

BOOK REVIEW
THE FAITH THAT DIVIDES US:
LINES OF (IN)DIVISION BETWEEN
RELIGION AND POLITICS

HIJACKED: RESPONDING TO THE PARTISAN CHURCH DIVIDE. BY MIKE
SLAUGHTER & CHARLES E. GUTENSON WITH ROBERT P. JONES.
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INTRODUCTION

Religious belief, which was once so widespread and so widely shared as to be a common and uninteresting trait, has become increasingly contestable, one among many competing belief systems and values. In turn, that development has meant that, for those Americans who are deeply religious, religion has also become increasingly salient: it has become an even more powerful, noteworthy, and publicly-debated phenomenon. It is thus no contradiction to say that Americans are a people who have become both more religious, in the sense that religion occupies a greater share of their attention and passion, and less religious, in the sense that an increasing number of Americans either profess no religion, or have shunned it off to the side.

– Professor Paul Horwitz¹

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¹ Paul Horwitz, Religion and American Politics: Three Views of the Cathedral, 39 U. MEM.

To prepare for the November 2012 presidential election, the Democratic National Committee hired the Reverend Dr. Derrick Harkins as the Democratic Party's faith outreach director.² Dr. Harkins' political work followed attempts by President Barack Obama to continue aiming at the "pew gap," just as President Obama and the Democrats did during the 2008 election cycle,³ in which matters of race and religion were highlighted as never before.⁴ Indeed, the 2008 election was historic in its own right as Barack Obama became the United States' first Black⁵

L. REV. 973, 975–76 (2009).

² See Michelle Boorstein, *Democratic Party Names Derrick Harkins to Lead Faith Outreach Efforts*, WASH. POST, Oct. 20, 2011, available at http://www.washingtonpost.com/local/democratic-party-names-derrick-harkins-to-lead-faith-outreach-efforts/2011/10/20/gIQA82GdIL_story.html. As the senior pastor of the historic Nineteenth Street Baptist Church in Washington, D.C., Harkins walks in the proverbial footsteps of the late Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. ("Dr. King") as an academically-trained Baptist minister. Harkins earned a B.S. at Boston University, M.Div. at Union Theological Seminary, and D.Min. at United Theological Seminary. See *Senior Pastor*, THE NINETEENTH STREET BAPTIST CHURCH, <http://everyblessing.org/pastor/> (last visited Feb. 16, 2013) (detailing Dr. Harkins' educational background, work experience, and family history).

³ In 2008, then-Democratic nominee Senator Obama made gains over his 2004 predecessor, Senator John Kerry, in closing the partisan divide among Catholics, Jews, and mainline Protestants. See Laurie Goodstein, *Obama Made Gains Among Younger Evangelical Voters*, *Data Show*, N.Y. TIMES, Nov. 6, 2008, available at <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/11/07/us/politics/07religion.html>. See also *How the Faithful Voted*, PEW F. ON RELIGION & PUB. LIFE (Nov. 10, 2008), available at <http://www.pewforum.org/Politics-and-Elections/How-the-Faithful-Voted.aspx> [hereinafter PEW FORUM] (last visited Feb. 16, 2013) ("Among nearly every religious group, the Democratic candidate received equal or higher levels of support compared with the 2004 Democratic nominee, John Kerry. Still, a sizable gap exists between the support Obama received from the white evangelical Protestants and his support among the religiously unaffiliated.")

⁴ See generally Charlton C. Copeland, *God-Talk in the Age of Obama: Theology and Religious Political Engagement*, 86 DENV. U. L. REV. 663 (2009) (arguing that Pres. Obama's campaign election broke the stranglehold that the Republican party had on religious voters). Because of President Obama's deliberate engagement of faith, the political left terms him "the most theologically serious politician in modern American history." David Fontana, *Obama and the American Civil Religion from the Political Left*, 41 GEO. WASH. INT'L L. REV. 909, 910–11 (2010) (quoting Copeland, *supra* at 664) (internal citations omitted).

⁵ Several legal scholars argue "Black" should be capitalized as a proper noun because, similar to Asian and Latino, it denotes a specific cultural group. See, e.g., D. Wendy Greene, *Black Women Can't Have Blonde Hair . . . in the Workplace*, 14 J. GENDER RACE & JUST. 405, 405 n.2 (2011); Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw, *Race, Reform, and Entrenchment: Transformation and Legitimation in Antidiscrimination Law*, 101 HARV. L. REV. 1331, 1332 n.2 (1988). See also Neil Gotanda, *A Critique of "Our Constitution is Colorblind"*, 44 STAN. L. REV. 1, 3–4 (1991) (discussing the four different types of "race"). In deference to these scholars' advocacy, I hereinafter use the term "Black" to denote Americans of African descent.

president.⁶

In *Hijacked*,⁷ authors Mike Slaughter and Chuck Gutenson, along with Robert Jones, explore the sociopolitical and theological reasons that form the foundation of the troubling overlap of ideology and theology in American culture.⁸ They regard President Ronald Reagan's 1980s courtship of "evangelical"⁹ voters as momentous,¹⁰ causing a deep paradigmatic shift whereby the Deep South became a dependable Republican Party voting constituency.¹¹ The authors also highlight the varied nuances

⁶ In addition to the 2008 election being historic as Obama became the first Black elected to the presidency, it was also religiously significant as political poll results revealed between ten and eighteen percent of actual or likely voters believed Obama to be Muslim, notwithstanding his publically professed Christian beliefs. See Bryan Adamson, *The Muslim Manchurian Candidate: Barack Obama, Rumors, and Quotidian Hermeneutics*, 25 ST. JOHN'S J. C.R. & ECON. DEV. 581, 584 (2011). Further, the 2012 presidential election was equally historic as being the first time neither major party featured a white Protestant Christian as either its presidential or vice presidential nominee. Vice President Joe Biden and his Republican challenger, Representative Paul Ryan are both Catholic, while Governor Mitt Romney, the Republican presidential nominee, is Mormon. See generally Josh Levs, *Romney-Ryan Ticket Makes U.S. Religious History*, CNN.COM (Aug. 14, 2012, 11:50 AM), <http://religion.blogs.cnn.com/2012/08/14/romney-ryan-ticket-makes-u-s-religious-history/> (discussing Gov. Romney and his running mate, Rep. Paul Ryan historic as it is the first presidential ticket to not feature a Protestant Christian candidate).

