

## DOCUMENT 27.2

**Jerry Falwell | We Must Return to Traditional Religious Values, 1980**

Socially conservative evangelical Christians opposed the feminist movement, abortion rights, gay rights, and other forces they believed contributed to the secularization of American society. Southern Baptist preacher Jerry Falwell was one of the Christian Right's most powerful leaders. He founded the Thomas Road Baptist Church and Liberty University, in Lynchburg, Virginia, as well as the Moral Majority political organization. The following selection illustrates Falwell's merging of religious beliefs with a conservative political agenda.

**Explore**

We must reverse the trend America finds herself in today. Young people between the ages of twenty-five and forty have been born and reared in a different world than Americans of years past. The television set has been their primary baby-sitter. From the television set they have learned situation ethics and immorality—they have learned a loss of respect for human life. They have learned to disrespect the family as God has established it. They have been educated in a public-school system that is permeated with secular humanism. They have been taught that the Bible is just another book of literature. They have been taught that there are no absolutes in our world today. They have been introduced to the drug culture. They have been reared by the family and by the public school in a society that is greatly void of discipline and character-building. These same young people have been reared under the influence of a government that has taught them socialism and welfarism. They

have been taught to believe that the world owes them a living whether they work or not. . . .

It is now time to take a stand on certain moral issues, and we can only stand if we have leaders. We must stand against the Equal Rights Amendment, the feminist revolution, and the homosexual revolution. We must have a revival in this country. . . .

As a preacher of the Gospel, I not only believe in prayer and preaching, I also believe in good citizenship. If a labor union in America has the right to organize and improve its working conditions, then I believe that the churches and the pastors, the priests, and the rabbis of America have a responsibility, not just the right, to see to it that the moral climate and conscience of Americans is such that this nation can be healed inwardly. If it is healed inwardly, then it will heal itself outwardly.

Source: Jerry Falwell, *Listen America!* (New York: Doubleday, 1980), 17–18.

**Interpret the Evidence**

- According to Falwell, what are the biggest problems facing American society?
- What solutions does Falwell propose?

**Put It in Context**

What contribution did Falwell make in expanding the base of the New Right?

observed, “is like a baby, an alimentary canal with a big appetite at one end and no sense of responsibility at the other.” His winning combination of support for conservative economic and social issues carried him to the presidency.

Reagan triumphed over Jimmy Carter and John Anderson, a moderate Republican who ran as an independent candidate (Map 27.3). The high unemployment and inflation of the late 1970s worked in Reagan's favor. Reagan appealed to a coalition of conservative Republicans

and disaffected Democrats, promising to cut taxes and reduce spending, to relax federal supervision over civil rights programs, and to end what was left of expensive Great Society measures and affirmative action. Finally, he energized members of the religious right, who flocked to the polls to support Reagan's demands for voluntary prayer in the public schools, defeat of the Equal Rights Amendment, and a constitutional amendment to outlaw abortion.