Less than Conquerors:

The Christian Right in State Republican Parties

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Social movements often create great tension in the American party system, and the Christian Right is a case in point. Like the civil rights and feminist movements before it, few people are neutral about this latest effort to draw a new constituency into national politics. The debate is acrimonious, full of reciprocal attacks on the "radical right" and "secular humanists," leading both observers and participants to speak of "culture wars" (Hunter 1991). And disputes have grown increasingly shrill as the Christian Right has taken the traditional first step toward political legitimacy: acquiring influence within a major party, dramatically illustrated by inroads into Republican state organizations.

Beneath the heated rhetoric, we can discern two rival perspectives on the movement’s new influence. Christian Right leaders and apologists see this development in "representational" terms: the movement has voiced legitimate grievances of millions of conservative citizens inspired by deep religious faith, using old-fashioned grass-roots politics to take advantage of favorable electoral circumstances (Reed 1994; Neuhaus 1984). Critics see Christian Right influence in "elitist" terms: a tiny band of well-organized zealots, peddling an extreme agenda, has seized Republican organizations by guile and stealth, exploiting institutional flaws (Anti-Defamation League 1994; Diamond 1995). Needless to say, the first perspective regards the Christian Right as a long-term asset for the GOP, while the latter sees the movement as a liability.

We will test these rival perspectives with evidence on Christian Right influence in the fifty state Republican parties. We find support for each point of view, with a modest edge to the representationalists. The Christian Right does, in fact, gain strength from conservative public opinion, but its impact also derives from extensive mobilization of activists. Both its public constituency and activist base are drawn from conservative religious communities, and the
movement is most potent where there are significant opportunities to participate in Republican politics. In fact, the convergence of motivations, means, and opportunities best predicts Christian Right influence. The movement's impact can be summed up with Biblical metaphors: although Christian Rightists may be legion in politics, they are less than conquerors in the Republican Party.

The Christian Right and the GOP

The interaction between the Christian Right and the GOP is clarified by recourse to the social movement and party literatures (Salisbury 1989; Green, Guth, and Hill 1993). From the vantage point of social movement theory, collective action theories highlight "demand" factors, resource mobilization theories point to "supply" factors, and political process theories focus on opportunities within the party system. The party literature suggests somewhat parallel factors: openings arising from Republican electoral and coalitional weaknesses, as well as the party's institutional and bureaucratic deficiencies. We shall summarize our expectations and findings under these three social movement perspectives.

1. Collective Grievances: The "Demand" for the Christian Right. The most common explanation for conservative social movements stresses the discontent of traditionalists confronting modernization. Advocates of "status politics" and related theories see such movements expressing a "demand" for political action (Lienesch 1982). Simply put, these theories predict that the Christian Right will have the greatest influence in areas where traditionalist grievances are strong and voiced, thus providing incentives for the movement to participate in state GOP politics.
Despite the popularity of this approach, measuring traditionalist grievances has proven to be a difficult task. Many scholars locate such discontent indirectly, using sociological remoteness from modernity as a proxy: traditionalist concerns are often assumed to dominate among impoverished, poorly-educated, white, older and rural populations, often residents of the South and West (Lipset and Raab 1978). Conservative religious groups are often seen as part of this "quondam complex," although the resource mobilization perspective puts more emphasis on them (see below). Despite frequent use, demographic proxies are very useful in accounting for the Christian Right (Wilcox 1992). In fact, traditionalist demands are often most prevalent at the intersection of tradition and modern life, rather than far from modernity. Thus, the Christian Right prospers rapidly growing metropolitan areas, with their burgeoning white-collar and professional classes, not in economically stagnant, rural and blue-collar areas (Green, Guth and Hill 1993). As a result, scholars turned to more direct measures of grievances: assessments of political culture, conservatism on social issues such as abortion and gay rights, and even general ideological conservatism (Hertzke 1993). Christian Right influence arises from pressure to represent widespread traditionalist grievances in Republican politics.

