰ Richard John Neuhaus, *The Naked Public Square: Religion and Democracy in America* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1984) pp. 14-5.

¹¹ Kenneth D. Wald and Allison Calhoun-Brown, *Religion and Politics in the United States (Fifth Edition)* (Lanham MD.: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2007) p. 131.

Thus the premise of this thesis is to objectively analyse and assess how Christian conservatives have engaged with, and sought to influence, key policy issues.

The scope of this study on Christian conservatism begins in 1980, which is significant as the year Ronald Reagan was elected President. Christian conservative leaders, who by that stage were building a values-based organisational coalition of their own, saw themselves as inextricably linked to Reagan's victory. In 1981 Jerry Falwell, with Ed Dobson and Ed Hindson, wrote *The Fundamentalist Phenomenon: the resurgence of conservative Christianity*.¹² This book, like many others written by Christian conservative leaders, sought to boldly signal the intent of the movement, through promoting and legitimising their new forays into the American political-cultural realm. Other writings of the early 1980s analysed this movement by profiling a variety of its facets: as a political movement, such as in Michael Lienesch's article "Right-Wing Religion"; as a lobby group, in Peter L. Benson and Dorothy L. Williams' *Religion on Capitol Hill*; and even as moral crusaders, in James Davison Hunter's *American Evangelicalism*.¹³ By the mid-to-late 1980s an even broader understanding developed, with the appearance of some of the decade's best works on Christian conservatism, by authors such as Gillian Peele, Kenneth Wald, and Clyde Wilcox.¹⁴

Steve Bruce's *The Rise and Fall of the New Christian Right* (1988) also provided an overview of mobilization techniques utilised by the Christian conservative's interlocking organisations. These groups were originally orchestrated

¹² Jerry Falwell [ed.] *The Fundamentalist Phenomenon: the resurgence of conservative Christianity* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1981).

¹³ Michael Lienesch, "Right-Wing Religion: Christian Conservatives as a Political Movement", *Political Science Quarterly*, 97.3 (1982) pp. 403-425. Peter L. Benson and Dorothy L. Williams, *Religion on Capitol Hill*, San Francisco, Cali.: Harper & Row, 1982). James Davison Hunter, *American Evangelicalism* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers, 1983).

¹⁴ Gillian Peele, *Revival and Reaction: The Right in Contemporary America* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984). Kenneth Wald, *Religion and Politics in the United States* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1987). Clyde Wilcox, "The Christian Right in Twentieth Century America: Continuity and Change", *The Review of Politics* 50.4 (1988) pp. 659-681.

by Richard Viguerie, Howard Phillips and Paul Weyrich, who were labelled by Bruce as “The Holy Trinity.”¹⁵ At this time Bruce and other commentators concluded that the influence of the “New Christian Right” was waning on account of financial strains and their inability to impose an overarching moral agenda on what is essentially a pluralistic society.¹⁶ However, Christian conservatism would rise again into the new decade, with a renewed focus and recast vision for political success.

Into the 1990s, Michael Lienesch continued publishing incisive analyses of Christian conservative culture, with *Redeeming America: Piety and Politics in the New Christian Right* (1993), as well as a chapter entitled “Prophetic Neo-Populists” in Hans-Georg Betz and Stefan Immerfall’s *The New Politics of the Right*.¹⁷ As the decade continued, Christian conservatism was often placed within broader studies of the cultural/political “right” within the United States, as was the case in Sara Diamond’s *Roads to Dominion*. Diamond’s depiction of the U.S. political “Right” incorporated a broad scope, containing anti-communist and racially-motivated elements, as well as neo-conservatives alongside the “New Christian Right.” Diamond viewed the latter as the “largest and most influential grassroots movement on the political scene”, on account of its growing base of “evangelical” support and gave exclusive focus to this group, of which she is openly antagonistic, in two of her other books, *Spiritual Warfare* and *Not by Politics Alone*.¹⁸

¹⁵ Steve Bruce, *The Rise and Fall of the New Christian Right: Conservative Protestant Politics in America, 1978-1988* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988). p. 56.

¹⁶ Steve Bruce, *The Rise and Fall of the New Christian Right*, p. 134. And Jerome L. Himmelstein, “The Rise and Fall of the New Christian Right: Conservative Protestant Politics in America 1978-1988 – Book Review”, *Social Forces* 69.1 (September 1990) p. 316.

