

**A Moral President:  
The Conservative Christian Values of George W.  
Bush and their Influence on his Decision Making**

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## **ABSTRAKT**

Táto bakalárska práca ukáže, že prezident Bush je veriaci muž a jeho konzervatívne kresťanské hodnoty ovplyvnili výkon jeho politickej funkcie, nie len v odpovedi na útoky z 11. septembra 2001 ale aj na otázky sociálnej politiky ako výskum kmeňových buniek a otázku potratu. Táto práca sa tiež zaoberá Bushovým evanjelickým štýlom prezídiovania a nedostatkom akademickej literatúry o vplyve viery na jeho rozhodovanie. Práca tiež tvrdí, že časť Bushovej kritiky od začiatku a počas jeho prezídiovania je neoprávnená na základe toho, že zostal verný svojim ideálom počas celého výkonu funkcie.

Klíčová slova: George Bush, Laura Bush, Bill Clinton, Spojené štáty, Dick Cheney, Tony Blair, Al Gore, prezident, súcitný konservatizmus, evanjelický, kresťanský, viera, hodnoty, potrat, výskum kmeňových buniek, homosexuálne manželstvo, AIDS, terorizmus, vojna proti teroru, zlosyni, svetová ekonomická kríza, voľby.

## **ABSTRACT**

This thesis will demonstrate that President George W. Bush is a man of faith whose conservative Christian values influenced his policy making, not just in the 9/11 response but in matters of social policy such as stem cell research and abortion. It also deals with Bush's evangelical presidential style and the lack of scholarly literature about the influence of his faith on his decision making. It will also argue that some of the criticism of Bush during and since his presidency is unwarranted on the grounds that he remained true to his ideals throughout.

Keywords: George Bush, Laura Bush, Bill Clinton, United States, Dick Cheney, Tony Blair, Al Gore, president, compassionate conservatism, evangelical, Christian, faith, values, abortion, stem cell research, same sex marriage, AIDS, terrorism, war on terror, evil doers, global economic crisis, election.

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## INTRODUCTION

It became clear that President Bill Clinton's questionable behavior during his second term would influence whom Americans would choose as their next president. Ultimately, in an extremely tight contest, and despite the fact that he actually lost the popular vote, George W. Bush won the electoral-college and became the forty-third U.S. president. Bush took with him into the White House the idea of "compassionate conservatism." He desired to implement a faith-based initiative, the core principle of which was funding religious groups that would in turn help improve society. Whereas President Ronald Reagan had espoused what critics came to refer to as "trickle-down" economics, Bush seemingly was prepared to push forth a program of "trickle-down" moral rectitude. However, the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 turned Bush into a wartime president and forced policy shifts. Many scholars have criticized Bush for his cowboy-like, gunslinging approach to foreign affairs in the post 9/11 world. His idea that if people and governments were not with America they were against America antagonized many, both foreign and domestic. However, such critics do not take into account the fact that in 2000 the nation chose a self-described man of faith whose values were dictated by his religious beliefs. He was not the first American president to be guided by religious principles, but thanks to the Muslim extremist attack on a predominantly Christian nation in 2001, Bush's response, influenced in large part by his evangelical Christian beliefs, brought religion to the forefront. And Bush, through his words and actions, kept it there. In a time of crisis, a nation needs a steadfast leader. Moreover, the U.S. has long been a country based on religious values and principles. Americans were upset about political partisanship and disputes over separation between church and state. Furthermore, politicians either avoided or failed to compromise on some key controversial issues. This thesis will demonstrate that President Bush is a man of faith whose conservative Christian values influenced his policy making, not just in the "war on terror" but in matters of social policy such as stem-cell research and abortion. Moreover, it will argue that some of the criticism of Bush during and since his presidency is unwarranted on the grounds that he remained true to his ideals throughout. He was consistent in his beliefs and actions. In this regard, any criticism of the Bush presidency should be overshadowed by the fact that the country twice elected him president, knowing exactly what to expect from him.

## 1 BACKGROUND

### 1.1 Bill Clinton and the Public Response to the Clinton-Lewinsky Scandal

While in office (January 20, 1993 – January 20, 2001) President Bill Clinton engaged in an extramarital affair with White House intern Monica Lewinsky. Political scientists analyzed the public response to this scandal, hypothesizing that the American public would deem the President's actions inappropriate. Surprisingly, several polls suggested the opposite, that U.S. citizens did not necessarily disapprove of his supposed misconduct. Despite general public apathy towards the charges, Clinton became only the second president (out of forty-two) to be impeached by the House of Representatives. Political scientist Arthur H. Miller comments that despite the fact that half of the Senate proclaimed him guilty on perjury and obstruction of justice charges (articles of impeachment) he was not forced to leave office.<sup>1</sup> Miller then concludes: "Throughout the year of the Clinton-Lewinsky scandal and subsequent impeachment, a large majority of the American public, while not condoning his behavior, remained firmly fixed in their support of President Clinton."<sup>2</sup>

Many factors played a role in explaining this public mindset. With little doubt, one of the factors explaining Clinton's high job approval rating of 51 percent in January 1998 when the scandal broke was the state of the economy. Generally speaking, when the economy is in bad shape the popularity of the current president decreases. In contrast, if the economy is strong the popularity tends to rise. The latter was the case for Bill Clinton.<sup>3</sup> Political scientists Regina G. Lawrence and W. Lance Bennett concluded in an article concerned with the public opinion about the Clinton-Lewinsky scandal that besides media coverage there were other factors behind the numbers: a period of peace, a growing economy, and Clinton's political skills. A poll from August 1998 asked Americans what made them approve of the way Clinton was handling his job as president. The answers included: "handling of the economy", "overall job performance", "foreign policy" and the differentiation between public and private conduct. The factor of growing partisanship

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<sup>1</sup> Arthur H. Miller, "Sex, Politics, and Public Opinion: What Political Scientists Really Learned from the Clinton- Lewinsky Scandal," *PS: Political Science and Politics* 32 (1999): 721-729, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/420161> (accessed January 12, 2012).

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Molly W. Sonner and Clyde Wilcox, "Forgiving and Forgetting: Public Support for Bill Clinton during the Lewinsky Scandal," *PS: Political Science and Politics* 32 (1999): 554-557, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/420644> (accessed January 17, 2012).

among Democrats and Republicans was one of the most influential. Democrats stood behind their man in time of crisis no matter what, but Republicans and independents were less keen on supporting such behavior.<sup>4</sup> The Republicans had to face the fact that the majority of Americans perceived the Lewinsky affair as a private matter. Their main focus was on Clinton's illegal behavior, and therefore they tried to change the public's perception and demanded that the case be public. The division among Americans over the president's honesty and integrity continued to be vast.<sup>5</sup>

The reliability of the poll results has also been questioned. Robert Jenson comments on the polls carried out during the period of the scandal: "What does that have to do with what people think about marital fidelity, adultery, lying under oath, rape and the meaning of 'high crimes and misdemeanors'?" Jenson suggested that although the poll questions differed, they followed the same pattern and the range could not possibly cover all the aspects needed to get a proper evaluation of what people really thought.<sup>6</sup>

Americans noted the lack of response to the affair from religious leaders. However, Richard Neuhaus suggested that the reason was clear: there was no need for a group of specialists on morality to proclaim Clinton's conduct as immoral because the public did not argue about it at all. There was no need for clerical expressions of outrage.<sup>7</sup> At the Washington National Cathedral, Rev. Nathan D. Baxter gave a sermon titled "Fig Leaves, Politics and Christian Faith". What Baxter criticized was not only Clinton and his loyal followers who perceived the affair as a private matter but also the general public which according to the polls valued economic prosperity over morality. Baxter called morality a crucial factor for power in politics and argued that leaders who lack modesty and morality are incapable of leading. The main concern in the sermon was about the nation caring more about money than soul. The message conveyed the immorality of the affair regardless of politics.<sup>8</sup> The need to bring morality back into politics became obvious.

