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An Unfit Standard-Bearer: Bill Clinton and the Social Order Expectations of the Religious Right

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RUNNING HEAD: Social Order Expectations

Abstract

This paper deals with the rift between the social order of the so-called Religious Right and the perceived social order established and held by President Bill Clinton as he entered his first term in office. The author, applying Duncan's "social order model," suggests Clinton's age, family history, educational background, work experience, domestic life, social circle, and leadership role--in sum, his symbolization of the presidency, presented to the public through the media--represented an unacceptable and irreconcilable affront to "traditional" Christian expectations for the office.

Introduction

At the beginning of President Bill Clinton's administration, Americans who identified with the Religious Right expressed their increasing dissatisfaction with the new president--a man who they felt did not support their domestic policy interests. Many political observers contended--accurately--that much dissatisfaction stemmed from differences between President Bill Clinton's stand on political issues and the positions held by conservative Christians. In this analysis, however, the author suggests that President Clinton's personal symbolism, which Christians saw as demonstrative of "social order"--rather than
the policy positions taken by his administration—which could have been at the root of religionists' discontent. The author illustrates the perspective taken by Duncan's "social order model" to show how Clinton's age, family history, educational background, work experience, domestic life, social circle, and leadership role—presented to the public through the media—all violated the expectations of the Religious Right and put the president at odds with a large and growing segment of the American electorate. While some political observers pushed for Clinton to make additional conciliatory moves to foster a relationship with the Right, the author suggests that such a move would have had little impact on what, from the beginning, was an irreconcilable relationship for many members of the conservative religious movement.

The "Social Order" Model
Researchers use models to help conceptualize and explain human behavior. Models organize information, give general pictures of specific circumstances, and help explain how different elements work together to support communication. Models offer "a structure for assembling (our) findings" (Hanneman & McEwen, 1975, p. 421) and may "make it possible to predict outcomes or the course of events" (McQuail & Windahl, 1993, p. 2). There are many different models which can be used to explain human behavior. In fact, Cassanta and Asante characterize as "chaos" the "claims, hunches, explanations, perspectives, and myths that abound in the field" (Cassanta & Asante, 1979, p. 72). Every researcher has his or her own preferences in regard to models, but most would no doubt agree with McQuail and Windahl that no single model of communication is universally applicable. The construction and use of models is, rather, "a continuing activity designed to clarify new ideas and theories" and point to areas for further research (McQuail
After a review of the literature, and after careful consideration of how to best explain the communicative issues at hand, this author has chosen to frame this discussion in terms of Duncan's "social order" model (Duncan, 1968; Duncan, 1962). The social order model examines the immediately observable hierarchies established in society by those in power--and those who want to be. In so doing, it allows us to see how the actors on the political stage play their roles and offer their rhetoric to create the drama we call politics. By focusing on the immediately observable (rather than attempting to analyze audiences, media messages, internal psychological factors, and other less absolute variables), the social order model allows us to come to some clear conclusions about this drama--or social order--because, as Duncan writes, "a social order defines itself through disorder as well as order" (1962, p. 281).

This examination of the social order begins by first looking at the composition of the large and growing population of Americans who consider themselves among the Religious Right. It follows with an examination of the major points of social order upheld by this group, and the means that are being taken to support the points of order. It takes into consideration the institution of the presidency itself, the unique symbolism attached to it, the individual elected to the office, and his family. Finally, it examines seven key areas in which Bill Clinton's first-term symbolism differed from the expectations of the Religious Right.

The Religious Right
The vast majority of conservative Christians are promoting a responsible (and mainstream) political agenda. What do they seek? Things like safe streets, good schools, strong families, nonintrusive government and communities where people care for one another. Good things all. And not, one would think, particularly
Although the media often portray the Religious Right as far-removed from the social mainstream, the fact of the matter is, most Americans consider themselves religiously Christian and politically conservative. A growing percentage of people most likely to vote in national elections now comes from the group referred to commonly as the Religious Right. According to a recent U.S. News & World Report survey quoted by Cohen (1994), 95% of all Americans believe in God, more than 80% believe the Bible is God's word, and 65% report attending church regularly (Cohen, 1994, p. A-31). In 1992, at least 89% of all Americans called themselves as "Christians", and identified with one of the 1,600 major Christian denominations (Hull et al, 1995, p. 72).

