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Revivalist Nationalism since World War II: From “Wake up, America!” to “Make America Great Again”

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Academic Editor: Mark T. Edwards

Received: 30 September 2016; Accepted: 24 October 2016; Published: 1 November 2016

Abstract: Between 1945 and 1980, evangelicals emerged as a key political constituency in American politics, helping to form the Religious Right and work for the election of Ronald Reagan and other conservative Republicans. This article argues that they embraced a distinctive type of revivalist nationalism, centered around the mass revival. Case studies of Billy Graham, Bill Bright, Jerry Falwell, and Ronald Reagan offer a narrative of postwar revivalist nationalism and demonstrate that evangelicals renegotiated the relationship between personal salvation and national renewal during this period, facilitating their mass entry into partisan politics. Billy Graham presented in his early crusades an unsophisticated assumption that mass conversion would lead to national renewal. Later revivalists such as Bill Bright, founder of Campus Crusade for Christ, sought to reorient revivalism toward directed political organization, leading in the 1970s to decreasing emphasis on personal conversion and increasing focus on the political process. By the 1980 presidential election, the Religious Right had completely abandoned the priority of personal conversion and sought instead to revive the “principles” of a Christian America. Ronald Reagan embodied this principle-oriented revival, and helped crystalize a revivalist nationalism that remains embedded in contemporary evangelical politics.

Keywords: Protestant revivalism; evangelicalism; Religious Right; Billy Graham; Harold Ockenga; Bill Bright; Jerry Falwell; Francis Schaeffer; Ronald Reagan; 1980 election

1. Introduction

“Wake up, America! Stir thyself!” The fiery words of a young Billy Graham in 1947 poured forth to an audience of thousands, pleading to each person, and to a nation: “God help us to return before it is too late” ([1], p. 27)! Graham was preaching revival—revival of the soul and the nation. Revival of souls *for* the revival of the nation. His theory of political change was straightforward: saved souls lead to a saved nation. In his Los Angeles crusade of 1949, which launched him into national fame, Graham warned that the fate of the City of Angels hinged on the spiritual lives of his listeners. “In this moment I can see the judgment hand of God over Los Angeles,” he cried. “I can see judgment about to fall. If we repent, if we believe, if we turn to Christ in faith and hope, the judgment of God can be stopped” ([2], p. 57). Graham’s language traveled fluidly, unhindered between individual salvation and national renewal. His words provided his audience with a politics that emphasized personal morality and individual responsibility.

Thirty years later, a call for revival, in a similarly spectacular setting, came from a man in many ways the opposite of Graham. While the evangelist preached against the apostasy of Los Angeles, Ronald Reagan made his name and his early career in Hollywood. Graham preached spiritual conversion above all else; Reagan’s theory of political change had no explicit mention of Jesus Christ. Graham crusaded for souls; Reagan crusaded for principles. In his 1980 acceptance speech for the Republican party nomination for president in Detroit, Reagan outlined his own revivalist agenda

expressed through his revivalist campaign slogan, “Let’s Make America Great Again.” “For those who’ve abandoned hope, we’ll restore hope and we’ll welcome them into a great national crusade to make America great again” [3]. To revive hope was Reagan’s primary passion; to “renew our compact of freedom”, the principles of small government and American exceptionalism. Through restoring this compact, through voting out the Democrats and even those Republicans who violated American freedoms, Reagan offered his thousands of listeners, and millions of voters—many of whom also cherished Graham’s revivalism—another kind of crusade.

The blurring of revival, politics, and nationalism that both Graham and Reagan embodied points to two understudied and misunderstood aspects of how evangelicals became part of a discrete political movement after World War II. Graham’s religious revivalism and Reagan’s political revivalism highlight how broad and malleable the practice of revival remained in postwar America, and yet also how distinct different types could be. “Revivalist nationalism”—this fusion of revivalist form, practice, and language with national concern and nationalistic politics—deserves attention in the postwar period for two reasons best illustrated by sketching the changing role of revivalism in American evangelicalism from Graham to Reagan [4–6].

First, revival as a political practice has been virtually ignored by historians of postwar evangelicalism or nationalism [7–13]. Its presence, however, is constant throughout the postwar era and offers a distinctive angle into growing mass political participation by evangelicals. Revival is an inherently political practice, including, as historian Bernard Weisberger noted, both a call for a previous, purer form of religion and a rebuke of the present ([14], p. vii). Taking place in the American context after World War II, revivalism fused with nationalism in new ways. George Mosse, the historian of European culture, wrote of the “nationalization of the masses” through public festivals, monuments, and mass gatherings in nineteenth century Germany [15]. In the same vein, revivalism contributed to the politicization of evangelical masses after World War II. In the American religious context, William McLoughlin argued more than forty years ago that revivals “are essentially folk movements, the means by which a people or a nation reshapes its identity, transforms its patterns of thought and action, and sustains a healthy relationship with environmental and social change” ([16], p. 2). McLoughlin sought to generalize revivals and awakenings across cultures; here we seek to understand how revivalist nationalism as a populist “folk movement” helped to bring millions of evangelicals into the political process. Historians have documented the decisive role of revivalism in nineteenth century America through the decline of revivalism in the 1920s ([17], pp. 180–89). Less studied has been the continuing relevance of this practice.

Second, while revival has remained a consistent practice of evangelicals over the postwar period, its relationship to politics has changed. That is because the goals of revival have changed. Certainly, there remain revivals in the twenty-first century that look strikingly similar to Graham’s crusades in the 1940s, calling for individual salvation, the atonement of sin, and assuming a direct connection between individual and national revival [18]. However, in the main, American evangelical leaders marshalled the means of revival to different ends. While the practice and form of revival—of “crusading”—provides a through line to this story, evangelicals themselves redeployed revivalism toward different political ends. Jerry Falwell, who succeeded Graham as the unofficial spokesman for evangelicalism in the 1970s, articulated a new theory of revival and its relationship to politics: to win divine blessing God cared less about individual souls and more about the principles that society was based upon. A nation may be full of unregenerate sinners, he explained in 1981, but if it upheld biblical principles it could remain in God’s graces. “He’ll still go to hell a tither,” Falwell remarked on the unsaved American who remained biblically moral, “but God blesses the principle” ([19], p. 22).

