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God in the Corridors of Power: Christian Conservatives, the Media, and Politics in America

Michael Ryan, Les Switzer

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God in the Corridors of Power: Christian Conservatives, the Media, and Politics in America is a comprehensive study of Christian conservative power in America's political culture—how it was achieved, how it is maintained, and where it is going. It came about in part because of an enduring influence in the school room, the seminary and in the pulpit, and in part because conservatives are so skilled at using commercial and non-commercial media, including religious media, to disseminate their views to broader audiences. Though their power has waxed and waned, they continue to be a potent force in public policy today.

The authors argue that the astonishing electoral successes of Christian conservatives at all levels of national, state and local government was made possible by linking political, social, media and religious interests with an emerging consensus about what constitutes a conservative mindset in American politics. Christian conservatives unquestionably have been the most significant component in a coalition of religious conservatives, traditionalist conservatives and neoconservatives that has driven the Republican Party now for almost two generations.

This multifaceted understanding of Christian conservative activists in religion and politics traces the impact Christian conservatives have had on American Christianity as a whole while also examining the limitations imposed on the Christian conservative agenda by American civil religion, the Constitution and case law. The authors explore women's reproductive rights in the debate over contraception and abortion, and gay civil rights in the debate over gay marriage and family rights. The debate over intelligent design and evolution is examined in the context of the campaign to transform public school education. The run-up to the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq is scrutinized against the background of the declared "war on terrorism."

While the conservative religious and secular coalition within the Republican Party began to fragment even before the end of George W. Bush's first term in office, it remained a powerful force in the 2004 and 2008 elections. The book concludes with some thoughts about the impact of Christian conservatives in politics, media and religion in the future.

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