

PRIMARY SOURCES FOR CHAPTER 29

CONSERVATISM RESURGENT, 1973–1988

SOURCE 29.1

Phyllis Schlafly, Excerpts from “What’s Wrong with ‘Equal Rights’ for Women?” (February 1972)

Phyllis Schlafly, a conservative activist since the early 1960s, grabbed national attention in the 1970s through her opposition to the proposed Equal Rights Amendment to the Constitution. She attacked feminists as “women’s libbers” who were antireligion, anti-free enterprise, and a threat to traditional American values. Schlafly’s efforts contributed to the failure of the amendment to win ratification by enough state legislatures.

Source: Phyllis Schlafly, “What’s Wrong with ‘Equal Rights’ for Women?” *Phyllis Schlafly Report* 5, no. 7 (February 1972): 1–4.

Of all the classes of people who ever lived, the American woman is the most privileged. We have the most rights and rewards, and the fewest duties. Our unique status is the result of a fortunate combination of circumstances.

1. We have the immense good fortune to live in a civilization which respects the family as the basic unit of society. This respect is part and parcel of our laws and our customs. It is based on the fact of life—which no legislation or agitation can erase—that women have babies and men don’t.

If you don’t like this fundamental difference, you will have to take up your complaint with God because He created us this way. The fact that women, not men, have babies is not the fault of selfish and domineering men, or of the establishment, or of any clique of conspirators who want to oppress women. It’s simply the way God made us.

Our Judeo-Christian civilization has developed the law and custom that, since women must bear the physical consequences of the sex act, men must be required to bear the other consequences and pay in other ways. These laws and customs decree that a man must carry his share by physical protection and financial support of his children and of the woman who bears his children, and also by a code of behavior which benefits and protects both the woman and the children.

The Greatest Achievement of Women’s Rights

This is accomplished by the institution of the family. Our respect for the family as the basic unit of society, which is ingrained in the laws and customs of our Judeo-Christian civilization, is the greatest single achievement in the entire history of women’s rights. It assures a woman the most precious and important right

of all—the right to keep her own baby and to be supported and protected in the enjoyment of watching her baby grow and develop. . . .

Do we want financial security? We are fortunate to have the great legacy of Moses, the Ten Commandments, especially this one: “Honor thy father and thy mother that thy days may be long upon the land.” Children are a woman’s best social security—her best guarantee of social benefits such as old age pension, unemployment compensation, workman’s compensation, and sick leave. The family gives a woman the physical, financial and emotional security of the home—for all her life.

The Financial Benefits of Chivalry

2. The second reason why American women are a privileged group is that we are the beneficiaries of a tradition of special respect for women which dates from the Christian Age of Chivalry. The honor and respect paid to Mary, the Mother of Christ, resulted in all women, in effect, being put on a pedestal. . . .

In other civilizations, such as the African and the American Indian, the men strut around wearing feathers and beads and hunting and fishing (great sport for men!), while the women do all the hard, tiresome drudgery including the tilling of the soil (if any is done), the hewing of wood, the making of fires, the carrying of water, as well as the cooking, sewing and caring for babies.

This is not the American way because we were lucky enough to inherit the traditions of the Age of Chivalry. In America, a man’s first significant purchase is a diamond for his bride, and the largest financial investment of his life is a home for her to live in. American husbands work hours of overtime to buy a fur piece or other finery to keep their wives in fashion, and to pay premiums on their life insurance policies to provide for her comfort when she is a widow (benefits in which he can never share).

The Real Liberation of Women

3. The third reason why American women are so well off is that the great American free enterprise system has produced remarkable inventors who have lifted the backbreaking “women’s work” from our shoulders. . . .