Since World War II, revivalist nationalism has maintained a central place in evangelical Christian nationalism. At the same time, revival has undergone a massive conceptual shift, making it more conducive to nationalist politics. There are at least three phases in this outline of revivalist nationalism worth exploring in more detail. Graham’s revivalism, expressed in his crusades after World War II, offered an idealistic conception of politics and nationalism, what historian Steven Miller has termed

“evangelical universalism”, believing in a social ethic centered on the individual soul and free will, and predicated on the universal commonality of divinely created humans ([13], pp. 44–50). By the 1960s, this idealism gave way to a realism that “old fashioned” revival could not alone renew the nation. Bill Bright, the founder of Campus Crusade for Christ, promoted more explicitly and directly a political message in his massive revival campaigns of the 1970s. Bright added to his revivalist nationalism a concern for party politics and the political process and the Christian injunction to “help elect men and women of God in every position of influence” [20]. Finally, Falwell took revivalist nationalism in a new direction by reducing focus on the eternal fate of individual souls—the singular focus of Graham’s early crusades. While Falwell remained concerned for individual salvation, he drew a stark line between individual and national revival. As the leader of the Moral Majority, he welcomed Catholics, Jews, and Mormons, whose eternal fate he regarded with grave concern, but whose role in national revival—in the crusade to make America great again—was essential.

There was no single cause for the shift in revivalist emphasis, but a number of developments deserve attention as contributing factors. First, as time went on, evangelical revivalists were less and less directly connected to fundamentalism’s commitment, however perfunctory, to a separation between political and religious language. Scholars have shown this separatism to be mostly non-existent, especially when it came to national politics, but in the language and theology of revivalism, there remained a strong distaste for explicitly political discussion. This would fade over the postwar period until the trappings of revival were conscripted in the direct service of political rallies. A second factor shifting the goals of revival were the realities of expanding religious and ethnic pluralism in America. To put it bluntly, the early postwar expectations of an old fashioned, largely white, evangelical revival became impractical. Even accounting for the power of the Holy Spirit, evangelicals in 1980 did not exhibit the same confidence as their forbearers in 1950 that a national awakening could occur. A third factor was ideological: the concurrent rise of the conservative movement and the threat, both real and imagined, of “secular humanism”. Billy Graham’s unsophisticated embrace of revivalist individualism appeared quaint to 1970s evangelicals, who spoke of biblical presuppositions, secular humanism, and conservatism as concepts rooted in a “biblical worldview”. “Old-fashioned” revivalism was concerned with morals, manners, and clear threats to Christianity like communism. The revivalist nationalism of the late 1970s embedded morality in more expansive arguments about values and developed an interpretation of secular humanism that made sense of the drift of American politics, the judiciary, and culture.

Throughout the postwar period, however, the outward trappings of revival remained as central to Falwell and Reagan as they were to Graham: the large crowds and the charismatic leader; the call to repent and the call to action; the return to apostolic faith and the rebuke of modern religion. Revival has become an innate pattern and ideological blueprint for evangelical politics. The progression from Graham to Reagan illustrates not only the centrality of revival to evangelical conceptions of politics and the changing relations of revivalism to Christian nationalism, but reveals a subtle and pervasive shift in evangelical concerns. By 1980, the chief purveyors of America as a “Christian nation” in fact had less interest in making new Christians of the nation’s citizens. Theirs was a revival of principles, not souls.

2. Revival and the Nation

Though evangelicals believed that conversion ultimately depended upon the working of the Holy Spirit, they had immense faith and expectation that God dependably worked in history through mass revival. Joel Carpenter has called this faith an “evangelical Whig” tradition of political thinking, “which by means of revivalism and voluntary reform sought to provide the virtuous political culture that would keep the American republic true to its covenant” ([21], p. 117). The sawdust trails and big tent gatherings struck many Americans in the twentieth century as anti-modern [22]. Not so for postwar evangelicals who, while updating the forms and practices, saw in the content of revivalism the divine process for spiritual and national renewal. This was always paired with an intense apocalyptic

expectation that revival, which witnessed the temporal being invaded by the eternal in the setting of a mass gathering, presaged the imminent return of Christ [23]. As much as evangelicals and fundamentalists believed in discernable, material, and historical fulfillment of prophecy, they also enumerated “conditions”, “results”, “consequences”, and “implications” of revival with the same certainty. This science of revival was the backbone of revivalist nationalism, revealing with exactitude the ways that revivals would come about and renew souls, and through souls, the nation.

In Graham’s commitment to his crusades, we can see that more than anything else he sought to convert the masses to Christ. However, he was also concerned with the social, cultural, and political changes roiling American society. The science of revival established that the relationship between revival, personal salvation, and national glory was spelled out clearly in the Bible; it was as ironclad as the laws of physics [24,25]. “I believe that God is true to His Word, and that He must rain righteousness upon us if we meet his conditions,” he confessed ([1], p. 59). Graham saw the individual and the political as inextricable. His idealistic expectation of revival redeeming the nation comprised the primary theme of his early crusade messages. God’s judgment was awaiting America “unless people repent and believe—unless God sends an old-fashioned, heaven-sent, Holy Ghost revival” ([2], p. 52).

Graham followed in the revivalist tradition of Dwight Moody and Billy Sunday, who made similar calls for individual souls to accept Christ on the way to national renewal. The same energy, militancy, and confidence animated Graham as it had his forbearers, though the form of Graham’s revivals evidenced a fusion of “old-fashioned” revivalism and new technologies and organization. Speaking of his early work for Youth for Christ in 1945–1948, Graham recalled, “We used every modern means to catch the ear of unconverted young people and then punched them straight between the eyes with the gospel” ([26], p. 488). In the late 1940s, a typical Graham revival lasted ten to twenty-one days and claimed five hundred to fourteen hundred converts. As Graham focused on urban areas like Charlotte, Miami, and Baltimore, his revivals took place either in buildings meant to accommodate mass meetings (large churches, auditoriums, and stadiums) or, as in the case of Los Angeles in 1949, a massive tent on a vacant lot with seating for thousands. Graham’s sermons were the top-billed events, but revivals also featured music (Graham preferred solemn hymns), guest speakers (often other evangelists or celebrities connected to Graham), and the all-important alter call to visually capture the “decisions for Christ”. Seeking to improve upon his predecessors, Graham invested in follow-up counseling programs meant to integrate new converts into church life. Pervading the entire revival, at each stage and in each organizational decision, was the priority to reach the most people possible with the gospel message.