A comprehensive survey by the Times Mirror Center found that specific characteristics of the Religious Right voter could be identified in two large blocks of people in the American electorate--"enterprisers" and "moralists" (Times Mirror Center. . ., 1994). Enterprisers and moralists are predominantly white, Republican, politically conservative and affluent. They often report being "religious, socially intolerant and opposed to social welfare" (p. 12).

Some 84% of the respondents "agree completely" that they have "old fashioned values about family and marriage" (p. 34), while 30% hoped to see "women return to their traditional roles in society."

Taken as a whole, these voters--those who fall most straightforwardly into the ideological category of the Religious Right--comprise 28% of the adult population and 32% of the nation's registered voters. It's widely believed that it was these voters who were responsible for the shift of power to the Republicans in the 1994 mid-term congressional elections--a shift which many voters said was in response to a disapproval of Presidential policy (Sperling, 1994a, p. 19).

Although religious people have always been involved in politics, it has
just been in the past few years that Americans in great number have organized along religious lines to represent their social and political agendas at the national level. In the late 1950s, there were only a dozen or so religious/political interest groups active in Washington, D.C.; by the late 1980s there were at least 80 such organizations lobbying in Congress and with the federal bureaucracy (Hertzke, 1989).
The largest of these groups is the Southern Baptist Convention, with a $1 billion budget and a membership roster which carries 16 million Americans and 38,000 churches (Chambers, 1993, p. A-18). Another powerful lobbying group is the Christian Coalition, which reports 500 chapters and a plan for ten million members by the year 2000 (Reed, 1994). Smaller organizations include broadcast-based support/interest group Focus on the Family, Phyllis Schlafly's Eagle Forum, the Heritage Foundation, Operation Rescue and the National Right to Life Committee. Religious interest groups which work on behalf of Catholics include the United States Catholic Conference and at least thirty other smaller organizations (O'Hara, 1989).

Points of Social Order
Some of the sub-groups in the Religious Right have a variety of political interests, others are more focused. But almost all of the organizations agree on a basic social order which contains the following:

Abortion
The Religious Right wants the president to take the lead to oppose abortion, an issue which was elevated to prominence with the Roe v. Wade decision in 1973. While some religionists simply speak of their concern about "abortion on demand" or "taxpayer funded abortions," others wish to make the procedure patently illegal under all circumstances. Most, however, seem to have as their goal the elimination of constitutional ambivalence on the issue and the establishment of
specific legal guidelines under which the procedure would be allowed—
guidelines 
commonly spoken of as "rape, incest or perceived (medical) 
necessity" (Hertzke, 

Education Issues
The Religious Right would like to see the president be an advocate for 
"choice 
in education," a broad term which Christians use when speaking of children 
receiving educational instruction "consistent with the teaching of their 
parents" (Reed, 1994, p. 231). William Bennett terms it "moral education--
the 
training of heart and mind toward the good" (Bennett, 1993, p. 11). This 
"choice" for "moral education" translates to a political agenda which 
includes 
influence over public school curriculum, to halt sex education and 
instruction 
on the theory of evolution. The Religious Right calls for additional 
parental 
involvement in course curriculum and textbook selection--and the 
establishment 
of a voucher system, whereby the government would underwrite the education 
of 
children in private or parochial schools. The Right wants to see more 
parental 
say over discipline, to combat what is said to be a breakdown in order in 
the 
public schools. Although there is some disagreement over whether a 
Constitutional amendment would be the proper means to assure it, the Right 
also 
wants allowances for prayer in public school classrooms. On these issues, 
Barna 
writes, "parents must take the initiative, using the Bible as ultimate 
authority" (Barna, 1993, p. 206).