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<sup>4</sup> Regina G. Lawrence and W. Lance Bennett, "Rethinking Media Politics and Public Opinion: Reactions to the Clinton-Lewinsky Scandal," *Political Science Quarterly* 116 (2001): 425-446, <http://www.jstor.org/pss/798024> (accessed January 17, 2012).

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Richard Neuhaus, "Bill Clinton and the American Character," *First Things: A Monthly Journal of Religion and Public Life* 63 (1999), <http://www.firstthings.com/article/2009/02/bill-clinton-and-the-american-character-25> (accessed January 26, 2012).

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Call Thomas, "Liberal Clergyman condemns Clinton's immorality," *Human Events* 54 (1998): *Academic Search Complete*, EBSCOhost (accessed January 26, 2012).

## 1.2 The 2000 Presidential Election in the U.S.

The presidential election of 2000 was the most partisan in thirty years. One factor causing the increased partisanship might have been an attempt by the Republicans to get rid of Clinton during his second term. Al Gore, Clinton's vice-president, was pitted against Republican candidate Gov. George W. Bush of Texas. Bush perceived the tension that prevailed in Washington and promised in his campaign that if elected he would become "a uniter, not a divider".<sup>9</sup> Before the election even started many scholars agreed with Stephen Hess's assertion that "George W. Bush and Al Gore are very different from Bill Clinton...they are not great campaigners."<sup>10</sup> Early predictions made by six political scientists suggested that the race would be close but that Al Gore would prevail. Their predictions were weighty because this group had accurately predicted the winner of every presidential election since 1952.<sup>11</sup>

Throughout the campaign, there was a dispute between Bush and Gore concerning Gore's association and dissociation from Clinton. On the one side there was Al Gore, about whom it was uttered by Republicans that he would be unable to change the immorality in Washington due to his close ties to the unethical and corrupt culture of the previous presidency. Striving to disassociate himself from the shadow of the former president, Al Gore presented himself as his "own man", moved the campaign HQ to Nashville, Tennessee and appointed Senator Joseph Lieberman as his vice presidential nominee. The unexpected choice of Senator Lieberman was interesting because he was the first Jewish vice presidential candidate, injecting a sense of religion and possibly morality into Gore's campaign. Moreover, Lieberman was also the first high-ranking Democrat to criticize the Lewinsky scandal in the Senate. However, towards the end of his campaign Gore realized the need to associate himself with Bill Clinton to remind people of the strong and growing economy. He thereby wanted voters to understand that he as a former vice president was also part of the office which implemented policies that helped the economy in the first place.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Garry C. Jacobson, "The Bush Presidency and the American Electorate," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 33 (2003): 701-729, <http://www.jstor.org/pss/27552534>, (accessed August 22, 2011).

<sup>10</sup> Corey Cook, "'The Contemporary Presidency': The Permanence of the 'Permanent Campaign': George W. Bush's Public Presidency," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 32 (2002): 753-764, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27552439> (accessed August 22, 2011).

<sup>11</sup> James L. Golden, "The Clinton Factor in the Presidential Contest of 2000," *American Behavioral Scientist* 44, no. 12 (2001): 2269-87.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

On the other side there were Republicans trying to associate Gore with President Clinton and his moral deficits. *Washington Post* journalist David Broder wrote that “Republicans have lost no opportunity to link Gore to the tawdry portions of the Clinton record.” Bush’s vice presidential candidate Dick Cheney described Bill Clinton as “a flawed Democratic leader who presided over an administration marked by scandals that led to a corrupt moral culture.” Cheney believed that Gore would never escape from the “shadow” of the former president, saying, “we will never see one without thinking of the other”. George W. Bush repeatedly announced that in case elected president, “the country’s new leader would have an impeccable character reinforced by the moral traits of faith and responsibility.”<sup>13</sup>

Throughout his campaign Bush emphasized the significance of a candidate’s character. With his Republican nomination acceptance speech, delivered on 3 August 2000 he wanted Americans to see the connections between the immoral president and his potential successor:

My fellow citizens, we can begin again. After all the shouting, and all of the bitterness and broken faith, we can begin....Our country is ready for high standards and new leaders, and it won't be long now. An era of tarnished ideals is giving way to a responsibility era, and it won't be long now....The Founding Fathers' highest hope, as Robert Frost described it, was to "occupy the land with character." And that, 13 generations later, is still our goal: "To occupy the land with character".<sup>14</sup>

Republicans embraced this tactic to overshadow Gore’s advantage stemming from the peace and economic prosperity of the times, which were key instruments in the Democratic campaign.

By the end of election day, it was clear that the outcome would depend on Florida. The media proclaimed Gore as a winner at one time and Bush a few hours later but in the end they put Florida into the undecided category. Al Gore requested a recount shortly afterwards. On 8 December the Florida Supreme Court announced Al Gore as winner following a statewide manual recount. Bush appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court. On 12 December the U.S. Supreme Court decided that Florida’s chaotic recount violated the equal protection clause of the Constitution and announced that there is no possibility of a fair recount in time for Florida to participate in the electoral college and thus George W. Bush won Florida, thereby making him the forty-third president of the United States. Bush

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<sup>13</sup>Ibid.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid.

learned about the decision in a unique way.<sup>15</sup> “I had hoped to share my victory with twenty thousand people at the state capitol on election night. Instead, I probably became the first person to learn he had won the presidency while lying in bed with his wife watching TV.”<sup>16</sup> Even with this simple statement, Bush hinted at the fact that he was not Clinton and that the U.S. had chose a new type of leader, one who respected the institution of marriage.

### 1.3 Bush’s Reelection in 2004

The 2004 presidential race pitted Democratic Senator John Kerry of Massachusetts against the incumbent, President Bush. In the beginning of his campaign Bush told his father, “This election is going to come down to who knows how to lead, who will take on the big issues, and who can keep America safe.” Believing this, he introduced an ambitious second-term agenda including modernizing Social Security, reforming the immigration system, overhauling the tax code, continuing No Child Left Behind and the faith-based initiative, Medicare reform and fighting the war on terror.<sup>17</sup>

Same-sex marriage and abortion became the most important issues of the race. Senator John Kerry tried to degrade Bush by raising the issue of Vice President Cheney’s daughter’s lesbianism, thereby hoping to prevent conservatives from voting for Bush. However, an unwritten rule in American politics suggests that children’s personal lives are not misused for political purposes. In times of such negative campaigning, Bush drew energy and devotion from signs he encountered on the campaign trail stating “God Bless You” or “I pray for you.”<sup>18</sup>

Facing criticism over his 9/11 response, some of which was generated by film director Michael Moore, and failing to fully implement his faith-based initiative, Bush still remained true to his values. These values, which included the belief that marriage should be between a man and a woman and that a human embryo has the same rights as any other human being, stemmed from his religious persuasion. And he was not alone; many Americans shared these values. In fact, according to a national election poll, 22 percent of eligible voters claimed “moral values” to be the most important issue for them, and of

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<sup>15</sup> George Walker Bush, *Decision Points* (New York: Random House, 2010):77-78.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 81.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 287.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 290.

these, 80 percent voted for Bush.<sup>19</sup> This strong support was reflected in Bush's reelection in 2004 by a wide margin. Once again the result of the election reflected the nation's desire for a moral and determined leader who upholds his integrity as well as values in any situation.

#### 1.4 George W. Bush, the Formative Years

George Bush was raised in Midland, Texas by his biological parents, George H.W. Bush and Barbara Bush. He attended Phillips Academy in Andover, Massachusetts just like his father. He graduated from Yale with a degree in history. After Yale, George served as a pilot in the army national guard. After some years of part-time jobs in different fields he was accepted to Harvard Business School. In 1976 he was caught driving under the influence by local police in Maine. He paid a \$150 fine and the case was closed. In July 1977 George met his future wife Laura Welch at a friend's barbecue. Their wedding took place later that year in Midland. In 1981 Laura gave birth to their two daughters Jenna and Barbara. After the twins were born Bush's family started to go to church regularly. Bush's habitual nature and everyday drinking created problems. At the age of forty, after rediscovering faith and love, he quit drinking alcohol. Bush claims in his autobiography that he has not had a drop since. "God helped open my eyes, which were closing because of booze", states Bush in hindsight. Since then he has felt a strong connection to his favorite hymn: "I once was lost, but now am found/ was blind, but now I see."<sup>20</sup> To get closer to the understanding of the Bible he joined his friends in a community Bible study at the First Presbyterian Church in Midland.