2. Resource Mobilization: The "Supply" of the Christian Right. An alternative view of social movements stresses organization over grievances. Resource mobilization theorists argue that movements appear when political entrepreneurs redirect existing social and organizational resources into politics (McCarthy and Zald 1977). From this perspective, the Christian Right will be most influential where religious resources are plentiful and already activated, thus providing the organizational means for participation in party politics.
Mobilized resources are as difficult to measure as traditionalist grievances, and not surprisingly, scholars have often employed proxies here as well. Indeed, analysts usually stress membership in Evangelical Protestant churches, especially the more sectarian fundamentalist, Pentecostal and charismatic communities, with their high levels of individual commitment and strong internal networks. Historically combining hostility toward "the [modern] world" with an apolitical stance, these groups represent a cache of untapped resources already predisposed toward the Christian Right's goals (Bruce 1988). Additional resources may also come from more mainstream Evangelical churches, such as the giant Southern Baptist Convention (SBC), and from traditionalist Mormons, Mainline Protestants and Catholics.

Rather than emphasizing membership in particular religious communities, other writers see Christian Right resources among those holding specific identities (such as the "born again") or having strong faith commitments, regardless of religious tradition (Petrocik and Steeper 1987). Whatever the analytic approach, few scholars have quantified the resources actually mobilized by the Christian Right, though such data might prove more effective in accounting for the movement than indirect measures. In any case, resource mobilization approaches suggest that Christian Right influence arises from leadership deployment of such already-mobilized resources in Republican politics.

3. "Political Opportunities" and the Christian Right. A third and increasingly dominant strand of social movement theory emphasizes strategic choice by movement leaders, rather than motivations of followers or organizational resources. Students of "political opportunity structures" (McAdam 1982) argue that movement success depends on the availability of chances
to use resources to redress grievances, not by mere existence of either. Simply put, the Christian
Right should influence the GOP where opportunities abound. This simple formulation, of course,
beegs the question of what opportunities may exist in party politics.

American political parties are notoriously permeable to outsiders (Epstein 1986). In the
conventional party model (Aldrich 1995), such permeability has been understood as weakness in
party control over candidates and constituencies. The more numerous the “weaknesses,” the
greater the opportunities to penetrate party structures (Gitelson et al. 1984:345-46; Loomis and
Cigler 1991:20). There are at least four ways of assessing the opportunities such weaknesses may
offer social movements. First, party weakness may be electoral: the failure to attract voters, and is
routinely measured by partisan identification in the mass public, or by the electoral fortunes of
party candidates (Bibby et al. 1990). Broader measures of party "competitiveness" combine
votes cast, offices won, and government bodies controlled. A second notion of party weakness is
coalitional, whether taking the form of elite factionalism or ideological division among party
activists (Baer and Bositis 1988; Green and Guth 1988). Many scholars believe that both electoral
and coalition weaknesses render parties more permeable: the former by making leaders more
receptive to new constituencies to enhance prospects at the polls (Lowi 1963), the latter by
leading rival factions to welcome--or even recruit--new allies (Schwartz 1995).

A third form of party weakness is institutional, reflecting the debilitating effects of state
law on organization (Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations 1986). Legal
regulation of parties’ internal affairs and external activities reduces institutional autonomy,
whether by specifying central committee membership, prohibiting candidate endorsements, or
requiring primaries to nominate candidates. A final kind of party weakness might be dubbed 
*bureaucratic*, the absence of organizational capacity by committee staffs, indicated by lack of 
funds, employees or facilities (Cotter et al. 1984). Over-regulation by state law reduces control 
by party leaders, making infiltration easier, while bureaucratic weakness may have the same effect 
(Lawson 1993; Yonish 1994).

Electoral, coalitional, institutional and bureaucratic views of partisan opportunities interact 
with collective grievance and resource mobilization theories as well. Those who see Christian 
Right power emanating from the demands of a previously unmobilized constituency might well 
stress the importance of electoral and coalitional weaknesses in providing opportunities to make 
good on followers' demands, while resource mobilization theorists should see institutional and 
bureaucratic weaknesses creating openings for Christian Right leaders to deploy their resources 
effectively.

In any event, there is some evidence that the Christian Right has exploited each type of 
party weakness (Green and Guth 1993; Oldfield 1995; Schwartz 1995; Wilcox 1994; Rozell and 
Wilcox 1996). Of course, if the conventional view of parties is in error, partisan opportunities 
may be occasioned not by party weakness, but by strength—an alternative which we will consider 
later (Schwartz 1995).