⁷ MIKE SLAUGHTER & CHARLES E. GUTENSON WITH ROBERT P. JONES, *HIJACKED: RESPONDING TO THE PARTISAN CHURCH DIVIDE* (2012).

⁸ In identifying the problematic conflation of politics and religion, the authors write of witnessing "[th]e growth of partisan political influence in the church, which has created an unholy alliance of political ideology and biblical theology." *Id.* at xviii.

⁹ Generally speaking, I define evangelicals as Christians that maintain an inerrant view of the Bible, often claiming to be spiritually "born again," having been transformed by faith. MICHAEL O. EMERSON & CHRISTIAN SMITH, *DIVIDED BY FAITH: EVANGELICAL RELIGION AND THE PROBLEM OF RACE IN AMERICA* 3 (2000). Although they come from all ethnic backgrounds, nearly ninety percent of self-identified evangelicals are white. *Id.*

¹⁰ See, e.g., Moyers on America, *Is God Green?: Religion and Politics*, PBS, available at http://www.pbs.org/moyers/moyersonamerica/print/religionandpoliticsclass_print.html#transcripts (last visited Feb. 16, 2013) ("Well, we all know how Reagan's 1980 presidential campaign turned out. His strategy of courting the evangelical vote has been a standard of the Republican Party ever since.")

¹¹ SLAUGHTER & GUTENSON, *supra* note 7, at 4 ("The shift in partisanship with the Reagan election was . . . dramatic . . . Reagan's campaign—during which he . . . courted . . . evangelical[s] . . . by saying, 'I know you can't endorse me, but I endorse you'—was the watershed moment that marked the beginning of white evangelical Protestants becoming a bedrock constituency of the Republican Party."). See also SARAH BARRINGER GORDON, *THE SPIRIT OF THE LAW: RELIGIOUS VOICES AND THE CONSTITUTION IN MODERN AMERICA* 155–56 (2010) (discussing the controversy of Blacks being prohibited from attending Bob Jones University and Ronald Reagan's endorsement of the university's autonomous policies as a crowd of more than 6,000 cheered in support). Evangelicals and other conservative Protestants represent approximately one-quarter of America's population. EMERSON & SMITH, *supra* note 9, at 3.

between being theologically and politically conservative, and theologically and politically liberal.¹² These nuanced perspectives ultimately support the authors' thesis that the conflation of theology and ideology is misplaced in the Church.¹³ As both empirical and anecdotal evidence make clear, this conflation has inured to the benefit of "red state" Republicans, especially in the South.¹⁴

This Review is organized to mirror the authors' structure in *Hijacked*. It proceeds in four parts. Part I defines the problem of theological and ideological conflation in American culture.¹⁵ Part II builds upon this foundation by providing a theological and sociological assessment of the identified problem.¹⁶ Part III shifts by setting a course

¹² SLAUGHTER & GUTENSON, *HIJACKED*, *supra* note 7, at 42–49.

¹³ *Id.* at xviii. Statistically, although the United States has innumerable faith groups and many denominational variations therein, there are three major religions in the country and indeed throughout the world: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. ROBERT T. MORAN, PHILIP R. HARRIS AND SARAH V. MORAN, *MANAGING CULTURAL DIFFERENCES: GLOBAL LEADERSHIP STRATEGIES FOR THE 21ST CENTURY* 510–11 (6th ed. 2004) (noting the world's three major religions all originated in the Middle East with a shared reverence for Abraham, considered a patriarch by Jews, an ancestor of Jesus by Christians, and a prophet by Muslims). *See also* STEPHEN PROTHERO, *GOD IS NOT ONE: THE EIGHT RIVAL RELIGIONS THAT RUN THE WORLD* 26 (2010) (discussing Judaism, Christianity, and Islam as Abrahamic faith traditions). The theological discussion of inter-religious relationships is beyond the focus of *Hijacked* and consequently this Review. For a historic analysis of such, however, *see generally* Roslyn Satchel Augustine & Jonathan C. Augustine, *Religion, Race & the Fourth Estate: Xenophobia in the Media Ten Years After 9/11*, 1 TENN. J. RACE, GENDER & SOC. JUST. 1 (2012) (arguing media deliberately vilified Islam in the decade following the September 11, 2001 terrorists attacks in the interest of pecuniary gain).

¹⁴ SLAUGHTER & GUTENSON, *supra* note 7, at 6 ("Beginning with the Reagan election in 1980 . . . white evangelical Protestants became increasingly conservative, and the percentage of moderates among them dropped precipitously By the end of Reagan's presidency in 1988, the conservative-moderate gap had jumped to 32 points (59% and 27% respectively). By 2008, the conservative-moderate gap had grown to 44 points, with nearly two-thirds (64%) of white evangelical Protestants identifying as conservative, and only 1 in 5 (20%) identifying as moderate."). *See also* RANDALL BALMER, *THE MAKING OF EVANGELICALISM: FROM REVIVALISM TO POLITICS AND BEYOND* 66–76 (2010) (describing the politics of the "religious right" and the political ascension of Ronald Reagan).