By the 1930s, national spiritual renewal had lost its distinctly Protestant evangelistic edge and become part of the developing civil religion of America [27]. The belief in a need for national “awakening” was shared by none other than President Roosevelt, who uttered a succinct summary of the concept in a 1936 radio address: “I doubt if there is any problem—social, political or economic—that would not melt away before the fire of such a spiritual awakening” [28]. However, Roosevelt’s spiritual awakening was non-sectarian, a recognition of the “brotherhood of man” and a call to national unity in the face of global threats. Harry Truman and Dwight Eisenhower uttered similar hopes for “moral and spiritual reawakening”, but these, too, elevated a tri-faith “Judeo-Christian” spirituality foreign to the pew benches of old-fashioned revivalism [29,30]. For Billy Sunday, and indeed for Billy Graham, spiritual awakening only came from on the saving grace of Jesus Christ. This was a theological necessity, as the Holy Spirit, the agent of renewal, only fell upon those who had accepted Jesus as their Savior [31]. Graham’s revivalism, part of the new public religiosity in the postwar period, differed in that his remained exclusivist and centered on the saving power of Jesus Christ. While Graham readily associated his revivals with national political leaders including Eisenhower and Nixon, his language from the pulpit remained rooted in the “revivalist individualism” of fundamentalism, which prioritized individual spiritual regeneration over political actions to bring about social reform ([21], p. 118).

A faith in the power of spiritual revival pervaded American society in the 1930s and 1940s, though Graham’s revivals were distinctive for retaining the particularistic goal of Protestant Christian

conversions. This was in part a function of Graham's own fundamentalist upbringing, which he only slowly distanced himself from until separatists openly charged Graham with being too ecumenical in his 1957 crusade in New York City [32]. Another explanation for Graham's emphasis on old-fashioned revival points to the financial backing he received from Christian businessmen beginning in the 1940s. Like one of his most pivotal backers, business executive Herbert J. Taylor, Graham believed that social change came primarily through individual souls being transformed. This same emphasis on individual choice and freedom appealed to Taylor in the realm of business, as Darren Grem has shown. Taylor's turnaround of his own companies in the midst of the Great Depression "reassured him of the applicability of religion in the work place and the nation at large. If his faith, duly believed, resulted in his company's success, then Taylor reasoned that God would bless any other endeavor, whether in private enterprise or not, if it followed a few guidelines" ([33], p. 33). The alliance between old-fashioned revival and free enterprise gave Graham the resources and justification for continuing to insist that salvation through faith in Christ alone would bring about change.

With the gospel as the key ingredient in revival, Graham and other evangelical leaders took great pains to enumerate—for themselves and for their audiences—the conditions, consequences, and results of revival. Harold Ockenga, the longtime pastor at Park Street Church in Boston (1936–1969), was, like Graham, a student of the revival. Though he ultimately credited the Holy Spirit with the fruits of revival, Ockenga also insisted the practice itself was structured through discernable processes—there was a science to revivals, a pattern outlined in the Bible and detectable in church history. All revivals were patterned from the apostolic work detailed in the New Testament. The Holy Spirit-driven mass conversions recorded in the book of Acts set the template for modern revival. Ockenga's revivalist outlook was further shaped by his Methodist upbringing. Moreover, he and many other evangelicals also relied on the early twentieth-century work of James Burns, whose *Revivals: Their Laws and Leaders* (1909) became a guidebook [34]. Together, the New Testament, the history of American revivalism, and the enumerated "laws" of revivalism shaped the goals and expectations of Graham's crusades.

According to Ockenga, revivals followed an "ebb and flow" historical trajectory, reaching fruition with the confluence of a united confession by listeners, ecclesiastical cooperation, and visionary leadership. At such moments the Holy Spirit would take hold. Ockenga counted three major revivals in American history, the First and Second Great Awakenings and Dwight Moody's ministry in the late 19th century; Graham was content to note that "after every great crisis in American history we have always had a revival" ([1], p. 18). Ockenga described the "flow" of revival in broader historical language. "The powerful awakening resulting from the combination of these circumstances is like a mighty billow which rolls irresistibly over the land. Vast energies and new forces long in preparation now burst into being," he explained. "[T]here is a regrouping of forces for a new advance. In the ebb there is always the gathering of the swell before moving forward, and that swell is gathering now," he prophesied in 1947 ([35], p. 229).

Just as in revivals of the past, the most important transformation to occur in the midcentury revival would be in the individual sinner. "What is God's work which is to be revived?" Ockenga asked. "First, it is God's work to forgive sin." The message that "Christ Jesus came to save sinners" led to "the reconciliation of rebellious men with their sovereign God" ([35], p. 224). Graham's famous call, in virtually every one of his sermons, for each individual to "turn to Jesus" was the coda and the basis for his crusades. "What can you do? Right now you can turn to Jesus," he pleaded with his listeners. "Let Christ come into your heart and cleanse you from sin, and He can give you the assurance that if you died tonight, you would go to heaven" ([2], p. 62).

In the same way that revivals facilitated the coming of the Holy Spirit on individuals, they also, through their salvific power, could safeguard American society. Here the direct linkage between personal and national revival found its purest expression. In 1949, Graham assured his listeners that "revival brings tremendous social implications". Past revivals, he explained, had brought about the abolishment of slavery and child labor. Moreover, when "the Wesleys preached in England, people were working ninety hours a week! As a result of that revival, sixty hours became standard, and

our great trade unions were organized" ([2], p. 61; [36]). More directly relevant after World War II, Graham regarded revival as the best, and the only legitimate, response to national threats like communism and materialism. "To safeguard our democracy and preserve the true American way of life," he concluded one sermon, "we need, we must have, a revival of genuine, old-fashioned Christianity, deep, widespread, in the power of the Holy Spirit." The corporate response that Graham had in mind mirrored the response of the individual to the alter call: "May God forgive our sins, change our stupidity, help us to repent, turn and pray, and turn us into the spiritual conflict! *Our only hope is revival*" ([2], p. 29).

Ockenga similarly understood revival to have social implications. The revival's "manifold effect upon society is just what men are seeking to promote by all other means, namely, to curb sin, to restrain evil, to promote righteousness, and to elevate mankind". In addition to the individual, the church and society would benefit. Revival aimed to "rebuild and strengthen the church as His witness in the world" through acting as "the custodian of the truth, the guardian of moral standards, the minister of mercy" and through receiving "thousands of new members, born-again ones". Revival could reform society and reorder the procedures of government. "There would be no need to resort to all the legislating processes to force men into these channels if a revival should occur, for then they would be moved from within to follow these channels." In other words, social revival flowed through personal redemption. Ockenga insisted, "It is obvious to us all that Christ is the solution. Let men acknowledge His authority, let them come to know Him as Saviour, let them love Him in life, and they will act accordingly" ([35], p. 226). This idealistic approach to the nature of politics underpinned both Graham's and Ockenga's embrace of revival as a process to spur mass politics.