Public Welfare
Noting that government spends more on welfare ($305 billion) than it spends for 
courts, law enforcement, and prisons combined, Reed and others among the 
Religious Right believe that the federal government should be "getting out of 
the welfare business altogether" (Reed, 1994, p. 258). This would involve the
federal government turning over to the states the responsibility for supporting people who cannot support themselves. The welfare reform effort would be guided by policy which would "encourage work, savings, marriage, and personal responsibility" (p. 258). The Right looks to the president to be the leader of this effort to change a political system its organizers contend "perpetuates [a] cycle of family decay" (Reed, 1994, p. 83).

Public Safety
"There has never been a time in history when so many storms have come together in one place and time as they have in the past decade," writes Billy Graham (1992, p. 35). "In America we see deepening poverty, racial division, homelessness, crime, physical and sexual abuse, and the disintegration of the traditional family." It is this disintegration of the family that Graham and other conservative Christians point to as the root of "social evils": violence, crime, homosexuality, AIDS. To address these concerns, the Religious Right urges presidential promotion of "traditional" families--with a father, mother and children living together in a Christian household.

"Family Values"
The point of order on which the preceding and all other concerns of the Religious Right rest is "Family Values." Although extremely nebulous as a specific term, "Family Values" has nonetheless become a symbol for "an essentially defensive struggle by people seeking to sustain their faith and their values" (Reed, 1994, p. 18). In includes a push for government to recognize what Christians consider the "traditional family" consisting of "the working father, the homemaker mother, and two school-age children" (Barna, 1993, p. 17)--even to the extent that government would support that family with additional tax breaks based on the number of children in the household. As a point of social order, it encompasses all the other points promulgated by the Religious Right--by signifying personal responsibility for behavior, in the context of the family, supported by prayer and authorized by Bible
Supporting the Religious Right Social Order
Much of the effort to support and develop the Religious Right and its social order comes through the media, and a growing "electronic populism" (Corliss, 1995) which allows the Religious Right to use both religious and secular media for its own gain.
In the secular media, the removal of the Fairness Doctrine has combined with a growing public skepticism of government to allow religionists to disseminate political and social messages unopposed over popular radio and TV talk shows (Ayres, 1994). Even in what was traditionally the "religious" media, the social messages have become so intertwined with the sermonizing that it's often hard to tell where the preaching ends and where the politics begin. Pat Robertson's 700 Club, for example, has been noted to have a "disproportionately high percentage of political content and a relatively low percentage of social and religious content" (Timmerman & Smith, 1994, p. 234). Still more evidence of this promotion of a Religious Right social order can be seen through the burgeoning number of computer-based bulletin board and interactive media systems--which allow for everything from publishing of policy statements to one-on-one conversations about religious issues, and the electronic transfer of funds to support the cause.
By many accounts, a great deal of the electronic communication about the Religious Right involves mere criticism of the president--a criticism so shrill one critic claims it is "on the edge of clinical hysteria" (Lewis, 1994, p. A-17). But there's also a significant amount of good old fashioned political positioning--even though most major conservative Christian groups are designated by the Internal Revenue Service as 501(c)(3) organizations--and, thus, are legally tax-exempt and forbidden from getting involved in
partisan politics. In reality, the designation provides little hindrance for any group pursuing the agenda of the Religious Right on a number of fronts. The most politically active individual Christian organization is the Christian Coalition, which raised $12 million in 1992 (Lewis, 1992, p. A-15). During that year, the Coalition carried out an extensive print and broadcast media campaign including both paid- and unpaid announcements. It printed and distributed 40 million copies of a voter guide listing presidential candidates' positions. Hundreds of Coalition members were purportedly selected as delegates to the Republican National Convention—where Pat Robertson spoke, saying he was aiming to achieve "working" control of the G.O.P. through the Christian Coalition (Lewis, 1992, p. A-15). Later, the Coalition applied for I.R.S. recognition as a 501(c)(4) association to legally broaden its activities to include political lobbying (Lewis, 1992, p. A-15).