¹⁵ *See infra* notes 21 through 34 and accompanying text. Religion has always been an intricate part of American culture. Justice Douglas, writing on behalf of the Supreme Court, observed that "[w]e are a religious people whose institutions presuppose a Supreme Being." *Zorach v. Clauson*, 343 U.S. 306, 313 (1952). Justice Douglas' logic in *Zorach v. Clauson* was arguably why Chief Justice Berger later reasoned "political division along religious lines was one of the principal evils against which the First Amendment was intended to protect." *Lemon v. Kurtzman*, 403 U.S. 602, 622 (1971).

¹⁶ *See infra* notes 34 through 41 and accompanying text. At best, it is difficult to separate religious and secular beliefs in the United States. The country's Great Seal, for example, depicts a pyramid in its background, a parallelism between early colonial settlers having escaped English oppression and the Hebrews' escape from bondage in Egypt, detailed in the Exodus

for things to come, in an attempt to address the identified issues and protect the validity of the church as an institution.¹⁷ Finally, Part IV concludes with an analysis of the authors' arguments and reader takeaways on the important role faith plays in addressing social conditions.¹⁸

Hijacked is timely and insightful in addressing the divisions between adherents of a faith filled with homogenous condemnation and social estrangement, contrasted with practitioners of the love-based religion that fuels social improvement.¹⁹ The great irony, however, is that although both camps identify as Christian, they remain divided by faith.²⁰

I. DEFINING THE PROBLEM

We live in an age of sound bites where most Americans receive their information from television.²¹ Moreover, in a post-Fairness Doctrine

biblical narrative. Burton Caine, *"The Liberal Agenda": Biblical Values and the First Amendment*, 14 *TOURO L. REV.* 129, 132–33 (1997).

¹⁷ See *infra* notes 43 through 65 and accompanying text. The authors make clear that members of the church should be involved in politics, just as politicians should be members of the church. SLAUGHTER & GUTENSON, *HIJACKED*, *supra* note 7, at 78–79. Further, as Professor Kent Greenawalt writes, "[t]hat state and church have different functions does not necessarily condemn participation in both by the same individuals, as when the king is head of the church or bishops are members of the legislature." Kent Greenawalt, *History as Ideology: Philip Hamburger's Separation of Church and State*, 93 *CAL. L. REV.* 367, 376 (2005).

¹⁸ See *infra* notes 66 through 80 and accompanying text. Dr. King famously remarked "[a]ny religion that professes to be concerned with the souls of men and is not concerned with the slums that damn them, the economic conditions that strangle them, and the social conditions that cripple them is a dry-as-dust religion. Such a religion is the kind the Marxists like to see—an opiate of the people." MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR., *STRIDE TOWARD FREEDOM: THE MONTGOMERY STORY* 36 (1958).

¹⁹ See Jonathan C. Augustine, *The Theology of Civil Disobedience: The First Amendment, Freedom Riders, and Passage of the Voting Rights Act*, 21 *S. CAL. INTERDISC. L.J.* 255, 265–81 (2012) [hereinafter Augustine, *The Theology of Civil Disobedience*] (providing an analysis of several authors' writings on Dr. King to support the position that Judeo-Christian beliefs undergirded the social activism that combated discrimination during the American Civil Rights Movement). See also MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. *supra* note 18 (using the image of the Christian cross in making a theo-political argument that the cross' vertical axis represents the individual's relationship with the divine, while the horizontal axis compels adherents to social action).

²⁰ See generally Richard W. Garnett, *Religion, Division, and the First Amendment*, 94 *GEO. L.J.* 1667, 1677 (2006) ("We are . . . increasingly, a nation divided by God.") (quoting NOAH FELDMAN, *DIVIDED BY GOD: AMERICAN'S CHURCH-STATE PROBLEM – AND WHAT WE SHOULD DO ABOUT IT* (2006)).

²¹ See Taylor Gandossy, *TV Viewing at 'All-time High,' Nielson Says*, CNN (Feb. 24, 2009), http://articles.cnn.com/2009-02-24/entertainment/us.video.nielson_1_nielson-company-nielson-spokesman-gary-holmes-watching?_s=PM:SHOWBIZ (showing through empirical research that Americans watch approximately 151 hours of television per month).

world of American media²² that has left little objectivity of information, viewers are drawn to polar opposites like MSNBC and FOX News, demonstrating the dearth of unbiased journalism.²³ As a result, it is no surprise that the issues of theology and political ideology have blurred significantly blurred in recent years to become conflated.²⁴

²² See generally Augustine & Augustine, *supra* note 13, at 16 n.32 (providing a comprehensive explanation of the fairness doctrine and how its repeal caused such extreme partisanship in news coverage). In summary, the fairness doctrine was initially promulgated in 1949, requiring television and radio broadcasters to: (1) “cover vitally important controversies in their communities;” and (2) “provide a reasonable opportunity for the presentation of contrasting viewpoints.” Anthony E. Varona, *Changing Channels and Bridging Divides: The Failure and Redemption of American Broadcast Television Regulation*, 6 MINN. J.L. SCI. & TECH. 1, 26 (2004). The doctrine’s constitutionality was upheld in *Red Lion Broadcasting Co. v. FCC*, 395 U.S. 367 (1969). In 1987, however, the Federal Communications Commission repealed it as an unconstitutional violation of the First Amendment. Varona, *supra* at 21. See also Robert D. Hershey, Jr., *F.C.C. Votes Down Fairness Doctrine in a 4-0 Decision*, N.Y. TIMES, Aug. 5, 1987, at A1, available at <http://www.nytimes.com/1987/08/05/arts/fcc-votes-down-fairness-doctrine-in-a-4-0-decision.html>. Because of the fairness doctrine’s repeal, media conglomerates now market news to consumers based on political predisposition. See Augustine & Augustine, *supra* note 13.