A final component of the science of revival was the singular figure of the revivalist, the individual through which God worked and through which the work of the Holy Spirit would reach the masses. "When a revival is about to come a person is discovered who incarnates in his message and life the inmost need of the times," Ockenga explained, ecumenically citing Francis of Assisi, Savonarola, Luther, Wesley, and Moody as examples. "He is more sensitive to the longings of men, the ideas of his day, the whisperings of the Spirit of God, until in what he does and says he becomes the symbol of the revival movement and the interpreter of the revival message" ([35], p. 227). Writing of the Los Angeles crusade, Mel Larson waxed that "Revival flowed through Billy Graham during that time until the entire world was conscious of it" ([37], p. 9). Graham's rocket into national fame in 1949–1950 gave evangelicals like Ockenga and Larson confidence that Graham would fulfill the role of Holy Spirit-powered revivalist. Charismatic leadership was an essential and defining component to reaching the masses.

On the heels of his success in Los Angeles, at which he spoke to more than 350,000 people, Graham traveled to Boston on the invitation of Ockenga. Hoping for a repeat success, Ockenga scheduled Graham for a New Year's Eve service in the nearby town of Worcester. With expectations "surprisingly moderate and publicity . . . sparse," Graham managed to draw 6000 people to the first night ([38], p. 132). He then did so again every night for the next eighteen days. Speaking on that first evening, Ockenga belted, "The hour for revival has struck. New England is ripe for evangelism. The same yearning which is seen over the land is experienced here" ([38], p. 133). The hope of revival overflowed naturally into the political sphere. Observing a litany of national and international problems, Ockenga assured that "millions and millions of Americans believe an old-fashioned spiritual revival could preserve our God-given freedoms and way of life" ([38], p. 134). If through Graham God converted the masses, and reawakened Christians, then the spiritual and social renewal of revival for the nation—"like a mighty billow which rolls irresistibly over the land"—had a vital place in the very fabric of the American century ([35], p. 227).

We can see in the work of Ockenga and success of Graham a deep-seated conviction in the "laws" of revival to improve the nation. Like many revivalists before them, including Charles Finney, Dwight Moody, and Billy Sunday, their sermons preached against personal vices—drunkenness, sexual immorality, and laziness—and drew straight conclusions between these practices and the dire state

of the nation. Conversely, the key to reviving the nation resided in turning from sin and receiving the blessing of the Holy Spirit through repentance. This theory of political change was immensely attractive to evangelicals after World War II and compelled hundreds of revivalists, Graham only the most prominent, to engage political questions through revivalism. Likewise, thousands of visitors to tent chapels and baseball stadiums in the 1940s and 1950s heard a clear and confident explanation of the challenges facing America, from communism to poor child rearing. Revivalism, more than virtually any other sphere of evangelical activity, brought evangelical religion and politics together to the masses.

3. Revivalist Nationalism and the Political Process

Graham's astronomical success with his crusades created a template and a network of institutions to perpetuate and expand revivalism. Most of the programming of the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association in the 1950s and 1960s worked off the model of an idealistic personal and national revival that animated Graham's early ministry. As late as 1973, with the national program of "Key '73" aiming to "evangelize the continent for Christ" in a single year, personal conversion still remained the primary process through which many evangelical leaders believed true political change could occur [39].

But the idealistic expectation of mass revival to spontaneously produce better government and a stronger America held less sway over a younger generation of revivalists, less submerged in fundamentalism and more concerned with accumulating cultural and political capital. For these evangelicals, including Bill Bright, the founder of Campus Crusade for Christ in 1951, evangelistic revival as the sole means to national reform was insufficient. Soul revival remained the crucial starting point, but it had to be paired with a more realistic understanding American politics that took into account the rough-and-tumble processes of democracy. To be sure, Bright remained fervently committed to the goals of personal spiritual revival and remained convinced that this was the bedrock of national renewal. From the 1950s until his death in 2003, Bright promoted his soul-focused "Four Spiritual Laws" literature with consistent verve and conviction. However, Bright's increasingly direct political engagement, especially in the 1970s, complicated the hitherto straightforward relationship between personal and national revival. Bright's fusion of soul revival and political engagement as two distinct steps in the process of national renewal fueled a more overt revivalist nationalism.

Graham himself presaged the changing role of revival in American political life. As he became close confidants of Presidents Eisenhower, Johnson, and Nixon, Graham's crusades and public utterances became more explicitly political. He held revivalist-type political rallies through Nixon's time in office, such as when Nixon spoke at a crusade event in Knoxville, Tennessee in May 1970, or when Graham helped organize "Honor America Day" for Fourth of July celebrations the same year. With close collaboration between Nixon and Graham, these rallies and crusades often played to Nixon's political advantage ([8], pp. 242–72).

This growing political valence could appear deceptively apolitical. At the 4 July rally he pleaded with the crowd of more than 300,000, "Let's sing a little, let's wave the flag, let's rejoice in all that's best in our country. We know America has its faults. But there are good things about America. It has not gone to the dogs. Let's be happy on our birthday" [40]. As part of an older generation of revivalists who remained committed to evangelization as not only a necessary, but a sufficient force for social transformation, Graham remained hesitant, even with the president sharing the stage, to wade into full-fledged partisan politics. In public, Graham projected a more detached political engagement that could survive transitions of power from one party to another, such as from Johnson to Nixon. In Grant Wacker's words, Graham "seemed both confident and proud that he had addressed those issues in terms of wide moral principles, not Democratic or Republican agendas" ([41], p. 222) Graham was also a man easily tempted by power and a seemingly unbreakable loyalty to Nixon until the final hours of Watergate. As with previous presidents, Graham's certainty in each man's personal piety made him perhaps too endeared to personal persuasion. He was driven by the conviction that good leaders

inevitably produced good policy, much as his revivalism was built on the conviction that revived citizens inevitably produced a good nation.

This would begin to change in the 1970s. One of the central agents of change was Bill Bright, who, more than any other evangelical, intensified the call for national revival in the early part of the decade. In his highly successful Campus Crusade for Christ student ministry, Bright had sizeable resources and opportunity to launch a national—even global—campaign for revival. In addition to constantly expanding its ministry (to almost 4000 employees in 1975), Campus Crusade organized some of the largest revivals of the postwar period. In one of the most successful spectacles, *Explo '72* (short for “spiritual explosion”) at the Cotton Bowl in Dallas, Bright, Graham, and other revivalists reached more than 80,000 students. Graham spoke in Dallas, but the target audience was much younger than Graham’s aging generation. The vast majority of attendees were between the ages of 15 and 30 [42]. Another 100,000 attended the “Christian Woodstock” music festival that ended *Explo '72*, featuring musicians from Randy Matthews to Johnny Cash. This event, along with Graham’s increasingly large crusades, including speaking to more than 500,000 people in Seoul, South Korea, in 1973, dwarfed most other mass gatherings of any type [43]. They were also the lead up to Bright’s more explicit political work.

