**Supplementary information for *A History of Religion in America: From the End of the Civil War to the Twenty-First Century* website: Chapter 7**

**Additions to “The New Christian Right and politics”**

**Carter’s acceptance speech at the 1976 Democratic National Convention**

Chapter 7 included a discussion of Jimmy Carter as the candidate of the reemerging New Christian Right and discussed why evangelicals sensed the dawning of a new age in which their engagement in politics was no longer shunned. In his acceptance speech at the Democratic National Convention in July 1976, as historian Raymond Haberski would put it: “[Carter] treated Americans to a revival for political healing.” He told those gathered that 1976 would be the year “that we give the government of this country back to the people of this country.” Without having to remind people of the difficulties the nation had faced over the past several years, he continued: “I believe that we can come through this time of trouble stronger than ever. Like troops who have been in combat, we have been tempered by the fire; we have been disciplined, and we have been educated. Guided by lasting and simple moral values, we have emerged idealists without illusions, realists who still know the old dreams of justice and liberty, of country and community.” Carter concluded: “My vision of this nation and its future has been deepened and matured during the nineteen months that I have campaigned among you for President. I have never had more faith in America than I do today. We have an America that, in Bob Dylan’s phrase, ‘is busy being born not busy dying.’” As Haberski summed up Carter’s address: “Carter promised Americans national salvation once they too were born again.”

[For more information, see: Jimmy Carter, “Acceptance Speech at the Democratic National Convention,” July 15, 1976, American Presidency Project, [www.4president.org/speeches/carter1976acceptance.htm](http://www.4president.org/speeches/carter1976acceptance.htm), and Raymond Haberski, Jr., *God and War: American Civil Religion Since 1945* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2012), 105–6.]

**Ronald Reagan’s “Evil Empire” speech**

Under the same heading, Chapter 7 discusses the rise of Ronald Reagan to become the candidate of the New Christian Right. Reference was made to his best-known speech on route to the presidency, his “Evil Empire” speech. Delivered on March 8, 1983, in Orlando, Florida, to the National Association of Evangelicals, Reagan labeled the Soviet Union, the “Evil Empire” – the “focus of evil in the modern world.” Reagan identified two characteristics that distinguished America from the Soviet Union: religion and freedom. He asked the evangelical audience for their support “to keep us ever-mindful of the ideas and the principles that brought us into the public arena in the first place. . . . The basis of those ideals and principles is a commitment to freedom and personal liberty that itself is grounded in the much deeper realization that freedom prospers only where the blessing of God are avidly sought and humbly accepted.” For Reagan, “the great triumph of our Founding Fathers,” that which set the stage for America’s greatness, was their discovery that “all men are created equal with certain inalienable rights” by their creator. He then quoted Alexis de Tocqueville, the nineteenth-century French visitor who came in search of that which made America exceptional: “Not until I went into the churches of America and heard her pulpits aflame with righteousness did I understand the greatness and the genius of America. . . . America is good. And if America ever ceases to be good, America will cease to be great.”

[For more information, see: Ronald Reagan, “Remarks to the Annual Convention of the National Association of Evangelicals, Orlando, Florida, (March 8, 1983), American Presidency Project, [www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=41023](http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=41023).]

**Addition to “The New Christian Right in the post-Reagan years into the twenty-first century”**

Chapter 7 covered George H. W. Bush’s victory in the presidential election of 1988 and his defeat four years later. Although his defeat was not the result of just one factor, a leading cause was the fall of the Soviet Union in 1989–1991, which deprived conservatives of the unifying cause that had served them well for decades. Historian Patrick Allitt has written: “A vacuum had emerged as the Cold War ended. Euphoria over its conclusion could not match the existential satisfaction of the Cold War itself. Gone was the moral necessity of standing against communism; the complicated emotion of fear in the face of nuclear war; and the organizing, totalizing logic of strategic planning against another superpower.”

In 1988, the year before the fall of the Soviet Union, as anticipating what was about to happen, Robert Wuthnow provided an even broader picture of the role religion had played in the United States during the Cold War. Wuthnow explained how religion in this period articulated the higher purpose in American life. Even though religion had always played a prominent role in the governing and defining of the nation, the religious right had become more involved in politics than ever before. Wuthnow found that, when Vietnam and Watergate made discussion of public morality a central feature of the public square, “the wall between private morality and public institutions began to break down.” Once “morality and politics were being discussed in the same breath, evangelicals found it only natural to condone political activities that appeared to uphold standards of morality,” and that lured them into politics, which previously had been seen by them as a dirty business. Wuthnow quoted Jerry Falwell to clarify the evangelical positon: “Our test is not to Christianize America, it’s to bring about a moral and conservative revolution.” Wuthnow found that during the 1980s conservative religious Americans were more likely to be involved in politics than liberals, and that divisions between the two that had been largely theological were mostly political. With the fall of the Soviet Union in 1989, however, the united political front of the New Christian Right fell into disarray.

[For more on the New Christian Right, see: Patrick Allitt, *Religion in America Since 1945: A History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 147–9, and Robert Wuthnow, *The Restructuring of American Religion: Society and Faith since World War II* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988), 210–3, 242, 257.]