²³ As an example of news bias from the political right, on March 2, 2010, former FOX News talk-show host Glenn Beck made a remark that became somewhat of a litmus test of the theological fidelity for some politically conservative Christians. In relevant part, Beck remarked, “I beg you, look for the words ‘social justice’ or ‘economic justice’ on your church website. If you find it, run as fast as you can. Social justice and economic justice, they are code words If you have a priest that is pushing social justice, go find another parish. Go alert your bishop.” Lynn Arave, *Mormons, Other Christians Decry Glenn Beck Comments on Social Justice*, DESERT NEWS, Mar. 13, 2010, available at <http://www.deseretnews.com/article/700016115/Mormons-other-Christians-decry-Glenn-Beck-comments-on-social-justice.html>.

Such comments broadcast by a major news network directly undermine community-centered social justice ministries. Cf. EARL D. C. BREWER, CONTINUATION OR TRANSFORMATION?: THE INVOLVEMENT OF UNITED METHODISM IN SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AND ISSUES (Alan K. Waltz, ed. 1982) (discussing the United Methodist Church’s affirmative positions of social justice and advocacy as being part of Methodist teachings and practice), and Jonathan C. Augustine, *Environmental Justice and Eschatology in Revelation*, 58 LOY. L. REV. 325, 340–42 (2012) (chronicling the United Church of Christ’s leadership in producing a seminal 1982 white paper addressing the disparate impact of governmental policies resulting environmental racism).

The combination of social justice and religion has resulted in praise from the White House. In speaking to the African Methodist Episcopal Church’s 49th General Conference in June 2012, First Lady Michelle Obama lauded the church’s history of involvement in social justice issues and encouraged it to continue being involved in nontraditional endeavors. Michelle Obama, *Remarks by the First Lady at the African Methodist Episcopal Church Conference*, THE WHITE HOUSE (June 28, 2012), available at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2012/06/28/remarks-first-lady-african-methodist-episcopal-church-conference>. See also *Vision Statement*, AFRICAN METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH, <http://www.ame-church.com/about-us/mission.php> (last visited Feb. 16, 2013) (documenting the church’s vision statement as including, with statements about evangelism, serving the needy).

²⁴ See, e.g., Augustine & Augustine, *supra* note 13, at 38–40 (discussing how the media

In addressing the post-modern reality of media influence, where news has a large entertainment value,²⁵ the authors write:

With the growth of 24/7 news channels and the migration of “news” reporting to become more and more deeply intertwined with partisan opinion on the one hand and entertainment on the other, we now live in a culture in which it is entirely possible to live the vast majority of one’s life inside an ideological bubble. In other words, folks can select the news channels they watch, the newspapers they read, and the websites they frequent in order consistently to reinforce their current political beliefs. If you are a political conservative, you can pick partisan news sources that allow you to feast upon a steady diet of criticisms and affirmations that align with what you already believe. While this is a little more of a challenge for liberals, it is only a wee bit more challenging. Living in the ideological bubble allows us constant affirmation of the things we believe and relatively little, if any, challenge to those commitments. And when these commitments are conflated with our faith commitments, we find ourselves with a matrix ripe for partisan division.²⁶

Recent scholarship also supports this position by detailing how the profit-driven phenomenon of “selling news” has increased partisan ideological divisions within Christian faith traditions while simultaneously vilifying Muslims in a post-September 11 news environment.²⁷

One of the most salient issues the authors develop in *Hijacked* is the conflated definitions of liberal and conservative, blending together political ideology and theology.²⁸ While there may be a common

influences many Christian Americans to have a xenophobic bias against Muslims).

²⁵ For a discussion on news as entertainment, see DANIEL J. BOORSTIN, *THE IMAGE: A GUIDE TO PSEUDO-EVENTS IN AMERICA* 9–12 (1987) (highlighting human beings’ expectation that news provide entertainment such that there is a demand for the creation of “pseudo” news events).

²⁶ SLAUGHTER & GUTENSON, *HIJACKED*, *supra* note 7, at 49. Bias is inherent in general society, and in the judiciary—especially with religion cases. See generally Gregory C. Sisk, et al., *Searching for the Soul of Judicial Decisionmaking: An Empirical Study of Religious Freedom Decisions*, 65 OHIO ST. L.J. 491 (2004) (discussing the influence of religion in judicial decision making). See also Marie A. Failinger, *Islam in the Mind of American Courts: 1800 to 1960*, 32 B.C. J.L. & SOC. JUST. 1 (2012) (suggesting that judges rely on false ideas about Islam to decide cases that involve Muslims).

²⁷ Augustine & Augustine, *supra* note 13, at 27–30, 36–39 (chronicling the adoption and elimination of the Financial Interest in Syndication (Fin-Syn) Rules and major media corporation’s subsequent profit driven agenda in marketing news for pecuniary gain).

