

THESIS

SAVING GRACE AND THE ENVIRONMENT: HOW STATES INFLUENCE  
THE CHRISTIAN STEWARD AGENDA

Submitted by

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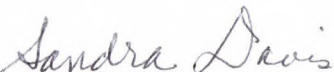
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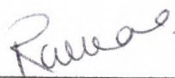
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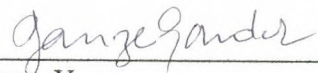
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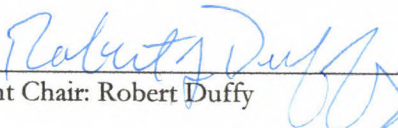
WE HEREBY RECOMMEND THAT THE THESIS PREPARED UNDER OUR SUPERVISION BY AMY LEWIS ENTITLED SAVING GRACE AND THE ENVIRONMENT: HOW STATES INFLUENCE THE CHRISTIAN STEWARD AGENDA BE ACCEPTED AS FULFILLING IN PART REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS.

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ABSTRACT OF THESIS

SAVING GRACE AND THE ENVIRONMENT: HOW STATES INFLUENCE THE  
CHRISTIAN STEWARD AGENDA

Explanations regarding the success and behavior of new social movements rely largely on postmaterialist assumptions. An examination of the Christian Stewards new social movement in the United States and Canada and its varying levels of success in these two different states calls into question the explanatory relevance of postmaterialist arguments as they pertain to new social movement theory and offers an alternative explanation in the form of social opportunity structure.

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## Chapter One

### **The State of Ideology: New Social Movements and State Context**

*“To understand the nature of the people one must be a prince, and to understand the nature of the prince, one must be of the people.”*

- Niccolo Machiavelli

## INTRODUCTION

As the modern environmental movement approaches its fourth decade it faces a curious problem. To date, it has achieved growing levels of support worldwide, especially in the West where, most recently, the securitization of the climate change issue by top U.S. military and intelligence analysts is political legitimization of an argument forwarded by many environmental advocacy groups for years (Broder, 2009). As the number of groups within this movement increases, proliferating arguments ranging from support for the maintenance of organic food supplies to protection of vital land and sea ecosystems to the reduction of man-made carbon emissions in the atmosphere, the general population's recognition and willingness to reprioritize the environment among other political and social issues has also slowly (although not necessarily linearly) shifted in support of the environment (Carrol, 2006). Nevertheless, increasing levels of support for these issues are not uniform across the Western world, with concern varying from state to state, and indeed, region by region (World Public Opinion, 2009). Furthermore, the reasons for adopting an environmental stance can vary dramatically between environmental movements as well as *within* them. As movements in a world increasingly defined by the forces of globalization vie for relevance across state and regional boundaries, the framing of messages and agendas diverge. So much so that, in some cases, the environmental aims of discreet movements fluctuate between superficial and substantive with the

transition of a single state frontier. The most eloquent summary of such a problem comes from Jacques Derrida (1996) who said of the exchange of ideas, “Eat well, or be eaten,” although in the cases about to be presented who is feasting at the expense of those providing the feast is by no means clear-cut. No place is this tension more clear than in a comparison of the Christian Stewards environmental social movements in the United States and Canada.

The Christian Stewards social movement is rooted in the concept of “creation care” supported, in some instances, biblically and in others historically (Berry, 2000; Martin-Schramm & Stivers, 2003; Morton, 2008; Kearns, 1996; Hay, 2002). Adherents of “creation care” believe that God ordained humankind to be a “steward” over creation. Christians point to the first chapter of Genesis in which God commands Adam and Eve to be “fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over . . . every living creature . . .” (New International Version). Many Christians, particularly Evangelicals who believe Biblical scripture is the literal word of God, understand this passage to imply implicitly environmental principles. “The task is to ensure that God’s handiwork is maintained in good health, drawing sustenance and even profit from it whilst managing it sustainably and looking to the interests of its living components” (Hay, 2002). Nevertheless, there is by no means a consensus that Christian religious texts represent benign environmental values. The extent to which Christian dogma encourages a subjugation of nature and the natural world is repeatedly articulated by a number of critics (White, 1967; Hay, 2002; Simpson-Housley & Scott, 1993). Rupert Sheldrake implicates the Protestant Reformation as the force behind the Enlightenment divorce of nature and reason that ultimately led to the reckless objectification of the natural world:

[T]he material world was governed by God’s laws, and incapable of responding to human ceremonies, invocations or rituals; it was spiritually neutral or indifferent, and could not transmit any spiritual power in and of itself. To believe otherwise was to fall into idolatry, transferring God’s glory to his creation . . . the domains of science and religion could now be separated: science taking the whole of nature for its province (Sheldrake, 1990: p. 20-21).

Still, many defend Christian teachings and their environmental implications, blaming dominant interpretations of Biblical scripture as flawed, instead of anything inherent to the teachings



themselves (Attfeld, 1991; O’Riordan, 1981). John Passmore argued that the Greek philosophical tradition is responsible for any misperception about Christianity’s relationship with nature:

[T]here is a strong Western tradition that man is free to deal with nature as he pleases, since it exists only for his sake. But they are incorrect in tracing this attitude back to Genesis. . . It is only as a result of Greek influence that Christian theology was led to think of nature as nothing but a system of resources, man’s relationships with which are in no respect subject to moral censure (Passmore, 1974: p. 27).

Both critics and apologetics draw from scripture and historical precedent, and the Christian experience over the last two millennia has, by and large, been broad enough to accommodate both groups’ claims. Side by side with the Roman Empire and the Protestant Reformation (two phenomena commonly cited by critics of Christian environmentalism) are a handful of saints and mystics who could, at times, elevate creation, typically characterized by Christian philosophers as the playground of carnal temptations, and place it squarely in the network of the Divine. Hildegard von Bingen, a Christian mystic during the Middle Ages and frequently cited by the Stewards social movement, was known to refer to the Divine as female and frequently drew upon descriptions of nature in her writings. “Then creation recognized its Creator in its own forms and appearances. For in the beginning, when God said, “Let it be!” and it came to pass, the means and the Matrix of creation was Love, because all creation was formed through Her as in the twinkling of an eye” (Newman, 1987).

The Christian Stewards movement is admittedly diffuse. Precisely when the movement originated is hard to gauge although stirrings trace back to Passmore and other philosophers writing in the mid to late-1970s. Many within the movement are not self-identified Stewards; more commonly, and depending on their orientations, participants in this movement call themselves “environmental Christians” or “social justice advocates” (Kearns, 1996). (For the purposes of this paper, participants in this movement will be referred to as “Stewards.”) For, indeed, in the few instances when attempts have been made to unify the message of Christian Stewards world-wide, the ensuing documents mirror all-encompassing concerns that resonate, perhaps unintentionally, with secular documents. The stated goals of many Christian Stewards are in many cases comparable with

those expressed by the World Commission on Environment and Development's 1987 Brundtland report, which propelled the sustainable development discourse and its three-pronged approach to development (environmental, social, and economic) as the dominant environmental discourse (Dryzek, 2005) of our times (Granberg-Michaelson, 1992). What distinguishes Christian Steward documents from secular ones is the attribution of cause. According to Stewards, the root of environmental and social ills lie in the dislocation of the relationship between God and man, where man has overstepped his prerogative and not given the care of divinely-sanctioned creation, including vegetable, animal, and human life, its proper respect.

These tenets are generalizable to the movement across state boundaries and most Stewards, when confronted with them, will identify both care of the environment and care of mankind as subjects in which they invest a great deal of concern (Kearns, 1996). It is in the prioritization and expression of these two ethics where differences within the movement begin to emerge. But before I expound upon those differences, there are a few things in need of clarification. First, despite more anthropocentric arguments to the contrary, environmental care and human care are not mutually exclusive as many researchers have demonstrated (Obach, 2004; Stevis, 2000; Stevis & Assetto, 2001; Kütting, 2004); oftentimes, they are mutually-reinforcing although this is not always the case. Many Stewards recognize the relationship between healthy environments and healthy populations, although they may choose to invest their own time in one area or the other. Social justice is just as important to the Christian Steward movement as the environment; in some places it may actually supercede the environment in importance. And like the term "environment," "social justice" can be defined in many ways and applied to a myriad of issues – in the case of U.S. Christian Stewards it includes the abortion debate, and not just from the perspective of women in complicated situations facing difficult choices, but also from the viewpoint of the fetus who many U.S. Christian Stewards vocally defend with a reasoning based in a "consistent ethic of life" (Wallis, 2005, p. 297-306)<sup>1</sup>. Second,

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<sup>1</sup> Though Wallis is cited as one of the authors of the "consistent ethic of life" term, he and the organization *Sojourners* have, in some ways, worked to redirect U.S. Christian Stewards attention to other issues. That, despite



although the following research will indulge in some fairly sweeping generalities about the nature of Stewards in Canada and the United States, this is by no means a characterization of the individual members within the movements or the groups with which they are affiliated. Rather, it is an observation of trends and discourses present (or absent) in the respective states, the pervasiveness of these trends, and their impact on the social movement within the discreet boundaries of each state.

Caveats about generalizations aside, the difference between the U.S. and Canadian Christian Steward movement emerges quite visibly in the emphasis each movement places on the single social justice issue identified above, abortion. This difference is so marked that most Canadian Steward groups and their agendas are accurately described as examples of “environmental Christianity,” while many of their American counterparts seem to be little more than a repackaging of the already phenomenally mobilized anti-abortion movement. How this schism within the Christian Stewards movement came to be is the primary question this research seeks to answer. Here we have two different cases: the same religious group in different states, but with distinct agendas and levels of success. What explains this variation?

This project is not intended to question the individual sincerity, merit, or faithfulness of those involved within the Christian Steward movement. Rather, it is an examination of how state political institutions and national identity can lead to the intended as well as unintended shifts in discourse, framing, and agendas of social movements with fairly rigid source ideology. In fact, had it not been for the prevalence of many well-regarded colleagues and friends who subscribe to the values promoted by the Christian Steward movement, I might never have come to the recognition of this instance of contextually structured mobilization. It is my firm *belief* that like other world religions Christianity is due a place of respect within our society as a framework of faith that has produced structure and well-being for many of its adherents. That it is the object of this research is not due to any lack of empathy on my part, but rather to a compulsion to demonstrate the ways in which forces

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his efforts, many U.S. Stewards prioritize the abortion debate over other issues is an example of the way a state’s historical, institutional, and political structure can influence the agendas of new social movements.

inherent within discreet state structures, can influence and mold even the most venerable of philosophies and doctrines.

## METHODS & DATA

This research draws upon historical accounts of Christianity in both states over the last 40 years. It explores the publications and actions of a handful of Christian Steward organizations in both the U.S. and Canada – organizations selected by their influence and preeminence within the movement in each state – and employs discourse analysis to decipher the meaning behind the stated principles of the movement at-large, and how this translates into action and agendas within each state. It relies heavily upon newspaper accounts of Steward activities, Steward organizations' websites and web publications, as well as book and journal publications by Steward leaders. Although personal interviews might have illuminated the impact of both Steward ideology as well as state social and political structures on individual Steward values, the primary goal of this project was to analyze the constitutive and regulative rules understood by the Steward movement in each unique state context. This is best accomplished through a broadly aggregative approach scrutinizing the hows and whys of collective action and framing, focused on entire movements, not discrete organizations or individuals. Utilizing a social opportunity framework presented later in this chapter, this paper compares the Canadian and American Christian Stewards movement across four dimensions: the relative openness or closure of state and social and political institutions; the stability and acceptance of a broad set of attitudes and values within a given state; the presence or absence of movements with similar messages; and the relevance of national symbols or publicly held assumptions and values to the message and goals of the Steward movement.

In this project I examine two instances of a single new social movement, divided by state boundaries and diverging agendas, which are difficult to explain using current social movement frameworks. Using structured, focused comparison, first articulated by John Stuart Mill, I select two most similar cases (according to postmaterialist criteria), the United States and Canada. I then outline



a possible alternative model for better understanding the interaction between political opportunity structure and new social movement framing and agendas. Most similar case studies do not yield results that are easy to generalize due to the controlled nature of the research (George & Bennett 2005). Nevertheless, in this instance, it is necessary to use most similar case studies in order to challenge postmaterialist criteria as set forth by Ronald Inglehart and other new social movement theorists. The alternative explanation for new social movement success presented in this research will require additional case studies in order to establish significant and generalized causal inference. The purpose then of the arguments presented is to suggest alternatives to postmaterialist assumptions.