**Addition to “Prayer in the schools”**

Chapter 7 considered two key Supreme Court cases that addressed prayer in the schools, *Abington Township v. Schempp* and *Murray v. Curlett.* Both were heard by the court on February 27 and 28, 1963. While the court deliberated, however, the cases were hotly debated in the media. To cite just one example among those less inflammatory, the widely read *Life* magazine weighed in in its March 15 issue. In “The Bible – Better in School than in Court,” the editors argued that the Founding Fathers did not intend to outlaw prayer or Bible reading in the schools, that the Supreme Court’s doing so would “offend the nation’s natural piety and sense of its own past,“ and that the matter should be left to the school boards to work out. They predicted that the *Murray/Abington Township* decision, brought by “a Maryland atheist and a Pennsylvania Unitarian,” might have “even more seismic political effects than *Engel* *v. Vitale* (also covered in Chapter 7). In view of the Court’s decisions in *Engel* and other related cases, they recommended that the court “re-examine the premises” on which it had been deciding such cases. The editors admitted that the Regents’ prayer “had little to recommend it but its innocuous nonsectarianism” but that millions of Americans were nonetheless “shocked to learn that any prayers could be unconstitutional.” *Murray/Abington Township*, they pointed out, dealt with the Bible and the Lord’s Prayer, both of which “have quite a different place in the national conscience.” *Life*’s editors accused the Supreme Court of leading the nation into a “morass” and claimed that it would be no surprise it if extricated the country by moving to “complete secularization, a literal ‘wall of separation’ between public property and piety of any kind.” That would constitute a “radical break with the American past” and would more likely “lead us into darkness than into light.” They concluded by quoting the French visitor, Alexis de Tocqueville, author of *Democracy in America* (1835–1840): “Religion in America takes no direct part in the government of society, but it must be regarded as the first of their political institutions. . . . Despotism may govern with faith, but liberty cannot.”

Madalyn Murray – the “Maryland Atheist,” as *Life’s* editors referred to her – could not resist responding to the editorial. In a letter that appeared in the April 12 issue with her picture, the “Maryland atheist” described what atheists believed and how it related to her case. She explained that atheist beliefs were “founded in science, in reason and in love for fellow man rather than in a love for God.” But, she continued: “We find the Bible to be nauseating, historically inaccurate, replete with the ravings of madmen. We find God to be sadistic, brutal, and a representation of hated, vengeance. We find the Lord’s Prayer to be that muttered by worms groveling in their meager existence in a traumatic paranoid world. This is not appropriate untouchable dicta to be forced on adults or children. The business of public schools, where attendance is compulsory, is to prepare children to face the problems on earth, not to prepare them for heaven – which is a delusional dream of the unsophisticated minds of the ill-educated clergy.”

[For more information on prayer in schools, see: “The Bible – Better in School than In Court,” *Life* (March 15, 1963): 3–4, and Madalyn Murray, Letter to *Life* Magazine, *Life* (April 12, 1963): 63.]

**Addition to “Creationism versus evolution”**

Chapter 7 discussed the US Supreme Court cases that ruled against efforts to have creationism taught in the nation’s public schools. It explained that one of the responses of the parents who rejected the court’s rulings was to enroll their children in religious academies or to home school them, both of which spread rapidly from the 1960s through the 1980s. In the 1960s and 1970s, the number of evangelical academies increased by two per day. By the mid-1980s, they were educating more than a million children per year. In 1972, the American Association of Christian Schools was founded, followed in 1978 by the Association of Christian Schools International. Both lobbied state and federal governmental bodies as well as accreditors to assure favorable legislation and regulations and to facilitate teacher training. Accelerated Christian Education sold ready-made curriculum packages to these academies.

That parents of students who chose to send their children to these private school found themselves paying taxes to support local public schools in addition to tuition for their children’s education prompted many to seek relief in the form of tuition tax credits or government vouchers that could be used to offset private school tuition. In this, which they defended on the grounds of freedom of choice, they were joined by Roman Catholics, who had fought for such accommodations for at least a century. The arguments against these proposals included, not only their possible violation of the separation of church and state, but also their negative impact on public schools by withdrawing public funds and the fear that vouchers might be used to send children to any religiously affiliated school, even those considered “cults.” A 1990 editorial in the journal *Church and State* argued: “It takes little imagination to expect the Rev. Louis Farrakhan and the Nation of Islam to create Moslem schools. And how about the Rev. Sun Myung Moon and his Unification Church?”

Home-school parents were supported by lobbying and support groups of their own, conferences, and the publication of a spate of newsletters and books that both advocated for home schooling and provided curricular assistance. Some of the leading books of the period included John Holt’s *Instead of Education: Ways to Help People do Things Better* (1976) and Raymond and Dorothy Moore’s *Home Grown Kids: A Practical Handbook for Teaching Your Children at Home* (1981) and *Home-Spun Schools: Teaching Children at Home – What Parents Are Doing and How They Are Doing It* (1982). The Home Schools Legal Defense Association, under the leadership of Michael P. Farris (formerly director of Washington State’s Moral Majority), provided effective lobbying and was able to get an exemption for home-school families from federal legislation requiring the certification of all elementary and secondary teachers. As noted in Chapter 7, although the motives of those who chose to home school their children varied, a 1995 survey found that 90 percent of home-schooling families had religious motives. “Eighty-four percent agreed that the Bible is the inspired word of God and literally true; 81% agreed that eternal life is a gift of God, predicated on belief in Jesus Christ; and 93% agreed that Satan is currently working in the world.”

[For more on religious education, see: Patrick Allitt, *Religion in America Since 1945: A History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 185–9; the editorial is quoted in Warren A Nord, *Religion and American Education: Rethinking a National Dilemma* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 363. See also: Mitchell Sevens, *Kingdom of Children: Culture and Controversy in the Home-schooling Movement* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001), 12, and Susan D. Rose, *Keeping Them Out of the Hands of Satan: Evangelical Schooling in America* (New York: Routledge, 1988).]