The real liberation of women from the backbreaking drudgery of centuries is the American free enterprise system which stimulated inventive geniuses to pursue their talents—and we all reap the profits. The great heroes of women’s liberation are not the straggly-haired women on television talk shows and picket lines, but Thomas Edison who brought the miracle of electricity to our homes to give light and to run all those labor-saving devices—the equivalent, perhaps, of a half-dozen household servants for every middle-class American woman. Or Elias Howe who gave us the sewing machine which resulted in such an abundance of readymade clothing. Or Clarence Birdseye who invented the process for freezing foods. Or Henry Ford, who mass-produced the automobile so that it is within the price-range of every American, man or woman.

The Fraud of the Equal Rights Amendment

In the last couple of years, a noisy movement has sprung up agitating for “women’s rights.” Suddenly, everywhere we are afflicted with aggressive females on television talk shows yapping about how mistreated American women are, suggesting that marriage has put us in some kind of “slavery,” that housework is menial and degrading, and—perish the thought—that women are discriminated against. New “women’s liberation” organizations are popping up, agitating and demonstrating, serving demands on public officials, getting wide press coverage always, and purporting to speak for some 100,000,000 American women.

It’s time to set the record straight. The claim that American women are downtrodden and

unfairly treated is the fraud of the century. The truth is that American women never had it so good. Why should we lower ourselves to “equal rights” when we already have the status of special privilege? . . .

Women’s Libbers Do Not Speak for Us

The “women’s lib” movement is not an honest effort to secure better jobs for women who want or need to work outside the home. This is just the superficial sweet-talk to win broad support for a radical “movement.” Women’s lib is a total assault on the role of the American woman as wife and mother, and on the family as the basic unit of society.

Women’s libbers are trying to make wives and mothers unhappy with their career, make them feel that they are “second-class citizens” and “abject slaves.” Women’s libbers are promoting free sex instead of the “slavery” of marriage. They are promoting Federal “day-care centers” for babies instead of homes. They are promoting abortions instead of families. . . .

Modern technology and opportunity have not discovered any nobler or more satisfying

or more creative career for a woman than marriage and motherhood. The wonderful advantage that American women have is that we can have all the rewards of that number-one career, and still moonlight with a second one to suit our intellectual, cultural or financial tastes or needs.

And why should the men acquiesce in a system which gives preferential rights and lighter duties to women? In return, the men get the pearl of great price: a happy home, a faithful wife, and children they adore.

If the women’s libbers want to reject marriage and motherhood, it’s a free country and that is their choice. But let’s not permit these women’s libbers to get away with pretending to speak for the rest of us. Let’s not permit this tiny minority to degrade the role that most women prefer. Let’s not let these women’s libbers deprive wives and mothers of the rights we now possess.

Tell your Senators NOW that you want them to vote NO on the Equal Rights Amendment. Tell your television and radio stations that you want equal time to present the case FOR marriage and motherhood.

WORKING WITH SOURCES

1. What faults does Schlafly identify in the women’s liberation movement?
2. How does she defend traditional female roles?

SOURCE 29.2

Paul Weyrich, Excerpt from “Building the Moral Majority” (August 1979)

In 1979, Paul Weyrich joined other conservative Christians, Catholic and Protestant, in founding the Moral Majority. The group sought to rally religious conservatives behind Republican candidates and make the Republican Party more responsive to their moral and religious concerns. In this article published in 1979, Weyrich explained the importance of creating a lobbying group that brought together formerly antagonistic groups of Christians through their opposition to abortion, gay rights, and the defense of traditional values.

Source: Paul Weyrich, “Building the Moral Majority,” *Conservative Digest*, August 1979, 18–19.

The family will be to the decade of the 1980s what environmentalism and consumerism have been to the 1970s and what the Vietnam war was to the 1960s.

It is possible that the enemies of the family and society may at last have set up a situation where the majority in this nation who still subscribe to moral principles and traditional values can unite into a cohesive political movement to change the direction of the country.

There was, in fact, a moral majority of sorts who were in power in this country for many years, into the early part of this century. But the Scopes trial and the revolt against Prohibition swept these fundamentalists, if you will, out of power, and they have been on the defensive ever since, until recent times.