*The Christian Right and State Republican Parties*

In the fall of 1994, *Campaigns & Elections* magazine (*C&E*) assessed Christian Right 
influence in state Republican party organizations (Persinos 1994). Based on in-depth interviews
with knowledgeable observers, C&E found that in eighteen states, the Christian Right had *dominant influence*, i.e. the movement and allies had a working majority in the principal state party organ. In another thirteen it had *substantial influence*, with over one-quarter of the membership, and in the remaining nineteen, only *minor influence*. Despite obvious limitations to this kind of data, the results comport well with accounts of Christian Right activities in the 1994 elections (cf. Rozell and Wilcox 1995) and are corroborated by a 1993 study of Republican elites designed to assess Christian Right influence.\(^1\) The latter survey generated a seven-point evaluation of movement strength in each respondent's locality. When averaged by state, these assessments correlate strongly with the C&E categories \(r=.74\). In fact, when state averages were divided into thirds ("strong," "mixed," and "weak"), and cross-tabulated with the C&E measure, 35 states (70%) were in agreement. In no instance were the two measures strongly at odds.

Even the modest disagreements were instructive. In five states, the Republican survey found the Christian Right "strong," but C&E discovered only "substantial influence." Just the opposite pattern appeared in ten other states: the survey found "mixed" Christian Right strength where C&E saw "dominant influence." These inconsistencies are easily explained. In the first group, the Christian Right had not yet translated a strong political position into organizational influence, while in the second the movement had gained organizational power despite its mixed strength and considerable opposition. Here one might well expect much intra-party conflict; a state-by-state review finds just that.

To incorporate insights derived from this comparison, we combined the two measures in a five-point "Index of Christian Right Influence," the dependent variable in our analysis. The first
two index points include cases consistent on both measures: *weak influence* states ("weak" on the survey item and "minor influence" by C&E) and *modest influence* states ("mixed" on the survey item and "substantial influence" according to C&E). The next two categories, however, encapsulate instances where the two measures differed modestly: *contested influence* ("mixed" on the survey item and "dominant influence" by C&E) and *strong influence* ("strong" on the survey item and "substantial influence" by C&E). The final category, *great influence* ("strong" on the survey item and "dominant influence" by C&E), represents consistent assignment by both studies. This index is strongly validated by other survey items and the original, unrecoded Republican survey responses on Christian Right strength are more highly correlated with the new index (r=.85) than with the original C&E assessment (.74).

Figure 1 illustrates the Index of Christian Right Influence, revealing that in 1994 the Christian Right had a great GOP organizational presence in eight southern states, ranging from North Carolina to Texas. Strong influence existed in two more southern states, Arkansas and Mississippi, and farther west in Kansas, Nebraska, and Utah. On the other hand, the movement had contested influence in the far west, including all five states of the Pacific Rim, Idaho and Arizona. This category also included Iowa, Minnesota and Virginia in other regions. Next, the Christian Right enjoyed modest influence in some other Midwestern states, centered on Ohio, as well as in Kentucky, Pennsylvania, Maine, Montana and Nevada. Finally, the Christian Right was weak in the east, in several parts of Mississippi Valley, Northern Plains, Rocky Mountains, and in one southern (Tennessee) and one border state (West Virginia).
Correlates of Christian Right Influence

What factors are associated with Christian Right influence in state Republican parties? Tables 1 through 4 provide bivariate correlations between our index and a host of demand, supply, and opportunity variables. As we will see, there is strong evidence for both the demand and supply perspectives, but although the opportunity factors also matter, it is not usually in the expected fashion.

1. Collective Grievances: Demand Factors. Given the patterns in Figure 1, it should come as no surprise that region is powerfully associated with movement influence ($r=.61$), reflecting the Christian Right's Southern strength and near absence in the Northeast (Table 1). But region is largely a proxy for political culture, a point illustrated by the strong correlation with Elazar's (1984 and 1994) popular typology: the Christian Right is most potent in "traditionalist" states, strong in "moralistic" ones, but weak in "individualistic" areas.$^3$

Traditionalist political culture is often associated with "traditionalist" demography, but we find only weak evidence connecting such factors to Christian Right influence.$^4$ True, Christian Right impact is negatively associated with income and education, but it is also negatively correlated with measures of the white population, not related to rural or older populations, and is positively associated with population growth. No doubt these patterns are partly artifacts of region, but they also suggest that contact with modernization is as important as distance from it in
accounting for the Christian Right’s appeal.