²⁸ SLAUGHTER & GUTENSON, *HIJACKED*, *supra* note 7, at 42–51. For a comprehensive analysis of this common conflation, with a focus on the theological development and political activities of President Obama, see generally R. WARD HOLDER & PETER B. JOSEPHSON, *THE IRONY OF BARACK OBAMA: BARACK OBAMA, REINHOLD NIEBUHR AND THE PROBLEM OF*

assumption that the descriptive terms are used interchangeably, their actual meanings in context are quite different.²⁹ In discussing the differences, the authors argue that:

[A]s a general rule, the terms *liberal* and *conservative* are abstractions that identify *hypothetical* positions. We suspect that, when push comes to shove, there are relatively few Americans who neatly fall into either blanket “conservative” or “liberal” identifiers. In fact, rather than thinking of these as positions, it is far more accurate to think of our theopolitical commitments being mapped to two spectrums . . . One spectrum is for political commitments and the other for theological commitments.³⁰

Furthermore, as a key in describing evangelical’s social practices *before* the Regan elections and his courtship of evangelical voters,³¹ the authors describe Dr. Ron Sider’s involvement in founding the organization Evangelicals for Social Action (ESA) in 1978 and ESA’s adoption of the 1974 Lausanne Covenant, promulgated by the International Congress on World Evangelization that met at Lausanne, Switzerland in July 1974.³² In describing the empathic, action-oriented tenants of faith embraced by ESA, the authors note “[t]he Lausanne Covenant clearly distinguished the neo-evangelical movement from the errors of rigid fundamentalism that focused only on the hopes of a heaven to come, as well as from modern liberalism, which affirmed social justice but did not hold the same high view of Scripture.”³³ The authors also write of evangelicals’ social progressivism and their common link with the Wesleyan philosophy upon which American Methodism was founded.

Evangelicals were tackling social issues, addressing the needs for

CHRISTIAN STATECRAFT (2012).

²⁹ As an example of the theological contrast between the terms “conservative” and “liberal,” and how they differ from the common political meaning, conservative theologians like the late John Gresham Machen, a professor of New Testament at Princeton Theological Seminary, argued for an infallible interpretation of the original Bible. *See, e.g.*, WILLIAM HORDERN, A LAYMAN’S GUIDE TO PROTESTANT THEOLOGY 53–62 (rev. ed. 2002). Conversely, liberal theologians like the late Walter Rauschenbusch, a pioneer of the Social Gospel, believed Christianity had to move past the rigidity of an orthodoxy detailed in ancient creeds and into a modern world with Christ-like action. *Id.* at 80–88. Rauschenbusch’s theology was influenced by a belief that the Bible had inaccuracies and discrepancies among its authors, thus bearing inherent limitations. *See* PAUL M. MINUS, WALTER RAUSCHENBUSCH: AMERICAN REFORMER 39–40 (1988).

³⁰ SLAUGHTER & GUTENSON, HIJACKED, *supra* note 7, at 46 (emphasis in original).

³¹ *See* Barringer Gordon, *supra* note 11 and accompanying text.

³² SLAUGHTER & GUTENSON, HIJACKED, *supra* note 7, at 19–20.

³³ *Id.* at 21.

economic justice and environmental care. The evangelical renewal was showing promise in leading a movement that was inclusive of spiritual, racial, economic, and environmental transformation. Evangelical churches were on the verge of a promising awakening that would be a demonstration of John Wesley's vision of a biblical countercultural community that would embrace both personal and social holiness.³⁴

II. THEOLOGICAL AND SOCIOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT

Everything changed in the 1980s. Along came Reagan and the conflation of theology and political ideology which followed.³⁵ In rejecting this politically expedient mesh, the authors rhetorically pose the following questions:

Where in Jesus' teachings do we find the outline of a conservative or liberal economic platform? And when did we begin to align ourselves with political positions and candidates that may align with Jesus' moral and ethical mandates in one area but are divergent in many others? How do Jesus' teachings on war, divorce, and our responsibility to the poor influence our attitudes and responses?³⁶

Indeed, these are questions that both "liberals" and "conservatives" must address as they blend religion and politics.

The authors invite the reader to be smart. Moreover, they remind the reader of Jesus' one overarching command: To love one another.³⁷ When did loving one another become the bigotry of anti-gay rhetoric?³⁸ When did loving one another become the racism of segregation in the church?³⁹ When did loving one another turn into a xenophobic hatred

³⁴ *Id.* at 22.

³⁵ *Id.* at 34.

³⁶ *Id.* at 27.

³⁷ *Id.* (citing John 13:34–35).

³⁸ See generally Lisa Sowle Cahill, *Homosexuality: A Case Study in Moral Argument*, in *HOMOSEXUALITY IN THE CHURCH: BOTH SIDES OF THE DEBATE* 61, 74 (Jeffrey S. Siker, ed. 1994) (using dialectical points of analysis to describe the "problem of homosexuality" in Christian ethics).

³⁹ See generally RICHARD S. NEWMAN, *FREEDOM'S PROPHET: BISHOP RICHARD ALLEN, THE AME CHURCH, AND THE BLACK FOUNDING FATHERS* 63–66 (2008) (describing the infamous bigotry and segregation in Philadelphia's St. George's then-Methodist Episcopal Church that led to the formation of the Free African Society as a precursor to the African Methodist Episcopal Church). See also ALBERT J. RABOTEAU, *CANAAN LAND: A RELIGIOUS HISTORY OF AFRICAN AMERICANS* 23–24 (2001) (describing the bigotry at St. George's church).

toward Muslims?⁴⁰

While inviting the reader to be smart, the authors use the inerrant view of scripture whereby many rely on one statement and apply it as a universal generalization.⁴¹ Examples of such overgeneralizations may include assuming that all Muslims are terrorists simply because one Muslim was a terrorist, or assuming that all lesbians and gays are atheist because someone knows an individual who is lesbian or gay and also happens to be atheist. As the authors highlight, any logic reaching such stereotypical generalizations in the name of religion is, unfortunately, misplaced.⁴²

III. THE WAY FORWARD

The conflation of religion and politics described in *Hijacked* is part of American history.⁴³ Sadly, it has also influenced social policy.⁴⁴ As the

⁴⁰ See, e.g., EDWARD W. SAID, *COVERING ISLAM: HOW THE MEDIA AND THE EXPERTS DETERMINE HOW WE SEE THE REST OF THE WORLD* 3–5 (rev. ed. 1981) (chronicling the media’s anti-Islamic rhetoric taking root in the 1970s when they were described as an “enemy” responsible for the United States’ high gas prices).