George W. Bush became interested in politics at age thirty-one when he campaigned for the Midland district congressional seat. He lost. In 1980 George H.W. Bush became vice president under Ronald Reagan, a position he held for two terms. In 1988 he campaigned for the presidency himself. George W. Bush joined his father's campaign team in Washington where he obtained invaluable experience in organization and public speaking. Furthermore, he learned the importance of having a good team surrounding you throughout the whole process. On 8 November 1988, George H.W. Bush became the forty-

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<sup>19</sup>Kevin M. Kruse, "Compassionate Conservatism: Religion in the Age of George W. Bush," in *The Presidency of George W. Bush: A First Historical Assessment*, ed. Julian E. Zelizer (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010): 227-251.

<sup>20</sup>George Walker Bush, *Decision Points* (New York: Random House, 2010):1-64., Laura Welch Bush, *Spoken from the Heart* (New York: Scribner, 2010).

first president of the United States, defeating the Democratic nominee, Michael Dukakis of Massachusetts. In 1989 George W. Bush became a co-owner and the public-face of the Texas Rangers baseball team in Dallas. This new job included giving speeches in public and promoting the franchise. Later, he together with other team owners won taxpayer approval for a new stadium. In 1992 George H.W. Bush was defeated for reelection by the Democrat Bill Clinton. After his father left politics, George W. Bush decided to campaign against Ann Richards in the race to become the Governor of Texas. He won and was inaugurated in 1995. Reelected in 1998, he became the first Texas governor to serve consecutive four-year terms. The morning before his second inauguration Bush was struggling with the idea of running for the presidency. He and his family attended a sermon at First United Methodist Church in Austin where they invited a pastor from Dallas, Reverend Mark Craig, to deliver the sermon. In the sermon the pastor was talking to Bush, conveying the message that the country needs moral and ethical leaders. George W. Bush heard the call and with the full support of his family announced his candidacy in June 1999 in Iowa.<sup>21</sup>

### 1.5 Bush Presidency Highlights

During his presidency, which lasted two consecutive terms, George W. Bush faced several unforeseen challenges. Bush entered the presidency with many goals which were often supplanted by current events that dwarfed the importance of what he had previously set out to do. As a result, Bush perhaps more than most presidents, spent much of his presidency responding to crises.

On 11 September 2001 symbols of U.S. pride in New York City and Washington, D.C. were either damaged, destroyed or in threat of being destroyed by terrorists. At this time of national crisis Americans sought reassurance from their leader. Through Bush's public appearances and committing the American military to a war against terrorism he proved his leadership skills.<sup>22</sup>

On 20 September 2001 Bush announced the so called "War on Terror". He said that no matter how long it would take, the U.S. would be fighting terrorism globally by any military means until all terrorist groups and countries providing a safe haven for them were

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<sup>21</sup>George Walker Bush, *Decision Points* (New York: Random House, 2010):1-64.

<sup>22</sup>Jon Roper, "The Contemporary Presidency': George W. Bush and the Myth of Heroic Presidential Leadership," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 34 (2004): 132-142, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27552568> (accessed August 22, 2011).



defeated. The government began implementing legislation increasing the power of both the president and security and intelligence agencies, affording them the opportunity to make decisions and act instantly. These included the establishment of a new Office of Homeland Security, the signing the USA PATRIOT Act, etc. As part of the war on terror the Department of Justice produced memos in which physical torture including waterboarding was justified in cases of captured terrorists. As a justification for these memos Vice President Cheney said, "We have exercised, I think, the legitimate authority of the president under Article II of the Constitution as commander in chief in order to put in place policies and programs that have successfully defended the nation."<sup>23</sup> During the Bush presidency, the U.S. fought in Afghanistan and Iraq. By all these measures, which were not always approved by all concerned, Bush managed to keep his country safe from other attacks on the home front.<sup>24</sup>

Security aside, same-sex marriage came into question in 2003 when religious conservatives, the majority of which were Republicans, worried that courts would legalize it after a Supreme Court decision to legalize sodomy. Therefore, they desired to implement a constitutional amendment that would define marriage as between a man and a woman. In February 2004 Bush fully supported pursuing the amendment. Although this campaign was stopped in the Senate, it provided Bush with huge support from conservative Christians in the 2004 election.<sup>25</sup>

Hurricane Katrina struck the U.S. Gulf coast in August 2005. The levy system protecting New Orleans failed and consequently caused a mega-disaster, flooding and destroying mostly lower-class, predominantly black neighborhoods. The response of the government was not sufficient because of FEMA lacking experienced leaders, poor federal-city-presidential cooperation, inadequate evacuation and an overall slow response. President Bush was criticized for mishandling the situation, prompting an apology to an irritated public for the deficient response to the disaster.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>23</sup>Timothy Naftali, "George W. Bush and the 'War on Terror'," in *The Presidency of George W. Bush: A First Historical Assessment*, ed. Julian E. Zelizer, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010):65-73.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid.

<sup>25</sup>Kevin M. Kruse, "Compassionate Conservatism: Religion in the Age of George W. Bush," in *The Presidency of George W. Bush: A First Historical Assessment*, ed. Julian E. Zelizer (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010): 227-251.

<sup>26</sup>Richard T. Sylvès, "President Bush and Hurricane Katrina: A Presidential Leadership Study," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 604 (2006): 26-56, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25097780> (accessed August 22, 2011).

Then a global economic crisis unfolded in 2006. After 9/11 there was a mild slowdown in the U.S. economy. To keep the country out of recession the Federal Reserve eased monetary policy. As home prices were rising financial institutions provided easy credit to subprime borrowers (people with poor credit or low incomes) and they started buying houses. Everything was working until the prices of real estate started plummeting and interest rates increased. People were unable to make their loan payments and institutions experienced liquidity problems. In August 2007 the subprime crisis spread throughout the world because American banks had reduced their risk by selling loan baskets containing sub-prime loans to European banks. It became apparent that rate cuts would not solve the liquidity problem and the U.S. government needed to step in. The National Economic Stabilization Act was passed in 2008 to purchase mortgage-based securities and help the financial institutions to cope with liquidity problems. Bush believes that the Troubled Asset Relief Program (TARP) to buy failing bank assets prevented Americans from an economic catastrophe similar in scope to the Great Depression. Critics said that the collapse could have been prevented by stricter regulation and quicker intervention.<sup>27</sup> Throughout his presidency, Bush had to deal with many issues of importance: security, economic, moral. In making decisions, Bush relied on facts and the opinion of experts, but also inner conviction. As Bush once commented to a reporter, “I’m not a textbook player, I’m a gut player”.<sup>28</sup>

## 1.6 The Compassionate Conservatism of George W. Bush

Since the 1980s, conservative Christians have rallied behind the Republican Party. The conservative movement was established by the organizations of the Religious Right, which consisted of the Moral Majority and the Christian Coalition, and committed itself to secure the votes of conservative Christians for the Republican Party. The indicator of success of “modern conservatism” was the “widening religion gap” among voters. The number of religious people voting Republican increased throughout the 80s.

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<sup>27</sup>James T. Patterson, "Transformative Economic Policies: Tax Cutting, Stimuli, and Bailouts," in *The Presidency of George W. Bush: A First Historical Assessment*, ed. Julian E. Zelizer (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010): 114-138.

<sup>28</sup>D. Jason Berggren and Nicole C. Rae, "Jimmy Carter and George W. Bush: Faith, Foreign Policy, and an Evangelical Presidential Style," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 36 (2006): 606-632, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27552257> (accessed August 22, 2011).