Television and the new breed of religious leader, exemplified by the Rev. Jerry Falwell and by Pat Robertson of the 700 Club, have given life and effectiveness to the Word of God as articulated by these men, who are not ashamed to pronounce that the Bible is the unerring truth. Unlike many of their predecessors, these "electronic preachers" understand the linkage between the religious and moral issues and the politics of our time.

Meanwhile, the Second Vatican Council of the Catholic Church has produced a whole new dimension which its modernist advocates did not intend. The liberal Catholic promoters of the excesses of Vatican II had a vision of a one-world Church, void of doctrine and beliefs, united at last with the "near beer" versions of mainline Protestantism. It is true, of course, that since Vatican II the social gospel advocates in the Catholic and Protestant churches have been working ever more closely together. But the "ecumaniacs" had not counted on a reverse coalition. Now, however, the true-believing Gospel-oriented Catholics, having been told by the hierarchy that they should seek accommodation with their Protestant brethren, have taken to working with fundamentalist/evangelical

Protestants in, for example, the right-to-life movement rather than with liberal Protestants in boycotting grapes with Cesar Chavez.

The alliance has produced great results. The media often portray the right-to-life movement as a tool of the Catholic bishops. Movement insiders know it is a truly grassroots effort and that if anything the Catholic bishops have hindered its success. Any typical right-to-life gathering these days is a microcosm of the moral majority, with urban ethnic Catholics, Gospel-believing Protestants, Mormons and Orthodox Jews working together.

The upshot of this new alliance is that hundreds of thousands, perhaps millions, of lives have been saved because of the visibility of the issue. We never hear about these lives. They don't make the statistical counts. These are the babies born of the mothers who have heard the message that abortion is murder.

Because of the strong political reaction against abortion, the necrophiliac agenda for euthanasia, limiting the number of children a family may have (population control) and other overt antifamily schemes has been slowed down considerably.

And the movement has given teenagers of this generation a cause, something more important than themselves, for which to work. In this "era of the self," no other political movement has managed to accomplish anything like it.

What the right-to-life movement has managed to put together on the abortion issue is only a sample of what is to come when the full range of family and educational issues becomes the focus of debate in the 1980s.

The homosexual rights advocates, genetic engineers and militant secular humanists who insist on their religion in the schools had better understand what is happening.

The threat to the family has caused leaders of various denominations to put aside their sectarian differences and, for the first time in decades, agree on basic principles worth fighting

for. This is no false unity based on papering over doctrinal differences. The various leaders of the individual communities have given up none of their beliefs in order to cooperate. Rather, the pro-family movement is a recognition that the moral majority must be put together as a coalition—because our very right to worship as we choose, to bring up our families in some kind of moral order, to educate our children free from the interference of the state, to follow the commands of Holy Scripture and the Church are at stake. These leaders have concluded it is better to argue about denominational differences at another time. Right now, it is the agenda of those opposed to the Scriptures and the Church which has brought us together. . . .

The alliance of which Falwell spoke has great potential and political implications. Clear-cut moral choices can be offered the American voter for the first time in decades. The alliance on family issues is bound to begin to look at the morality of other issues such as SALT and the unjust power that has been legislated for union bosses.

What is more, all of this occurs at a time when the political parties have declined to

the point where, in certain parts of the country, they are no longer taken seriously.

It is a coalition which can work. It can be the basis for a Christian democratic movement rooted in the authentic Gospel, not the social gospel.

Each part of the coalition brings something useful. The fundamentalist/evangelical Protestants bring a knowledge of and devotion to the Bible which no politician can shake. In addition, they have mastered the use of television and radio for their efforts, and this will make communications easier. The Catholics and Eastern Orthodox bring philosophical underpinnings which can help make the coalition impervious to attack, so that this alliance will not be swept away as happened earlier in this century. The Catholics also bring with them their rich cultural traditions from places like Ireland and Italy which can serve well during these times of attack on the family. The Mormons bring a superb knowledge of organization and outreach, and the Orthodox Jews bring not only family tradition but the ability to be productively aggressive.

