Essay 2, Chapter 3: "The Christian Right"

Chapter 3: The Christian Right

#Hunter: "Christians who are politically conservative want what all people want: namely, to have the world in which they live reflect their own likeness." (111)

That is, the Christian right wants American to reflect their highest ideals, esp. concerning sexual and family relationships. And it is a response to the intellectual and cultural challenges to the faith and the moral authority of the Christian church.

There was a time when the Chr. church held a central moral authority in America and Europe. It does not anymore. That decline of authority allows the Chr. right to position themselves as victims in the cultural war.

Just to be clear, for Hunter, Chr. Right = Evangelicals, Fundamentalists, conservative Catholics and Charismatics. His def. is wide.

Central to the Chr. Right's understanding of power is its constitutive "myth" centered on the right ordering of society. Some see America's past as essentially Christians. Others see the past as a time when Christians had more input in publ. discourse.

This construction of the past provides a "deed of trust" and a "sense of ownership," i.e. "America belongs to the people of faith." (114) That is to say, the principles of God's righteousness provided America with the principles of "ordered freedom." (114) Liberty, order, hard work that leads to prosperity, all provide the moral and spiritual foundations for America's greatness.
But for the Chr. Right, that heritage is being threatened by secularization and hostility towards religion. The radical elements of society threaten to destroy America's soul. (That sounds extreme, but it reflects their rhetoric). Such radicalism can be found in the press, Hollywood, political action groups, education, but esp. in the courts.

This reading of history enables the Chr. Right to place themselves (and all good Americans) as victims of radicalism. The literature of the Chr. Right is full of stories of Christians persecuted in schools and universities, or by pol. action groups. The relentless nature of these perceived attacks (by lib. media, politics, educators, etc.) is used to mobilize Christians. Some Chr. Right leaders go so far as to declare that they are in Civil War. In that context, Christians are called to infl. culture.

The Chr. Right calls Christians to engage in 2 ways - prayer and political action (voting, giving to political groups, etc.). Presidential politics is seen as esp. important so that conservative judges can be appointed throughout the land (esp. Supreme Ct.).

That is to say, cultural influence is seen almost wholly in terms of political engagement. And it means support for Republicans. This is tricky, bc many of these groups dep. on *not* being political to maintain their non-profit status. It's a fine line. But it's obvious that they are not politically neutral. They seek influence for and in the Republican Party.

#Hunter remarks "The hope Christian conservatives place in politics is quite astonishing." (126) For the Chr. Right, politics is the chief means by which America can be "healed" and returned to its proper course.

They want to restore Am. to her Chr. roots, when Am. was truly great. That is, there is a "mythic connection between the Chr. faith and America" which motivates the Chr. Right. And it is interest of this agenda of restoring Am. that the Chr. Right has forged a strong alliance with a particular political

party.

The Chr. Right peaked in 2004, and is now on the wane as many younger Evangelicals supported Obama in 2008. But they are far from dead, though its M.O. is changing. It is focused more on a "cultural engagement" wider than simply politics. Enter Christian worldview education, designed to combat the pernicious influence of "secular postmodernism."

At this point, #Hunter starts hitting a little close to home, since I'm a big advocate of both worldview and cultural engagement. But with this difference - the Chr. Right seeks a new Christendom, a culturally dominant position through their engagement. I prefer the language of witness and service. We, as Christians, are here to be a witness to the truth. We engage culture to provide oases in a spiritually dry, truth-starved land. *That's* what the Church should be about. Just to make it clear - I love the people of the Chr. Right as brothers and sisters in the Lord, but I don't consider myself one. I'm conservative on some things, not-so-conservative on others. For more on that, check out a recent blog post: [1]

Anyway, back to #Hunter: While the Chr. Right's intentions are good-hearted (to restore America), this cultural engagement strategy is almost identical to the political agenda in its language: "take back the culture," + a whole host of martial vocab. "Drive out," "eradicate the Other," "attack," enemy," etc. It's the same language and discourse of cultural domination. That is to say, though the tactics change, the motivating myth and outlook of victimization has not. They are the same.

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