Locally-based organizations are also assisting in lobbying efforts. The Church at Pierce Creek, in Binghamton, New York, for example, sponsored a $65,000 advertisement in USA Today on the Friday before the 1992 general election, urging Christians "not to follow another man in his sin" with a vote for Bill Clinton (Lewis, 1992, p. A-15).

The effort to shape public policy has been supported through at least one blatant attack on the character of the president. In early 1994, Moral Majority founder Jerry Falwell marketed a $43 videotape through his television ministry programs. The tape featured interviews with Clinton critics, one of whom accused the president of arranging the murder of political opponents (Ayres, 1994; Yoder, 1994). Other criticisms of the president's character followed in non-fiction publications and in at least one thinly disguised fictional work.

But while Lewis and others criticized the media for attacking Clinton as a human being and questioning his faith (Lewis, 1994, p. A-17), others wrote that the media were simply reflecting what most Americans believed. Lauter claims the
negativity reported in the media was a simple reflection of the fact that, at
the onset of the president's first term, 30 million Americans had "a
dislike of
Clinton that burns with the pure flame of hatred" (Lauter, 1994, p. A-1).

The Presidency as an Institution
A symbol is a "mystical force which adds power to the essential activities
of
living" (Gordon, 1971, p. 35). As such, it is needed by people to describe
and
interpret the human environment. And, at the very root, a symbol can itself
be a
metaphor for power. Such is the case with the presidency, the most powerful
and
complex symbol of America. The presidency represents not only a particular
individual (the president) but an administrative institution which is
universally recognized as having authority over government, commerce and
society. In addition to the immediate officeholder, the symbol of the
presidency
also envelops his wife (the First Lady) and their children (the First
Family).
All are part of the symbolism of the institution because all are seen as
symbols, or models, of what the nation's families and beliefs should
encompass.
Because of the complex nature of the symbolic relationships involving the
president, it's often difficult for the Chief Executive to get a grip on real
leadership. There are just too many forces (symbols) to contend with. So,
presidents resort often to a "mystique of presidential leadership" which
uses
the president's personality and the symbols of his office as a foil, to help
create and defend the illusion that he is the center of government and
social
systems (see Rockman, 1984).
While some would characterize this as a powerful position, others see it in
exactly the opposite light. Grover believes that the president is a
prisoner--a
prisoner who must stand at the front of government and represent national
affairs and interests in a world in which our nation's prestige, power,
influence, and resources are both loved and hated (Grover, 1989). In our
culture's social organization, which is always temporary, and always
fragile,
this can and often does put the president at odds with popular
constructions of
the social order.

Bill Clinton's Presidency
People don't trust that sleazy hypocrite, babbling the Bible out of one
side of
his mouth while pushing his baby-killing, fag-promoting agenda on the
world.
---Fred Phelps, Baptist Minister, Wichita KS

Bill Clinton was elected the 42nd President of the United States on
November 8,
1992. Clinton, a plurality president, entered a divided arena to "put
America to
work", "demand corporate accountability", "reward work and families",
"provide
affordable, quality health care", and "break the Washington stalemate"
(Clinton/Gore '92, 1992).
From the very beginning, Clinton's active first-term agenda was, itself, a
lightning rod for criticism among members of the Religious Right. But the
root
of the Religious Right's discontent with the president goes much deeper--to
the
divergence between the social order demonstrated by Mr. Clinton, and the
social
order expected by conservative Christian organizations. This divergence can
be
seen in seven areas:

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Age
The "enterprisers" and "moralists" who are identified by Times Mirror as
now
making up almost one-third of all the nation's voters are predominantly
white,
conservative, and affluent. But more importantly, they are for the most part
middle-aged and older (Times Mirror Center. . ., 1994). These older Americans who form the core of the Religious Right grew up in a social order which gave them a long and mostly unbroken string of more mature Chief Executives--Franklin Roosevelt, Harry S Truman, Dwight Eisenhower, Richard Nixon. They have grown up in a nation which was traditionally led by a "father" figure (Schmoolker, 1994). In 1992, these Americans saw the leadership of their nation turned over to a man who was 46 years old when elected--a president who was born after World War II, avoided military service, and could not share any of the symbolism of that era. Bill Clinton's youthfulness resulted in his being seen as "a symbol of the Woodstock generation" (Reed, 1994, p. 212) and an unfit standard-bearer for the Religious Right's social order.