¹⁷ Michael Lienesch, *Redeeming America: Piety and Politics in the New Christian Right* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1993). Hans-Georg Betz and Stefan Immerfall, *The New Politics of the Right: Neo-Populist Parties and Movements in Established Democracies* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1998).

¹⁸ Sara Diamond, *Roads to Dominion: right-wing movements and political power in the United States* (New York: Guilford Press, 1995) p. 311. Sara Diamond, *Spiritual Warfare: the politics of the Christian Right* (Boston, M.A.: South End Press, 1989). Sara Diamond, *Not By Politics Alone: the enduring influence of the Christian Right* (New York: Guilford Press, 1998).

The latter is particularly revealing, as it critiques Christian conservatism in terms of its political influence through the imposition of a cultural morality. Diamond argued that the New Christian Right, having had almost two decades of experience in the trenches of United States politics, had now solidified itself as a “potent force” on account of its “dual nature as [both] subculture and political faction.”¹⁹ The author’s discussion of Christian conservatives’ cultural accessibility is also highly engaging, with analysis of their “mindset that moves seamlessly from the details of daily life to the ominous task of changing politics.”²⁰ This somewhat editorial style of analysis continued into the new millennium, through such books as Barbara Victor’s *Last Crusade* and David S. New’s *Holy War*.²¹ However, Kenneth Wald’s fifth edition of *Religion and Politics in the United States*, co-written with Allison Calhoun-Brown and published in 2007, offers a more academic appraisal of Christian conservatives’ continued presence within U.S. politics. This study is particularly valuable, as the authors ignore the simplicity of debating a religiously-driven “culture war” and instead emphasise their own quantitative analysis, inclusive of what they describe as “the social movement known as the Christian Right.”²²

These foundational works have provided a historical basis for this thesis, as a synthesis of the movement from 1980 and the election of Ronald Reagan, to the second term of George W. Bush. This span of over a quarter century provides appropriate scope to understand the movement over a significant timeline. Within this temporal breadth, this study offers far more than simply a linear narrative, as it focuses on three key aspects of Christian conservatism.

¹⁹ Sara Diamond, *Not By Politics Alone*, p. xi.

²⁰ Sara Diamond, *Not By Politics Alone*, p. 34.

²¹ Barbara Victor, *Last Crusade*, David S. New, *Holy War: The Rise of Militant Christian, Jewish and Islamic Fundamentalism* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland and Company, Inc. Publishers, 2002).

²² Kenneth D. Wald and Allison Calhoun-Brown, *Religion and Politics in the United States (Fifth Edition)* p. 206.

This thesis contains four distinct chapters, each analysing a different aspect of Christian conservatism's political and cultural ideology. For the opening chapter assessing Christian conservative's role in presidential elections and subsequent administrations, I have consulted a broad array of academic and journalistic sources. Haynes Johnson's *Sleepwalking Through History* is a seminal work critiquing the Reagan administration, with topical analysis of the Christian conservative agenda during this time.²³ *The Bible and the Ballot Box: Religion and Politics in the 1988 Election*, edited by James L. Guth and John C. Green, is another outstanding study, which included a detailed analysis of Christian conservative leader Pat Robertson's bid for the Republican nomination.²⁴ Overarching both these periods is Bruce Nesmith's *The New Republican Coalition*, which successfully articulated the rise of the Christian conservative political agenda.²⁵ This chapter, and all subsequent others, has also been aided by numerous primary sources, including the online-archived *Sojourners Magazine*, edited by Jim Wallis. I have furthermore utilised many newspaper articles, from the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, *Boston Globe*, *Dallas Morning News*, *Denver Post*, *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*.

The second chapter analyses the history of abortion politics in the United States, which has also been well-documented especially the quarter-century beginning with Reagan's election in 1980. The avidly pro-choice Michele McKeegan published *Abortion Politics: Mutiny in the Ranks of the Right* in 1992, in which she detailed how the abortion issue has been problematically utilised by the Republican Party.²⁶ The old-firm leadership of Viguerie, Weyrich and Phillips were

²³ Haynes Johnson, *Sleepwalking Through History* (New York: Anchor Books, 1992).