Little success was achieved in issues such as abortion and gay rights, and a huge effort had been made to remove Bill Clinton from office, but it also failed. Such failures led to a crisis of trust. The co-founder of the Religious Right, Paul Weyrich, desperately proclaimed the movement a failure. He said, "I no longer believe that there is a moral majority." He was so disgusted by the politics that he called upon religious conservatives to escape and start living separate from politics. A similar crisis hit the Christian Coalition when it was investigated by the Federal Election Commission as well as the Internal Revenue Service. Consequently, some of the leaders left and the organization was declared "defunct."<sup>29</sup>

As a result of these developments, a solution to the problematic disputes between politics and religion was needed. Texas Governor George W. Bush offered one in the form of "compassionate conservatism", an ideology introduced by journalist and author Marvin Olasky. Many were skeptical about the actual phrase with some labeling it as "heartless". Many others felt it was just a marketing slogan. David Frum, a Republican speechwriter, came up with a joke mimicking a popular beer advertising campaign: "Love conservatism but hate arguing about abortion? Try our new compassionate conservatism- great ideological taste with less controversy."<sup>30</sup>

In July 1999 in Indianapolis, Bush announced "I know that economic growth is not the solution to every problem." In stating as much, Bush showed that his focus would not be on economics. Furthermore, he introduced the "faith-based initiative" which would nurture religious institutions and charities engaged in social welfare. In fact, he asked that \$8 billion worth of government funding and tax credits for donations be set aside for them annually. Moreover, small charities could obtain money for their poverty programs from the "Compassion Capital Fund" (\$200 million annually). Bush persisted in explaining that "Without more support and resources, both public and private, we are asking them [the organizations] to make bricks without straw." Compassionate conservatism became central to the Bush general election campaign. As the polls showed Bush secured votes from churchgoers, but their turnout at the polls decreased compared to previous years.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Kevin M. Kruse, "Compassionate Conservatism: Religion in the Age of George W. Bush," in *The Presidency of George W. Bush: A First Historical Assessment*, ed. Julian E. Zelizer (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010): 227-251.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

On 29 January 2001, Bush issued his first two executive orders as president, the first being the foundation of the White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives (WHOFBCI) and the second creating faith-based programs for five departments: Education, Health and Human Services, Housing and Urban Development, Justice, and Labor. As director of the WHOFBCI neither a Republican nor a religious leader but a political scientist, John DiIulio was chosen to maintain “pluralism”.<sup>32</sup>

However, the appointment did not have the promised effect. While Liberals criticized the initiative as merely funding religion, conservatives attacked it as “big government” spending a lot of taxpayer dollars. Moreover, the Religious Right was afraid of losing its autonomy and others were concerned with the actual donating to questionable religious groups. Failing to secure legislation to provide tax incentives for charities and religious organizations and politicizing the whole initiative led John DiIulio to resign, a move appreciated by many conservatives.<sup>33</sup>

Regarding the upcoming 2004 election, Republicans used WHOFBCI conferences about how to obtain federal grants for social programs as a political tool because their impact seemed significant. The president’s agenda also embraced issues targeted to attract the Religious Right voters. One of them was abortion. As far as abortion was concerned Bush appointed pro-life movement representatives into “prominent positions”. Furthermore he prohibited organizations performing abortions abroad from receiving federal funding (also known as “global gag rule”). The partial-birth abortion ban was legislated in November 2003, followed by The Unborn Victims of Violence Act (UVVA) in April 2004. The latter had a significant legal impact because the fetus in the mother’s womb began to be regarded as the second victim in the case of a pregnant woman being murdered.

As far as AIDS policy was concerned, Bush pledged to contribute \$200 million in 2001, increasing the amount to \$500 million in 2002, to the UN Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Malaria and Tuberculosis. Moreover, Bush shocked the public in January 2003 when he stated in his State of the Union Address that the U.S. would contribute \$15 billion in the following five years to fighting the disease worldwide. The pattern of the bill was based on the “ABC approach” standing for “abstain, be faithful and use condoms”. In Congress, the abstinence program was criticized by liberals while the usage of condoms

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<sup>32</sup>Ibid.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid.

was criticized by conservatives. The anti-abortion amendment was demanded but the bill was not implemented in a way that could pass. President Bush managed to engage religious conservatives in the global fight against AIDS and this was regarded as an unprecedented success by many.<sup>34</sup>

In regards to gay marriage, religious conservatives strived to add a constitutional amendment which would declare marriage as only between a man and a woman. In February 2004 after intense lobbying, Bush fully endorsed the federal marriage amendment proposal. It was believed that the question of same-sex marriage would be a defining issue of the 2004 election, and therefore Republicans tried hard to secure religious voters and their effort paid off. Conservative political theorist William Bennett argued that “President Bush now has a mandate to affect policy that will promote a more decent society, through both politics and the law... Now is the time to begin our long, national cultural renewal.” However, immediately after the election Bush focused on economic issues to satisfy liberals and postponed the promised amendment. Robert Knight of Concerned Women for America criticized Bush for riding the fence and not pursuing the promised agenda. Another controversial issue was the Shiavo case about a Florida woman in a persistent vegetative state whose husband wanted to disconnect her from life support. The case became a fight between conservatives and liberals. Bush signed a federal bill to keep her “alive”, which was considered a success for conservative Christians who perceived it as an “important moral issue”. However, Americans as well as the majority of conservatives and republicans thought that she should have been disconnected. Finally, the courts upheld Shiavo’s husband’s right to remove her feeding tube and allow her to die. By this case, the Conservative right failed to preserve the sanctity of a human life.<sup>35</sup>

Towards the end of the Bush presidency, the Religious Right was replaced by a new generation interested in “the poor, in racial reconciliation, in global poverty and AIDS, in the plight of women in the developing world”. The compassionate conservatism of George W. Bush did not solve the problems between religion and politics. The faith based initiative was seen as “a missed opportunity”, abortion rights and gay marriage issues as merely “electoral strategies”. As for the evangelical leaders of the new generation, they set an agenda based on their priorities which differed from the ones of their predecessors. Compassionate conservatism had great potential to solve the ongoing crisis between

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<sup>34</sup>Ibid.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid.

religion and politics, however, its potential was not fulfilled.<sup>36</sup> The faith-based initiative should have served as a compassionate means of helping, but many organizations took advantage of the idea and forgot about its initial aim.

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<sup>36</sup>Ibid.

## 2 CASE STUDIES

### 2.1 The Evangelical Presidential Style of George W. Bush

The scarce scholarly literature on the religious faith of George W. Bush lacks the scrutiny of its influence on his daily decision making as part of his presidential duties. The existing scholarship mentions Bush's religious rhetoric, his belief in universal values and his relationship with the religious-right but lacks analysis on his personal faith and its political usage.<sup>37</sup> In a recent work Jacobson noted that the most steadfast supporters of Bush were conservative Christians.<sup>38</sup>

According to Richard Neustadt, contemporary presidents should be activists, politicians with experience and should be passionate about politics. Moreover he claims that "The Presidency is a place for men of politics, for extraordinary politicians". Presidents therefore need to learn to compromise, they must exercise "the power to persuade" and "the power to persuade is the power to bargain." Furthermore, James David Barber also sees the relation between politics and an active approach as crucial for the proper "presidential character." Although the literature has long stated that such qualities are essential, only a few presidents, such as the Roosevelts, Kennedy, Reagan and Clinton have evinced such skills.<sup>39</sup>

However, these are not the only qualities that Americans have deemed electable. Take, as examples Presidents Woodrow Wilson, Jimmy Carter and George W. Bush, who rose to the fore as "men of faith" preferring the evangelical presidential style. For instance Bush informed Bob Woodward that he asks his "heavenly father" to give him strength. Neustadt contends that such presidents are bound to fail because they fail to understand the limits of presidential power and the unavailing strive for morality in the current political system. Even during the Wilson era German economist and sociologist Max Weber suggested two general rules for politicians: "politics is made with the head, not with other parts of the body or soul" and "whoever wants to engage in politics at all...has to realize...ethical

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<sup>37</sup>D. Jason, Berggren and Nicole C. Rae, "Jimmy Carter and George W. Bush: Faith, Foreign Policy, and an Evangelical Presidential Style," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 36 (2006): 606-632, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27552257> (accessed August 22, 2011).