The cases I have chosen are the U.S. and Canadian Christian Stewards movement. I have selected these cases based on several factors. First, both the U.S. and Canada are culturally similar enough to be located close to one another on the Inglehart Cultural Map of the World. The economic and social similarity between the two states would suggest that any trans-national new social movement operating within the individual territories would value and prioritize similar issues; but in the two selected examples, that is not the case. Second, Christian ideology, and in particular, the Christian Steward movement's stated principles are uniform and consistent enough to further the expectation that the movement, operating in two culturally similar states, would experience a convergence of values and agendas, not a divergence; again, this is not the case in the examples selected. Finally, in an era dominated by assumptions driving arguments presented in works like Samuel Huntington's "The Clash of Civilizations" and Benjamin Barber's "Jihad Versus McWorld," when the Other is relentlessly examined at the expense of a self-conscious awareness of the structures subtly mobilizing as well as caging thought closer to home, I wanted to examine social movements in the regions once thought to be, and still implied to be by much research, the endpoint of history. Economically-enriched democracies are not static monoliths, but experience internal processes that reinforce, recreate, and reshape identities, meanings, and values. What really occurs under the seemingly placid surface of postmaterialist societies? And how are we to account for new social movement variance in culturally similar societies with models that seem either too blunt for the

task or designed for entirely different phenomena? When asking these and other questions, the old adage comes to mind, “Still waters run deep . . .”

## LITERATURE REVIEW: POSTMATERIALISM AND CULTURAL VARIANCE - WHEN VALUES DO NOT ADD UP

The Christian Stewards are an example of a new social movement (NSM). New social movement theory emerged in the late 1960s and intimately relates to the postmaterialism hypothesis initially advanced by Ronald Inglehart (1977). This theory assumes that individuals prioritize values and pursue them in a relatively methodical, hierarchical order. Interpreting, Abraham Maslow’s hierarchy of needs, Inglehart argued that societies advance through stages of materialism as they develop, prioritizing security and material acquisition in eras of economic scarcity and eventually transcending these concerns after advancing to periods of sustained prosperity, when presumably, the material needs of most members of society have been amply fulfilled. Having achieved a state of high material affluence, individuals reorder their values, giving high priority to quality of life concerns, freedom of expression, personal improvement, and healthy environments; this is postmaterialism. Thus, new social movements vary in character and ambition from traditional social movements as they tend to be more diffuse, less structured, placing a greater emphasis on individual lifestyle choices versus policy at the state level.

Alternative explanations for the existence and behavior of social movements primarily center on resource-mobilization theory which emphasizes a social movement’s access to either economic and/or political capital as indicative of the movement’s ability to mobilize significant swaths of the population around a handful of grievances (Tarrow, 1998; McAdam, 1996). These explanations fall short when it comes to predicting the emergence and success of social movements that lack political access to state institutions as well as material resources, yet still succeed in penetrating many parts of the polity, raising awareness around a few select issues. In addition, these new types of social movements, in general (although there are many exceptions), tend to ignore the policy-making



process entirely, preferring instead to target lifestyle change (Dalton, 1994; Pichardo, 1997). The “green” mantra “think globally, act locally” is typical of the types of agendas these new social movements promote. While some are critical of the new social movement proposition, arguing that lifestyle social movements have existed well before the contemporary era and that there is little that distinguish new social movements from more traditionally-oriented social movements (Pichardo, 1997; Bagguley, 2002), the fact that there are lifestyle-oriented social movements and that these are oftentimes significantly different in structure and activity than other social movements is suggestive of a distinct phenomenon. In this regard, the Christian Stewards movement is exemplary of a NSM as it identifies the primary cause of environmental and social degradation as an imperfect relationship between God and man, rather than any one policy or governing style. Even though NSMs are typically ambivalent about contending within the formal structures and institutions of state governance, that does not mean that these same institutions have no influence or bearing on the priorities and agendas of the NSM, as will be discussed later.

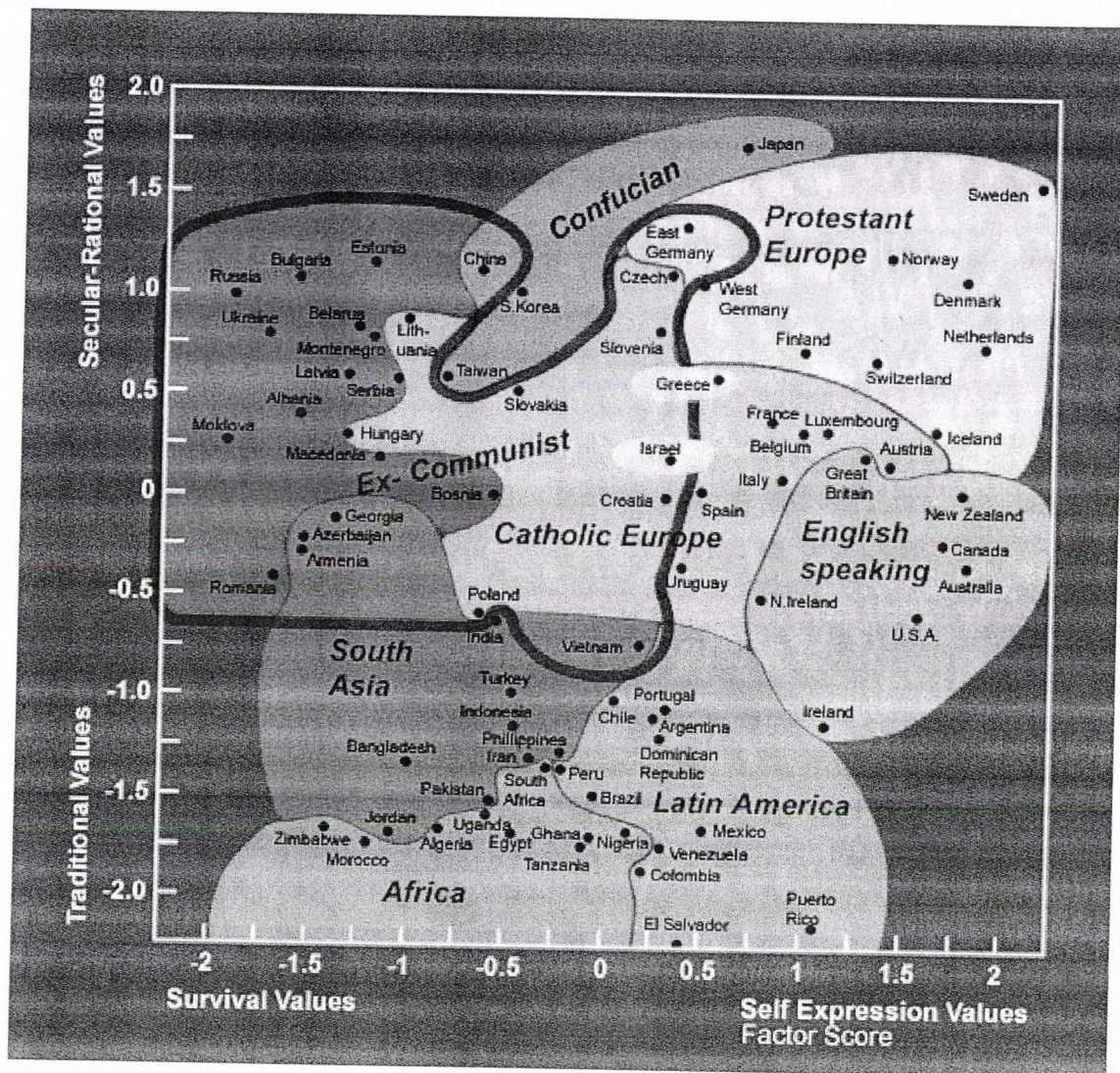
Towards the beginning of Ronald Dalton’s book, “The Green Rainbow” (2004), he says of the new social movement conceptual framework that it “is often as ill-defined and imprecise as the groups being analyzed” (9). Many, if not all, new social movement researchers are familiar with the challenging implications of Dalton’s statement. I argue that these challenges, while basically inherent to the subject matter, are unnecessarily exacerbated by NSM’s relationship to postmaterialism and the foundational assumption that ideology, as opposed to material resources, is skeleton and sinew to these movements. This, however, is by no means a return to resource mobilization-driven models of social movement behavior. It is simply a reconsideration of the preeminence of ideology within the new social movement experience.

Ronald Inglehart’s characterization of postmaterialist societies has rendered the fodder for NSM research bland, apolitical, and ideologically pure, transcendent societies not unlike in character to initiates about to take up the sacraments. In the World Value Systems (WVS) survey, postmaterialist states are differentiated by little more than economic and religious orientations

(Capitalist, Communist, etc.; Catholic, Protestant, Muslim, Confucian, etc.), or what Inglehart calls the "traditional versus secular-rational" and the "survival versus self-expression" dimensions. Although the WVS survey claims that "these two dimensions explain more than 70 percent of the cross-national variance in a factor analysis of ten indicators," what its parsimonious account of cultural variation seems to be more indicative of is the differences existent between the various "systems" themselves, not the actual variance between the nation-states within a given system. That individuals operating in different cultural and political systems respond differently to survey questions is a given, but what are the processes and structures that actually lead to these different responses? And how is it the WVS might obscure significant distinctions among states within the discreet groupings? It is assumed that the populations within a given value system are similar enough to be, for the most part, unremarkable. This is hard to reconcile with the differences evident in even cursory comparisons of the U.S. and Canada, harder still when examining specific phenomena, like the Christian Stewards social movement, occurring separately, but with varying outcomes, in each state. This is not to say that the rest of new social movement literature has painted with such a broad brush. Dalton, for example, excluded some environmental groups from the new social movement categorization, arguing that some organizations' structures were better understood with more traditional, resource-mobilization models while the groups that actually fell into the new social movement category required their own framework (ideologically structured action) for a more precise understanding of their organizational structures and hierarchies. This is a significant refinement of postmaterialist assumptions which tend to lump any environmental-orientation in the postmaterialist values category without considering the nuanced agendas of the multitude of environmental groups. Still others have noted the presence of new social movements in more materialist-oriented (Pichardo, 1997; Bagguley, 1992) societies while others have sought to explore the often-times tenuous boundaries between social movements and new social movements (Byrne, 1997), highlighting distinguishing qualities and acknowledging similarities. Nevertheless, the assumptions that have



buttressed new social movement research for the past thirty years are broad and are due a fair, but critical, reexamination.



“The Inglehart World Values Map,” 2005.

The emphasis in new social movement research is mostly placed upon the movements themselves to the detriment of understanding the unique, state-driven external social and political mechanisms that must, to varying degrees, influence the processes that occur. The implicit (and sometimes very explicit) assumption has reflected a prejudice that the differences between “postmaterialist” states are insignificant enough as to not matter. As will become clear in later



chapters, this is certainly not the case with the U.S. and Canada, and while the U.S. may test as an outlier in many value system surveys, understanding the processes at work in this more extreme example may elucidate more subtle structures elsewhere with, nevertheless, significant implications. This oversight can be at least partially remedied with the more explicit and prominent use of political opportunity structure in new social movement analysis.

### POLITICAL OPPORTUNITY STRUCTURE



M.C. Escher's "Mosaic II," 1957. Brauer Museum of Art, Valparaiso.

In 1965, David Easton broadly illustrated the workings of a political system with an image commonly referred to as the "black box of government." His diagram represented not just the social and economic inputs and outputs flowing to and from the government sector, but also the application of systems theory to political science. The state was out and the system in. Easton's effort helped move the discipline out of the mire of idiographic paralysis, expanding the potential for a limited case analysis to be relevant across a wide-range of geographic and political settings through the

mechanism of the “political system.” Easton may, in fact, have been too successful (although I doubt he would agree with that assertion) in promoting the virtues of a systems approach to political science; there is certainly a place for flexible frameworks within political science, but an unnecessary amount of appreciation was lost for more mid-range tools and analysis, to the detriment of a more fulfilling and meaningful explanations of phenomena. Easton’s black box also limits the conceptualization of internal friction, within both society and the state, and the way these tensions reinforce frames and definitions of contested issues. This is particularly problematic for the new social movement researcher. As the following analysis relies, in part, upon the influence of states in the creation of new social movement agendas, it is important to reconceptualize this process as something more messy and complicated than the linear inputs and outputs offered by Easton’s model.

As a visual guide for aiding in the conceptualization of the new social movement dynamic within a given state, I suggest the above image by M.C. Escher instead. In the picture, one set of figures shapes the other, which in turn perpetuates the space of the original set. Why one individual appears in such a way is dependent on a myriad of factors, both direct and indirect. Such are the interactions of social and political forces in society, perhaps similar, but still unique as we refocus our lens on different states and different aspects of those states. The shape and positioning of several factions within a state, might very well determine the dimensions of the opportunity window in which different actors emerge. Particular noteworthy about the image is that although it is rendered in a static medium and its subjects are as interlocked as pieces in a puzzle, it somehow seems to squirm to life, as if the figures are not cemented in place at all, but can ever so slightly shift leading to a repositioning of the individual as well as a redefinition of the surrounding figures. As Heraclites observed, “Everything is flux” and therefore, attention to the details of a region and a moment are essential to understanding the outcome and endurance of forces at play in that area. Thus is the role of agency in the “structuration of society” (Giddens, 1984), a motif that will appear more frequently



in the detailed discussion to follow about some of the factors that account for the structural differences in the Canadian and U.S. religious-political climate.

