

# Thirty-one.6

## Donald E. Wildmon, The Conscience of a Conservative Christian (1985)

*Beginning in the 1970s, conservative Christians became actively involved in politics. One of the movement's early and most influential leaders, the Rev. Jerry Falwell, founded the Moral Majority in 1979 to oppose "abortion, pornography, the drug epidemic, the breakdown of the traditional family, the establishment of homosexuality as an accepted alternate lifestyle, and other moral cancers that are causing our society to rot from within." Conservative Christians were important supporters of Ronald Reagan in the 1980 election. Televangelists, including Pat Robertson, who would later be the founder of the Christian Coalition, Oral Roberts, and Jim Bakker, were popular political as well as religious figures in the mid-1980s, until they were struck by scandals. Right-wing evangelicals became increasingly important in the 1990s after their successes in grassroots organizing and the election of a number of their supporters in the congressional elections of 1994. This selection is from Donald Wildmon's book, *The Home Invaders*, describing his decision to become involved in grassroots activism.\**

One night during the Christmas holidays of 1976, I decided to watch television with my family. Gathered around the set in our den, shortly after 7 P.M., we prepared ourselves for a relaxing time of entertainment. We turned on the set and sat back to be entertained.

Not far into the program was a scene of adultery. I reacted to the situation in the manner I had been taught. I asked one of the children to change channels. Getting involved in the second program, we were shocked with some crude profanity. Once again reacting in the prescribed manner, I asked one of the children to change the channel. We got involved in a mystery when, without warning, on came a totally unexpected scene in which one man had another tied down and was working him over with a hammer. I again reacted as I had been instructed. I asked one of the children to turn off the set.

\* From Donald E. Wildmon, *The Home Invaders* (Wheaton, Ill: Victor Books, 1983), 7-8, 44-7. Copyright © 1985 by Scripture Press Publications, Wheaton, IL 60187. Reprinted by permission.

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As I sat in my den that night, I became angry. I had been disturbed by the deterioration of morals I had witnessed in the media and society during the previous twenty-five years. This was accompanied by a dramatic rise in crime, a proliferation of pornography, increasingly explicit sexual lyrics in music, increasing numbers of broken homes, a rise in drug and alcohol use among the youth, and various other negative factors. I had managed to avoid those unpleasant changes to a large degree by staying away, turning my head, justifying my actions with the reasons most commonly expressed—freedom of speech, pluralism, tolerance.

Realizing that these changes were being brought into the sanctity of my home, I decided I could and would no longer remain silent. I decided to do something even though at that time I had no idea what that something would be. Little did I realize the magnitude of my decision....

Out of that decision came the National Federation for Decency (and out of the NFD came the Coalition for Better Television). For nearly three years I dealt with what I perceived to be the problems with television—sex, violence, and profanity. But the more I dealt with the problems, the more I realized that I was dealing only with symptoms—not the disease....

We Americans are caught up in a great struggle unlike any with which we have faced before. Our struggle is not with an enemy from beyond our shores as it has been in the past; it is being waged inside our very borders. The outcome will determine the direction our country will take for the next several centuries.

This great struggle is one of values—particularly which ones will be the standard for our society and a base for our system of justice in the years to come. For 200 years our country has based its morals, its sense of right and wrong, on the Christian view of man. The Ten Commandments and the Sermon on the Mount have been our solid foundation. To be sure, we have never managed to get the system perfect in practice. Nor will we ever be able to do so no regardless of what base we use. But it has been the most perfect system ever devised in the history of mankind.

Today there are those who would have us change; go in new directions; directions, they are convinced, that will free man from his chains of oppression. They are tired of this old system. They want a new one. And the new one will be based on what they perceive to be right and wrong. The standards for society will come from within themselves. They will decide for themselves and, consequently, for society, what kinds of conduct are acceptable and unacceptable. The old Christian morals will be cast aside in pursuit of a new society....

If within the next five years we fail to turn the tide of this humanist value system which seeks to replace our Christian heritage, then we have—in my opinion—lost the struggle and it will be generations, if at all, before the Christian view of man will be the norm again. I don't like making such a statement. But I must write what I perceive to be the truth.

As a young minister I remember how cold chills ran over my body when I discovered what happened to unwanted babies in Rome at the time of Christ. They were thrown into the sewer! And even in enlightened Athens unwanted children were discarded in the woods for the animals to eat. I thought about how much we have changed since

then, how civilized we have become, how much more compassionate we are today than 2,000 years ago. Then I am told that every year there are more than one million abortions in this country. We haven't changed that much. We wouldn't dare throw a baby in the sewer. Today, we kill babies in the sterile atmosphere of a modern hospital or an abortion clinic and put the bodies in trash bags for disposal in garbage bins. It is so respectable that we even allocate tax money to help cover the expense. We aren't more civilized, only more efficient in our cruelty. Jesus' words, "Suffer the little children to come unto Me," seem out of place in this new society.

#### DOCUMENT ANALYSIS

1. What does Wildmon see as the great struggle going on in society? What does he see as the key adversary to the Christian values he embraces?