Such population traits, however, are usually surrogates for social attitudes, which we can tap directly by aggregating survey data. This operation reveals that Christian Right influence is correlated with public conservatism on gay rights, traditional "family values," feminism, and abortion. The positive association grows for self-identified conservatism, surpassing correlations for region and political culture. Thus, public attitudes are the best measure of grievances and the broadest attitudes are the most potent. In other words, the Christian Right is most successful where its agenda resonates with popular ideology, providing support for the classical perspective on social movements.

2. Resource Mobilization: Supply Factors. What about the resources to make good on the demand for Christian Right activities? Table 2 reports on a crucial source of movement support: the proportion of the population who belong to conservative religious communities. Not surprisingly, Christian Right influence is highly correlated with the number of sectarian Protestants, including fundamentalists, Pentecostals, and charismatics, but their importance is matched by that of larger and more mainstream Evangelical churches. Black Protestant numbers, "second cousins-twinces-removed" of white Evangelicals, show nearly as strong a relationship with movement support, but these findings are largely an artifact of region. Membership in other traditionalist religious groups, such as the Mormons, shows a much weaker, but still positive relationship to movement strength.

[Table 2 about here]

The size of other religious communities, however, is negatively associated with Christian
Right influence, starting with modest correlations for small non-Christian groups (Buddhists, Muslims), the secular population, and Jews). Negative correlations increase for the proportions of Mainline Protestants (such as Episcopalians, Methodists, and United Church of Christ), liberal non-traditionalists (such as Unitarians), Eastern Orthodox, and Roman Catholics. Indeed, the strong negative correlation for the Catholic population matches the positive coefficients for Evangelicals. Not surprisingly, such measures of religious tradition can be combined into a single scale with Evangelicals at one end and Catholics at the other, which is strongly linked to Christian Right influence. These denominational measures outperform other religious variables, such as the proportion of "born again" citizens or those to whom religion is salient, although both are positively correlated with movement influence.

"Potential" religious resources are important, but "activated" resources are even more vital (Table 2). Christian Right influence is linked most strongly to the number of Christian Right activists in a state, but both the length of movement activity in the GOP and its level of campaign activism also show major effects. Thus, the Christian Right is most influential where it has been most involved in politics. These intuitively satisfying results are confirmed by assessments of the Christian Right in the party elite survey: influence is positively associated with party leadership perceptions of how effective, supportive, and cooperative the movement has been in state Republican politics. Public evaluations of the Christian Right reveal similar picture: influence increases as more citizens claim to "belong to the religious right," say that their religion has an important impact on their politics, or that report that they feel close to the "religious right." In other words, the Christian Right is strongest where resources are available for effective politics.
Taken together, these findings show that resource mobilization or supply factors also help account for Christian Right influence in the GOP. Indeed, the location of conservative religious communities and movement resources rivals the impact of region and public conservatism in explaining Christian Right power.

3. Political Opportunity Factors. What about the partisan opportunities available to the Christian Right? In assessing the opportunity structure, a good place to begin is with electoral weakness, which reveals some unexpected patterns (Table 3). First, Christian Right influence is positively associated with the proportion of self-identified Democrats in the electorate and negatively correlated with the number of independents, but the positive relationship with self-identified Republicans is weak and lacking statistical significance (Erikson et al. 1993). In contrast, movement influence is also positively linked with the electoral success of recent Republican presidential candidates, here illustrated by the 1992 vote. These findings may at first blush seem contradictory, but they fit the regional patterns already identified: Christian Right strongholds in the South and many contested states in the West are traditionally Democratic, but have been voting Republican in recent federal elections.

