3. Jerry Falwell

LISTEN AMERICA! (1980)

The political influence of fundamentalist groups in the United States waned considerably after the 1920s, and by the early 1970s it was negligible. Then a new variety of social issues—feminism, the “sexual revolution,” drug culture, etc.—prompted several evangelical Christians to mobilize and organize like-minded believers into a political force. By 1980, their informal network of political action groups such as the Moral Majority was well enough developed to play a pivotal role in the election of the conservative Republican Ronald Reagan as president that year. The Moral Majority was founded in 1974 by the popular Baptist preacher Jerry Falwell (1933—), a pioneer in televised evangelism with his “Old-Time Gospel Hour.” In the excerpt below from his book Listen America!, Falwell explains his conviction that the political and social health of the nation is in decline and that this condition stems directly from a much deeper spiritual crisis. Fundamental “biblical values,” he argues, are more important than ever in a society besieged by the “secular humanist” creed of self-indulgence above all else. More specifically, Falwell identifies new political developments—the women’s rights movement, the gay rights movement, and misguided attempts to separate church and state—as dangerously exacerbating the problem. Only a return to the Christian family and nation that he envisions will reverse the moral decay and forestall certain divine wrath. The genius of Falwell and other modern fundamentalist leaders in picking up on a widespread sense of national malaise and proposing a “biblical” solution to the problem has allowed evangelical political activism to spread far beyond a small, concerned core of believers to permeate every aspect of local and national politics today.

Why do we have so few good leaders? Why is it that political and judicial decisions are made that horrify America? You will find that when society begins to fall apart spiritually, what we find missing is the mighty man, that man who is willing, with courage and confidence, to stand up for that which is right. We are hard-pressed to find today that man in a governmental position, that man of war, that judge, that prophet, that preacher who is willing to call sin by its right name. Vanishing from the scene is the prudent, the wise person, the ancient, the old, the honorable people, the grandparents who will stand up for righteousness year after year, generation after generation, and be an example to us. For the first time in history, we
have few elderly honorable people on the national scene. We have few we can look to and say, “Here is an example of godliness in leadership.” Instead we find confusion and selfishness, which is destroying the very basis of our society.

We must review our government and see where our leadership has taken us today and where our future leaders must take us tomorrow if we are to remain a free America. It is a sad fact today that Americans have made a god of government. They are looking to government rather than to God, who ordained government. The United States is a republic where laws rule. Although the people of the United States have a vote, America is not a democracy in the sense that the majority rules. Her citizens elect representatives who represent them and govern them by laws. I believe that God promoted America to a greatness no other nation has ever enjoyed because her heritage is one of a republic governed by laws predicated on the Bible.

America is facing a vacuum of leadership not only in regard to her elected officials, but also among her citizens who are not standing for what is right and decent. We need in America today powerful, dynamic, and godly leadership. Male leadership in our families is affecting male leadership in our churches, and it is affecting male leadership in our society. As we look across our nation today we find a tremendous vacuum of godly men who are willing to be the kind of spiritual leaders who are necessary not only to change a nation, but also to change the churches within our nation and the basic units of our entire society, our families.

If a man is not a student of the Word of God and does not know what the Bible says, I question his ability to be an effective leader. Whatever he leads, whether it be his family, his church, or his nation, will not be properly led without this priority. God alone has the wisdom to tell men and women where this world is going, where it needs to go, and how it can be redirected. Only by godly leadership can America be put back on a divine course. God will give national healing if men and women will pray and meet God's conditions, but we must have leadership in America to deliver God's message.

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.

I believe that America was built on integrity, on faith in God, and on hard work. I do not believe that anyone has ever been successful in life without being willing to add that last ingredient—diligence or hard work. We now have second- and third-generation welfare recipients. Welfare is not always wrong. There are those who do need welfare, but we have reared a generation that understands neither the dignity nor the importance of work...
selves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.”

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.

It is not easy to go against the tide and do what is right. This nation can be brought back to God, but there must first be an awareness of sin. The Bible declares, “Righteousness exalteth a nation: But sin is a reproach to any people” [Prov 14:34]. It is right living that has made America the greatest nation on earth, and with all of her shortcomings and failures, America is without question the greatest nation on the face of God’s earth. We as Americans must recommit ourselves to keeping her that way.