Clinton's role upon taking office was that of the caring brother. "I'll tell you what to do" was supplanted by "Let me help you." Questioning Clinton's patriotism (recall that patri means father) was also a way of saying that he was not qualified to be a real leader because he refused to act like a father" (Schmookler, 1994, p. 18).

Family History
Members of the Religious Right are on record as supporting what's called the "traditional family." This family, with a father, mother and children living together in a Christian household, is called by Barna "a choice... that has already been made for humankind by God" (Barna, 1993, p. 34). In this area, the President's background clearly violated the expectations of the Right. Clinton was born to a single mother, then lived with a grandparent while his mother entered the workforce. Later, Clinton would take the surname of his adoptive father--Roger Clinton--who proved to be an abusive alcoholic. In later years,
Clinton's mother, Virginia Kelley, would marry again. Decked out in fur coats and heavy make-up, she would spend much of her retirement time traveling—or at home, betting on horses at the racetrack in Hot Springs. While the family history is probably not that unusual given the wide diversity of American lives and interests, it's clearly at odds with the Religious Right's social order.

Educational Background
Bill Clinton earned his undergraduate degree at Georgetown University, then went on to Oxford University as a Rhodes Scholar. Returning to the United States, Clinton received his law degree from Yale. A stellar educational background, indeed, but not what's expected by Americans who support "traditional" family values and believe in the symbolism of the "school of hard knocks." While members of the Religious Right generally respect Clinton's collegiate attainments, they still insist vehemently that his liberal educational background—and the charisma that accompanies it—are "a poor substitute for core beliefs" (Reed, 1994, p. 208).

Work Experience
Bill Clinton was an undergraduate at Georgetown University when he joined the staff of Arkansas Senator William Fullbright in 1967. Clinton later left, for England and studies at Oxford (Fullbright reportedly wrote him a letter of recommendation for the Rhodes Scholar program). Returning to the U.S. in the early 1970s, Clinton taught law for a short time in Arkansas, but quickly moved on to involvement in national and state politics. He has no military service record, and in fact worked hard to avoid the draft for Vietnam. In 1972, Clinton moved to Texas to manage George McGovern's Texas presidential campaign. He returned to Arkansas, lost in a bid for Congress in 1974, but was elected without Republican opposition as Attorney General in 1976. Two years later, Clinton was elected governor of Arkansas—and at 32, was the youngest governor in the nation. While some would consider his work accomplishments indicative of
an intelligent, ambitious and effective pragmatist--many among the Religious Right see Clinton's career as self-serving. The president, writes Yancey, "never leaves a hand unshaken, a crowd unaddressed, a baby un kissed. He is a consummate politician" (Yancey, 1994, p. 29). "The classic complaint about President Clinton is that he stands for nothing. Which is to say, he's willing to do just about anything to satisfy voters" (Wright, 1995, p. 21).