[Table 3 about here]

This pattern can be seen more systematically with standard measures of electoral competition. Table 3 presents two versions of the Ranney index: a standard state office index and a similar index for federal elections. Christian Right influence is greatest in states with Democratic advantage in state elections and a similar Republican edge in federal contests. Parallel indices for 1994 show the same results, but with a decline in state Democratic bias and
corresponding increase in the federal Republican advantage (data not shown). We have captured
this pattern by calculating an Index of Partisan Transition, which is strongly correlated with
Christian Right influence.\textsuperscript{10} Partisan transition, however, is as much evidence of electoral strength
as weakness. Interestingly, these data help explain one anomalous category in our dependent
variable: four of five "strong influence" states have experienced a less dramatic disjunction
between state and federal elections than have the Christian Right strongholds.

The relationship between Christian Right influence and coalitional weakness is more mixed
(Table 3). For example, Jewell and Olson’s (1982:58) measure of state party factionalism is
indeed linked to Christian Right influence. An index of whether the state GOP is "cohesive," "bifactional" or "multifactional" combined with state party competitiveness reveals that more
multifactional and less competitive states have the strongest movement influence. These patterns
surely reflect region: the one-party South has been notorious for its party factionalism and lack of
general election competitiveness. In contrast, another measure of coalitional strength, the
ideology of party elites (Wright et al. 1994), reveals unexpected results. The raw data show a
consistent pattern: Christian Right influence is strongly associated with conservative
predominance among Republican activists and candidates rather than diversity of opinion.
(Although not shown, a similar pattern obtains for Democrats.) These findings persist for
measures of net ideology as well (calculated by subtracting the Democratic from the Republican
scores.) Because elite conservatism is likely to be associated with mass conservatism and perhaps
even with Christian Right activism, we recalculated the former controlling for both of the latter.\textsuperscript{11}

This exercise produced measures of "residual" elite conservatism which exhibit correlations with
the same sign and significance as before, but with smaller magnitude. All these patterns suggest that the Christian Right benefits from ideological unity, arguably a party strength rather than a weakness.

What about the institutional strength of parties? We used three measures of state regulation of party: the degree of autonomy in internal affairs and electoral activities (Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations 1986:123-162), and the extent to which nomination rules require primaries (Jewell and Olson 1988:50). All three items show the expected positive correlations with movement influence, but only the internal affairs scale is statistically significant. One specific aspect of party law does produce a much stronger association with Christian Right influence, namely, the rules governing membership on local and state central committees, but the results run against expectations: the weaker the state regulation of party committee membership, the greater the Christian Right influence. A combined Index of Committee Access shows an even stronger positive association with movement influence.12

{Table 4 about here}

Apparently some state regulations that limit party autonomy also limit access by outside groups. Put another way, Christian Right inroads are facilitated by the openness of party rules. Of course, scholars have often noted that opening up party rules regarding primaries, caucuses, conventions, and reform efforts has increased participation by outsiders (Crotty 1983), and here we observe yet another example. The data also provide insight into seeming anomalies in Christian Right influence. Tennessee and West Virginia, for example, have only weak movement influence despite their southern location; in both, state law sharply restricts access to party
committees. On the other hand, some states with contested influence, such as Virginia, Minnesota, and Washington, have unusually open party rules.

The bottom of Table 4 looks at bureaucratic weakness, using data from the Party Transformation Study (Cotter et al. 1984). Contrary to expectations, the bureaucratic weakness of state Republican parties is negatively linked to Christian Right influence, although the coefficient is not significant. Inspection of the raw data reveals why: state GOP organs are relatively strong everywhere, leaving only modest variance to explain. The expected positive association with party weakness does hold for local Republican committees, but these are quite weak compared to state parties. (State and local Democratic committees reveal a similar pattern in data not shown). An index of net bureaucratic weakness at the state level (produced by subtracting Democratic from Republican scores) is more strongly correlated with Christian Right influence, while net local strength is unrelated. These data support Yonish's (1994) observation that the combination of weak local party units and stronger state organizations represents the best targets for Christian Right activism, as well as Schwartz's (1995) contention that social movements can be attracted by party strength.