<sup>38</sup>Gary C. Jacobson, *A Divider, Not a Uniter: George W. Bush and the American People* (New York: Pearson Longman, 2006): 151-157.

<sup>39</sup>D. Jason, Berggren and Nicole C. Rae, "Jimmy Carter and George W. Bush: Faith, Foreign Policy, and an Evangelical Presidential Style," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 36 (2006): 606-632, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27552257> (accessed August 22, 2011).

paradoxes.” Furthermore, he claimed that a responsible politician “must pursue the mundane, yet necessary, activities of compromise, bargaining, logrolling, pork spending, patronage, burden sharing, and the occasional use of force.” Although most presidents acknowledged God in a noncontroversial way they tried to avoid expressing their personal faith publicly and separated it from politics. Religious faith and moralism has, according to Neustadt and Webber, no use in the presidential office.<sup>40</sup>

However, the evangelical style could be described as openly making use of religious faith and moralizing rhetoric. Presidents embracing this style of presidency are usually excellent speakers using rhetorical language and mass media to connect with public. The fact that they are not professional politicians is illustrated in Bush’s comment to a reporter that “I’m not a textbook player, I’m a gut player”. He then went on to describe politics as “world of fakery, obfuscation and political back-shots.” David Frum commented that Bush has “a deep distaste for the necessary insincerities of political life.” Scholars generally agree with Weber and Neustadt that the evangelical style leads to failure in presidential conduct.<sup>41</sup>

Evangelicals, despite coming from various backgrounds, share similar traits. These include being protestant, “having a born again” experience, believing in Salvation through Christ, seeing the Bible as the sole authority, Christocentrism, personalism, a quest for personal holy living and a sense of mission to convert others. According to these traits Carl Henry called contemporary evangelical presidents Carter and Bush “spiritually regenerated sinners” who admitted that faith changed their lives and brought purpose to their lives- in this case joining politics and spreading the “good news” (faith).<sup>42</sup>

Bush won the Republican Party nomination and religious conservatives comprised the majority of his voters in 2000 as well as in 2004. As soon as he stepped into the White House, the ambience changed significantly. For example administration gatherings started with a prayer, no drinking or smoking was allowed and as former Bush speechwriter Frum said, if one wants to understand the “Bush White House” he must understand “the culture of modern Evangelicalism.” Frum adds that the first words Bush told him in the White House were “Missed you at Bible study.” During his life Bush was exposed to several protestant religious styles. As an infant he was baptized in the Episcopal Church which

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<sup>40</sup>Ibid.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid.



was his father's denomination, but he later joined his wife's Methodist church. Bush attributes his success in becoming president to his decision for Christ. As Frum quoted him in his book, "there is only one reason that I am in the Oval Office and not in a bar. I found faith. I found God. I am here because of the power of prayer." Michael Lind wrote about Bush that "No president since Jimmy Carter has been so obtrusive and insistent in sharing his religious faith and pressuring his fellow citizens to do so as well." Bush himself claimed that the mission to convert other people is not the president's goal but "to set an example, to make sound decisions, to respect religion, and, if asked to herald religion."<sup>43</sup>

Fred Greenstein recognizes six qualities to evaluate presidential job performance and these include: "public communicator," "organizational capacity," "political skill," "vision," "cognitive style," and "emotional intelligence." Evangelical presidents strive to see the world as it might be rather than as it is. The "evangelical" presidents have "political vision", which is one of the important qualities identified by Greenstein. Barber calls evangelical presidents "active" presidents. Before 11 September, Bush was not eager over interventions abroad or peace-making in the Middle East and distanced the United States from agreements with international scope such as the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty with Russia, the Kyoto protocol and the International Criminal Court. At that time his main concern was domestic policy, in particular the "faith-based initiative". The attack of the so-called "evil doers" on 9/11 acted as a catalyst for Bush's "democratic evangelism." After the attacks he changed course, committing himself "to rallying the armies of compassion in America, to help our fellow citizens in need," and "build a culture of life," and "defend the sanctity of marriage". Liberty and democracy, he claimed "are not American gifts to the world, they are God's, "and it would be America's responsibility to deliver these gifts to the world. This ideological shift led Bush to stand on the ruins of Ground Zero, and shout into a bullhorn promising the whole world that "the people who knocked these buildings down will hear of us soon." He became a war president. As he himself noted in his State of the Union address in 2004: "America is a nation with a mission. We're called to fight terrorism around the world, and we're waging that fight. As freedom's home and defender, we are called to expand the realm of human liberty. And by our actions in Afghanistan and Iraq, more than 50 million people have been liberated from tyranny."<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>43</sup>Ibid.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid.

Bush was persuaded that the terrorists attacked the U.S. because it is a home to democracy and freedom. The war on terror was according to Bush a fight between “good people and evil people”. Jacobson wrote that the support for his actions came mostly from conservative evangelical Christians who perceived him “as God’s instrument in the battle between good and evil.” Furthermore, a lack of trust in world leaders led Bush to acknowledge in the State of the Union address in 2004 that “America will never seek a permission slip to defend the security of our country.” No country would have the right to veto any decision made by the U.S. because “America has always been willing to do what it takes for what is right.”<sup>45</sup>

One of the most important traits of the evangelical style is the sharing of a bad experience with others and talking about it publicly and thereby connecting with the other people who may have similar experiences. In Greenstein’s words, “personalism is harnessed to a vision of public policy.” Another important trait is creating a bond with other people of faith. This can be illustrated by Bush’s close relationship with another world leader and man of faith, British Prime Minister Tony Blair. David Broder from the *Washington Post* wrote that Tony Blair was the only international leader who put so much of his personal prestige and party leadership on the line for the American president. When Bush was in London he responded to the charge that “The U.S. too frequently mixes faith and foreign policy.” He responded by the confession that Americans are a religious nation and that the American-British alliance is “an alliance of values and a shared mission in the world beyond the balance of power or the simple pursuit of interest.” As Frum wrote, Bush once remarked when he met Russian President Vladimir Putin that by looking “the man in the eye” he “was able to get a sense of his soul.” Bush obviously did not want to form alliance with leaders that did not share the same values and whom he could not trust.<sup>46</sup>

Neustadt and Weber argue that a president embracing the evangelical style will fail in their political duties due to their calmness and certainty stemming from their religion. Moreover, they might be seen as arrogant in their decision-making by foreign leaders, and that leads to losing allies who take a more secular view of the world. Bush was criticized for his view of the world after 9/11. For many leaders it seemed idealistic and unreal to see

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<sup>45</sup>Ibid.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid.

the world only in terms of good and evil and blamed Bush for not recognizing the complexity of the problems.<sup>47</sup>

On the other hand there is Greenstein with his theory that the confidence coming from strong faith enhances the “emotional intelligence” which he labels as the crucial presidential quality. He commented on Bush’s “emotional intelligence”, stating “whatever the merits of his actions his emotions appeared to have been well in hand.”<sup>48</sup> Furthermore, Greenstein also praised Bush for having vision because as he wrote “If a leader does not set his own goals others will set them for him.”<sup>49</sup> According to these statements it seems obvious that Greenstein sees the evangelical presidential style as viable and helpful in certain situations.<sup>50</sup> Sometimes, rationale thinking is not enough to make a sound decision. Evangelical faith gave Bush the tools and courage to manage even the most unexpected and difficult problems the United States and the world faced.

## 2.2 Bush’s Embryonic Stem Cell Research Decision

“Stem cells” are utility and repair body units that maintain and regenerate organs and tissues throughout our lives. Since the 1960s, adult stem cells have been extracted from bone marrow and umbilical cord blood mainly to be used for cancer treatment. However, stem cells from human embryos were first isolated in 1998. In contrast to the adult stem cells, the ones derived from embryos are “undifferentiated”, which means that these units are able to repair the human body because they have not been programmed to any bodily tissue yet. Therefore, they can be programmed to be the brain, the skin, the heart, the lungs or other specific tissue. Scientists believe that embryonic stem cell research can be used in treatment of various diseases including AIDS, diabetes, Alzheimer, Parkinson, spinal cord injuries and heart disease.<sup>51</sup>

The controversy surrounding embryonic stem cell research is the result of two clashing values. One is to protect early human life while the other is the solidarity with sick people who might possibly be cured with the help of stem cells. Democracies all over the world have taken various approaches to the issue. British legislation in 2001 allowed stem cell

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<sup>47</sup>Ibid.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid.