⁴¹ See SLAUGHTER & GUTENSON, *HIJACKED*, *supra* note 7, at 53–67.

⁴² See *id.*

⁴³ History unambiguously shows that the United States was founded with a clear separation between “church and state.” C. FRED KLEINKNECHT, *ANCHOR OF LIBERTY* 25 (1987) (“Before any other principle, the Bill of Rights underlines that State and Church, like oil and water, cannot mix. The world’s bloody history of state-sponsored religious terrorism was already clear in the 18th century.”). See also JUSTO L. GONZÁLEZ, *THE STORY OF CHRISTIANITY VOLUME II: THE REFORMATION TO THE PRESENT DAY* 94 (2010) (describing the persecution of Protestants by the Catholic English Queen Mary Tudor, nicknamed by the Protestants “Bloody Mary,” and the policies that became the law of England under a consolidated church and crown); *but see* DONALD L. DRAKEMAN, *CHURCH-STATE CONSTITUTIONAL ISSUES: MAKING SENSE OF THE ESTABLISHMENT CLAUSE 2* (1991) (noting that the separation between church and state is not expressly mentioned in the Constitution and was not actually addressed by the Supreme Court until its decision in *Everson v. Board of Education*, 330 U.S. 1 (1947)).

Notwithstanding the Framers’ decision to not expressly mention something that was so apparently implied, the United States has still been referenced as a so-called “Christian nation.” See, e.g., *County of Allegheny v. ACLU*, 492 U.S. 573, 678 (1989) (Kennedy, J., concurring in part and dissenting in part). Such references still remain the subject of great debate. See generally DAVID BARTON, *ORIGINAL INTENT: THE COURTS, THE CONSTITUTION, & RELIGION* 39 (2008) (acknowledging that America is pluralistic, but arguing that the country remains “tolerant of other religions *only* because it [i]s a Christian nation.”) (emphasis in original) (internal citations omitted).

⁴⁴ As evidence of contemporary attempts to proselytize, TLC was scheduled to begin airing a new reality show about American Muslims living in Dearborn, Michigan called *All-American Muslim*. See Fahima Haque, *Russell Simmons Buys Ads for “All-American Muslim,”* WASH. POST, (Dec. 13, 2011, 9:47 AM), http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/therootdc/post/russell-simmons-buys-ads-for-all-american-muslim/2011/12/13/gIQAp5dmrO_blog.html.

authors attempt to move forward—away from the bad and toward the good—they propose solutions to eradicate the problem of theological and ideological conflation.⁴⁵ In moving from “description to prescription,”⁴⁶ some of the authors’ recommendations include: being aware, selecting news sources with care, resisting the seduction of sound bites, and not allowing anecdotal evidence to outweigh statistical assessment.⁴⁷ Each of the foregoing is briefly addressed in turn.

A. BEING AWARE

When discussing awareness as the first step toward eradication, the authors invoke the image of a patient seeking medical assistance only for the physician to lament that if she had known of the situation sooner, something could have been done.⁴⁸ The authors make clear that recognizing the problem of theological and ideological conflation is the catalyst for finding a solution.⁴⁹

In an apolitical and pastoral tone, the authors write, “[a]s soon as our ideology trumps our theology, we lose our distinctive Christian voice and begin to sound more like a political party than like the church.”⁵⁰ In

However, amid protests and pressure from right-wing political and evangelical Christian groups, the publically traded national home improvement chain Lowe’s, withdrew its sponsorship of the reality show. *Id.* Hip-hop icon Russell Simmons expressed his disappointment and subsequently purchased the advertisement so that the show could air as originally scheduled. See Camille Mann, *Russell Simmons Weighs in on TLC’s “All-American Muslim” Ad Controversy*, CBS NEWS, (Dec. 13, 2011, 9:32 AM), http://www.cbsnews.com/8301-31749_162-57342090-10391698/russell-simmons-weighs-in-on-tlcs-all-american-muslim-ad-controversy/ (discussing how Lowe’s pulled its pledged advertisements from All-American Muslim in response to pressure from conservative evangelical groups). Lowe’s spokesperson Karen Cobb defended the store’s actions by claiming it was only one of approximately a dozen others to withdraw its support after the controversy. Edith Honan, *Lowe’s Defends Pulling Ads from Muslim TV Show*, REUTERS, (Dec. 12, 2011, 10:18 PM), <http://www.reuters.com/article/2011/12/13/us-media-muslim-lowes-idUSTRE7BC01D20111213>.

⁴⁵ Slaughter and Gutenson take issue when politics becomes the “lens for interpreting Scripture and the Christian tradition rather than the other way around.” SLAUGHTER & GUTENSON, *HIJACKED*, *supra* note 7, at 79. The authors’ admonition is not for Christians to stay out of politics, but rather to encourage Christians to be actively engaged in political endeavors, presupposing they will affiliate with the political party that best represents their ideological positions. *Id.* at 78–88.

⁴⁶ *Id.* at 77.

⁴⁷ *Id.* at 77–88.

⁴⁸ *Id.* at 78.