The above image is an apt visual depiction of the social and political realities much of social movement literature has attempted to explain in recent years. What it portrays in this regard is the “shifting institutional structure and ideological disposition” (McAdam, 23) of society, and particularly those in power, which creates the boundaries in which a social movement may act. Writing in 1970, Michael Lipsky asked, “[I]s it not sensible to assume that the system will be more or less open to specific groups at different times and at different places?” (14); this question became the initial volley into a field of research that would later introduce the term of “political opportunity structure,” a concept, as defined by Peter Eisinger (1973), relates to “the degree to which groups are likely to be able to gain access to power and to manipulate the political system.” In the case of new social movements, this definition is not particularly helpful. Oftentimes, their stated goals are ostensibly nonpolitical. But systemic openness *does* play a part in the success and endurance of these types of movements. How else can we broadly explain the varying levels of success of the environmental movement over time were we not to explore the receptivity of society to certain environmental messages at different times? So, what are the political opportunity structures available to measure the degrees of openness within a society to new social movement messages? Unfortunately, there are few to choose from.

Current political opportunity structure models attribute overwhelming significance to the governance apparatus. Doug McAdam’s synthesizes some of the leading models into four consensual factors: the relative openness or closure of the institutionalized political system, the stability or instability of elite alignments, the presence of elite allies, and the state’s capacity and propensity for repression (1996). The summary of these dimensions by McAdam represents a culmination traditional, resource-mobilization social movement research and is, for the most part, inclusive of the most significant factors in this area of social movement research. While it is my intended purpose to inject the state and its political institutions into new social movement research, McAdam’s political

opportunity structure model is largely irrelevant to the analysis of new social movements. Due to NSMs preference for lifestyle change versus political change, factors concerning elite alignments or allies, and even a state's propensity for repression are difficult, if not impossible, to mesh with NSM analysis. That does not mean that the understanding of opportunity structure is a meaningless endeavor for the NSM theorist.

Indeed, the concept of political opportunity structure as it relates to new social movements seems to be flawed from the get-go as the opportunities to be measured are more frequently and relevantly within the social order rather than within the political apparatus of the state. State politics matter in regards to new social movements insofar as it undermines or reinforces the lifestyle framing and message of a movement. With these concerns in mind, I have outlined a "social opportunity structure" with which to compose the findings of this research.

#### CONTEXTUALLY STRUCTURED MOBILIZATION

Why are some polities in culturally similar states more receptive to a social movement's message than others? Sidney Tarrow tells us that "political opportunities . . . and constraints are situational, and cannot compensate for long for weaknesses in cultural, ideological, and organizational resources" (77). But Tarrow's preference of situational factors is difficult to apply in the context of new social movements. To begin with, the goals of a new social movement are, perhaps, less opportunistic than those of traditional social movements. The quick passage of a policy or overthrow of a regime, while daunting, are insignificant on a longitudinal scale compared to the lifestyle shifts advanced by most new social movements. In these cases, identities and values – contrasted with their ephemeral cousins, attitudes – are the currencies in which new social movements must deal. Inglehart attempted to tap into this vein of reasoning with instruments too blunt for the task. Despite the prominence of systems level analysis over the years, it is difficult to understand the nuances of national identities and/or the national expression of values (even universal ones) if the assumption is that forces like



“traditionalism” or “secularism” can be dropped into just any national climate without experiencing significant and meaningful alteration.

On the other hand, a close examination of the social movement alone will not necessarily reveal the ways in which it has been shaped by external forces, particularly those unique to the political and social institutions of the state. Dalton argues that “the ideology of [new social movements] is what produces these new patterns of political action” (5). This may explain the behavior and strategies of a centralized group of individuals organizing and mobilizing resources and ideologies, but it does not explain why that attempted mobilization does or does not take root in the ideological disposition of society at large. Here, however, I argue that when attempting to explain why two similar social movements attract different levels of public support (the most significant resource for any social movement, according to Dalton) state and national social institutions, not political situations, are the most significant factors for consideration. These considerations create a new framework in which to understand the mobilization implications of a new social movement. I call this framework *Contextually Structured Mobilization* (CSM). The four primary dimensions of CSM are:

1. The relative openness or closure of state social and political institutions
2. The stability and acceptance of a broad set of attitudes and values within a given state
3. The presence or absence of movements with similar messages
4. The relevance of national symbols or publicly held assumptions and values to the message and goals of the new social movement

Despite appearances, the public is not something readily manipulated by just any social movement or state propaganda. In most cases, when large swaths of disgruntled citizenry mobilize around an idea or movement, it is because the message has appealed to their deep, intuitive understanding of the world and their own identity in it. In states with strong national identities this understanding will also include what it means to be a citizen or member of the state. It arises from a



complex and sophisticated set of values, institutions, and history. One must address the public on terms of its own intersubjective meaning of itself. For this reason, national identities and state political institutions are important for new social movements, particularly in democratic states where the public has some sense of investment and control over these entities. New social movements unable to connect to the polity's intuitive understanding of itself will not achieve as wide a base of support as those that do. If a NSM message proves difficult to integrate with a state's social and political identity, a broadening or reinterpretation of that identity must occur if the movement is to endure.

I am the first to acknowledge that this framework borrows from and is quite heavily influenced by the political opportunity frameworks preceding it. However, I believe its many distinguishing factors – the fact that it does not privilege political structures over social ones or even consider risk assessment on the part of the social movement participants – merits the recognition of a new category of opportunity structures, one based partially or primarily in the social order of the state and used for the examination of new social movements. As stated above, the pertinence of lifestyle, social institutions, identity, and ideology to the study of new social movements segregates it from traditional social movement definitions. It is only logical then that this distinction would require unique tools for the apprehension of these separate phenomena. Even so, the state and all that entails is still vital to new social movement analysis. Sue Ellen Charlton, Jana Everett, and Kathleen Staudt argued in “Women, the State, and Development” that alongside explicit policies, the state also performs an implicit role “in terms of the way in which state structures and ideologies condition the nature of politics. State ideologies set the tone and acceptable boundaries of political discourse and also nourish assumptions . . .” (Charlton, Everett, and Staudt, 1989: 3). Finally, while I cautiously acknowledge that this framework is grounded in assumptions that culture matters (insofar as it relates to new social movements and identity politics) this is by no means an argument that culture and its many disaggregated facets are 1) responsible for the development trajectory of a state or 2) of much use as an independent variable outside of the study of new social movements. It is simply recognition

that certain social and political features of states influence the outcomes of new social movement strategies and frames as much as political institutional structures influence the outcomes of traditional social movements. It is an attempt to refocus the lens of analysis and achieve a more satisfactory explanation of what makes new social movements work, where, and why.

The political opportunity structure literature inspired me to create similar conceptual models specifically for the analysis of new social movements. Social opportunity structure, CSM, and receptivity building (a concept that will be further elucidated in the following chapters) are tools I developed for the purpose of analyzing and explaining the behavior and success of new social movements.

## CHAPTER OVERVIEW

I will be applying the contextually structured mobilization framework to the analysis of my two cases: the interaction between the social-political order in the U.S. and Canada with the Christian Stewards social movement. In chapter two I will present the Canadian case which seems to follow a relatively predictable transition from traditional to industrial to “secular” state. This transitional process, of course, has bearing on the stability of secular values and identities in Canada. For the two cases addressed in this research, although not necessarily pertinent to the body of new social movement research, this transition is relevant to the discussion of the of social and political opportunity structures available to the Canadian Christian Stewards movement.

The somewhat exceptional case of the U.S. Christian Stewards movement will be examined in chapter three. Here some notable deviations occur in the transition from traditional to secular society, as well as in the vitality and significance of certain national symbols and myths. How these interplay with the development and framing of the Steward message in the U.S. will be the central area of examination.

Finally, in chapter four, I review the integrity of CSM when applied to the central comparison of this research and discuss the broader implications of CSM for new social movement

research. I argue that if culture is to remain relevant to the political scientist's arsenal, then its scope must be narrowed enough to capture the significant interactions of state political institutions with social norms and identities. Broad labels and generalizations reveal little, if anything at all, about the social and political processes churning within state boundaries. I contend, along with Marc Howard Ross, that there are more variations within a culture than between cultures. If this is the case, then our tools for understanding new social movements in variable contexts must be precise enough to capture the more significant of these variations and how they relate to the unique identities and political outcomes in relatively similar states.



## Chapter Two

### **Canadian Stewards: Social Opportunity and Environmental Discourse**

*"You can be a French Canadian or an English Canadian, but not a Canadian. We know how to live without an identity, and this is one of our marvelous resources."*

- Herbert Marshall McLuhan

It is easy to draw the conclusion that Canada's social opportunity structure is unusually open, allowing Canadian Stewards unrivaled opportunities to present a relatively uncontaminated, uncompromised message. With one of the most open-door immigration policies in the world (despite recent problems) (BBC News, 2007), a kaleidoscope of ethnic diversity, and, in the recent past, an ostensibly progressive government, Canada's social and political order seems to be open to a relatively broad swath of ideas and movements. However, these realities are only part of the story. The underlying social and political order of Canada is like any other, receptive to some types of messages, and dismissive of others. It is important to state at this point that one of the basic assumptions of the CSM framework is that there is a dynamic relationship between social opportunities and new social movement framing. If we use M.C. Escher's "Mosaic II" as a visualization of the social opportunity framework, then rarely, if ever, is there a time when the social opportunity terrain is anything but a crowded arena of ideas, values, messages, assumptions, and groups, circumscribed and buttressed by a state's national identity and the dominant interpretations of this identity. What CSM measures then is the type of messages a polity is open to. In Canada's case over the last 40 years, those types of messages have been overwhelmingly secular ones. Why? In order to answer this question I will first need to examine relevant portions of Canadian history and national myth in order to establish the stability and acceptance of a broad set of attitudes and values in Canada as well as the strength of national symbols and assumptions as they relate to the Christian

Stewards social movement. Then I will explore the types of new social movements predominant in Canadian society as well as the types of social and political opportunities readily available to new social movements and, in particular, the Christian Stewards.

Since its formation, Canada has experienced deep social, political, and national divisions. “For three decades, Canadian political and cultural life has been intermittently dominated by evolving permutations of Quebec separatism, regional disaffection, constitutional reform and the quest for a distinctive national identity” (O’Tool, 1996). The impact of these divisions between Anglo/Protestant Canada and French/Catholic Canada on the Canadian psyche cannot be overstated. The way in which this national schism, or what Hugh MacLennan referred to as the “two solitudes,” most relevantly pertains to the research question at hand is through the expression and creation of a Canadian civil religion or myth and national identity.

#### MYTH & IDENTITY: THE FORMATION OF CANADIAN NATIONALITY

The term “civil religion” was introduced by Rousseau and is defined as “the set of beliefs, rites, and symbols which relates a man’s role as a citizen and his society’s place in space, time, and history to the conditions of ultimate existence and meaning” (Coleman, 1970: 70). While the nature of the relationship between a state’s civil religion and the policies it produces is a controversial one, especially considering the priorities given to elite interests, exogenous/international forces, security, and pressing economic concerns by the average policy maker<sup>2</sup>, that is not, ultimately, the primary concern of this research. I’m interested in the reverse relationship: the influence of the state on new social movements and, at this particular moment, civil religion. Robert Bellah and Philip Hammond noted an absence of Canadian civil religion in “Varieties of Civil Religion.” They write:

The lack of revolutionary experience, the long history of special ties of English Canadians with England and English symbols of civil religion, and the existence of a large province that

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<sup>2</sup> One commonly mentioned argument for the relevance of civil religion on state policy is the strong alliance between the U.S. and Israel. This, however, is by no means a clear-cut example of Evangelical and Jewish interests dominating U.S. policy. The U.S. government has many secular and material reasons for continuing to support a strong Israeli presence in the Middle East. That these happen to coincide with the dictates of civil religion only reinforces their permanence in the U.S. policy portfolio (Zunes, 2002).



is linguistically, ethnically, and religiously distinct from the rest of Canada – all these conditions have militated against not only the emergence of a Canadian civil religion but of any very clearly defined sense of national identity.

Bellah and Hammond seem to be limiting the use of the word “religion” to conventional, non-secular interpretations. That is, they are suggesting Canada lacks a defining religion because neither Catholic nor Protestant values are encompassing enough to ascribe to a large enough sample of the Canadian population. It would be a mistake, based on this observation, to believe that civil religion is a prerequisite to national identity. The U.S.S.R. is just one example of a state with a strong national identity without the presence of a civil religion. The momentum which propelled the Soviet Union into the modern era with a decidedly secular identity had a whiff of the mythic about it. In the novella *Sophia Petrovna*, author Lydia Chukovskaya describes daily life during the Great Purge. At one point in the book the heroine is observed replacing the nativity figurines in her crèche with those of Stalin, Lenin, and other Soviet political figures, an act that symbolizes the cult of personality and mythic quality that surrounded the heroes of the revolution.