Domestic Life
By all accounts, President Clinton and his wife have a very egalitarian marriage--and a relationship which runs contrary to what's expected in the traditional Christian home. Hillary Clinton was on her way to a law career of her own when she met her future husband at the Yale Law School. After their marriage, she kept her maiden name, and then later used the hyphenated surname of Rodham-Clinton. Unlike what's expected from the "traditional" Christian woman discussed by Reed (1994), Barna (1993) and others, this First Lady of the nation is assertive--even to the point of being referred to as "a bitch" in a whispered dialogue between the mother of the Speaker of the House and a noted celebrity journalist. In summary, Ehrenreich believes "Hillary Clinton, perhaps more than any woman in public life, has been subject to relentless review by the gender police" (Ehrenreich, 1995, p. 64). Some of the review comes as the result of Mrs. Clinton's personal strengths and the inability of women in a male-dominated world to appear strong "without inviting perceptions like 'ball-buster' or bitch" (p. 64). But Ehrenreich also concludes that the First Lady has put herself in a position for public scrutiny. "If she has a problem--and clearly she does--it's that somehow, characterologically speaking, she doesn't add up. A vigorous advocate of the poor, she devoted much of the '80s, yuppie fashion, to dubious schemes for the accumulation of loot. A feminist, she's been faulted for doing little to advance women's careers in her husband's Administration." As a result of her actions--rather than her philosophy--Ehrenreich concludes
Mrs. Clinton could easily be perceived as "yuppie scum, liberal, elitist, hypocrite, [or a] sellout to the patriarchy" (1995, p. 64). Regardless of whether Mrs. Clinton was seen during the first term as a sell-out, a "liberal, elitist", or simply as a strong-willed woman, her symbolism of the role of the First Lady still runs contrary to the expectations of the Religious Right. Barna, in fact, decries the implications of a non-traditional or "noveau family" such as the one headed by Bill and Hillary Clinton--saying that such a family is "harmful, and at its root, sinful" (1983, p. 38) because it follows social standards other than those set forth in the Bible. Barna makes it clear that, as far as members of the Religious Right are concerned, marriage brings about a "traditional family" consisting of "the working father, the homemaker mother, and two school-age children" (p. 17)--a social order the Clintons cannot fulfill.

Social Circle
Pat Robertson, Jerry Falwell and other leaders of the Religious Right consider it a sin even to socialize with people who live in the world of "secular, capitalist materialism" (Robertson, 1992, p. 35). For the Right, then, it is nothing less than heresy for the president to meet and take counsel from the likes of Mario Cuomo (himself a sinner for defying his on church on the subject of abortion), Barbra Streisand and TV mogul Linda Bloodworth-Thomason. Add to this the continuing allegations of Clinton's infidelity, and it's clear that, as far as the Religious Right's social order is concerned, the president himself is lost in sin because he surrounds himself with those who are "the tools of evil" (Plantinga, 1994, p. 28). There are also those who argued that the Clinton's first-term attempts at
familiarity with ordinary Americans and their everyday concerns tarnished his image as president. Sperling believes that the President's "good-'ol-boy" approach to politics should have been left home in Arkansas. Because Clinton continued to use the strategy both before after his election in an effort to include himself in the social circle of average Americans (as evidenced by playing the saxophone on late-night television and chatting about his favorite type of underwear on MTV), Sperling believes the president has fostered a familiarity which "undercuts the presidential dignity that the public wants" (Sperling, 1995, p. 19).

Leadership Role
In an interview shortly before the mid-term elections in 1994, Clinton asserted his view that leadership amounted to "getting things done and moving the country forward" in a way in which the leader "is able to communicate with people in any environment" (The president at midterm, 1994, p. 4). While offering a somewhat simplistic view of the process, the president did hint at the two areas in which his symbolism of presidential leadership was at odds with what members of the Religious Right would expect. The conservative religionists would not agree with Clinton's suggestion that leadership ("getting things done") would equate with "moving the country forward." Christians see political and social conservativism, and the return to Biblical values, as non-negotiable. "Situational ethics have replaced God's absolutes," Pat Robertson admonished (1992, p. 11). "The message reaching most Americans in the 1990s is that nothing is morally wrong except lying to the press or the government, failing to pay income taxes, making racial slurs, or denigrating the open expression of homosexuality and lesbianism." Robertson and other spokesmen for the Religious Right could not accept Clinton's version of leadership, because regardless of his strength as a leader, they could not
accept the social order the president leads for.
Much of the difficulty can be identified in the President's inability to
demonstrate the religious faith he claimed to hold. While Clinton said that
there's no reason "those of us who have faith shouldn't frankly admit that we
are animated by that faith" (Steinfels, 1993, p. 8) he had difficulty
displaying
that animation during the campaign and on into his first term. While the
president went to church regularly, met with religious people and quoted the
Bible in his prepared remarks, he failed to display the level of "animation"
many would expect. Or, as Bob Woodward put it, in his book The Agenda, Clinton
has "seemed unable to find the high ground or establish his moral
authority" (1994, p. 325). One can't help comparing Clinton to John F. Kennedy. While it's
arguable in light of what we know today that Kennedy was the most moral of
presidents, during the 1960 campaign he very successfully defined his own personal "moral authority." Because Kennedy took the offensive and addressed the
issue of his Catholicism head-on, he was able to put himself in the position
where he no longer needed to be in a reactive mode on the issue. In
Clinton's case, even though he, too, presented the symbolism of a strong religious
background, he failed to take the additional steps of animating this symbolism
to define his "moral authority." So, even when Clinton took a leadership
role to
promote a policy step which would be in support of religious interests
(such as his signing legislation guaranteeing certain religious freedoms), his own
spiritual commitment was perceived to be somewhat uncertain. Despite all that
Christians have heard about Clinton the devout Baptist from Hope, Arkansas,
there still existed a great disbelief in his ability to serve as a moral and
social leader for the nation.