Bright’s fervor for a national revival climaxed in 1976 with the celebration of the nation’s bicentennial, in a presidential election year no less [44]. Bright put in place a new program, *Countdown to '76*, as a lead up to this momentous year. Writing in late 1975, Bright warned, “The next 16 months will, in my opinion, likely determine the destiny of our nation and the future course of history.” In language striving to capture the biblical immensity of the task before him, he explained, “We are in a battle with Satan and a race against time. Our present involvement as Christians is not enough. We must do more—yes, many times more. At present, we are losing the battle.” The initial goal, he explained to supporters, was for “tens of millions of Americans [to] be reached for Christ in this country before we end our bicentennial celebrations, 31 December 1976” [45].

But this was only the first phase. While this evangelism may have satisfied Graham, Bright wanted a foothold in the American political process, too. He gave a number of reasons for expanding his interest into the realm of formal politics, including the rising threat of “secular humanism” evident in Supreme Court cases banning prayer and Bibles in school and the erosion of traditional Christian morality in culture. These were pertinent issues, but they were part of a more fundamental shift that concerned Bright and other evangelicals who continued to promote revival: the increasingly pluralistic beliefs and attitudes of Americans. The rise of constant polling and survey data in the 1970s laid bare that more Americans than ever did not agree some of the basic religious values that evangelicals considered essential. Moreover, the Hart-Cellar Act in 1965 abolished the immigration quota system based on national origin, which led to increasing numbers of non-Protestants settling in the country. Bright could point to some new statistical findings to encourage revivalism—in 1975 he cited “hundreds of thousands of surveys taken at random across the United States [that] indicate that one out of two unbelievers in certain parts of the nation to one out of four generally will receive Christ the first time they hear the gospel” [45]. However, these stats could easily be countered with survey after survey indicating increased religious pluralism across the nation [46]. For revival to achieve national renewal in this new context, it had to be directed and channeled.

As one part of this realization, Campus Crusade, which had evolved from a campus ministry into an organization with its hands in all sorts of social and political issues, embarked on a massive campaign in 1976 branded “Here’s Life, America!” It was a combination of local church outreach, training, and evangelism, supported by a multi-million-dollar marketing budget, merchandise, and media coverage. By most accounts, the immediate goal of sharing the gospel with every American in 1976 came up short, and the church growth as a result of the campaign was modest. However, as historian John Turner has shown, the campaign helped bring Bright and evangelicals as a political demographic into the political light in 1976. It was coupled with other political efforts meant to build off of *Here’s Life, America*, including a Washington D.C. based center, the Christian Embassy, which

aimed to be a spiritual center for lawmakers. As an emerging religious identity, “evangelical” had yet to ally itself openly or exclusively with conservative and Republican Party politics. Indeed, a vocal minority of liberal-leaning evangelicals, the so-called evangelical left, vied for popular attention. Bright’s efforts, however, had helped make “evangelical” a political as well as religious identity.

Like other evangelical leaders who recognized the limitations of personal salvation to directly affect the political process, Bright sought to politicize politically inactive Christians. He eagerly endorsed a new “Citizen’s Guide to Politics” written especially to this group, titled *In the Spirit of ‘76* [47]. Published by Third Century Publishers in Washington D.C., which Bright and Arizona Congressman John Conlan founded in 1974, the book displayed a granular understanding of American political organizing. It made more complex the idealistic revivalist relationship between personal salvation and “good government”, offering itself as “a ‘how to’ handbook on winning elections” and urging Christians that “taking part in the political processes of civil government” was biblically warranted. The bulk of the book took readers through a detailed outline of selecting candidates, building campaign teams, and organizing at the precinct level. The book featured a quotation by Billy Graham about the role of Christians in good government, but this offered a far more detailed theory of how being a Christian influenced the political process than Graham’s revivalist messages.

Graham’s prominent place on the cover of *In the Spirit of ‘76* was misleading for another reason. Through the mid-1970s, especially since Bright’s decision during *Explo’ 74* to praise the regime of Park Chung Hee for allowing Christianity to be taught in Korean schools, Graham began to distance himself from his longtime associate. “When I read what Bright said over there [in South Korea], it sickened me,” Graham told *Newsweek* in 1976 [48]. Part of Graham’s concern over Bright’s attempt to merge revivalism and political activism was because Graham was still reeling from the aftermath of Watergate, a searing experience that chastened, though did not eradicate, his public identification with any single politician [49]. Graham’s unusually close relationship to Nixon had discredited him in the eyes of many Americans. “I learned my lesson the hard way,” he reflected [48].

But there was an ever deeper chasm between Graham and Bright that revealed their different approaches to revival, salvation, and politics. One particular issue that angered Graham, according to *Newsweek*, was that he had come across “evidence of attempts by representatives of Campus Crusade to organize politically the hundreds of prayer and Bible-study groups spawned by [Graham’s] crusades” [48]. This brazenly calculating intervention in the process between the revival (the crusade) and improving government struck at the most basic understanding that Graham’s revivalism was built upon. Bright rejected the idealistic link between personal salvation and national renewal, recognizing instead the need to organize and place Christians in positions of power before national renewal could. “Bright has been using me and my name for twenty years,” Graham complained. “But now I’m concerned about the political direction he seems to be taking” [48].

Bright himself did not take his more engaged political philosophy to its logical conclusion. John Conlan, Bright’s partner at Third Century Publishers, began to use the organization and its literature to endorse specific Republican candidates and create an index of members of congress rating their conservative ratings. This was a bridge too far for Bright who remained foremost committed to the evangelistic work of the ostensibly non-partisan Campus Crusade. After a searing expose by the evangelical left magazine *Sojourners*, Bright reduced his official political activism even further ([12], pp. 120–22).