⁴⁹ *Id.*

⁵⁰ *Id.*

recognizing this as a societal issue, they note that “[i]t arises when political commitments become [the] lens for interpreting Scripture and the Christian tradition rather than the other way around. *This concern arises when our agreement with a party on a particular issue gets translated into wholesale support of that party on practically all issues.*”⁵¹ The authors also note, however, that “[a]ction follows recognition.”⁵² Therefore, in the case of the ill patient, the reader may draw the logical inference that since the physician caught the illness in sufficient time, there is no reason it should be fatal.⁵³

B. SELECTING NEWS SOURCES WITH CARE

The authors caution that the average citizen is “bombarded by a virtual nonstop stream of news bits.”⁵⁴ With the inherently biased way that news is “marketed” to the unknowing consumer,⁵⁵ and with the ease of technology exposing the Internet’s more than two billion worldwide users to blogs and opinion sites, consumers cannot unconditionally accept the veracity of all information.⁵⁶

Once people identify their own political biases, the potential to live in political and ideological isolation exists. Moreover, “[w]ith the breadth of information online and with the plethora of perspectives offered, any person with any set of ideological commitments could easily select a collection of news sources that would allow them to live major portions of their lives within the reassuring confines of an ideological bubble.”⁵⁷ Consequently, the authors recommend and encourage the reader to burst the ideological bubble of political isolation by making deliberate efforts to hear from balanced sources on a subject to ensure that ideas are appropriately challenged.⁵⁸ Indeed, in the post-Fairness Doctrine world where news is business, this may present a challenge.⁵⁹

⁵¹ *Id.* at 79 (emphasis added).

⁵² *Id.*

⁵³ *See id.* at 78–79.

⁵⁴ *Id.* at 80.

⁵⁵ *See supra* notes 24–25 and accompanying text.

⁵⁶ SLAUGHTER & GUTENSON, HIJACKED, *supra* note 7, at 81.

⁵⁷ *Id.*

⁵⁸ *See id.* at 82.

⁵⁹ *See generally* RICHARD DAVIS & DIANA OWEN, NEW MEDIA AND AMERICAN POLITICS at 18–19 (1998) (discussing how corporate interests incentivize media to sensationalize news to entertain and placate consumers in the name of capitalism); Kristine A. Oswald, Comment, *Mass Media and the Transformation of American Politics*, 77 MARQ. L. REV. 385, 386–87 (1994)

C. RESISTING THE SEDUCTION OF SOUND BITES

In cautioning to avoid the appeal of sound bites, the authors note that in contemporary society, time is at a premium.⁶⁰ Hence, while increasing amounts of information are available, it is hard not to give in to the lure of attention grabbing sound bites.⁶¹ The authors, therefore, invite the reader to develop and exercise a willingness to use available resources—including news outlets on both sides of the political spectrum and hopefully some objective ones in between—“to get past the simplistic solution to one that has the nuance necessary to address the complexities involved [in most political issues].”⁶² As *Hijacked* makes clear, making the time to understand issues and not simply relying on marketed news is not easy.

D. NOT ALLOWING ANECDOTAL EVIDENCE TO OUTWEIGH STATISTICAL ASSESSMENT

With news sources competing for consumers’ attention as they attempt to appeal to inherent biases, anecdotal truth may often preempt statistical facts.⁶³ Consequently, if one is to rely on the veracity of a news source, the authors caution the reader “to be careful to pick examples, not because they yield partisan gain or because they ‘prove’ what we want to be true . . . [but rather because they are] an accurate representation of the policy and programs in question, according to legitimate research statistics on the subject.”⁶⁴ Therefore, while making the conscience effort to be informed on political issues, the authors admonish the reader to consult nonpartisan government sources, as opposed to sensationalized and polarizing news sources that seek to entertain more so than to inform.⁶⁵

(“Many fear that the media companies will ignore the interests of their public audiences in order to attend to their stockholders. This in turn forces editorial decisions to be ultimately based upon making a profit, rather than informing the public.”). See also ORWELL ROLLS IN HIS GRAVE (Sag Harbor-Basement Pictures 2003), available at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g_IYGyIaK80 (last visited Feb. 16, 2013) (A documentary film that argues that after the Fairness Doctrine’s demise, corporate media elites market and sell inherently biased news for pecuniary gain.).

⁶⁰ See SLAUGHTER & GUTENSON, *HIJACKED*, *supra* note 7, at 83.

⁶¹ *Id.* at 85.

⁶² *See id.* at 83–85.

⁶³ *Id.* at 86–87.

⁶⁴ *Id.* at 87.

⁶⁵ *See id.* at 88.

IV. CONCLUSION: THE REVIEWER'S OBSERVATIONS

At the risk of appearing hypocritical and perhaps showing bias, there are times wherein the juxtaposition of religion and politics has significantly benefited the United States.⁶⁶ However, as a general rule America's recorded history from its establishment to early existence supports the premise that theologically-influenced or imposed politics are not good.⁶⁷

As *Hijacked's* authors describe, the current conflation of ideology and theology results from President Reagan's political expediency during the 1980s.⁶⁸ Indeed, the same conflation ruled the 1996 Republican National Convention and the adoption of the party's political platform.⁶⁹ Consequently, in the United States, the post-modern conflation of theology and political ideology seemingly inures to the benefit of one political party much more so than the other.⁷⁰

⁶⁶ See generally Jonathan C. Augustine, *Environmental Justice in the Deep South: A Golden Anniversary Reflection on Stimulus and Change*, 47 U.S.F. L. REV. (forthcoming 2013) (celebrating the fiftieth anniversary political activism of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s *Letter From Birmingham Jail* and arguing the American Civil Rights Movement and subsequent environmental justice movement led to, among other things, an environmentally "green" infrastructure and associated economic development in the South); ANDREW YOUNG, AN EASY BURDEN: THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT AND THE TRANSFORMATION OF AMERICA 326 (1996) (chronicling the clergy's political involvement that led to passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Voting Rights Act of 1965); TAYLOR BRANCH, AT CANAAN'S EDGE: AMERICA IN THE KING YEARS 1965-68, at 44-57 (2006) (describing the events of "Bloody Sunday," March 7, 1965, when clergy and laity marched across the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, Alabama demanding voting rights).