Considering these cases, perhaps it would be appropriate to rename civil religion and call it “civil myth” so as to remove connotations suggestive of conventional religious sects and denominationalism. The question, then, is does Canada have a civil myth? Unequivocally, the answer must be yes, although the formation and expression of that mythos is fairly subtle, its existence masked by the almost seamless convergence of these “beliefs, rites, and symbols” with the values and expectations of contemporary, secular, and postmaterialist principles. Canada does not so much lack a national identity as its national identity necessarily emphasizes public tolerance and, on the face of things, social diversity. Arnold Edinborough, a well known Canadian writer and editor, said of Canada that it has “never been a melting pot; it’s more like a tossed salad.” Whereas the U.S. “melting pot” connotes assimilation into a vat of homogenous cultural social stew, a tossed salad requires that its ingredients remain identifiably distinct.

What is, perhaps, unusual about Canada then is that the formation of its civil myth occurred and is occurring in such a quiet, unassuming fashion. This is due more to the very real and volatile

political divisions in the country and the need for a cautious and diplomatic internal dialogue than it is to any so-called natural instinct or inclination towards the polite. This has restricted the identification and acceptance of Canadian national symbols to shared spaces and assumptions, universal ideas free from ethnic and religious connotations, thus spurring Canadian national identity even further into the realm of the secular. The environment, in particular its appreciation and exploration, is just one of those symbols; all the more appropriate due to Canada's vast wilderness regions. "Canada has many symbols of nature and land that could possibly provide a pan-Canadian identity – the beaver, the maple leaf, and the 'northernness' . . ." (Kim 262)<sup>3</sup>. This, combined with the decay of institutional religion in the 60s and 70s paved the way for a Christian Steward movement that is more consistent with typical environmental discourse.

#### THE QUIET REVOLUTION: CANADIAN RELIGION SINCE THE 1960s

Canada has been, and continues to be, a strongly religious nation (Statistics Canada, 2001; McGowan, 1990). "Although less than a third of Canadians regularly attend religious services, an overwhelming number describe themselves as Christians while significant majorities subscribe in varying degrees to specific doctrinal beliefs and articles of the Christian faith" (O'Toole). That religion is not synonymous with conceptualizations of Canada is a product of the divided ethnic and political character of the country that naturally spills over into religious matters. Put simply, no one can agree on what religion could generalize Canadian beliefs on a national scale. Canadian religious discussions require clarification: is one discussing the Protestant or Catholic faith? This section begins with a brief discussion about the evolution of both these faiths in Canada and their connection with

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<sup>3</sup> Although Kim goes on to note that he believes none of these symbols have been sufficiently "sacralized" to serve as a form of civil religiosity due the heavy motive of exploitation and domination in Canadian nature narrative. I disagree with the notion that something must remain free from exploitative influence in order to achieve iconic and sacred status. Many times the sacrificial act of being exploited is enough to propel some icons into the realm of the sacred. Pagan-European and Middle Eastern Green Man myths concerning the resurrection and rebirth of male sacrifices are an example of this. Also noteworthy is the treatment of female religious icons that are, with few exceptions, revered for their submissive tolerance of socially-acceptable forms of exploitation (e.g. Tibet's Kumari).



Canadian politics and identity, before moving on to the process of disenchantment that began during the 1960s.

The dominant components of the Canadian religious make-up are Roman Catholic, United Church of Canada (a merger of Presbyterians, Methodists, and prairie Evangelicals that occurred during the 1920s), and Anglicans. These three sects comprise of more than 60% of the Canadian population (O'Toole). Unlike the religious disposition in the U.S., Canadian religious groups are establishmentarian in nature "in keeping with a Canadian reluctance, both French and English, to abandon the ties of ancestral authority in a revolutionary American manner" (O'Toole, 1996). The Anglican Church, in Anglophone Canada, like the Catholic Church in Quebec, were, for centuries, the instruments of the British and French states who used them to promote cultural, institutional, and ultimately, political agendas (Simpson and MacLeod, 1988; Fingard, 1972). In the middle of the last century, Canada was even more religiously oriented, the ecclesiastical order all but omnipresent in provinces like Quebec. But this changed dramatically due to a culmination of forces in the 1960s, industrialization and urbanization not being the least of these.

The epicenter of "the Quiet Revolution" occurred in Quebec, but had ramifications for the entirety of the Canadian socio-religious order. The reforms of the second Vatican Council combined with Canadian political reforms, urbanization, and industrialization brought about a profound crisis for the Quebec church, which saw the reduction of church attendance from 90% of the population in the 1960s to only 25% in the 1990s (O'Toole, 1996). This experience has brought about a number of significant changes for Quebec society as well as for the rest of Canada. On the one hand, while a vast majority of the population still claims to be Catholic, most of these dissent on official church teachings in matters such as birth-control, legalized abortion, and premarital sex. Second, the rapid decline of religious relevance in the province (e.g. the Roman Catholic church used to head public education in Quebec; now it is the Canadian government who executes schools, but the Catholics who administer them (Kim) with the current Canadian federal government pushing to centralize educational instruction by the end of its term) prompted a more compassionate and ecumenical



dialogue from Catholic leaders, anxious to maintain the relevance of their social position in a drastically changing order. This marginalization within Canadian society has further advanced mainline Christianity and messages of social justice as the Catholic Church reaches out to other socially marginal groups, including Protestant denominations, searching for common areas of agreement in which together they might maintain some position of relevance (O'Toole, 1996). Many of these areas are found in the secular realm and are dominated by issues concerning social justice and the environment.

That Canada still has relatively high levels of religious affiliation and participation compared to the majority of the developed world is a testament to practical Christianity and a pragmatism born from a decline of institutional religious fortunes in the middle of the twentieth century. The United Church of Canada, for example, has so often eschewed the doctrinal in preference of the consensual that it has been mockingly referred to as "the New Democratic party at prayer." On the vision page of the Canadian Council of Churches websites, one of the leading ecumenical Canadian Christian forums as well as a leader in Canadian Stewardship, the following statement makes clear mainline Christianity's commitment to consensus building:

The Forum works like this: All participants in any ecumenical action speak and make commitments only with the full voice of their own church. Actions that receive 100 per cent consensus are recognized as representing the common Christianity we hold and as the voice of The Canadian Council of Churches. Actions that do not find 100 per cent consensus may go forward as joint actions of some member churches. Even debates on which there is strong disagreement are regarded as important ecumenical experiences because they allow member churches to understand each other.

The lesson to be learned from this narrative is that states matter, even within longstanding groups founded in ideology and doctrine. While the social processes of urbanization and industrialization were important to the (partial) disenchantment of religion in Canada (processes that are, themselves, uniquely defined and promoted by specific state policies), the exceptional social and political circumstances of the Canadian state had already influenced religious disposition, as it continued to do so for the remainder of the twentieth century.

## STRENGTH IN SYMBOLS: BEER, NATURE, AND COOPERATION

Canada, although a federal state, is considered to be one of the world's most decentralized federations. This depiction of Canada is somewhat counterintuitive to the perceptions and stereotypes held by its southern neighbor, whose insight into Canadian life is frequently limited to the highly socialized nature of Canadian politics and society. In the United States, the land of independent frontiersmen, bootstrap libertarians, state secessionist movements both historical and contemporary<sup>4</sup>, where the cult of independence blossoms most fervently in conservative social and political groups, the idea of a decentralized, socialized state is something of a paradox. And yet, it is in the heart of this social and political structure wherein Canadians find the symbols and ideas that knit their nation together.

In recent years, one of the strongest arguments for a unique and potent Canadian identity has come from the beer industry. In April, 2000 Molson Brewing Company aired "The Rant," featuring an average man named "Joe" standing in front of a movie screen displaying different images related to Canadian culture. Joe gives a speech in which he first distinguishes himself from foreign stereotypes of Canada (particularly American), and then from Canadian stereotypes about Americans. Joe's speech is as follows:

Hey, I'm not a lumberjack or a fur trader. And I don't live in an igloo or eat blubber or own a dog sled. And I don't know Jimmy, Sally, or Suzie from Canada although I'm certain they're really really nice. I have a prime minister, not a president. I speak English and French, not American. And I pronounce it "about," not "a-boot." I can proudly sew my country's flag on my backpack. I believe in peacekeeping, not policing; diversity, not assimilation; and that the beaver is a truly proud and noble animal. A toque is a hat, a chesterfield is a couch, and it is pronounced "zed" not "zee". Zed! Canada is the second largest landmass! The first nation of hockey! And the best part of North America! My name is Joe. And I am Canadian!

Although the commercial was a marketing success for Molson, critics argue that it is not actually representative of a Canadian identity because it is often about what Canada is not versus what it is; furthermore, any "Canadian identity" inherent to the script is based on comparisons with the United States (Sugars, 2006 ;Wagman, 2002). Although these are salient criticisms, Molson's second

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<sup>4</sup> Although, what the average Canadian would think of the contemporary U.S. movements is hard to guess considering the quite serious nature of threats periodically issuing out of Quebec.



commercial in the series, “The Anthem,” puts most of them to rest. In this commercial, various Canadians, historical figures, celebrities, and common people, sing the words “No other heart is truer than the one we call Canadian. I am, you know I am proud to be Canadian” while famous moments in Canadian history, including the pounding of the Last Spike of the Canadian Pacific Railway and the raising of the Maple Leaf, play on screen (it should also be noted that a number of the scenes celebrate hockey). Clearly, the images depicted in this ad were positively Canadian, including the line sung in French by Quebecois rugby players. What is most revealing about both of these commercials is that while their target audience was probably male (considering the product being sold and the predominant number of male characters featured in them), values like peacekeeping and cooperation are elevated alongside activities traditionally associated with masculinity, like hockey and industry. There is only so much that can be drawn from a couple of beer commercials, and yet, Molson’s highly successful “I am Canadian!” campaign (ended when, in 2005, Coors bought Molson) could not have worked if it didn’t confirm certain values and perceptions Canadians already accepted about their national identity.

Although natural themes do not dominate the Molson commercials, punctuated only briefly by references to lumberjacks, beavers, and “northern-ness,” they are common enough in the rest of Canadian society to merit mention in this research. Returning to the theme of cultural comparison with the United States (an activity that some argue is, in fact, culturally Canadian), Robert Paehlke states that Canadians have a persistent “belief in the ‘environmental superiority’ of” their government and society. This belief derives, in part, “from the very great significance of the land and nature in Canadian cultural life, from painting to literature and even music” (125). Unfortunately, values do not always translate into policy, even in Canada, and the Canadian environmental record in comparison to the U.S. is mixed, although on balance it is arguably better. But the relationship most central to the CSM framework and the current research question is the influence of the state on social values and national identities, not the reverse. Therefore, the impact of values on policy is somewhat irrelevant to the current analysis.

Other forces urging environmental values into the Canadian identity are the presence of high-profile international environmental agreements like the Montreal Protocol, one of the most successful international environmental treaties. Canada was one of the first states to sign and ratify the treaty which limited the emission of ozone-hazardous chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs). The long-standing presence of a number of environmental non-governmental organizations (ENGOS) has also increased the receptive capacity of the Canadian general population to environmental values. Many of these organizations first mobilized in the 1970s around the issue of acid rain originating largely from within the U.S. “No other single environmental issue has so aroused the attention of citizens and governments in Canada” (Paehlke, 2002). Other, more radically-oriented groups, like Greenpeace, while not fully representative of the general population’s level of concern for the environment, found a relatively secular and receptive climate in which to make further inroads for the environment within the social conscious. Within the CSM framework of new social movements this process is understood as “receptivity building.” While these pioneering ENGOS had their own environmental agendas, they also acted as agents building the social and political receptive capacity for future movements, subtly shaping the social opportunity structure for generations to come.

The decentralized political nature of the Canadian federation is, arguably, one of the most significant factors in the formation of cooperative and socialized principles as a part of the Canadian national identity. The presence of these values has also been attributed to the harsh “northern-ness” of Canadian geography, and the emphasis placed on mutual survival and aid in such climates. Both the political and geographic challenges faced by Canadian society have been met by a cooperative versus revolutionary approach. The gradual emergence of an independent Canadian state as well as a national history that has so far managed to elude the threat of civil war or secession has undoubtedly had an impact on the Canadian national identity. While the emergence of the United States required that its founders be bold revolutionaries, challenging the dictates of an unjust authority and prepared to strike out independently, the origins and endurance of the Canadian state are far less dramatic although no less influential in defining what it means to be Canadian.



With the conclusion of this brief overview of Canadian history, symbols, and identity, this paper can now begin to examine the ways in which this identity has influenced the agendas and framing of the Christian Stewards social movement in Canada. In particular, the cooperative, consensual, and nature-related themes will become increasingly relevant as we look at the behavior of Stewards in Canada and then later, in chapter 3, compare this behavior with their counterparts in the United States.

#### CONTEMPORARY CHRISTIANS: RECONCILING INDUSTRY AND NATURE

In November 2008, Canadian Stewards held a forum on the role of faith in the debate between environmental protection and industrial growth (Morton, 2008). Preston Manning, the founder of Canada's Reform party<sup>5</sup>, told an audience of 200 that "Jesus communicates constantly through God and Man. As a mediator, He sacrifices his own interests to bring the parties together. He's not an aloof third party weighing the arguments of both sides . . . [W]e as Christians can bring a distinctive approach to acting as mediators which is rooted in our faith." Other speakers addressed the environmental crisis highlighting systemic flaws underpinning various types of degradations: the pricing of oil as a commodity without consideration for social or environmental costs, the extinction of species, and the consumption disparity between economically rich and poor states. The Canadian GDP was also held to account as a poor measure of quality of life and social welfare. Most significant about this event is the participants. Manning, while an admitted populist, is also one of the more conservative figures in Canadian politics. His American counterpart might be something akin to an amalgamation of Mitt Romney and Mike Huckabee, candidates in the 2008 Republican presidential primary. That Manning spoke clearly and articulately about the role of faith in environmental dialogue speaks to the mainline nature of environmental issues for Canadian Christians.