But while Bright retained a primacy on the revival as site for personal conversion, other evangelicals, similarly stoked into nationalistic celebration by the bicentennial, were willing to press forward and further utilize the methods of revival toward engaging in the political process. Jerry Falwell, an obscure Independent Baptist pastor from Lynchburg, Virginia, used the bicentennial celebrations as a coming out party for nationalizing his socially conservative message. In 1976 he endorsed Gerald Ford over the self-identified evangelical Jimmy Carter. In addition, the founder of Lynchburg Baptist College, Falwell brought a choir to Washington D.C. to sing in the bicentennial “I Love America” celebrations ([12], p. 171–72). The performance, which Falwell turned into a television

special, evidenced a mix of revival themes and Falwell's trademark deftness for electronic media and showmanship. The opening scene included, in the words of one reporter, "the singers stepping smartly in time up and down the steps [of Capitol Hill], smiling and singing 'I Love America' to upbeat, pre-recorded and fully orchestrated music." The song lyrics rang out: "Free to worship as we please . . . that's why I love America . . . America, America, the land I love" [50]. These types of events weren't explicitly partisan—they in fact echoed the form of old-fashioned revivals with choirs, praise music, and revivalist speakers. In his early efforts, Falwell hit on the same evangelical themes that had animated revivalism since World War II: moral decline, coming judgment, the unlimited potential of redemption for both the individual and the nation. However, one glaring omission to the revival formula was the alter call. Bright had tried to bridge the alter call and partisan politics and made modest headway. It would be left to Falwell, who had no intention of using events like "I Love America" to call sinners to Christ, to further develop revivalist nationalism.

4. "Pro-Principle" Revivalist Nationalism

By 1980, the Religious Right had assumed the mantle of leadership in the evangelical world—both spiritually and politically [51,52]. This reality underlay the shifting meaning of revival and the developing nationalism of the Religious Right. The often-weekly televangelist revival episodes of Jerry Falwell, Pat Robertson, Jack Hayford, and Jimmy Swaggart reached millions of Americans in their homes, while these same ministers laced their sermons with implicit and explicit political messages about what it would take for national revival. In form and style, there was a great continuity in postwar revivalism. However, the sawdust trails and big tents were much too small for the American Century. Massive buildings—stadiums, megachurches, theaters—required microphones, speakers, and lighting to best present the revivalist's message to audiences of thousands. Music, skits, and auxiliary ministers conveyed messages consonant with the central, charismatic revivalist, while a variety of books, tapes, programs, and bumper stickers supported both the believer and revivalist. Even in message many themes remained consistent. The judgment of God, the promise of salvation, the everlasting faithfulness of the Word echoed in cavernous halls and living rooms alike. The Religious Right inherited and leveraged revival with one major exception: it dropped the evangelism. It adopted the form of revival but shifted the emphasis. The result was a more political, less evangelistic, but equally urgent and populist revival suitable to the demands of grassroots, local, and culture wars politics.

One way to see this shift is in Jerry Falwell's reformulation of the relationship between personal salvation and national renewal alluded to earlier. In 1981, Falwell was interviewed by the evangelical magazine *Christianity Today* and asked about the rationale for his entrance into politics and, essentially, his entire ministry apparatus that included the Thomas Road Baptist Church, the Moral Majority, his *Old Time Gospel Hour* television program, and Lynchburg Baptist College (renamed Liberty University in 1984). Falwell's response was telling. The editors of *Christianity Today*, still operating in Graham's model of revivalism, were concerned that Falwell was mistaking politics for spirituality. They presented Falwell with a hypothetical:

Say that in Salt Lake City they took the Moral Majority position right down the line, but because of false doctrine, they would not ultimately go to heaven. New York City has a reputation for the very things Moral Majority is against. Yet there is a possibility that some of those people in the corrupt society in New York City, in spite of their immorality, might be converted and wind up in heaven. Which would you rather see? I'm concerned that we could get the country morally straight and people would still go to hell [19].

This question got at the heart of the diverging purposes of revivalist nationalism. Did the saving of souls lead to the saving of the nation? Or did the underlying morality of society require the evangelist's primary attention? In response, Falwell emphasized a clear delineation between the spiritual and the political. "America has become the greatest nation on earth," he explained, not because it was full of Christians, but "because of what Solomon said in Proverbs 14 (in paraphrase): 'Living by

God's principles promotes a nation to greatness; violating God's principles brings a nation to shame." He continued, "If a nation or a society lives by divine principles, even though the people personally don't know the One who taught and lived those principles, that society will be blessed. An unsaved person in business will be blessed by tithing to the work of God. He'll still go to hell a tither, but God blesses the principle." Here Falwell reversed the evangelical priority of personal salvation to save the nation. Instead, he sought to save the nation first, which would protect the needed political freedoms with which to save souls. *Christianity Today* asked for a clear statement on this reversal: "So then you can justify Moral Majority by this rather distinct, clear delineation between the political and the spiritual and say that in the long run Moral Majority contributes to the preaching of the gospel and the saving of souls?" Falwell responded, "Yes, because it creates and preserves freedom" ([19], pp. 22–23).

The Religious Right's priority of principles over souls was fashioned, delivered, and even embedded in the form of revival. Falwell and other leaders of the Religious Right fused revivalism with their overarching goal to preserve and revive the principles of America they felt to be in peril. One of Falwell's intellectual influences, Francis Schaeffer, relied on national revival as the primary frame within which to promote mass political action in the 1980s. Schaeffer and Falwell worked closely to promote a more theologically Christian understanding of "Judeo-Christian values", especially on the issue of abortion, and while Falwell, the longtime host of the *Old Fashioned Revival Hour*, played the role of revivalist, Schaeffer assumed the mantle of the Religious Right's theologian [53]. A broad set of concerns animated the more philosophically-minded Schaeffer, who could trace his rise as a popular conservative Christian intellectual to his attacks on modern Western thought formulated at his Swiss evangelistic center, L'Abri, and his well-attended speaking tours through college campuses in Europe and North America [54]. Schaeffer provided the Religious Right with another argument for the importance of revival in renewing the nation—one rooted almost entirely in the principles on which American society rested.

Schaeffer's philosophical approach reveals one of the additional shifts that was taking place in evangelical thinking and transforming the role of revival in the process. The overarching concern that Schaeffer displayed for principles could be traced to the presuppositionalist school of apologetics popular among Reformed theologians in the 1930s and 1940 ([55], pp. 220–24). Gordon Clark and Cornelius Van Til were two of the most prominent presuppositionalists and teachers of Schaeffer at Faith Theological Seminary. They focused on the most basic epistemological and ethical claims (presuppositions) as the basis for a Christian worldview. Without a Christian worldview, Christianity, morality, and Western civilization would collapse. These theologians had little affinity for revivalism or apocalypticism and emphasized a cerebral, philosophical, and systematic form of Christianity. Schaeffer's innovation was to marry the presuppositionalism with revivalism. Through the politics of the Religious Right, Schaeffer believed Christians could revive the worldview out of which evangelicalism had sprung. Along with Falwell, who featured him in his Lynchburg pulpit, Schaeffer saw revival as the vehicle to national salvation.