During the Civil Rights Movement in the twentieth century, committed clergy and laity both worked to fight racial discrimination in interstate commerce, and convince Congress and President Johnson to support the Voting Rights Act of 1965. See, e.g., Augustine, *The Theology of Civil Disobedience*, *supra* note 19, at 288-94.

⁶⁷ See, e.g., GEOFFREY R. STONE ET. AL., CONSTITUTIONAL LAW 1073 (3d ed. 1999) (describing how the Crown and Parliament "attempted vigorously to suppress opinions deemed pernicious"); GONZÁLEZ, *supra* note 43, at 94 (explaining how Catholic "Bloody Mary" earned her nickname for persecuting Protestants); Augustine & Augustine, *supra* note 13, at 19-22 (providing a historical basis for the Establishment Clause's adoption).

⁶⁸ See *supra* notes 9-11 and accompanying text.

⁶⁹ As Professor Nadine Strossen notes in writing about the conflation of religion and politics that led to former Senator Bob Dole receiving his political party's nomination for the presidency, "[t]he Christian Coalition's anti-liberties clout was highlighted by the 1996 Republican [National] Convention. The Coalition's delegates were supporters of his organization." Nadine Strossen, *Religion and Politics: A Reply to Justice Antonin Scalia*, 24 FORDHAM URB. L.J. 427, 430 (1997) (citing John Harwood, *Campaign '96: Conservation Christians Prove More Powerful Than Dole in Shaping the GOP Abortion Plank*, WALL ST. J., Aug. 7, 1996, § Politics & Policy, at A14).

⁷⁰ See, e.g., Dalia Sussman, *Who Goes to Church?*, ABC NEWS, Mar. 1, 2012,

While the authors expressly argue that “God is the God of justice,”⁷¹ they imply that God does not embrace the politics of polarization.⁷² Instead, the authors urge the reader to “live with a proactive biblical world-view [following the teachings and examples of Jesus, which] . . . seeks the common good of all God’s children and to care for all of God’s creation.”⁷³ Through encouraging churches to serve humanity in a commonality of belief rather than the division of politics,⁷⁴ the authors recommend that believers should “be engaged in the political process without becoming entangled in the partisan divide.”⁷⁵

To illustrate their point that core beliefs must transcend partisan politics, the authors use examples like former Democratic Representative and U.S. Ambassador Tony Hall,⁷⁶ and Dr. Theodore Wymyslo, a Republican nominated to serve as Director of the Ohio Department of Health by Governor John Kasich.⁷⁷ The examples of both men’s Christian commonalities and service across political party divides should be a basis of uniform motivation, not partisan division.

In closing, the authors issue a faith-based call to action.⁷⁸ Noting Judeo-Christian history, they emphasize that although the ancient Torah has 613 commandments, Jesus focused on two: loving God with one’s

<http://abcnews.go.com/US/story?id=90372&page=1> (reporting that nearly one-half of all Southerners attend weekly church service, forty-seven percent of Republicans do the same, and eighty-three percent of Americans consider themselves Christians); *see also* PEW FORUM, *supra* note 3 and accompanying text.

⁷¹ SLAUGHTER & GUTENSON, *HIJACKED*, *supra* note 7, at 17 (citing Old Testament biblical verses from Isaiah and Amos to support their argument).

⁷² *See id.* at 17–18.

⁷³ *See id.* at 111; *see also* HOWARD THURMAN, *JESUS AND THE DISINHERITED* 16–18 (1976) (noting Jesus’ empathetic embrace of the marginalized in society was due to his mother’s modest economic background). *See generally* Stephanie Buckhanon Crowder, *The Gospel of Luke*, in *TRUE TO OUR NATIVE LAND: AN AFRICAN AMERICAN NEW TESTAMENT COMMENTARY* 158 (Brian K. Blount ed., 2007) (providing an excellent exegetical commentary on Luke portraying Jesus as a champion of the marginalized in society).

⁷⁴ *See* SLAUGHTER & GUTENSON, *HIJACKED*, *supra* note 7, at 95–109.

⁷⁵ *Id.* at 111.

⁷⁶ *Id.* at 112–16 (describing Hall’s service as a Democrat in Congress, including his work with hunger relief programs, his efforts to improve international human-rights conditions, and his ongoing involvement in a nonpartisan Bible study prayer group with members of Congress from both political parties).

⁷⁷ *Id.* at 112–16 (detailing Wymyslo’s January 2011 appointment by the then-newly elected Kasich, Wymyslo’s financially poor “inner city” background, and how his faith motivates him to participate in public service by keeping him “directed and on track”).

⁷⁸ *See id.* at 125–29.

entire being and loving one's neighbor as one's self.⁷⁹ The authors then implore the reader to unite in service to others based on Jesus' issuance of a "new commandment" to love one another such that Jesus' followers can be recognized by the love they exhibit for others.⁸⁰ Love is not exhibited in partisan division. Instead, it manifests in unified action. Just as actions speak louder than words, a common commitment to service must speak louder than partisan division. Accordingly, the conflation of ideology and theology is misplaced in the church if it divides believers and stymies social progress. As the old cliché provides: "That which unites us, is far greater than that which divides us."

⁷⁹ *Id.* at 127 (citing *Matthew* 22:37–39).

⁸⁰ *Id.* at 127–28 (discussing *John* 13:34–35).