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<sup>5</sup> The Reform Party was a socially conservative, economically populist political party that existed between 1987-2000. Bigoted remarks by some of its leaders created a reputation shrouded in controversy. Its pro-life platform was a secondary issue for Manning, who distanced himself from it by declaring his party was, first and foremost, about representing the people's will. The Reform Party eventually merged with the Conservative Alliance which, in turn, merged with the Conservative Party of Canada in 2003. Neither the Conservative Party of Canada nor the Liberal Party of Canada has an official abortion platform.

The qualities that define Christian Stewardship in Canada are ones that evoke establishmentarian principles, mediatory action, and environmental issue orientation. It is establishmentarian because an assumption permeates the movement within Canada that while the current secular social system may not be perfect, it is adequate for addressing environmental concerns based in spiritual conviction. The priorities listed on the Canadian Council of Churches<sup>6</sup> web page include issues like strengthening public health care in Canada; just peacemaking wherein Canadian churches work together to speak out on global issues like disarmament, security, human rights, and the use of force; and an “economy of life” described as critical reflection on “developments in economic globalization” and an opportunity to present alternatives. In this context the word “life” refers to biodiversity and respect for indigenous and socially marginalized communities, concepts that are fairly axiomatic throughout the environmental movement. In the U.S. context, the word “life” becomes fraught with meanings not necessarily environmental in origin and, therefore, will become a more central component of that case studies’ analysis.

Canadian Stewardship’s mediatory quality is evident in the fact that many aims of Stewards groups around Canada are to “negotiate,” “mediate,” or “arbitrate” between social, environmental, and industrial realities. This is as apparent in Manning’s quote above as it is in a number of other Canadian Steward documents. For example, cited as one of the background papers for the Canadian Council of Churches statement on globalization (North American Churches, 2003), the Fourth Biennial Convention of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada in 1993 reaffirmed

continued reservations concerning the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and called upon the Federal Government not to proceed to implement the agreement until environmental protection can be secured, access to indigenous knowledge and the benefits of bio-diversity for local communities can be safeguarded and just labour and social standards can be assured.

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<sup>6</sup> The Canadian Council of Churches is an ecumenical body of churches representing 23 denominations in Canada including the two largest Protestant denominations and the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops. These three groups alone account for over 60% of Canada’s religious landscape. Although there are equivalent organizations in the United States (e.g. Christian Churches Together and the National Council of Churches, to name a few), they either lack the equivalent breadth of representation or the same depth of relevance when it comes to coping with social and environmental justice.



What statements like these demonstrate is that Canadian Stewards actively engage in social, environmental, and economic debate, propelled by religious fervor but rhetorically grounded in secular vocabulary. Their identity as Christians, in general, is background to the issues at hand.

Finally, Canadian Stewards embody well-defined environmental issue-orientation. Although some of the more conservative groups, like the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada, are less nuanced in their endorsement of environmental engagement, most Canadian Stewards seem to be beyond the point where they simply acknowledge the existence of an ecological crisis and are well on their way to engaging with specific issues, be it climate change, the destruction of ecosystems, or the extinction of species. This can be partially attributed to the prominent recognition given environmental issues in Canada for the last two decades, but it also reaffirms the Canadian Christian's willingness to immerse and engage with social and political issues on secular terms, rather than purely spiritual ones. Such a characteristic is indicative of a long-term value-orientation with secular society in general, rather than an attitude born out of situational factors.

The development of values is as much a part of the social and political structure of a state as they are to any individual ideology. The cooperative as well as establishmentarian qualities inherent in the development of the Canadian state, as well as the relatively smooth shift to a more secular social orientation prepared an opportunity structure receptive to movement identities and messages that evinced the same values. Furthermore, the symbology of Canada with its public ethic of environmental virtue founded upon internal relationships with nature, as well as its ambition to maintain a favorable comparison with its southern neighbor prepared the way for social and political receptivity to environmental-oriented agendas.

The preceding chapter is by no means a characterization of all Canadian Christian groups or even of Canadian Steward groups. What I have hoped to depict are the major trends, messages, and agendas of the Canadian Christian Steward movement. While it goes without saying that there are

conservative and traditionally-oriented Canadian Christians, even within the Steward's movement<sup>7</sup>, they represent a minority interest. But what is especially telling about the Canadian Stewards movement is the presence of these conservative groups within its fold. What seems a matter of course for many Christians in Canada, be they leftist or right-wing, becomes a decision fraught with social and political implications for their counterparts in the United States. How that came to be is the subject of the next chapter.

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<sup>7</sup> One of these groups is the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada (EFC). This group is one of the few to discuss the abortion issue on their website. Their anti-choice stance, however, is decidedly moderate in tone. In a recent webitorial, Don Hutchinson, director of the EFC's Center for Faith and Public Life, has this to say about a change in Quebec's law governing the operation of abortion clinics: "It's about time. I do not endorse abortion, but applaud the Government of Quebec's decision to require abortion clinics to meet the same medical standards as any other surgical facility . . . Women undergoing a surgical procedure should be entitled to the same standard of care as men or women undergoing a different surgical procedure" (Hutchinson, 2009).



### Chapter Three

#### **U.S. Stewards: Life on the Right**

*"You can't be evangelical and associate yourself with Jesus and what he says about the poor and just have no other domestic concerns than tax cuts for wealthy people."*

- Jim Wallis

The following chapter recounts the story of how Republican strategists created the party of "traditional values" and how this, in turn, politically mobilized a previously untapped demographic: evangelical Christians. The political empowerment of this group at a time when secularizing forces were transforming social and political life in the developed world, marginalizing the cultural prominence of religion even within the United States, altered the social and political landscape, and at the same time, strengthened a more traditional interpretation of national symbols and identity, restricting the social opportunity structure for more progressive social movements while simultaneously shifting the political spectrum to the right. This chapter first explores how interpretations of U.S. national strengthen the perceived importance of evangelical values in American society. Then it examines the recent history of the U.S. religious sphere and how its relevance to political institutions, namely the Republican Party, opened opportunity structures for more traditional movements. Finally, it explains how these forces play out in the framing and agendas of the Christian Steward movement in the United States.

In the late 1970s a convergence of social and political phenomena laid the groundwork for a profound shift in U.S. politics, altering the trajectory and orientation of U.S. norms and values in the coming decades. Although the late 1960s and early 1970s witnessed the rise of Republican power with the breaking of the Democrat's "Solid South" over civil rights and the emergence of the "silent majority," this orthodox backlash against the cultural permissiveness of the 1960s could only carry

the Republican Party so far. In fact, Republicans were positioned for devastating losses until at least the end of the decade, if not longer, if their demoralized ranks were not quickly reinforced.

Watergate, the Vietnam stalemate, as well as a swiftly recovering and increasingly energized Democratic party, threatened the recent ascendancy of many Republicans. At some point, Republicans would need to stand for something, and whatever political orientation they chose it would need to be more socially compelling and integrative than the economic welfare of east coast upper-middle class businessmen, the core demographic of the Republican Party at that point in history.

### PROTESTANTS, PRESIDENTS, AND PROPHECY

The U.S. religious disposition, from its very beginnings, is characterized by a remarkable tolerance for small, radical sects of Christian believers. From the Puritans to the Quakers to Seventh Day Adventists and Mormons, the U.S. has cultivated an image that it is first among nations for religious tolerance, although this notion can be contested by a number of groups – after all, Mormons moved west to find sanctuary from discrimination and ostracism, Catholics and Jews were persecuted in the South for decades, and modern-day Muslims find often little more than an uneasy tolerance from surrounding communities. What is difficult to contest is that for most Protestant sects, the U.S. social and political climate is open to a degree that is unparalleled almost anywhere else in the world. This has everything to do with the U.S. civil myth surrounding the Puritan settlers, the founding fathers (most of whom belonged to Protestant denominations, or are, at least, understood that way in popular culture), and the prominence of religious institutions in U.S. allegiances, currency, and idiom (e.g. the frequency with which politicians invoke God's blessing during uncertain times, "God bless America"). While the First Amendment prohibits the establishment of a national religion, it is for the most part apparent that the United States is a predominantly Protestant state. The election of John F. Kennedy to the presidency was remarkable largely due to the fact that he was Catholic, a singular phenomenon in the history of U.S. presidents. In the most recent Republican presidential primary,



one of the favored candidates, Mitt Romney, was pressured into publicly addressing his personal beliefs (he is Mormon), promising not to allow his religion an undue amount of influence in his politics, an agreement few, if any, other presidential candidates (with the exception of JFK) have had to make. While the establishmentarian principles of Canadian Christian religions are formally invoked as a part of their operating procedures (and indeed, Canadians demonstrate far less of a propensity for the formation of small, independent Christian sects) (Eisgruber & Zeisberg, 2006), the American church is just as pro-establishment, although this is not explicitly recognized by most Protestants, and in the case of evangelicals, it is a reality that is actively denied.

That the United States is Protestant, however, does not necessarily equate to one particular set of policies or another. Jimmy Carter and Ronald Reagan may have believed in the same God, but they most certainly did not believe in the same policies. For that matter, there are a number of Protestant states throughout the world who differ in both social and political character from the U.S.: South Korea and Sweden being just two of these. Where the particular brands of U.S. Protestantism become most relevant is in the formation of social and political cache; the process involved in the formation, interpretation, and reinterpretation of national symbols, national identity, and the idiom through which Americans contest values, ideas, and what it means to be a citizen (Ross, 1997). This idiom both enables and constrains the promotion of new social movement lifestyle alternatives, but it, in and of itself, does not represent the entirety of the process of winning public support. After all, Canada too has and had a significant evangelical population (although it was never as large or socially dominant as the one found in the U.S.). What accounts for the different religious trajectories in each state?

Before we continue it is important to clarify the differences between evangelical Protestants and more mainline Christians (although even these two broad categories fail to capture some of the more important divisions occurring presently in the American religious landscape). Whereas mainline Christians profess belief in basic Christian principles (e.g. Jesus Christ is the Son of God, was crucified, died, and resurrected on the third day and that all Christians ought to love God and their

neighbors), evangelicals are characterized by more dogmatic beliefs. Most evangelicals (although this is beginning to change) believe that the Bible represents the literal truth of God's word to man. Their religious practice also emphasizes evangelism (hence the name "evangelical") and many in this category, although not all, place a heavy value on the book of Revelation, which prophesies the rise of the Antichrist, the second coming of Christ, and the eventual destruction of the world by fire. It is not a stretch to claim that most evangelicals anticipate these events happening at some point in their lifetimes. Immensely popular book and movie series like "Left Behind" are evidence that evangelicals not only believe in the End Times, but also derive some entertainment value from thinking about them. The doctrinal differences between evangelical and mainline Protestant Christianity are, perhaps, nowhere as distinct as they are in the United States.

Moreover, Christian Stewards and evangelicals are not one in the same. In the context of the United States, evangelicals are important to Stewards; due to their significant numbers they represent the best opportunity for the expansion of the Steward movement. But in the past Stewards and evangelical priorities have been at odds with one another. This schism is exacerbated by the intervention of political parties and is discussed later in this chapter. In the last few years, Stewards movements have attempted to reframe environmentalism to make it more appealing to the evangelical population. To some degree they have been successful (although the rise in environmental awareness among evangelicals may have to do as much with increased media attention and the urgency of impending crises like climate change as it does with efforts on the part of Stewards), but they have still failed in the formation of a broad "religious center" comparable to the axiomatic religious context in Canada.

## PREACHING THE ISSUES: INTEGRATING EVANGELICALS

In 1965 a young preacher named Jerry Falwell argued that

"[Christians] have few ties to this earth. . . . Believing in the Bible as I do, I would find it impossible to stop preaching the pure saving Gospel of Jesus Christ and begin doing anything else, including fighting communism or participating in civil rights reforms. . . .



Preachers are not called upon to be politicians but to be soul winners. Nowhere are we commissioned to reform the externals” (Falwell, 1987: 290).

Falwell’s opinion was not uncommon among evangelicals at the time. The influence of the Scofield Bible on evangelical thinking combined with doctrinal support calling for distance from matters of State, had fashioned an evangelical population that was, by the middle of the twentieth century, socially and politically subdued. But by 1980, Falwell’s rhetoric (as well as the rhetoric of many evangelical leaders) had changed. “[T]he day of the silent church is passed. . . We’re here to stay. . . Preachers, you need as never before to preach on the issues, no matter what they say or what they write about you. Get involved, registered, informed, and voting” (Willis, 1980). The increasingly secular discourse of American culture and politics in the 1970s might have been enough to launch a prodigious backlash from traditionalists, evangelical Christians included. After all, rapidly declining church attendance, increasing marginalization and cultural irrelevance, as well as a counterculture movement hostile to the precepts of conservative Christian doctrine, were causes for concern among many Christians at the time. Likewise, the Canadian church confronted some of the same challenges, but Canadian evangelicals did not emerge in the decades to come as a powerhouse in Canadian politics. Of course, there are and always have been far fewer Canadian evangelicals than American. And maybe therein lies part of the answer.