To that end, Schaeffer spoke out less against personal vices and trained his sights on the ideology of secular humanism. Bright anticipated the fixation on this newly defined enemy. In 1975 he charged that "the United States is being poisoned by a relatively small handful of people. They are the purveyors of pornographic filth, the writers of lewd plays and the producers of film. They are the ones who control the mass media and who pour atheistic humanism into the university classrooms." Bright numbered the culprits at "not more than one thousand individuals" [45]. The philosophical villain in Schaeffer's writings of the 1970s was "humanism", by which he meant "Any philosophy or system of thought that begins with man alone, in order to try to find a unified meaning to life" ([56], p. 200). He positioned the Christian worldview against humanism, and interpreted the rise of abortion rights and the looming threat of legal euthanasia as products of a "culture of death" rooted in humanism [57]. Popular evangelical writers like Tim LaHaye were equally charged against humanism and secularism. In his *Battle for the Mind* (1980), LaHaye outlined the sources, motivations, and arguments of humanism, a force which he aligned with political liberalism, public

education, and the popular culture. This looming threat would decide the next decade, “a decade of destiny for America”, LaHaye warned, “which will become increasingly humanistic or Christian in its philosophy” ([58], p. 46). In contrast to early postwar revivalism, the secular humanist threat of the 1970s removed from the center of concern the individual. The menace of humanism took precedence for the Religious Right, which worried that the very foundations of religious freedom and Christian society were eroding.

Thus, Falwell and Schaeffer were more concerned with the principles on which American society stood than the spiritual state of individual Americans. For example, in trying to revise the memory of revivalism, Schaeffer wrote in his call to political action, *A Christian Manifesto* (1982): “The old revivals are spoken about so warmly by the evangelical leadership. Yet they seem to have forgotten what those revivals were. Yes . . . without any question and with tremendous clarity, [they called] for personal salvation. But they also called for a resulting social action. Read the history of the old revivals” ([59], p. 64). In fact, Graham rarely called for specific social action—he simply assumed it would follow. His idealistic notion that personal renewal would inevitably better the nation seemed naïve to Schaeffer. Schaeffer was calling for a revivalism even more politicized than Bright, who remained chiefly committed to “personal salvation” with an additional step of politicization.

Schaeffer had not rejected the importance of personal salvation, but he found less promise in the traditional revivalist emphasis. Moreover, he drew a more tenuous connection between personal and social salvation than had earlier evangelicals. While Graham traced the linkages between the personal forgiveness of sin and the elevation of mankind, Schaeffer only referred to the “resulting blessings” of “the gospel”. His concern was more fundamental and more abstract than personal regeneration. “We have forgotten why we have a high view of life, and why we have a positive balance between form and freedom in government, and the fact that we have such tremendous freedoms without these freedoms leading to chaos.” These deep cultural values were not the products of sinners turned saints, but “based on the fact that the consensus was the biblical consensus” in America ([59], pp. 70–71). Here Schaeffer revealed that his ideas were not only informed by the tradition of revivalist nationalism, but also by the ideological conservatism then ascendant in the Republican Party. The same was true of Falwell and the majority of the Religious Right, which provided a pronounced difference to the new nationalist revivalism in comparison to its early postwar ancestor. Graham, Ockenga, and many other postwar evangelical leaders were conservatives by temperament and preference, but they did not possess a robust conservative worldview framed in terms of political philosophy. One of the achievements of the postwar conservative intellectual movement, as George Nash showed in the build up to the Religious Right’s national prominence in the late 1970s, was supplying a comprehensive conservative worldview [60]. In the end, national revival for Falwell and Schaeffer was about restoring the principles of Christianity into the highest echelons of the American mind. Schaeffer cited the historical scholarship of Perry Miller to make the conservative case that behind the genesis of these deep cultural values—the American Revolution—a similar process had been at work [61].

5. “Make America Great Again”

The revivalist nationalism of Falwell and Schaeffer not only supported the Reagan Revolution, but Reagan himself fashioned his campaign as a revival to “make American great again”. On Labor Day 1980, mere weeks before Americans cast their ballots, Reagan clearly defined what needed to be revived. “This country needs a new administration, with a renewed dedication to the dream of America—an administration that will give that dream new life and make America great again” [62]. A growing economy and American exceptionalism—“this last best hope of man on earth, this nation under God”—were two key components of this dream. These principles, Reagan prophesied, would find a revival of spirit and practice in his new administration.

Reagan playing the role of revivalist was in many ways unprecedented in modern American politics, which was peopled with presidents unsuitable or unwilling to borrow so liberally from the forms, themes, and language of evangelical revivalism. Most postwar presidents spoke of the

need for a national “spiritual awakening”, but few placed the theme at the center of their campaign. Most postwar presidents sought to stir the masses with speeches that evoked urgency and calls to action, but few had the Hollywood training to make such appeals resonate. Most postwar presidents associated with Billy Graham—the “Pastor to Presidents”—and gave tacit approval to improving the nation’s civic religiosity, but few “endorsed” the work of conservative religious leaders, as Reagan did in a 1980 rally, and so closely allied themselves in public to the revivalists.

Like past presidents, Reagan had called for spiritual renewal in times of national upheaval. As early as 1972, at a Governor’s Prayer Breakfast, he theologized, “I think our nation and the world need a spiritual revival as it has never been needed before . . . a simple answer . . . a profound and complete solution to all the trouble we face.” But Reagan’s conception of spiritual revival was narrower and more explicitly Christian than the civil religion of postwar America. In speaking to Pope Paul VI, Reagan especially praised the Jesus People movement of the late 1960s and “how so many young people had simply turned from drugs to faith in Jesus” ([63], p. 154). Moreover, during his presidency, Reagan received media scrutiny more than once for speaking too much in the vein of Protestant theology to a nation with vast religious pluralism. To the National Religious Broadcasters meeting in 1984, Reagan spoke of “a promise from Jesus to soothe our sorrows . . . He promised if our hearts are true, His love will be as sure as sunshine. And by dying for us, Jesus showed how far his love will go: all the way.” This evangelism from the nation’s bully pulpit had crossed the line for the *New York Times*, which took offense at Reagan’s “private piety” made public in an official capacity as president ([64], pp. 157–70).