Thus, we find few of the hypothesized links between party weakness and partisan opportunities. But our findings do match two summary measures of party institutions sometimes thought to assess party weakness. The first is Mayhew's (1986) "traditional party organization" scale, which basically shows a strong negative correlation between the ability of parties to "control" their candidates and Christian Right influence. The second is Morehouse's (1981) measure of interest group strength, which essentially shows a strong negative relationship
between the ability of parties to "control" constituency pressures and movement influence. In other words, the Christian Right is strong where parties do not exercise their traditional control over either candidates or interest group activities. These patterns make intuitive sense, given the grassroots character and issue focus of the Christian Right. And taken in the context of all our findings, they suggest that the Christian Right is strongest where a modern "service-vendor-broker" form of party (Frantzich 1989) is most common. Movement influence may associated not so much with party weakness, as with the presence of a different kind of party (Schwartz 1990).

Thus, although we find Christian Right influence in state Republican politics to be strongly associated with partisan opportunities, they are always not in the expected form: electoral transition, ideological consistency, institutional autonomy, and bureaucratic capacity are more often linked to the movement's gains rather than to its failures.

Combining Perspectives: Multivariate Analysis of Christian Right Influence

So far we have found at least some support in our bivariate analysis for collective grievance, resource mobilization, and political process perspectives on Christian Right influence in the GOP. To sort out their relative effects, we conducted a series of multivariate analyses, arriving at the simple model in Table 5. Only five variables survived the regression, one each from the demand and supply factors, and three from the opportunity factors. Together, these five variables explain a very respectable 75% of the variance in movement influence.

[Table 5 about here]

The number of Christian Right activists in the state, a key supply variable, is the best
predictor, followed closely by mass public conservatism, a critical demand factor. The
opportunity factors are less important: the Index of Committee Access has the third largest
impact, followed by residual net activist conservatism, and lastly, the Index of Partisan Transition.
All three reflect partisan opportunities, but, as noted above, all operate contrary to our initial
expectations.

We should comment on one variable not making the final model: religion. As we might
expect, the influence of conservative religion is indirect, acting through other variables. A simple
path model suggests that it has potent indirect effects, generating a total effects coefficient of
.32. Interestingly, there is no direct path between the size of conservative religious communities
and the number of Christian Right activists; instead, it is years of activity which link conservative
religion to movement activists, and hence to party influence. This finding points to an important
conclusion: movement resources, like movement grievances, may well originate in social
conditions, but they must be activated to matter politically.

Thus far we have explored the global differences between states where the Christian Right
has great influence and where it is weak. But what about states with contested influence, located
in the middle of our Index of Christian Right Influence? As we noted above, contested influence
states are the most likely to experience intra-party conflict. The bottom of Table 5 investigates
the differences between these and other kinds of states by means of two discriminant analyses
(using the same variables as above plus the religion measure). The first analysis differentiates the
contested from the weak influence states, and the second, the contested from the great influence
states.
The results are quite revealing. Note first that the coefficients of three variables change signs between the two analyses: the number of movement activists, residual net GOP activist ideology, and conservative religion. The contested influence states have more movement activists that the weak influence states, but fewer than the Christian Right strongholds. And the contested influence states actually have a more liberal GOP activist corps and fewer conservative religionists than the weak influence states. A second set of variables does not change signs between the analyses, but the coefficients change in magnitude. On the Index of Committee Access, the contested states are more open that the weak influence states, but nearly match the great influence states. Public conservatism and partisan transition increase in magnitude between comparisons, as one might expect. Thus, the contested states have more Christian Right activists, but more liberal Republican activists and fewer conservative religious folk that one might expect on the basis of the regression analysis.

One clear interpretation is that in the contested influence states the strength of the Christian Right activist corps is disproportionate to the size of its mass base. Such "over-mobilization" of activists is suggested by the 1993 survey data: GOP elites in these states reported the Christian Right far more "effective" in politics than respondents in any other category. This insight also fits with the recent history of the Christian Right in Republican politics. Almost without exception, the initial appearance of the Christian Right produces intense conflict, and these early episodes represent at least a short-run over-mobilization of activists, sometimes followed by the activation of a mass constituency that reduces intra-party conflict.

Of course, the Christian Right has been active for a long time in many contested influence
states, and we can only speculate as to why such over-mobilization has persisted. A glance back at Figure 1 suggests that the relative cultural diversity of these states has provoked particularly intense movement activism. Indeed, recent surveys of state party delegates reveal a particularly sharp division over social issues in several of these states (Wilcox, Green, and Rozell 1995). Given the high profile conflicts generated in Virginia and Minnesota in 1994, for example, one can readily understand the empirical basis for the elitist perspective. By the same token, the relatively peaceful expansion of Christian Right influence in its southern strongholds reveals an equally plausible basis for the representational theory (Hoover 1995).