American Christianity was not the only institution struggling in the 1970s. The Republican Party was as well. Defeat in Vietnam, the disgrace of both Watergate and Ford’s pardon of the previous president, and an ungainly identity tied more to economics than to social realities had distanced the polity from the Republican Party. While the Democratic Party (known as the party of “acid, amnesty, and abortion” during the McGovern era) was hardly the place for traditionalists, evangelicals had, up until this point been content to remain on the sidelines of the political sphere. And the nomination of Jimmy Carter, a born-again Christian, broadened the cultural territory of the Democratic Party, further eroding the chances of a spontaneous up-welling of conservative Christian support for Republicans. But the early formation of the “Christian Right” was anything but spontaneous (Layman, 2002). The New Right, a secular, but conservative political movement within

the Republican Party opposed to many of the policies of the more moderate Rockefeller Republicans, actively assisted in the mobilization and integration of evangelical Christians in the Republican party by personally reaching out to and encouraging religious leaders like Falwell and Pat Robertson to engage more in the political sphere. “New Right leaders such as Richard Viguerie, Paul Weyrich, and Howard Phillips played a critical role in convincing evangelical religious leaders to become involved in politics” (p. 44). New Right priorities, while not opposed to the values and concerns of evangelical Christians, were hardly in unison, either. The strategies acted upon by New Right leaders represent the formation of an unofficial coalition within U.S. politics, a coup for the secular, but conservative faction of the Republican Party, and the mobilization of a previously untapped demographic.

To gain firm control of the party, conservatives needed to bring a new constituency into Republican politics that would provide consistent support for conservative candidates and policies. Evangelical Christians were a large, unattached constituency, and cultural conservatism provided a way to draw them into the GOP (Layman, 2002: p. 45).

Thus, political institutions were more than just receptive to evangelical Christians; they were actively inviting them to join the Party. Ronald Reagan’s “highly conservative rhetoric on cultural issues such as abortion” further solidified evangelical Christian loyalty to the Republican Party and enthusiasm for political mobilization, in general. As Weyrich cynically observed in 1980: “The New Right is looking for issues that people care about and social issues, at least for the present, fit the bill” (Reichley, 1987: 79).

The centrality of the abortion issue to the evangelical movement was not a bygone conclusion either; some Protestant groups even responded favorably to the 1973 Supreme Court decision. Again, New Right strategies had a hand in organizing and mobilizing a broad national movement of evangelical Christians around a “social issue” from which they could derive enough emotional conviction to overcome previous aversions to politics. Randall Balmer, an evangelical and a professor of American History at Barnard College writes in his book *Thy Kingdom Come: How the Religious Right Distorts the Faith and Threatens America – An Evangelical’s Lament* that Weyrich had initially organized the Religious Right around the Internal Revenue Service’s attempt “to revoke the tax-



exempt status of Bob Jones University in 1975 because the school's regulations forbade interracial dating" (p. 14). Evangelical discontent about a perceived attack on their subculture (the government's intervention in the institutional policies of Bob Jones University, a bastion of evangelical extremism) was the opportunity Weyrich had been looking for to reinforce the ranks of the conservative arm of the Republican Party. But once the momentary fervor surrounding Bob Jones University's tax status ebbed, Weyrich knew he would need to replace it with an issue that had the lasting qualities necessary for a broader political movement. Many anticipated the issue would be divorce; after all, the Bible has a lot more to say about divorce than it does abortion. However, in a conference call intended to mobilize evangelical leaders for Bob Jones University in the late 1970s, someone mentioned abortion, Weyrich ran with it<sup>8</sup> "and that is how abortion was cobbled into the political agenda of the Religious Right" (16).

The elevation of evangelical Christianity to the national political stage gave this religious group an auspicious and credible platform from which to lobby, not just for political change, but for social and normative change as well. Within the span of a decade, cries for abstinence-only education drowned out the counterculture's demand for "free love," moral certitude imbued capitalism, and women, it was argued, became the pawns of a secular conspiracy to destroy the family and the cultural integrity of the nation. "The feminist agenda is not about equal rights for women. It is about a socialist, anti-family political movement that encourages women to leave their husbands, kill their children, practice witchcraft, destroy capitalism, and become lesbians" (Pat Robertson quoted in *Washington Post*, 1992). As risible as the arguments advanced by Robertson and others are, the fact that they were issued from a national podium and given legitimacy by parts of the political establishment helped shift the national political spectrum decidedly to the right while affording this previously marginalized group a significant amount of cultural cache they otherwise would have found difficult to attain.

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<sup>8</sup> Weyrich's decision in this matter could have been influenced by the emergence of the Equal Rights Amendment and the roll abortion would play in any debate regarding women's rights.

While it would be difficult to characterize the majority of Americans by the likes of Robertson, or even the majority of American Christians, the evangelical Christian interpretation of American and Christian identity became a forceful argument in American politics and society, polarizing both spheres. Again, quoting Robertson: "You say you're supposed to be nice to the Episcopalians and the Presbyterians and the Methodists and this, that, and the other thing. Nonsense! I don't have to be nice to the spirit of the Antichrist. I can love the people who hold false opinions but I don't have to be nice to them" (Robertson, 1991: 700 Club, January 14). This polarization represents a unique challenge for the Christian Steward social movement in the U.S., a challenge it would be difficult to argue they successfully overcame.

#### U.S. STEWARDS: BETWEEN TWO POLES

There are several distinctions that can be drawn between American and Canadian Stewards. Many of these stem from the ideological polarization resulting from New Right and Religious Right strategies in the 1980s and 90s as well as the priorities of evangelical Christians. First, whereas Canadians Stewards are solidly establishmentarian in practice and identity, American Stewards tend to perceive themselves as misunderstood by the larger cultural context as well as by political institutions. This, no doubt, is partly due to a deep-seeded tendency for American evangelical groups, even relatively progressive ones, to evince an attitude of martyrdom, even when they represent one of the more powerful factions in American politics. Second, American Stewards, much like their Canadian counterparts, perceive themselves to be mediators, but their mediation occurs almost exclusively within evangelical circles rather than within competing sectors of society. A phenomenon explored later in this chapter. Finally, while American Stewards are ostensibly moving away from single-issue voting (that single issue being abortion, of course), there is little evidence to suggest that this trend is taking hold in the evangelical population at-large. In fact, in recent months, one of the preeminent American Stewards groups, Sojourners, finally declared its sympathy with the left of the political spectrum after years of avoiding an explicit statement on the matter. This decision is an implicit



admission of defeat, that appeals to more conservative evangelicals are largely futile. It might also indicate an implicit recognition for potential co-option of the Steward message (At the beginning of this paper I referenced Derrida's observation "eat or be eaten;" here is where that tension is most readily apparent).

Evangelical Christians have long discoursed in an idiom defined by themes of martyrdom and persecution. This inheritance springs in part from dominant perceptions regarding the Puritans, a group of conservative Christians fleeing ostracism in Europe to settle a new continent, and partially a product of Weyrich's early strategies incorporating Evangelicals into the Republican Party. The mobilization of this group into national politics around the Bob Jones tax scandal is exemplary of the themes that have underscored their message for years. The typical evangelical riff on their own political involvement is observed countless times in their communications with one another. The following Jerry Falwell quote from 1980 sums up this sentiment: "We're not trying to jam our moral philosophy down the throats of others. We're simply trying to keep others from jamming their amoral philosophies down our throats" (Greider, 1980). This quote is reminiscent in many ways of the American Revolutionary War slogan, "Don't tread on me" and presents a remarkable contrast between American and Canadian Christianity. Whereas Canadian Christians seem to have an implicit understanding that it is *their* responsibility to reach out to society at-large if they are to remain relevant, many American Christians take a different approach by attempting to fashion a social reality that is relevant to Christian doctrine. Whether unconscious or strategic thinking carried this self-perception into the American Stewards movement is hard to gauge. What is apparent, however, is the almost tangible feeling conveyed in many American Steward documents that they are doubly burdened by misunderstanding: first by secular social forces and second by evangelicals themselves. Jim Wallis, leader of the Stewards organization Sojourners, subtitled one of his most popular books *God's Politics* with "why the Right gets it wrong and the Left doesn't get it." Wallis, one of the most eloquent and thoughtful Steward leaders, is justified in feeling misunderstood. The religious center (as he calls it) has been shunned by most evangelicals who perceive it to be a legitimizing force for

secular politics; leftists have also regarded Wallis' "center" with suspicion, believing it to be another inappropriate gateway for the influx of religious values into "rational," secular debate (Dinham & Lowndes, 2009). Most important, how this prevailing sense of misunderstanding has shaped the American Stewards message is in the way it directs attention inward, toward the internal struggles of the Stewards movement, as opposed to outward into the broader challenges confronted by society. In other words, many (but not all) American Stewards are caught up in a conversation about why it is okay to be a Christian and simultaneously an environmentalist versus why national social and political values should incorporate certain issue-related positions.

In 2006, an Ellison Research survey found that 70% of American evangelicals believed that global warming was a "serious threat" to the future of the planet (although the survey did not reveal the percentage of those who identified human and industrial activity as the leading cause of climate change) (Worldnetdaily.com, 2006). Furthermore, 51% of respondents said the U.S. should take steps to reduce global warming even if there is a high economic cost. The survey tested evangelical support for the Evangelical Climate Initiative (ECI) signed by 85 Christian leaders and unveiled in February of the same year. The results of the survey mask several issues that paint a far less conciliatory view of the evangelical relationship with environmentalism. The most obvious of these is how evangelicals prioritize environmental policies against social ones, but next in line is the furious evangelical reaction against the Christian leaders who signed the ECI.

For decades, evangelicals have perceived the environmental agenda as one that is mutually-exclusive with anti-choice policies. These fears still preside over many evangelical Christians, even ones that have cautiously appropriated some environmental values. For example, the Ellison Research survey was funded by the Evangelical Environmental Network (EEN), a prominent American Stewards group which receives donations from the Rockefeller Brothers Fund among its many donor groups. This fact in itself was cause for alarm to many evangelical Christians. Brannon Howse of the Christian Worldview Network writes: "The Rockefeller Brother's Fund has given grants to such radical environmental groups as Greenpeace. Let's not forget that it was the



Rockefellers that donated the land and formed the United Nations. . . According to a press release by the pro-life group Human Life International, the Rockefeller Brothers Fund supports many anti-Christian ideals and organizations including the United Nations Millennium Peace Summit” (2006). Another evangelical columnist cautioned the 85 Christian signers of the Evangelical Climate Initiative, including Todd Bassett, the national commander of The Salvation Army, against hubris and the assumption they had secured a place in heaven. “Before attempting to work out the salvation of the world by government force, maybe these folks, too, should be certain they work out their own personal salvation with fear and trembling. I’m not the judge of where they will spend eternity. But I do know they are about the business of making earth a living hell” (2006).

Considering the origins of the Religious Right in American politics it is understandable how environmentalism came to represent anti-Christian ideals. Weyrich and other New Right strategists would have certainly painted the environmental movement with a sinister brush in order to secure evangelical commitment to conservative economic policies. Furthermore, prominent environmentalists and groups like Garret Hardin (1968) and the Zero Population Growth movement compounded suspicions that the environmental movement masked a conspiratorial agenda to promote the liberal, unrestricted use of abortion for the purposes of population control. Robert Alcorn, a featured guest on Pat Robertson’s 700 Club as well as a recent convert to the Stewards movement has this to say about his decision to support a very rudimentary form of environmentalism:

“There are those who assume that every claim of man-caused global warming is true, ignoring the fact that many groups, including pro-choice organizations, are capitalizing on exaggerated environmental fears to justify ungodly agendas that include increasing global abortions. . . Frankly, I don’t know how to interpret all the data from the opposing camps. . . When it comes to concern for the environment, I have no interest in following conservatives or liberals. I am called to be a follower of Christ, no matter who that aligns me with on any given issue. I care about defending the unborn and the sanctity of marriage and the value of business, so some consider me a conservative. I care about the poor and racial equality and the environment and humane treatment of animals, so some will consider me a liberal. Maybe some will call me New Age” (Alcorn, 2008).

Alcorn’s fears that he will be called “New Age” (a term that sums up all that is wrong with the world in the eyes of the evangelical movement) is justified considering the statements

made by evangelical groups in response to the ECI. While Canadian Stewards perceive their mission to be one of mediation between secular institutions for a resolution to the ecological crisis, American Stewards also perceive themselves to be mediators, but their arbitration is more insular. They mediate primarily between themselves and the already highly mobilized evangelical political movements that have dominated the American evangelical identity for decades.