Both before and during his presidency, Reagan’s overt religious language gave his campaigns an especially revivalist flavor that was apparent to reporters. For example, in a single story during Reagan’s unsuccessful 1975–76 campaign to unseat Gerald Ford for the Republican nomination, *Newsweek* described him as “a missionary to the aggrieved” who ignited “visceral fire” in his fellow conservatives. “He’s a man with a message who wants to make converts,” one campaign staffer remarked. *Newsweek* observed that even though in March 1975 Reagan refused to make his campaign official, “the Reagan non-campaign still carries about it more nearly the aura of a Billy Graham crusade than of a classic political canvas.” Reagan’s anger against Ford was righteousness—the President “had fallen prey to the heresies of deficit spending and ecumenical politics” and Reagan aimed to “punish him for his apostasy”. In all, while Reagan’s language never reached this revivalist caricature, the form that Reagan had assumed was clearly, to reporters, an aping of the “old-fashioned” revival. Similar religious language to describe Reagan’s campaigning could be found in 1980 and 1984. More than any other modern president—more even than the pious Jimmy Carter—Reagan utilized the trappings of revival and evoked its aura on the campaign trail [65].

However, being ecumenical by nature and surrounding himself especially with Catholic advisors, Reagan’s revivalism was not about the alter call. Not only did evangelicals understand this, but they, too, had reconceived of their action in line with the revival of principle that Reagan espoused. Writing in 1982, Schaeffer described “a unique window open in the United States” following the 1980 elections. “It is unique because it is a long, long time since that window has been open as it is now . . . we should be struggling and praying that this whole other total entity—the material energy, chance worldview—can be rolled back with all its results across all of life” ([59], pp. 73–74). The “worldview” of the nation needed saving, and Reagan was the man through whom the revival would pour forth.

So dramatically had the priorities of evangelicals shifted that the eternal status of Reagan’s soul was largely irrelevant to the Religious Right—a surprising development given revivalism’s historical focus on personal salvation and piety. Certainly, evangelicals preferred leaders who were led by the Holy Spirit, but Jimmy Carter’s unceremonious rejection by evangelical leadership showed that being saved was not everything. More to the point, Reagan was the candidate of the Religious Right because he held the principles evangelicals found most important. A final campaign episode evidences this point. In August 1980, a young Mike Huckabee, a future presidential candidate himself (who also attended Explo ’72 as a high school student), helped organize the political rally in which Reagan

said to evangelical ministers, “I know you can’t endorse me. But I endorse you, and what you are doing” ([66], pp. 61–62). At the time Huckabee was an understudy of evangelist and revivalist James Robison. Huckabee’s biographer recounted the final words that Robison imparted to Reagan that day:

I looked at Mr. Reagan and I said, ‘We really like you; we really like you. We like the principles that you espouse. But you need to understand something about the nature of this group that you’ll speak to tonight and those of us in this room. We’re not partisan; we’re not pro-party; we’re not pro-personality. We’re pro-principle. If you stand by the principles that you say you believe, we’ll be the greatest friends you’ll ever have.’ But I said, ‘If you turn against those principles, we’ll be your worst nightmare.’ ([67], p. 143)

Robison captured the shifting priorities of American evangelicalism as it became more identified with the Religious Right. A receptive Reagan, if he reflected on Robison’s caution, would have seen a clear picture of the scope and nature of what evangelical leaders expected spiritual revival to attain in the 1980s. Sawdust trails and altar calls—once the best hope of American national renewal—had been replaced by an entire set of principles related to family values, biblical morals, and political conservatism. The change in priorities is what allowed Robison, Falwell, and other evangelicals to cooperate with non-evangelicals and exert influence in national politics. The change was undoubtedly a response to the growing religious pluralism in America: with a Graham-like mass revival less and less likely, it made sense to resort to more universal principles of freedom and liberty. That this effort, like the “old fashioned” call for sinners to repent, was carried out through the practice of revival is a testament to how malleable and indispensable revivalist nationalism had become to American politics after World War II.

6. Conclusions

Insofar as evangelicals in the 1940s had a theory of political change, it was idealistic, straightforward, and direct: saving the nation came down to saving souls. “Our only hope is revival”, Graham told his audiences. The dependability of God’s promises and the laws of revivals dictated that through sinners coming to Christ, the nation could avert disaster and live up to its potential. This belief in the political and social power of revivals made mass revivalism central to the process of politicizing evangelicals. To the extent we can discuss a distinct nationalism among evangelicals, as opposed to mainline Protestants, Catholics, Jews, or other religious communities, it was a revivalism that interpreted global and national events in terms of sin, repentance, and salvation.

Revival remained central to evangelical politics throughout the postwar period, as the efforts of Bright and Falwell make clear. Even with the world of political organizing, campaigning, and fundraising knocking down the door to mobilize evangelicals, the allure of “Here’s Life, America” and the *Old Fashioned Revival Hour* still remained strong. Reagan’s revivalist-themed campaign to “Make America Great Again”, which attracted lopsided numbers of evangelicals to the Republican ticket in 1980, evidenced the continuing endurance of revivalist motifs. And yet, Reagan’s gospel was not about the fires of hell and Christ’s saving grace. As president, perhaps, this was an impossible language with which to speak to such a diverse electorate. However, regardless, even among the 1970s revivalists and leaders of the Religious Right, revival had come to connote the biblically-based principles of America—wholly detached from the eternal status of individual souls. These principles needed to be revived against the onslaught of secular humanism. What principles did Reagan stand for? This, more than his personal faith, concerned the Religious Right.

By tracing revivalist nationalism through the postwar period, at least three points are worth summarizing. First, the centrality of revivalism to American evangelical nationalism reshapes how scholars should understand postwar evangelicalism, the rise of the Religious Right, and postwar conservatism. Revivalism has played a consistently disruptive role in American political culture. This did not change in the twentieth century, and in certain decades, like the 1970s, revivalism

channeled, organized, and fueled a significant amount of political activity, especially in the fledgling conservative movement.

Second, revivalist nationalism is both an ideology and a process that contributed to the politicization of postwar evangelicals. Many evangelicals, from Mike Huckabee on, experienced decisive spiritual and political awakenings in the context of revival. Many of the most successful evangelical leaders, from Graham to Falwell to Pat Robertson, had deep ties to revivalism that deserve more exploration and contextualization.

Finally, because of revivalist nationalism's changing objectives over time—from winning individual souls to renewing the principles of the nation—we can observe a gradual secularization of revivalist nationalism, one that could even accommodate a non-evangelical figure like Donald Trump, so long as this figure was suitably “pro-principle”. Indeed, this line of argument has pervaded evangelical discussions of the 2016 election and Trump's campaign to, once again, “Make American Great Again” [68]. Trump is the most recent in a long line of deft leaders—media savvy, charismatic, at home in front of a crowded stadium—who have continued to rely on revivalist forms to shape and share their message [69,70]. It would be too much to conclude that Trump's urgent message of recent national decline is merely an expression of a secularized revivalism, but it would be too little to ignore how this form, and its brand of nationalism, have shaped how millions of Americans understand the nation.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

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