

The Rights Turn in Conservative Christian Politics

The Rights Turn in Conservative Christian Politics documents a recent fundamental change in American politics with the waning of Christian America. Rather than conservatives emphasizing morality and liberals emphasizing rights, both sides now wield rights arguments as potent weapons to win political and legal battles and build grassroots support. Lewis documents this change on the right, focusing primarily on evangelical politics. Using extensive historical and survey data that compares evangelical advocacy and evangelical public opinion, Lewis explains how the prototypical culture war issue – abortion – motivated the conservative rights turn over the past half-century, serving as a springboard for rights learning and increased conservative advocacy in other arenas. Challenging the way we think about the culture wars, Lewis documents how rights claims are used to thwart liberal rights claims as well as to provide protection for evangelicals, whose cultural positions are increasingly in the minority. Rights claims have also allowed evangelical elites to justify controversial advocacy positions to their base and to engage more easily in broad rights talk in new or expanded political arenas, from health care to capital punishment.

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The Rights Turn in Conservative Christian Politics

How Abortion Transformed the Culture Wars

ANDREW R. LEWIS

University of Cincinnati



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*To my wife, Kasey, for everything before, during, and after
And to my father, Tim, for inspiration*

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Abbreviations

ACA	Affordable Care Act
ACLJ	American Center for Law and Justice
ACLU	American Civil Liberties Union
AFL-CIO	American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations
AMA	American Medical Association
ANES	American National Election Study
BJC	Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty / Baptist Joint Committee for Public Affairs
CIs	Confidence Intervals
CJRS	Criminal Justice and Religion Survey
CLC	Christian Life Commission
CRC	Christian Reformed Church
DOMA	Defense of Marriage Act
ERA	Equal Rights Amendment
ERLC	Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission
FACE	Freedom of Access to Clinic Entrances
FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigation
FRC	Family Research Council
GSS	General Social Survey
HHS	Health and Human Services
IRS	Internal Revenue Service
LCMS	Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod
LGBT	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender
MTurk	Amazon’s Mechanical Turk
NAE	National Association of Evangelicals
NCC	National Council of Churches
n.d.	no date (on letter)

NFIB	<i>National Federation of Independent Businesses v. Sebelius</i>
NRLC	National Right to Life Committee
OR	Odds Ratio
RCIG	Religious Committee for Integrity in Government
RFRA	Religious Freedom Restoration Act
SBA List	Susan B. Anthony List
SBC	Southern Baptist Convention
SCHIP	State Children’s Health Insurance Program
SEs	Standard Errors
SSI	Survey Sampling International
UN	United Nations
U.S.	United States