Although many of their leaders, like Wallis, hope to encourage dialogue between the secular left and the religious right, the real debate is occurring between the religious left and the religious right, terms Wallis' organization, Sojourners, avoided for years. In early 2009, Sojourner's finally claimed the religious left in a statement that seemed like a move away from the battle for a "religious center."

I wanted to gauge your interest in the first big mobilization of the Religious Left in the Obama era - a signal of the shift in power dynamics. Sojourners is mobilizing over a thousand Christian activists and 70 religious and anti-poverty groups at a conference next week in DC to prepare a new poverty coalition for legislative battle this year. This is the Religious Left filling the hole created by the decline of the Religious Right but now we have the political power and ear of the White House - definitely a new trend and a "first" within this new political era. (Olson, 2009: Christianity Today politics blog).

What is telling about this statement is not just the move away from a religious center, but also the competitive subtext of the message. This is not the consensual internal dialogue of Canadian Stewards, nor is it representative of previous statements made by Wallis or Sojourner staffers. Whether or not this represents a permanent abandonment and understanding of the "religious center" as a quixotic pursuit in American politics, or a temporary and strategic alignment with the political left as they assume power is somewhat beside the point. The fact that it is at all represents a dramatic difference between the American and Canadian Stewards movements. It is also clear that even in the U.S. the term "evangelical" is becoming a less reliable indicator of an individual's political values.

A "consistent ethic of life" is a term employed frequently by Stewards as they reconcile the preoccupation of the evangelical political movement with the abortion (and euthanasia) debate with the more progressive initiatives advanced by environmental ethics. As originally described by Wallis



(2005), this term is actually a plea to evangelicals and political parties alike for consistency in life issues, primarily abortion and the death penalty: “The tragedy is that in America today, one can’t vote for a consistent ethic of life. Republicans stress some life issues, Democrats some of the others, while both violate the seamless garment of life on several vital matters” (Wallis, 2005: p. 301). However, the meaning of the term has since been invoked in relation to the ecological crisis as well.

A consistent ethic of life must also take seriously our responsibility for the environment. I find it absolutely flabbergasting to think that the current administration [George W. Bush administration] actually found its own scientists to say what it wanted the science to say regardless of what the entire global scientific community has been saying for decades. We impact this planet and I am certain our responsibility with God's planet, when he crowned us the earth's stewards, was not to industrialize every square inch of it in the name of progress. Drill here, drill now is no longer acceptable. We must find alternatives to oil and coal and we must do that now (Heyboer, 2008: CRC Justice Seekers blog).

Wallis has also observed the same all-encompassing meaning of the word “life” when speaking with evangelicals (Wallis, 2007). In fact, the phrase “consistent ethic of life” might be the catch-all phrase that sums up most of the American Stewards movement. The abortion issue has become such an entrenched controversy in U.S. social and political life, particularly for evangelical movements (for indeed, it is ostensibly their *raison d’être*), a discussion of any other issue, including the environment, cannot be far removed from the “life” issue or else it loses relevance. This has also shaped a Stewards movement that is rather more interested in the “social” aspects of Stewardship, than the environmental ones. While this generalization cannot be extended to every corner of the American Stewards movement for there exist dedicated environmentalist groups and individuals within its fold, the majority of Stewards with the polity as well as many leaders are and have been socially-oriented to the exclusion of many important environmental issues. A common feature of American Stewards is a basic recognition that there is an ecological crisis and that something should be done about it, but focused environmental solutions to specific problems have, thus far, not been a priority. There are signs that Stewardship has the potential to become a legitimate and powerful force for the care and protection of “creation” in the future, particularly if it leaves the formation of an American “religious center” until a later date, but it still has a long way to go before it becomes a movement free from the preoccupation with the most conventionally understood “life” issue, abortion. This may occur on its

own as the movement gives up appeals to the religious right and instead occupies itself with the empowerment of the religious left.

It could be argued that American Stewards pursued an unsuccessful strategy when they implored the religious right to move to the religious center. The historic and institutional relationship between the religious right and the New Right (the dominant faction in the Republican Party since the Reagan years), created a situation fraught with a potential for the co-option (what Derrida termed “to be eaten”) of message and agenda, as indeed, the preoccupation with the abortion debate may represent. Nevertheless, the increasing prevalence of environmental messages and groups throughout U.S. society coinciding with evangelical disaffection with George W. Bush whose administration violated many traditionally conservative principles (Cox, 2007), has perhaps, in the end, assisted in the reinvention of a U.S. Stewards movement that is positioned to become a powerful conveyor of environmental values. It is unlikely that U.S. Stewards will ever occupy the religious center, as do their counterparts in Canada. The American political spectrum has, for the last thirty years, represented a determined and inescapable movement to the right due to the powerful coalition formed between the New Right and the Religious Right. Nevertheless, this does not preclude the U.S. Stewards from becoming a more substantive force for environmental, social, and economic change in U.S. politics and society in the future. Their actions may even be described as “receptivity building” for a moderate spectrum of issues in the years to come.



## Chapter Four

### **New Social Movements and States**

*“Start by doing what’s necessary; then do what’s possible; and suddenly you are doing the impossible.”*

- St. Francis of Assisi

This project is about more than just Canadians and Americans, stewards and evangelicals. It’s about the profound and intuitive relationship between the individual, her convictions, and the state. The state is not the conclusive arbiter of our most cherished beliefs – that remains firmly in the domain of individual choice – but the state and its political and social institutions are responsible in no small way for the framing and positioning of those choices. It is often the fulcrum and balance against which we measure the weight and relevance of norms and values, even if its influence is not at first apparent.

In order to understand this relationship I have examined the structures that reinforce it and give it purchase in the life of individuals and the new social movements to which they belong. The argument began with a careful explication of conceptual tools necessary for the apprehension of the subtle structures that shape opportunities for and social receptivity to new social movements. Tools in hand, the argument then moved to understanding the impact of four fundamental structures in two distinct states: Canada and the U.S. Those structures are: first, the relative openness or closure of state and social and political institutions; second, the stability and acceptance of a broad set of attitudes and values within a given state; third the presence or absence of movements with similar messages; and fourth, the relevance of national symbols or publicly held assumptions and values to the message and goals of the new social movement. Together, these formed the central arguments of this project:

1. Understanding why new social movements fail, succeed, or behave unexpectedly in a given state requires first an understanding of the openness of social and political institutions, the stability of norms and values, the presence or absence of movements with similar messages, and the relevance of national symbols and dominant interpretations of national identity.
2. The restrictive influence of anyone of these structures will require varying periods of receptivity building in order to shift the social opportunity structure of a state into a more favorable position.
3. New social movements do not emerge organically from any one type of state, but are the products of contest, both political and social, for the policies, structures, symbols, and ideals that shape the individual's understanding of both his place in the cosmos as well as his role as citizen within the boundaries of the state.

The following diagrams (figures 4.1 and 4.2) visually depict the difference in social opportunity structure openness or size one might expect to see when comparing the Christian Stewards social movement in the U.S. and Canada. The striped areas represent the social opportunity structure. The larger the social opportunity structure, the more likely a new social movement might succeed. The striped area is measured using the four dimensions of CSM.



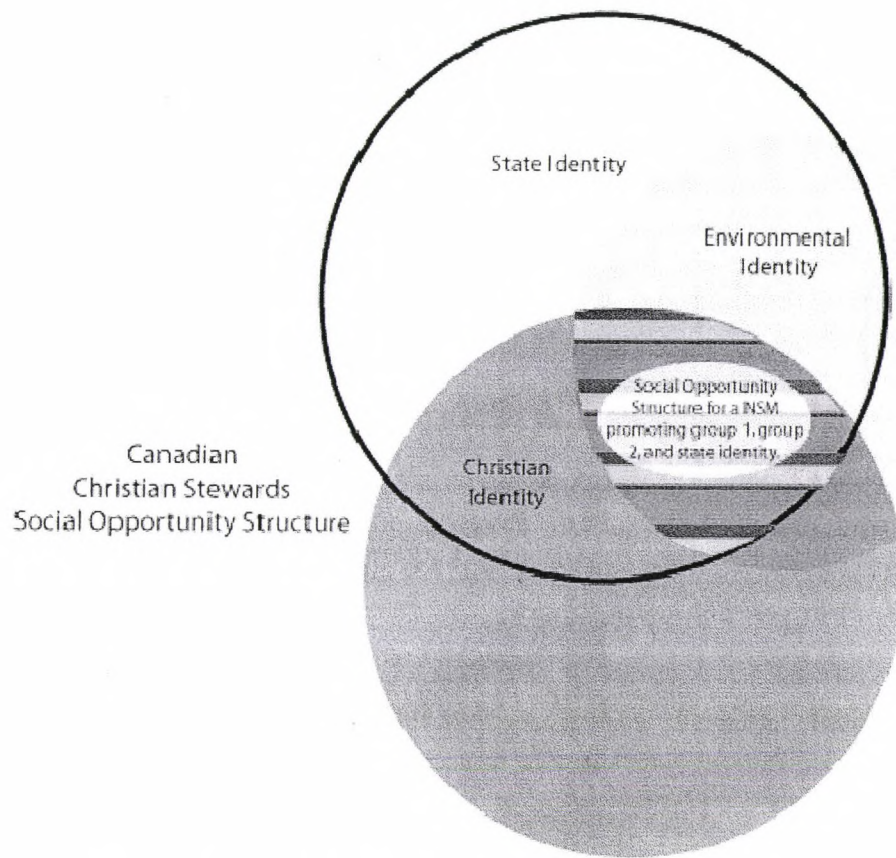


Figure 4.1 Canadian Christian Stewards Social Opportunity Structure

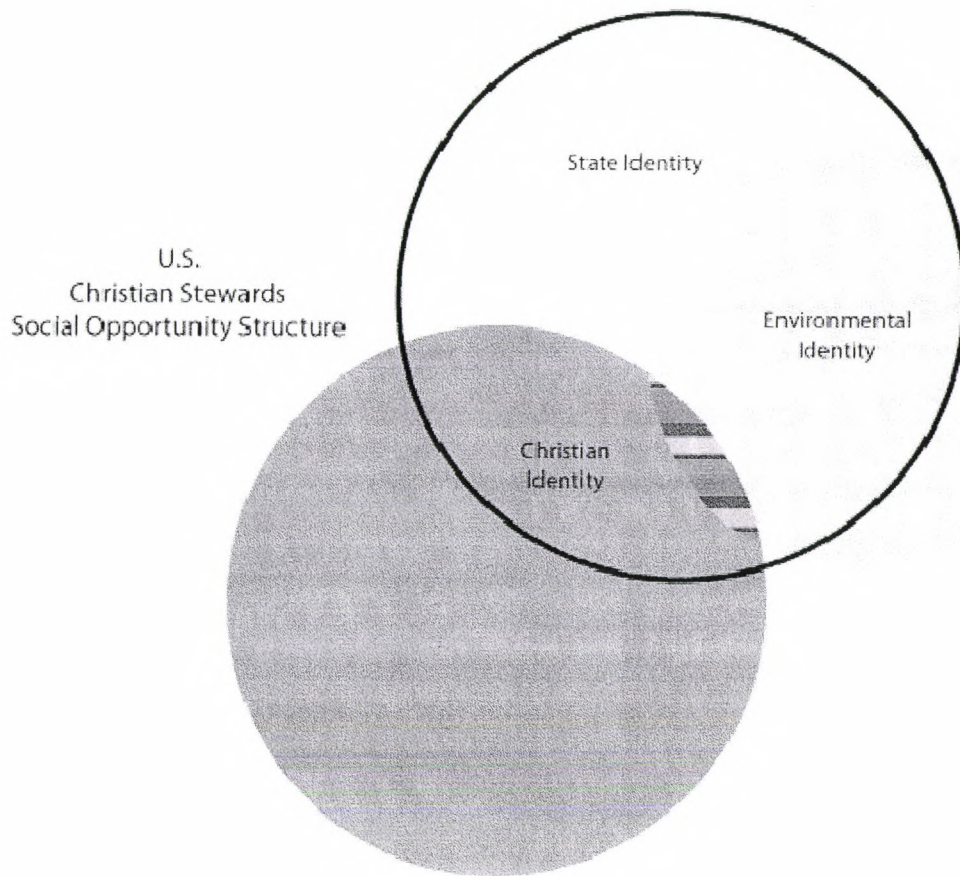


Figure 4.1 U.S. Christian Stewards Social Opportunity Structure

This final chapter reviews the major components of CSM in relation to the case studies presented by analyzing the qualities of the two different social opportunity structures in Canada and the U.S. and the importance of receptivity building in both cases. It then reviews the four dimensions of CSM and how they apply to the case studies before concluding with a brief section regarding the possibilities and limitations of the CSM framework in future research.