Hence, Christian Right influence in the GOP stems in roughly equal measure from representation of conservative constituencies, based in conservative religious communities, and extensive mobilization of activists from the same communities, combined with easy access to potent and conservative party organizations enjoying the prospect of electoral gain. Or put another way, the movement has the greatest influence when the motivations, means, and opportunities for party politics occur together. The absence of partisan opportunities reduces the movement's influence, while the absence of mass motives generates sustained intra-party conflict. Finally, any of these factors in isolation or small quantity produces only modest or weak influence.

Less than Conquerors

"The Religious Right" declared People for the American Way "is committed to taking over the GOP...It already controls many state parties and has plans to expand" (People for the American Way 1994). Pat Robertson agreed, albeit with glee rather than alarm. Speaking at the
1995 national conference of the Christian Coalition, Robertson made reference to the same C&E assessments, remarking "They say about 31 [states], but that leaves...a lot more. We've got more work to do. Because I like 100 percent, not 60 or 70" (Edsall 1995).

Our evidence suggests that neither Robertson's hopes nor his enemies' fears are likely to materialize. The Christian Right has indeed captured some state Republican parties, but this success arises from its mass constituency, aided and abetted by its own activities and favorable circumstances. But these same factors also limit the spread of Christian Right influence. In fact, the movement faces intense opposition and uncertain prospects among Republicans in as many states as it dominates, and has only weak purchase in even more. Thus, the Right's influence is distributed about as one might expect if the representational and elitist perspectives are thought of as complementary hypotheses rather than contending hyperbole. If the representational view has the edge, it is because the Christian Right actually has a mass following which can exploit opportunities presented by the GOP, but just as clearly, movement activists frequently operate beyond the "supply lines" from that mass constituency.

What do these data tell us about the Christian Right? First, this is a textbook example of a social movement: a set of activists dedicated to mobilizing an aggrieved but previously inactive group of citizens into mainstream politics by tapping slack resources and deploying them to best advantage. And like many other social movements, it has found one of the major political parties a valuable target, engaging in what Baer and Bositis (1988) have referred to as "partisan mobilization." Second, the movement's success also reveals stern limitations to further growth. If the Christian Right's influence comes ultimately from Evangelical Protestantism, that large and
geographically concentrated constituency falls far short of constituting a national majority. Gaining influence in additional states will require expanding its base beyond white Evangelicals to Black Protestants, and especially, to Catholics, something the movement has repeatedly attempted with little success. Likewise, the Christian Right has demonstrated an impressive capacity to arouse activists, but there are limits to their effectiveness, particularly in the absence of a mass base and in the presence of determined opponents. Finally, the movement can gain much from its influence in the state GOP: legitimacy, access of organizational resources, and a key role in nomination and platform politics. But none of this guarantees victory in primaries, general elections, or in policy making. Indeed, the Christian Right's more unpopular issue positions, if pressed, can be devastating to Republican campaigns and, alternatively, winning as part of a broader coalition can carry its own disappointments (Wilcox 1994). What do these data tell us about the Republican Party? First, the Grand Old Party is poised to gain in the South and the West in part because of its ability to absorb the Christian Right and related conservative groups. Part of this capacity is ideological, but there is an important organizational component as well. Republicans have built modern party organizations that can broker conservative interests and service the resulting candidacies effectively. The conventional model of parties that stresses control of candidates and constituencies may not adequately account for this situation. Ironically, Republicans may finally have become, in their own way, as representative of diversity as the Democrats.