<sup>50</sup>Ibid.

<sup>51</sup>Matthew C. Nisbet, "Trends: Public Opinion about Stem Cell Research and Human Cloning," *The Public Opinion Quarterly* 68 (2004): 131-154, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3521541> (accessed March 1, 2012).

and cloning research under specific circumstances, as did the Japanese, Swedish and Israeli governments. On the other hand Germany, Poland, Ireland and Italy banned the research and cloning but allowed stem cells from “surplus” embryos to be imported. The issue of stem cell research belongs to the group of “value driven issues” such as abortion, euthanasia, same-sex marriage and capital punishment.<sup>52</sup>

In the U.S. the advocates of further research and the scientific community, seeing the potential of embryonic stem cells, asked the U.S. government for funding. Scientists later complained that they were unable to advance the treatments of health problems because of the ban on using cells from human embryos in federally funded projects. The advocates against the research argued that the required destruction of a human embryo was morally wrong and the government should not support such research. The opposition consisted mostly of religious and conservative elites. They believe that a human embryo deserves the same rights as any other human being and view its destruction as murder.

A 2003 *Newsweek* poll showed that 58 percent of the American public believed that the life begins as an embryo. In July 2001, 54 percent considered embryonic stem cell research morally wrong. However, they also noted that even though the research might be immoral it might still be necessary. Furthermore, the public opinion approving or disapproving the research using the “extra” embryos (already obtained) differed according to the polls sponsored by different organizations in 2001 prior to Bush’s televised address on the issue. For instance the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation (JDRF) designated a source of stem cells as extra embryos “donated to research” and listed diseases that stem cell research could help to cure. A survey revealed that 65 percent of the public supported the funding. On the other hand, a poll sponsored by the National Council of Catholic Bishops (NCCB) said that Congress wanted to provide funding for experiments using stem cells from human embryos and the live embryos would be destroyed in the first week of development to extract the cells. Then they asked, “Do you support or favor using your federal tax dollars for such experiments?” Unsurprisingly, 70 percent opposed the funding. The role of religion in the struggle over the moral status of the embryo was not a new phenomenon in areas such as assisted reproductive technologies (ART), preimplantation genetic diagnosis (PGD) and abortion with respect to the development stage of the fetus.

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<sup>52</sup>Thomas Banchoff, "Path dependence and Value-Driven Issues: The Comparative Politics of Stem Cell Research," *World Politics* 57 (2005): 200-230, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25054292> (accessed February 29, 2012).

The divisions in the view of the status of the human embryo produced a dispute over abortion policy to such an extent that the United States has been assumed to be fighting “culture wars” where religion played an important role. Overall, the public support for the research depended on the type of embryo used.<sup>53</sup>

On August 9, 2001 in his first televised address as a president, George W. Bush announced a compromise solution. Federal funding would be limited to research using existing stem cell lines. This meant that no further human embryos would be destroyed and that meant that the rule would be more restrictive than Clinton’s. However, Clinton administration guidelines stated how the informed consent process of the donors should look and that only frozen embryos, not fresh ones, were allowed to be used because ethicists agreed that it was an emotionally vulnerable time when a woman was trying to get pregnant. In contrast, Bush administration rules required “proper informed consent” but did not state what that exactly meant, and no prohibition concerning fresh embryos was mentioned. Bush made sure that no other embryos would be destroyed and thereby remained firm on his persuasion that even an embryo in its early stage has the same rights as any other human being.<sup>54</sup>

Some of the cells that could be used for research were obtained by the University of Wisconsin, which is a leading academic research institution and holds patents on Thomson’s stem cells. These cells were the first embryonic stem cells obtained in the United States by James Thomson. Bush promised that there are approximately sixty human embryonic stem cell lines available for study covered from federal funds. Lana Skirboll, National Institutes of Health director of science policy, confirmed this number and said that they are located in laboratories all over the world. Despite the fact that scientists were skeptical about the number and quality of cells, Skirboll assured them that “The NIH believes that all sixty cell lines meet the president’s criteria for federal funding.” The criteria were: cells must be from embryos left over from fertility treatments (not created for research); parents must not have been compensated for donating embryos; proper informed

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<sup>53</sup>Brian Salter and Charlotte Salter, "Bioethics and the Global Moral Economy: The Cultural Politics of Human Embryonic Stem Cell Science," *Science, Technology, & Human Values* 32 (2007): 554-581, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/29734004> (accessed March 8, 2012).; Matthew C. Nisbet, "Trends: Public Opinion about Stem Cell Research and Human Cloning," *The Public Opinion Quarterly* 68 (2004): 131-154, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3521541> (accessed March 1, 2012).

<sup>54</sup>Rick Weiss, "A Stem Cell Ethics Rules is Eased; Bush Decision May Add Colonies for Research," *The Washington Post* (Washington, D.C.), August 11, 2001.

consent must have been obtained; and the embryos must have been destroyed before 9 p.m. Aug. 9 (the day of the announcement).<sup>55</sup>

Shortly after Bush made his decision the first criticism came from Richard M. Doerfinger, the spokesman of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops who appeared on CNN and said, "I seem to be the only man in America who is against the president's policy." Later on he was joined by other leaders who criticized Bush's decision at the National Press Club in Washington. Some of them compared the research to medical experiments performed by the Nazis. It was then clear that the anti-abortion coalition was now divided. The president of the Family Research Council, Kenneth L. Connor, who believed that Bush would ban the funding for such research, commented on the anti-abortion activists who approved of Bush's decision, saying that "I find their positions difficult to square with the fundamental principle that human life is precious and ought to be preserved." He opined that some of the activists approved of the Bush decision out of loyalty to the president. Bush had been accused of breaking his campaign promise to outlaw the research on living embryonic cells, a pledge given to an anti-abortion group. Lauren Newell of the Christian youth group Saviour's Alliance for Lifting the Truth said: "I am ashamed of our president, who compromises and gives my generation the disposable human life mentality that human life can be picked apart, abused and destroyed. If the president wants to be a strong man and a moral man, then I urge him to reconsider his decision." And SALT was just one of many conservative Christian groups which disapproved of Bush's decision.<sup>56</sup>

On the other hand, the Bush decision also had its supporters. Public leaders of Christian right expressed their delight for a "Solomonic decision" and not spending federal money on "sacrificing" human embryos for research purposes. Moreover the largest anti-abortion organization, the National Right to Life Committee, as well as the founder of the Moral Majority, Rev. Jerry Falwell, and the founder of Focus on the Family, Dr. James C. Dobson, claimed to be "delighted" by Bush's decision. The founder of the Christian Coalition Pat Robertson declared the decision to be "an elegant solution to the thorny issue of stem research by firmly protecting the rights of the unborn." Bush was aware of the split in his "core constituency" and responded in a *Times* Op-Ed article where he mentioned the

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<sup>55</sup>Ibid.

<sup>56</sup>Laurie Goldstein, "Abortion Foes Split Over Plan on Stem Cells," *The New York Times* (New York City), August 12, 2001.

origins of the chicken pox vaccine which was developed from aborted fetal tissue. He said that once the vaccine worked the origins were not important. He wrote that “many ethical and religious leaders agree that even if the history of this vaccine raises ethical questions, its current use does not.”<sup>57</sup>

The controversy over the usage of human embryonic stem cells and consequent destruction of the embryo seemed to be resolved when in 2007 independent researchers from Japan and Wisconsin found a different way to obtain the not-yet-programmed stem cells. Adding four genes to the adult stem cells, they managed to create a stem cell very similar to the human embryonic stem cell that can be then turned into any of the two hundred and twenty cells found in a human body. Dr. Thomson from the University of Wisconsin commented that “By any means we test them [cells] they are the same as embryonic stem cells.” Moreover, Dr. Douglas A. Melton, co-director of the Stem Cell Institute at Harvard University described this method as “ethically uncomplicated.” The director of education at the National Catholic Bioethics Center Rev. Tadeusz Pacholczyk said: “Everyone was waiting for this day to come... You should have a solution here that will address the moral objections that have been percolating for years.” The White House also reacted positively saying that “Mr. Bush was ‘very pleased’ about the new findings... By avoiding techniques that destroy life, while vigorously supporting alternative approaches, President Bush is encouraging scientific advancement within ethical boundaries.”<sup>58</sup> By his decision, Bush upheld his conviction that human life is sacred and nobody has the right to end it by any means for any purpose either good or bad. At the same time he expressed his support for technological advancement in all fields of science but within moral boundaries.