WORKING WITH SOURCE

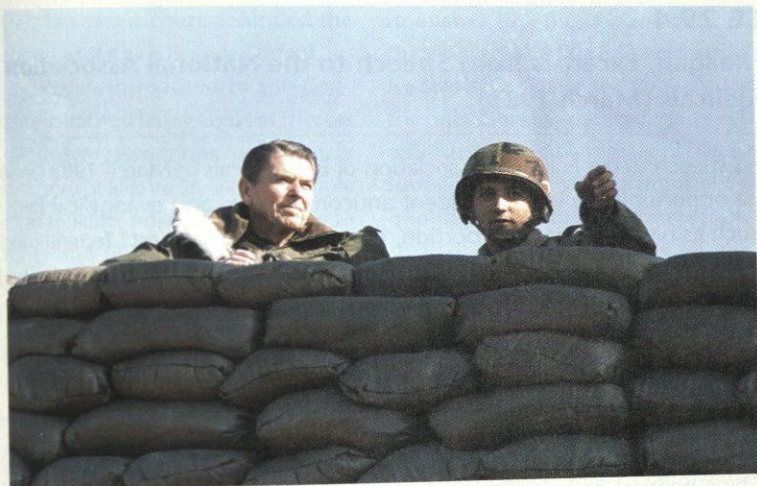
1. How did controversies over abortion rights and school prayer create, as Weyrich saw it, a basis for political alliance between evangelical Protestants and Catholics?

SOURCE 29.3

Visual Documents: Ronald Reagan Imagery

As a candidate for president and throughout his first term, Reagan spoke in strident tones about the Communist threat, the need to rearm America, and his determination to roll back Soviet influence in the third world. His unapologetic, muscular patriotism was displayed in White House photographs and in his fans' identification of him with action hero "Rambo." In 1988, near the end of his presidency, as relations with the Soviet Union improved, he visited Moscow and posed for a picture near the Kremlin.

Sources: AP Photo/Scott Stewart; MAI/Landov.



Second Lt. Charles A. Preysler, U.S. Army, Guard Post Commander, points out positions to President Ronald Reagan, from the south side of the DMZ in South Korea, November 13, 1983. AP Photo/Scott Stewart.



Ronald Reagan posing with Mikhail Gorbachev near the Kremlin. MAI/Landov.

WORKING WITH SOURCES

1. How did Reagan use imagery to appeal to patriotic sentiment?
2. How did his supporters use popular culture to boost his Superman image?

SOURCE 29.4**Ronald Reagan, Excerpts from Speech to the National Association of Evangelicals (March 1983)**

Reagan's speech to the National Association of Evangelicals in March 1983 provided him with the opportunity to link his strident anticommunism and evangelical faith to social issues such as his opposition to abortion, high taxes, and "activist" federal judges. Government policies, he argued, must be consistent with precepts contained in the Bible.

Source: Remarks at the Annual Convention of the National Association of Evangelicals in Orlando, Florida, March 8, 1983. Ronald Reagan Presidential Library, National Archives and Records Administration, <http://www.reagan.utexas.edu/archives/speeches/1983/30883b.htm>.

I want you to know that this administration is motivated by a political philosophy that sees the greatness of America in you, her people, and in your families, churches, neighborhoods, communities—the institutions that foster and nourish values like concern for others and respect for the rule of law under God.

Now, I don't have to tell you that this puts us in opposition to, or at least out of step with, a prevailing attitude of many who have turned to a modern-day secularism, discarding the tried and time-tested values upon which our very civilization is based. No matter how well intentioned, their value system is radically different from that of most Americans. And while they proclaim that they're freeing us from superstitions of the past, they've taken upon themselves the job of superintending us by government rule and regulation. Sometimes their voices are louder than ours, but they are not yet a majority. . . .