²⁴ James L. Guth and John C. Green [eds.], *The Bible and the Ballot Box: Religion and Politics in the 1988 Election* (Boulder, Col.: Westview Press, 1991).

²⁵ Bruce Nesmith, *The New Republican Coalition* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc., 1994).

²⁶ Michele McKeegan, *Abortion Politics: Mutiny in the Ranks of the Right* (New York: Free Press, 1992).

again at the forefront of this campaign, and McKeegan provided a high degree of background in profiling these, and other important personalities within the Christian conservative-GOP relationship. McKeegan also notably closed her analysis with the depiction of the “New Christian Right” as a movement in decline, citing the dismantling of the Moral Majority in 1989 on account of falling support, as well as the public and government backlash against the pro-life campaign known as Operation Rescue.²⁷

The following year Barbara Hinkson Craig and David M. O’Brien published *Abortion and American Politics*, a study providing important insights into how government and policy-makers had wrestled with the legislative processes surrounding abortion politics.²⁸ Cynthia Gorney’s, *Articles of Faith: A Frontline History of the Abortion Wars*, highlighted the author’s journalistic credentials, through offering a detailed analysis of the abortion issue, largely through the perspectives of individual organisers.²⁹ William Saletan sought to continue this narrative into the current decade with *Bearing Right: How Conservatives Won the Abortion War*.³⁰ Here Saletan revealed the increasingly conservative approach that has come to overwhelm both sides of the abortion politics issue, again by looking predominantly at individual case studies.

In terms of the current literature on the relationship between the United States and Israel, a number of key books have been helpful in my own understanding and analysis of the topic. Edward Tivnan’s *The Lobby: Jewish Political Power and American Foreign Policy* (1987), provides a comprehensive overview of the

²⁷ Michele McKeegan, *Abortion Politics*, pp. 164-5.

²⁸ Barbara Hinkson Craig and David M. O’Brien, *Abortion and American Politics* (Chatham, N.J.: Chatham House Publishers, Inc., 1993).

²⁹ Cynthia Gorney, *Articles of Faith: A Frontline History of the Abortion Wars* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1998).

³⁰ William Saletan, *Bearing Right: How Conservatives Won the Abortion War* (Berkeley, Cal.: University of California Press, 2003).

entwined relationship of the two nations' political history and its consequences.³¹ In researching the book, Tivnan interviewed Tom Dine (a former head of AIPAC), policy adviser Martin Indyk, a number of Israeli social-science professors, and dozens of confidential sources, among others. Many notable insights are achieved from this extensive primary research, including the role of pro-Israel lobbies in getting sympathetic candidates elected to office, achieving desired amounts of foreign aid dollars for Israel, as well as influencing specific government policies – especially in the areas of defence. A more contemporary work of note is Timothy P. Weber's *On the Road to Armageddon: How Evangelicals Became Israel's Best Friend* (2004). Weber offers an outstanding theoretical and cultural analysis of pre-millennial dispensationalism, and demonstrates how U.S. Christian conservatives work within this ideology in engaging directly with Israel.³² Other recent contributions include the working paper by John J. Mearsheimer and Stephen M. Walt and subsequent response by Alan Dershowitz, on the question of "The Israel Lobby."³³ Mearsheimer and Walt's paper, (later published into book form) proved highly controversial, with Dershowitz, a colleague of Walt at Harvard University, the main protagonist of attacks against the authors.³⁴ While not analysing the role of Christian conservatives specifically, both papers raise important questions about the

³¹Edward Tivnan, *The Lobby: Jewish Political Power and American Foreign Policy* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1987).

³²Timothy P. Weber, *On the Road to Armageddon: How Evangelicals Became Israel's Best Friend* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2004).

³³John J. Mearsheimer and Stephen M. Walt, *The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy – Working Paper* Number RWP06-011, March 2006. Alan Dershowitz, *Debunking the Newest – and Oldest – Jewish Conspiracy: A Reply to the Mearsheimer-Walt "Working Paper"*. April 2006.