### 2.3 Reproductive Health Policy and the Bush Administration

Since the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) which took place in Cairo in 1994, there has been a worldwide struggle to improve women’s reproductive health and rights. Countries from all parts of the world agreed on an united approach to the controversies over abortion, adolescent sexual life and reproductive health.

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<sup>57</sup>Ibid.

<sup>58</sup>Gina Kolata, "Scientists Bypass Need for Embryo to Get Stem Cells," *The New York Times* (New York City), November 21, 2007, <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/11/21/science/21stem.html?pagewanted=all> (accessed March 13, 2012).

Although it was the main promoter of the Cairo Programme of Action, the United States undermined it by its actions.<sup>59</sup>

After George W. Bush came into office, health care institutions in the U.S. were discouraged from offering contraceptive devices and insurance companies were discouraged from covering them. The government introduced abstinence-only education funded by taxpayer dollars. Teachers taking part in this program were discouraged from speaking about contraception except for examples of its failure. Moreover, the legality of abortion came into question. However, beliefs about sex, family, religion and fate are conflicting issues in many societies. The direct opposition on the part of the U.S. to the Cairo Program was unforeseen, though. The Republican Party managed to depict abortion rights and same-sex marriage as direct threats to society and promoted “moral values”. An alliance of religious conservatives strived to appoint anti-abortion Supreme Court judges who would make abortion illegal, overturning the 1973 Roe vs. Wade decision. After Bush’s reelection in 2004 the Republican Party gained control over the federal government and enhanced its influence within the Supreme Court by Bush appointing two conservative justices. Social conservatives emphasized that sex, pregnancy and relationships relate to family, gender, religion and values. They tried to hide the fact that contraception reduced unintended pregnancies (believing that a technological solution was absurd) and promoted a “faith-based utopian vision” where sexual intercourse was restricted to marital context. Therefore, the Bush administration preferred Christian ideals to scientific facts.<sup>60</sup>

Ethical questions arose due to inequality in reproductive health. The three main ethical frameworks of reproductive health were formulated: deontological ethics (stress given on moral obligations); utilitarian ethics (focus on good consequence) and feminist ethics (women’s voice heard and equality of genders).<sup>61</sup> Bioethicists focus on the ethical questions of biomedical research and biotechnology. They claim that “good ethics depend on scientifically sound facts.”<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Andrzej Kulczycki, "Ethics, Ideology, and Reproductive Health Policy in the United States," *Studies in Family Planning* 38 (2007): 333-351, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20454428> (accessed March 14, 2012).

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Rosalind P. Petchesky and Jennifer A. Weiner. "Global Feminist Perspectives on Reproductive Rights and Reproductive Health". (A report on the Special Session held at the Fourth International Interdisciplinary Congress on Women. Hunter College, New York, June 3-7,1990).

<sup>62</sup> Tom L. Beauchamp and James F. Childress, *Principles of Biomedical Ethics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001). ; Andrzej Kulczycki, "Ethics, Ideology, and Reproductive Health Policy in the United States," *Studies in Family Planning* 38 (2007): 333-351, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20454428> (accessed March 14, 2012).



Rights of women have been recognized since 1948 (United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights), but their reproductive rights were established no sooner than 1974 by the World Population Plan of Action. A woman's right to equality and self determination was added at the World Conference on Human Rights in 1993. However, reproductive health and rights together with the most controversial issue of abortion remain unaccepted by conservative groups in many countries. The most recent controversial issues include abstinence-only education, access to emergency contraception, access to abortion services, condoms and their effectiveness against AIDS and AIDS prevention policies.<sup>63</sup>

In the United States, social conservatives proclaimed sex education including only physiology of sex "disastrous" and promoted abstinence-education (sexual abstinence). The Bush administration approved federal money for abstinence education, which focuses on persuading children to remain virgins until marriage. The substantial increase ranged from \$60 million in 1998 to \$176 million in 2006. The funded programs warned about psychological and physical harm that non-marital sex causes and depicted contraception as ineffective protection. The author of this program was Robert Rector of the Heritage Foundation. He also wrote controversial studies where he stated that adolescents who took "virginity pledges" experienced "substantially improved life outcomes" in contrast to sexually active adolescents who suffer depression and sometimes try to commit suicide. The opposition to Rector argued that there was no evidence that the programs worked, but the campaign was driven by "ideology" more than "sound" public health policy. However, conservatives regarded the fact that teenage birth rates in the U.S. fell 33 percent between 1991 and 2003 as proof that the education was working, and in 2007 the National Abstinence Education Association was established in order to find further public support. The National Survey of Family Growth (NSFG), however, pointed out that 86 percent of the decline in adolescent pregnancy was due to improved contraceptive use. Furthermore, the last NSFG showed that pre-marital sex has been universal among Americans for a long time.<sup>64</sup>

Representative Henry Waxmen, the Chairman of the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform in the United States House of Representatives showed in his report examples of misleading information about reproductive health issues taught in abstinence-

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<sup>63</sup>Ibid.

<sup>64</sup>Ibid.

only programs. An example of government interference might be the censorship of sex education programs on the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) website where five sex education programs were deleted because they did not promote “abstinence only”. Furthermore, the former Surgeon General of the United States (appointed by President Bush) Richard Carmona testified to a Congressional panel that the administration prevented him from speaking freely about emergency contraception and human embryonic stem-cell research and he was told which topics he could discuss publicly and which were taboo.<sup>65</sup>

In 2007 a congressionally ordered survey found out that out of 2,057 students, one group assigned to an abstinence education program and the other to the usual educational services over a period of four to six years, the average age of first intercourse was identical in both groups (14.9 years). On the one hand, public opinion polls conducted over the past two decades showed that parents in general wanted age-appropriate sex education for their children. This should include both contraception and abstinence. On the other hand, the actual abstinence-only programs did not provide comprehensive education. Moreover, the funding of such ineffective programs was “fiscally irresponsible” and violated “ethical notions of informed consent, free choice, and beneficence because young people might have adopted ineffective means or no means at all of protection against pregnancy and disease.”<sup>66</sup>

In the United States over three million unintended pregnancies occur every year and half of them result in abortion. It is estimated that half of the unintended pregnancies happen due to lack of contraception. By the age of forty-five, one-third of American woman undergo an abortion and 1.3 million legal abortions are performed every year. The Republican Party strived to change the 1973 ruling of the Supreme Court *Roe v. Wade* that enabled women to terminate their pregnancy. Securing the evangelical vote, George W. Bush signed a “Partial-Birth Abortion Ban” Act into law in 2003 which made “intact dilatation and extraction” illegal. However, the ban did not mention what to do when the women’s health is endangered and therefore was attacked by federal courts. The Supreme Court, recently packed with two new Bush appointees, upheld the ban in 2007. This was

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<sup>65</sup>Ibid.