Let me state the case as briefly and simply as I can. An organization of citizens, sincerely motivated and deeply concerned about the increase in illegitimate births and abortions involving girls well below the age of consent, some time ago established a nationwide network of clinics to offer help to these girls and, hopefully, alleviate this situation. Now, again, let me say, I do not fault their intent. However, in their well-intentioned

effort, these clinics have decided to provide advice and birth control drugs and devices to underage girls without the knowledge of their parents. . . .

Is all of Judeo-Christian tradition wrong? Are we to believe that something so sacred can be looked upon as a purely physical thing with no potential for emotional and psychological harm? And isn't it the parents' right to give counsel and advice to keep their children from making mistakes that may affect their entire lives? . . .

More than a decade ago, a Supreme Court decision literally wiped off the books of 50 States statutes protecting the rights of unborn children. Abortion on demand now takes the lives of up to 1½ million unborn children a year. Human life legislation ending this tragedy will some day pass the Congress, and you and I must never rest until it does. Unless and until it can be proven that the unborn child is not a living entity, then its right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness must be protected.

You may remember that when abortion on demand began, many, and, indeed, I'm sure many of you, warned that the practice would lead to a decline in respect for human life, that the philosophical premises used to justify abortion on demand would ultimately be used to justify other attacks on the sacredness of human life—infanticide or mercy killing. Tragically enough, those warnings proved all

too true. Only last year a court permitted the death by starvation of a handicapped infant. . . .

Recent legislation introduced in the Congress by Representative Henry Hyde of Illinois not only increases restrictions on publicly financed abortions, it also addresses this whole problem of infanticide. I urge the Congress to begin hearings and to adopt legislation that will protect the right of life to all children, including the disabled or handicapped.

Now, I'm sure that you must get discouraged at times, but you've done better than you know, perhaps. There's a great spiritual awakening in America, a renewal of the traditional values that have been the bedrock of America's goodness and greatness.

One recent survey by a Washington-based research council concluded that Americans were far more religious than the people of other nations; 95 percent of those surveyed expressed a belief in God and a huge majority believed the Ten Commandments had real meaning in their lives. And another study has found that an overwhelming majority of Americans disapprove of adultery, teenage sex, pornography, abortion, and hard drugs. And this same study showed a deep reverence for the importance of family ties and religious belief.

I think the items that we've discussed here today must be a key part of the Nation's political agenda. For the first time the Congress is openly and seriously debating and dealing with the prayer and abortion issues—and that's enormous progress right there. I repeat: America is in the midst of a spiritual awakening and a moral renewal. And with your Biblical keynote, I say today, "Yes, let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream." . . .

And this brings me to my final point today. During my first press conference as President,

in answer to a direct question, I pointed out that, as good Marxist-Leninists, the Soviet leaders have openly and publicly declared that the only morality they recognize is that which will further their cause, which is world revolution. I think I should point out I was only quoting Lenin, their guiding spirit, who said in 1920 that they repudiate all morality that proceeds from supernatural ideas—that's their name for religion—or ideas that are outside class conceptions. Morality is entirely subordinate to the interests of class war. And everything is moral that is necessary for the annihilation of the old. . . .

They must be made to understand we will never compromise our principles and standards. We will never give away our freedom. We will never abandon our belief in God. And we will never stop searching for a genuine peace. But we can assure none of these things America stands for through the so-called nuclear freeze solutions proposed by some. . . .

Yes, let us pray for the salvation of all of those who live in that totalitarian darkness—pray they will discover the joy of knowing God. But until they do, let us be aware that while they preach the supremacy of the state, declare its omnipotence over individual man, and predict its eventual domination of all peoples on the Earth, they are the focus of evil in the modern world. . . .

I believe we shall rise to the challenge. I believe that communism is another sad, bizarre chapter in human history whose last pages even now are being written. I believe this because the source of our strength in the quest for human freedom is not material, but spiritual. And because it knows no limitation, it must terrify and ultimately triumph over those who would enslave their fellow man.

WORKING WITH SOURCES

1. What specific evils did Reagan associate with Communism?
2. Why did Reagan believe that religious faith was an antidote to Communism?