³⁴John J. Mearsheimer and Stephen M. Walt, *The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2007). Dershowitz labelled the authors "liars" and "bigots", and also challenged them to a public debate, declaring "I challenge Mearsheimer and Walt to look me in the eye and tell me that because I am a proud Jew and a critical supporter of Israel, I am disloyal to my country." In Peter Beaumont, "Editor Hits Back Over Israel Row", *The Observer*, Sunday April 2, 2006 (<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2006/apr/02/pressandpublishing.highereducation> - accessed December 9, 2008) and Mik Awake, "The Israel Lobby: The Walt and Mearsheimer Essay That Started It All", *The New York Inquirer*, September 5, 2006 (http://www.nyinquirer.com/nyinquirer/2006/09/the_israel_lobb.html - accessed December 9, 2008).

U.S.-Israel relationship, an issue in which this constituency has a particularly vested interest.

The opening chapter of this thesis investigates the mobilising role of Christian conservatives supporting presidential campaigns within the United States, and in particular their problematic relationship with the Republican Party. Starting with the 1980 election of Ronald Reagan, the Christian conservative movement sought to mobilise itself into a significant electoral constituency through appealing to the conservative values of the GOP. Eight years later, a driving determination to be an influence in the White House led Christian conservative leader Pat Robertson to run for the Republican Party nomination in 1988. Despite his eventual defeat, the nature of his campaign provided some important insights into the political motivations of the movement's leadership. Likewise, the presidencies of George H.W. Bush, Bill Clinton and George W. Bush have all been impacted in at least *some* way by Christian conservatives. While the effectiveness of their influence has risen and fallen across these administrations, Christian conservatives have continued to maintain a prominent position within the conservative coalition that has undergirded the Republican Party.

The second chapter moves onto the Christian conservatives' domestic agenda, focusing on the example of abortion politics within the United States. Since the *Roe v. Wade* Supreme Court decision of 1973, Christian conservatives have been highly active in seeking to overturn it through a variety of means. Organisations have played a major role in providing a framework for their pro-life activities, with many political action committees (PACs) having been established within the United States. Other groups, such as the militant Operation Rescue, have been deliberately confrontational in their struggle to end abortion, and the group's rise and fall

provides a number of insights into the evolution of the abortion issue for Christian conservatives. However, the crux of this chapter focuses heavily on the political implications of the abortion issue, in addressing three key elements: the problematic nature of legislating against women's reproductive rights, the ingrained pro-life position of the Republican Party, and finally the electoral implications of abortion as a major factor in single-issue voting.

The third chapter is a more exhaustive analysis of the role that Christian conservatives play within the relationship between the United States and Israel. This influence is motivated by deep-seated theological conviction, known as pre-millennial dispensationalism. This belief places Israel squarely at the centre of all foreign policy considerations, and often at the expense of the United States' own national interest. Christian conservative influence in encouraging the United States' support of Israel is predominantly channelled through a number of organisational structures, including political interest groups, various grass-roots networks, and also para-church operations through individual congregations. Over the years both Congress and the White House have been under considerable pressure to remain ardent supporters of Israel, on account of the lobbying strength of these organisations, as well as from internal demands from various Christian conservative politicians. Within such a climate, Christian conservative ideology in relation to Israel has truly become the status quo within the United States.

The final chapter is a case-study of the Christian conservative mega-church, Thomas Road Baptist in Lynchburg, Virginia. Founded and led by the late Rev. Jerry Falwell, Thomas Road is a bastion of Christian conservative ideology, with significant resources and media networks. From its pulpit, Falwell and a host of other leaders have propagated their agenda by both reaffirming the faith of Christian

conservative believers, while simultaneously attempting to reach new converts. This is done through appealing to such populist causes as the War on Terror, support for Israel, and prevailing anti-communism. These themes also continue to be discussed within the expanding realm of Christian conservative prophetic literature, an area also analysed within this first chapter.

These four chapters all work together to evaluate the questions of what has motivated Christian conservatives and why has their influence endured as a political and cultural movement since 1980. In the quest to find an answer, this study goes directly to Christian conservatives themselves in critically seeking to understand Christian conservative theology as the foundation for their culture and politics. Through this, their motivations and actions can be brought into a more focused context, especially within such controversial issues as Israel and abortion. The study of Christian conservative leadership is equally important in an assessment of the movement's enduring qualities. The changing nature of these leaders, and their capacity to project their values onto a national stage, has been both volatile and problematic. This has been demonstrably shown in the politicisation of their movement through increasing links to the Republican Party's campaign machinery, and it is on this key issue that the thesis begins.