I am positive in my belief regarding the Constitution that God led in the development of that document, and as a result, we here in America have enjoyed 204 years of unparalleled freedom. The most positive people in the world are people who believe the Bible to be the Word of God. The Bible contains a positive message. It is a message written by 40 men over a period of approximately 1,500 years under divine inspiration. It is God’s message of love, redemption, and deliverance for a fallen race. What could be more positive than the message of redemption in the Bible? But God will force Himself upon no man. Each individual American must make His choice.

Men and women today try to rationalize their sins by calling them shortcomings or errors. Many modern theologians evade the word “sin.” It is time that we began calling sin by its right name and calling for what is America’s only hope—a biblical and spiritual awakening in the lives of her people. The Bible declares, “For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” [Rom 6:23].

We live in a world under God’s judgment. Until man realizes that his greatest problem is sin and that this is what has alienated him from God, his Creator, there can be little hope of curing the chaotic conditions in our nation and world. Countless people are searching desperately for something that will bring inner peace and stability to their lives. People are lonely and filled with fear about the future, about failure, about death.

Men and women cannot ignore God, live as they please, and expect to be happy and blessed. This is, however, precisely what has happened. Men and women have placed their priorities on acquiring tangible possessions and achieving tangible goals. Man, rather than God, has been placed at the center of all things. Humanism in some form has taken the place of the Bible. Secular humanism has become the religion of America. Through education and the media, man is constantly being told that he is nothing more than a machine.

According to Webster’s New Collegiate Dictionary, humanism is “a doctrine, attitude, or way of life centered on human interests or values; a philosophy that asserts the dignity and worth of man and his capacity for self-realization through reason and that often rejects supernaturalism.” Humanism is man’s attempt to create a heaven on earth, exempting God and His Law. Humanists propose that man is in charge of his own destiny. Humanism exalts man’s reason and intelligence. It advocates situation ethics, freedom from any restraint, and defines sin as man’s maladjustment to man. It even advocates the right to commit suicide and recognizes evolution as a source of man’s existence. Humanism promotes the socialization of all humanity into a world commune.

Christianity is ruled out of humanism and is said to be an obstacle to human progress and a threat to its existence. Mao Tse-tung once said, “Our God is none other than the masses of the people. Ye shall be as Gods.” The first version

I believe that at the foundation of the women's liberation movement there is a minority core of women who were once bored with life, whose real problems are spiritual problems. Many women have never accepted their God-given roles. They live in disobedience to God's laws and have promoted their godless philosophy throughout our society. God Almighty created men and women biologically different and with differing needs and roles. He made men and women to complement each other and to love each other. Not all the women involved in the feminist movement are radicals. Some are misinformed, and some are lonely women who like being housewives and helpmeet and mothers, but whose husbands spend little time at home who take no interest in their wives and children. Sometimes the full load of rearing a family becomes a great burden to a woman who is not supported by a man. Women who work should be respected and accorded dignity and equal rewards for equal work. But this is not what the present feminist movement and equal rights movement are all about.

The Equal Rights Amendment is a delusion. I believe that women deserve more than equal rights. And, in families and in nations where the Bible is believed, Christian women are honored above men. Only in places where the Bible is believed and practiced do women receive more than equal rights. Men and women have differing strengths. The Equal Rights Amendment can never do for women what needs to be done for them. Women need to know Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior and be under His Lordship. They need a man who knows Jesus Christ as his Lord and Savior, and they need to be part of a home where their husband is a godly leader and where there is a Christian family.

Right living must be re-established as an American way of life. We as American citizens must recommit ourselves to the faith of our fathers and to the premises and moral foundations upon which this country was established. Now is the time to begin calling America back to God, back to the Bible, back to morality! We must be willing to live by the moral convictions that we claim to believe. There is no way that we will ever be willing to die for something for which we are not willing to live. The authority of Bible morality must once again be recognized as the legitimate guiding principle of our nation. Our love for our fellow man must ever be grounded in the truth and never be allowed to blind us from the truth that is the basis of our love for our fellow man.

As a pastor and as a parent I am calling my fellow American citizens to unite in a moral crusade for righteousness in our generation. It is time to call America back to her moral roots. It is time to call America back to God. We need a revival of righteous living based on a proper confession of sin and repentance of heart if we are to remain the land of the free and the home of the brave! I am convinced that God is calling millions of Americans in the so-often silent majority to join in the moral-majority crusade to turn America around in our lifetime. Won't you begin now to pray with us for revival in America? Let us unite our hearts and lives together for the cause of a new America...a moral America in which righteousness will exalt this nation.