Second, the GOP faces a major challenge in managing this emerging coalition, confronting problems not unlike those traditionally facing the Democrats. The Christian Right offers the GOP
potent activist resources and access to a significant voting bloc, but it is a powerful antagonist to
many equally important Republican constituencies. Federalism gives the GOP the opportunity to
accommodate both the Christian Right and other interests in some places, but severe and
prolonged conflict may occur in others. Party leadership is surely one key to managing these
problems, but of equal importance is the Christian Right response to such leadership: will the
movement follow a cooperative or confrontational strategy? Pragmatism can allow the
representational tendencies of the movement to take hold, benefiting the GOP, while purism can
bring the elitist tendency to the fore with negative consequences. Such possibilities reveal yet
another example of the tension social movements generate in the party system.
NOTES

1. These data come from a survey of 1992 Republican national convention delegates conducted at The University of Akron in 1993, with a return rate of 52.6% for a total usable N of 998. The survey item read "How would you evaluate the role of the Christian Right in 1992...in your area?" with seven response categories ranging from "very strong" to "very weak."

2. According to C&E, if the Mormon Church is counted as part of the Christian Right, then the movement is dominant in the Utah GOP as well.

3. This typology is most often used as a nominal variable, but Elazar (1994) himself has used the typology as a scale. Our use reflects an underlying dimension of cultural traditionalism, with individualistic cultures being the least "traditional." Region is coded from Northeast to South according to traditionalism.

4. All the demographic variables come from the 1990 U.S. Census of Population.

5. These data come from a variety of sources. Mean self-identified conservatism comes from Erikson et al. (1993). The social issue measures come from aggregating issue positions by state in 1992 VRS exit polls, the National Election Study, and the 1992 National Survey of Religion and Politics (Kellstedt et al. 1994).

6. The data on religious affiliation are derived from three sources: the 1980 and 1990 Glenmary Census of Churches (Quinn et al. 1982; Bradley et al. 1992), as well as national surveys of religious affiliation by Kosmin and Lachman (1993) and Kellstedt et al. (1994). In each case, we picked the measure of religious tradition that performed best. The other religious measures were aggregated by state from the 1992 National Survey of Religion and Politics (Kellstedt et al. 1994).
7. The religious index is a factor score generated by principal components analysis using all of the religious groups in Table 2. See Green and Guth (1991) for a justification for such a scale.

8. The estimates of movement activists resulted from aggregating the zip codes from mailing lists of movement activists and are presented as the number of activists per thousand voters. The number of years the movement has been active in the state GOP was collected from news sources; the measure of electoral activism was the number of congressional races the movement was active in 1978 to 1992, aggregated by state (Green, Guth, and Hill 1993; Green and Guth 1993). Elite assessments of the Christian Right came from the 1993 Akron survey. Measures of support for the "religious right" came from 1994 VNS exit polls, while the proximity and religious relevance measures are from the 1992 National Survey of Religious and Politics (Kellstedt et al. 1994).

9. The authors calculated a Ranney index for post-1988 period following Bibby et al. (1990). An analogous federal elections index was generated for the same period using presidential and congressional vote, as well as the frequency of split-ticket outcomes.

10. The Index of Partisan Transition was calculated by dichotomizing the state and federal Ranney indices and combining them into a four-point scale, with the states with Democratic state advantage and Republican federal advantage at one end, the reverse pattern at the other end, and consistent scores in the middle.

11. The measures of elite ideology were regressed upon mass conservatism and number of
Christian Right activists and the residuals were employed in the analysis.

12. The Index of Committee Access results from cross-indexing three-point measures of the degree of state regulation of membership in state and local party committees and then recoding the scale so that states with no regulations in either case were at one end, states with strong regulation is both cases at the other end, and the various combinations in between. A few cases were shifted from one category to another based on the openness of the state primaries. For example, Louisiana state law regulates membership in both state and local party committees, but the state’s blanket primary renders these regulations moot.

13. As one can easily imagine, a path model using all the variables discussed above is quite complex and beyond the scope of this essay. However, there is a strong path between the religious factor and mass conservatism, and a strong two-step path between religion, the number of years the movement has been active in state Republican politics, and the number of Christian Right activists in the state. Religion does not appear to operate through any of the other variables in the final regression.

14. A discriminant analysis of all five categories of the dependent variable generates four significant functions; the first of these strongly replicates the results of the regression analysis. The results presented here are consistent with the fourth of these functions, which appears to distinguish the contested influence states from the other categories. We report these data as two analyses with dichotomous variables for ease of presentation.

15. Ironically, Baer and Bositis (1988:75-81) dismiss the Christian Right as an elitist operation, although it is an excellent example of their argument about social movements.
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