<sup>66</sup>Ibid.

the first time since 1973 that the Supreme Court negated the Roe v. Wade principle that “abortion restrictions should not put women’s health at risk.”<sup>67</sup>

The Global Gag Rule, signed by President Bush shortly after his inauguration, is a directive designed to prevent funding of abortion outside the U.S. Consequently, it has had a side impact on reduction in family planning, post-abortion care, HIV prevention and maternal and child health-services. The lower abortion rate resulting from the Global Gag Rule cannot be proven. Furthermore, the United States stopped donating contraceptives (including condoms) to non-governmental organizations all over the world, which resulted in an increase in unsafe abortions. Spreading the option of contraception lowers the number of unintended pregnancies and consequently the number of abortions. This fact was dismissed by the Bush administration, however.<sup>68</sup>

Forty million people are now living with AIDS. Each year, five million more are infected and three million people die due to the disease. In Africa, AIDS has been spread among the general population and social groups such as prostitutes, homosexuals and drug addicts. U.S. politicians did not see the need to help the international community in fighting the disease until two decades ago when the CIA reported possible destabilization of the population in case of its infection. Moreover, evangelicals also recognized the threat to society. The United States used the ABC slogan, however, “abstinence until marriage” was the focus of Bush administration. President Bush announced a five-year \$15 billion plan called the President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR). It was aimed at the fifteen most affected countries such as Guyana, Haiti, Vietnam and twelve sub-Saharan countries. In order to receive funds, twenty percent had to go to prevention and one-third to promote “abstinence until marriage”. Moreover, condom-promotion schemes were reduced, and in 2005 American and foreign groups had to declare opposition towards prostitution and sex trafficking in order to obtain U.S. government funding.

In 2004 Human Rights Watch concluded that “United States government policy, particularly in its emphasis on abstinence, had become a source of misinformation and censorship in PEPFAR countries, especially by reducing access to condoms.” However, the PEPFAR program committed the largest amount of money to fighting AIDS. Furthermore, in 2007 Bush asked for extending the program for another five years. The

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<sup>67</sup>Ibid.

<sup>68</sup>Ibid.

initiative was also embraced by Christian conservatives.<sup>69</sup> Despite huge opposition Bush believed that by promoting the utopian Christian ideals of family, marriage, sex within marriage and raising children with similar convictions the world could get closer to perfection.

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<sup>69</sup>Ibid.

### 3 ANALYSIS

As obvious from the Clinton-Lewinsky scandal, Bill Clinton lowered the standard of personal behavior expected from public leaders in the United States. Moreover, he lied under oath, casting his trustworthiness into question. Polls carried out by various institutions revealed that the public valued their economic situation the most when evaluating the president's job performance. However, morality in presidential conduct was also significant. Many religious leaders criticized the fact that the populace seemed more concerned about their wallets than about questions of morality. Hillary Clinton remained Bill Clinton's spouse even after his confession of infidelity, but because the marriage bond is based in large part on trust, their relationship seriously suffered. The fact that Bill Clinton was unfaithful in his marriage, and in the Oval Office no less, cast a shadow over his presidency. In contrast, George and Laura Bush have been happily married for almost thirty-five years. Their marriage also suffered from a major problem on George's side. He was an alcoholic but was willing to change for his family. The instrument which helped him overcome alcoholism was his faith. Bush managed to stop drinking and started reading the Bible instead. He always spoke openly about his problem with alcohol and there is no record that he was ever unfaithful to his wife, and this despite the fame and power associated with the office. Despite poll results, the presidential election results in 2000 clearly demonstrate that morality was a factor.

As far as presidential faith is concerned, Clinton rarely mentioned his in public appearances. On the contrary, Bush did not try to suppress his religious convictions in his public speeches and spoke overtly about his belief. He was a man of faith and he was proud of it. Although Bush did not intend to persuade Americans to be religious like him, his Christian morals proved attractive and even contagious to many. After the events of 9/11, Americans needed reassurance about "the right thing to do". Bush evolved into a leader striving to protect Americans from "evil doers" attacking the most Christian nation in the world. There is no doubt that decisions following the attacks were influenced by his faith, which gave him confidence in his actions.

Bush embraced the so called evangelical presidential style throughout his presidency. Although the literature is very scarce about Bush's personal belief and its influence on his policy making, some scholars commented on the evangelical presidential style. Neustadt and Barber suggest that presidents should be active, passionate about politics and must exercise the power to persuade. Neustadt then comments that presidents embracing the

evangelical presidential style are bound to fail because they do not see the limits of presidential power and strive for moral solutions in every situation. Together, Neustadt and Weber claim that religious faith and moralism have no use in presidential office. On the other hand, there is Fred Greenstein who identifies political vision as a trait of evangelical presidents and a very important one in presidential decision making. The evangelical presidential style determined Bush's actions in his policy making and most visibly in the response to the attacks of 9/11. Many scholars criticized Bush for his calmness and confidence in times of crisis. In his biased documentary *Fahrenheit 911*, director Michael Moore poked fun at Bush for his lack of emotion and slow responses. In contrast, Greenstein described Bush's emotions and actions as controlled and appropriate, as demonstrative of a leader whose confidence was buoyed by the knowledge that God was on his side.

Regarding his interactions with other world leaders, Bush was criticized for acting arrogant and isolating America. As his speechwriter wrote, Bush did not want to create bonds with somebody whom he did not trust. This view seems rational and is supported by the obvious bond created with Tony Blair, who became one of the Bush's best friends and political allies, in large part because they shared a common vision as men of faith. No other world leader showed so much support for Bush's actions.

Bush's evangelicalism was also reflected in his controversial decisions about abortion, same sex marriage, stem cell research, AIDS policies, etc. In each case, he made choices that reflected his faith. Many decisions were not so cut and dry and Bush often strived to reach a compromise but never at the expense of his Christian values. Despite the fact that HIV was often spread via means that evangelical Christians deemed immoral, Bush adopted the approach that we are all God's children and are all deserving of compassionate support. Recognizing the threat AIDS poses for the world, Bush launched the largest financial support for fighting AIDS in history. This effort even earned the applause of Bush's many critics.

The Bush presidency started as one of compassionate conservatism trying to implement faith-based initiatives to help the society. Besides the attacks of 9/11, many other serious issues arose during his presidency, most with moral implications. The Bush presidency ended with the "war on terror" ongoing and an economic crisis deepening. For many scholars, critics and for the majority of the public, these facts became crucial in assessing the President. However, the decision making process behind all the issues is a more complex one and cannot be judged based on the outcome only. In the case of Bush,

he held a vision stemming from his religious beliefs which helped him cope with even the most weighty and controversial issues. No matter what the circumstances or lobbying, he always tried to do the right thing for the nation and for mankind.

## CONCLUSION

This thesis proved that President George W. Bush is a man of faith, and his conservative Christian values had a significant influence on his decision making, not only in the “war on terror” but also in matters of social policy such as stem-cell research and abortion. He preserved his personal integrity throughout his presidency by making decisions based on his beliefs and inner convictions. When a nation is in crisis, the people need somebody to lead them through the bad times and somebody they can trust and rely on. Bush did not hesitate for a second in the response to 9/11 but allowed his faith to guide him through each and every decision. In absence of a crystal ball, it is difficult to judge the rectitude of a decision right away. And it is far too easy to criticize past decisions which proved incorrect in hindsight. However, during the first decade of the new millennium, decisions had to be made without hesitation and with confidence, to reassure the nation. Bush often found himself in an unenviable position. He had good advisors, but ultimately the buck stopped with him. In Bush’s case, religious faith strengthened his ability to act. The core principle of democracy is that the people can indirectly participate in the government by choosing the country’s decision makers. In reelecting Bush, the American people stayed true to their values and firm about whom they wanted to lead them. Bush personified core American values, or what neo-conservatives have often referred to as “family values.” In fact, Bush’s large margin of victory in 2004 gave him a mandate, as his father repeatedly said, to “stay the course.” Indeed, the public feared change and craved the stability Bush offered them. Critics who scrutinize Bush’s presidency often fail to take into account or ignore the fact that he was the man the majority of Americans chose to do the job. They knew full well he was an evangelical Christian when they chose him, and they knew he would bring his values to work with him, which he did unfalteringly. Weighing all the variables in various situations, examining arguments on both sides, this thesis demonstrates that Bush always tried to “do the right thing” but never at the expense of his beliefs. He was the right man at the right place at the right time for America. He deserved the trust given to him by the nation and strived to make sound decisions based on what he believed to be the Christian thing to do. For this reason, he deserves praise.



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