#### SOCIAL OPPORTUNITY STRUCTURE & RECEPTIVITY BUILDING

In order for a social opportunity structure to be receptive to a new social movement message urging a change in lifestyle, values, and institutions, that message must somehow be emotionally and intuitively relevant to the process through which people understand themselves and their place in



society. As witnessed in the Canadian case, a decades-long transition to a more secular identity, enabled by state policy, history, and the response of social and political institutions, constructed a social reality receptive to religious organizations acting on behalf of common values, including environmental and social improvement. The reason Canadian Stewards are described as establishmentarian is not simply due to their engagement with political and economic issues in a secular state context. No, their establishmentarian principles run far deeper than just strategy. In fact, in many instances these principles are axiomatic. The example of Manning speaking at a Steward conference comes to mind. There was no mention of his conservative leanings, no announcement heralding the emergence of conservative Christians in the environmental movement – he was simply there because, like the rest of the participants, he considered the ecological crisis an important issue to address. His presence there was unconsciously accepted as usual and appropriate.

Herein lies a significant difference between Canadian and U.S. Stewards. While both states have their share of evangelicals and environmentalists, only in the U.S. is it perceived as noteworthy when conservative Christians take up the banner of environmentalism. This discrepancy emerges through a social opportunity structure that is open to a different kind of movement and evangelical identity. The Religious Right is the expected norm whereas the religious left and the religious center are exotic phenomena, remarkable in their challenge of the norms and identities perpetuated by the state social structure.

This variance in the establishmentarian orientation in each group leads to a difference in their identities as mediators, both rhetorical and in practice. While Canadian Stewards benefit from a structure that enables their activities within the state and society at-large, U.S. Stewards stumble upon a sense that they are not fully accepted for reasons largely outside of their control. They are participants in a conversation not just between themselves and secular society, but between themselves and other Christians, negotiating the spaces and issues in which it is appropriate for Christians to act. Some have suggested that this is due more to constitutional differences than to anything else (Eisgruber & Zeisberg, 2006). While that certainly accentuates some differences (and

could be analyzed within the CSM framework as part of institutional openness, stable values, and public assumptions dimensions) constitutions first enable the identities and norms before these then ferment into social assumptions and divisions. When U.S. Stewards, like Wallis, wade into the public sphere it is not with the dictates of the separation of church and state at the forefront of their minds, but rather with the desire to challenge perceptions perpetuated by both the media and evangelicals that Christians are or should be single-issue voters. In the past Wallis has stated, “The media seems to think only abortion and gay marriage are religious issues. Poverty is a moral issue, it's a faith issue, it's a religious issue” (White, 2005). At the same time he has urged the church to engage more in issues relevant to the rest of society. “When evangelical leaders can persuade the president to be concerned about what's happening in Sudan, or sex trafficking around the world, or HIV-AIDS, that's a very good thing. I am completely supportive of that” (Frontline, 2004).

Despite the insistence of people like Wallis who claim that the media has misrepresented evangelicals, the most vocal and public evangelical voices for decades have been those calling for an end to abortion and for the dominance of traditional values in the public sphere. This, as many claim, is not just the result of a capricious media who ignore reasonable voices in pursuit of sensational stories. The fact is that even if moderate Christians outnumber the Religious Right in the U.S., it is the conservative evangelicals who dominate political and social attention, and it is the receptivity of the social structure that has enabled this dominance. Those occupying positions most capable of influencing that structure (party strategists, politicians, political appointees, academics, and policy makers) might consider this fact if they wish to embed future potential for change within the social opportunity structure. Although the social opportunity structure mutates, incrementally, outside the boundaries of state political structures, the intervention of these structures seems to be one of the more expedient ways in which to direct and accomplish strategic positioning. Receptivity building can come from both bottom-up and top-down strategies. However, in these two cases, the influence of top-down decisions seems to be the most effective.



## RECEPTIVE SOCIAL AND POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS

Institutions are rarely, if ever, closed; they are simply receptive to different types of spectrums, ideas, values, and identities at any given time. Framing will only get a movement so far. Institutional agendas become the subtext of the social opportunity structure. In a purely political context these structures and agendas would result in one type of policy or another, in the social context they form and reform perceptions of lifestyle, identity, and nationhood. Processes which increase receptivity vary from state to state and era to era. In Canada the combination of a decline in church attendance and relevance (due to a number of forces) and a heightened awareness of the ecological crisis created a social opportunity structure open to more secular, environmental justice movements; in essence, moving the religious sphere closer to the environmental sphere, while expanding the environmental sphere. In the U.S., a conservative political party in search of a new demographic to bolster flagging ranks united with conservative Christians concerned about the decline of Christian influence in society and opened social opportunity structures to more fundamentalist movements while simultaneously restricting these same structures for environmental Christian movements. In other cases, social opportunity structures might open to indigenous movements if the population perceives national identity to be derived, in part, from indigenous origins (e.g. Mexico), or they may open to a backlash movement if a cherished national value or symbol is perceived to be under threat by another social and/or political force (French agriculture versus McDonalds).

## STABILITY OF ATTITUDES AND VALUES

It is unlikely that an enduringly successful new social movement will arise out of a context in which attitudes and values are under intense scrutiny and contention. Referring back to the diagrams on pages 53 and 54, if any of the circles – state, Christian, or environmentalist, but especially state – are in a highly volatile condition, palpitating like an irregular heartbeat, then perceptions of shared spaces and identities may not persist long enough for the formation of a consistent movement. It is true that

attitudes, values, and norms are constantly in flux. Heraclites said, “You can never step in the same river twice,” and this is especially true for those rivers that run faster than others. In these periods of dramatic social and political transition it is unlikely to find a very successful new social movement. Some might emerge overnight, gaining a vast number of adherents, only to fade with the dawn of a new day, never having maintained the lifestyle shifts that are ostensibly the goals of new social movements. The counterculture revolution in late 1960s U.S. might be one such example. Nevertheless, as social change begins to settle and become the norm, the emergence of long-term new social movements become more likely.

#### PRESENCE OF SIMILAR MOVEMENTS

The presence of movements with similar messages and goals is not only important for the process of receptivity building; it also provides a significant learning curve for new movements. Whether or not the Canadian Stewards were aware of the strategies of other environmental social movements in Canada is not discussed in this research. However, it is almost certain they would at least unconsciously observe the issues and messages of greatest appeal to the Canadian population. This in turn would encourage Stewards to target the issues and frame the messages most relevant to the general population. Likewise, in the U.S. the significant presence of the New Right was a known aid to the formation of the Religious Right. This produced a wheel of learning for both groups as each adopted, to a greater or lesser degree, the positions favored by the other while simultaneously promoting each others agendas. It also may be one of the larger factors concerning the predominance of “life” issues in the U.S. Steward movement.

#### RELAVANCE OF NATIONAL SYMBOLS AND ASSUMPTIONS

National icons and myths are, in part, the idiom through which identities form. That is not to say that these symbols are identities in and of themselves; they are not. But whether they are accepted or rejected, revered or ridiculed they are the centerpiece around which individuals position themselves



in the context of a nation. National identity is not the only type of identity that is important to understand when exploring new social movements – there are, of course, the ideologies and identities brought to bear by the social movements themselves – but they are the context in which each social movement ideology must reinterpret itself in order to appeal to a state population.

In Canada, the recurrent themes of nature, negotiation and compromise, and opposition to American values and assumptions are important symbols to consider when analyzing any new social movement within its borders. On the other hand, the mythic quality of the American Revolution, the Pilgrims, and the strong persistence of Protestant sectarianism in the U.S. are important factors for this state, especially when examining movements of a religious nature.

#### CONCLUSION: CSM STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

What I have hoped to accomplish with this project is to provide some definition to an otherwise “ill-defined” territory: new social movements. In order to do so, I needed to first marginalize the significance of postmaterialist discourse on the subject. The presence of lifestyle movements has pre-existed the “postmaterialist” state and continue to persist in non-postmaterialist states. That the phenomenon seems more frequent in postmaterialist state is indisputable and not without consequence, but postmaterialism is only part of the story of new social movements, and by no means a comprehensive explanation of their origins. With this accomplished, I borrowed from social movement theory the concept of political opportunity structures. Incidentally, this included borrowing the assumption that states matter to new social movements; their significance is not limited to just the realm of traditional social movements. Unfortunately, pre-existing opportunity structure frameworks were not sufficient for the analysis of new social movements as they focused almost entirely on political contestation within governance structures. Certainly this type of contest is a component of new social movement behavior, albeit a marginalized one, but frameworks developed for the measurement of it alone left little room for the consideration of the wider scope of new social movement activities within the broader social structures of the state. If one were to

compare CSM with McAdam's political opportunity structure (which itself was a synthesis of frameworks that had come before it), the similarities would be readily apparent. And yet, the focus of each is distinctive and yields two very different analyses. That is very much the point. One tool is ideal for policy-oriented social movements. The other, for lifestyle-oriented movements.

There are conventional features of new social movement theory excluded from this analysis. That is intentional. While a good number of new social movements are progressive and even leftist in nature, restricting the subject to these movements alone unnecessarily and inappropriately restricts the field and our understanding of the way people mobilize around values and institutions. Not all values and institutions are progressive; in fact, quite a few in the Western world remain traditional to this day. Excluding more conservative movements from the analysis leaves a whole phenomenon of behavior outside the lens of observation while simultaneously weakening claims of impartiality attested by new social movement adherents. The pluralistic emphasis placed on new social movement thought by the likes of Habermas and others, while valuable, is only half of the story. It is time to tell the other half.

I recognize that much of what has been stated, explicitly and implicitly, in this project is not in keeping with more conventional interpretations of new social movement theory. Nevertheless, very few of my arguments are, in fact, original. This project simply represents a synthesis of some of the more salient praise and criticism heaped upon new social movement theory. While I approached some aspects of new social movement theory with a good amount of skepticism, I did not discard cherished precepts lightly. My skepticism was not without justification and neither was my belief that despite its problems, new social movement theory represents a valid field with a very real, *distinct*, and legitimate subject matter.

It is my hope that CSM will provide a helpful conceptual tool for those who wish to predict the success of new social movements individually as well as in competitive conditions with one another. Furthermore, I anticipate this being a useful aid for the development of new social movement strategies, explanation of differences, and understanding of social and political openness.



While structure is too often a restrictive force, narrowing opportunities and winnowing creativity, it is also demonstrably enabling. Without the administrative and structural advances of the mid-twentieth century how could society ever have achieved the deep interconnectivity that defines our world today? It is my belief that the structure CSM offers the study of new social movements will help extract the discourse from an often confused morass of worthy, but disorganized ideas, broadening and reinforcing its subject matter for future research projects and topics.

Unfortunately, CSM does not and cannot begin to address all the challenges confronting the study of new social movement theory. To begin with, while the types of analysis it offers are far more ideographic in nature than anything attached to postmaterialism, they are still broad, perhaps too broad, in scope. This to me seems more a criticism inherent to the structural and cultural study of comparative politics, rather than to any new feature CSM has introduced into that study. There are some profound similarities between the study of new social movements and the study of public opinions. However, while the former is often conducted from a top-down position of observation, the latter utilizes the individual as a unit of analysis and progresses from there. I cannot begin to claim that CSM bridges this divide. It obviously falls into a top-down measurement category, this being particularly controversial when identity, national or otherwise, occupies such a significant dimension in the conceptual framework. This paper has not addressed this failing adequately, nor will it. That must wait for future research projects.

Furthermore, I anticipate CSM might run into some problems when applied to contexts in which national identity is less stable or significant than it is in many parts of the world. This may be due in part to the presence of a weak state or absence of a state structure altogether (e.g. Iraq and the Palestinian controlled territories) or it may be the result of an ethnically-divided state in which allegiance to tribe or ethnic group is as important if not more so than allegiance to the state (Kenya might very well be an example of this, although the success of Wangari Mathai's Green Belt movement suggests it is not insurmountable, at least in that particular instance). However, I make no pretense of creating a "grand theory" that is the key to understanding new social movements

everywhere and in every circumstance. While I believe CSM to be generalizable to a variety of new social movements and state contexts, the limits of that applicability are yet to be fully explored. I whole-heartedly endorse the definition of its horizons.

The circumstances described in this project are by no means set in stone. Even as I type social opportunity structures are shifting, the limits of national norms and values are contested, identities are expanding and contracting, and new social movements are adjusting their strategies to meet the challenges of these currents. The cases I have described have depicted the Stewards as reflecting and responding to the spectrum of values and norms in their respective states, yet how those are perceived are in constant, if oftentimes imperceptible, motion. The disorganization and failed strategies of Canada's major left-leaning political party has resulted in the recent success of conservatives. This will certainly impact the disposition of the state as a whole, although the extent of that impact is still anyone's guess. Likewise, the 2008 American presidential elections culminated in remarkable gains for the Democratic Party. The New Right and Religious Right are hardly fixtures of the past, but evidence suggests their monopoly control on American values is slipping. The outcome of these contests will surely ripple on both sides of the 49<sup>th</sup> parallel: how this reshapes the social opportunity structures open to the American and Christian Stewards is an important test for CSM and an exciting moment for the social movements caught up in the action. In fact, it is my sincere hope that this research will go a little ways towards rethinking some of the generalizations propounded in past social movement research, paving the way for a more mid-range framework and understanding of the forces that mold movements "from the dust of the ground" and propel them into existence.



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