Conclusion
Clearly, the president worked effectively in his first term to protect secular
interests. He took action to address the issue of homosexuals in the
military. He devoted an extensive amount of administrative time and energy to health care reform (although his efforts eventually failed). He worked with the vice president in the "re-inventing government" administrative streamlining. But these secular interests, though legitimate, were social changes--attempted in a time in which Sperling writes that most Americans are "contented" with their social standing (Sperling, 1994b, p. 19). And, while pleasing to liberals, the President's attention to these social issues did nothing to satisfy the growing ranks of conservative Christians--many of whom would rather have had no government action on social issues than action they saw as irreconcilable with their beliefs. An additional complication for Mr. Clinton was the fact that he seemed unable to make decisions about exactly what positions he was going to take. Clinton is a true thinker; an intellectual who enjoys being involved in discussion and debate. He also enjoys being surrounded by a lot of people--many of whom don't always agree with him. As a result, the president had difficulty in his first term coming to closure on issues which affected the social order. Yet another example of this Clinton weakness was displayed at the mid-way point in the term, when the president stated a completely different position on school prayer than he had offered during the campaign just two years earlier (see Schorr, 1994, p. 19). Because Clinton the president always seems to be in flux, in transition, it was difficult in the first term--and remains so--for the public to understand who he is, what he stands for, and what he can make happen. This is particularly disconcerting to Christians who look to the decades-old tenets in the Bible as their guide for daily living. Since the president early-on failed to square his faith with his social position--and establish a moral "high ground" as a basis for seeking greater
social equality for all—Clinton continued to stir up trouble he did not need, and could not afford, especially given the new conservative majority in Congress. Regardless of Clinton's recent movement to the ideological center, the potential for the president to become part of the social order dictated by the Religious Right would appear to be very limited, based on Clinton's first-term behaviors and his resulting public image. Traditional Christianity "is about right and wrong" (Yoder, 1994, p. B-7); it "saws against the grain of much in contemporary culture" (Plantinga, 1994, p. 26). The Christian belief system of the Religious Right—and the social order which results from that belief system—is simply irreconcilable with the president and his ideas about inclusive social order.

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| Table 1 |
|-------------------|-------------------|
| Symbols of Social Order | The Religious Right |
| Expected Symbolism | Demonstrated Symbolism |
| President Clinton | President Clinton |
| Age | Pre-World War II reared |
| Sacrifice and national duty | Post-World War II birth |
| Prosperous 1950s/60s/70s | |
| Family History | "Traditional" Family |
| Two-parent household | "Non-traditional" Family |
| Single mother, half-brother | |
| Educational Background | "School of hard knocks" |
| Conservative, pragmatic | Georgetown/Oxford/Yale |
| Liberal, elitist academia | |
| Work Experience | Military veteran |
| | ...followed by private service |
| | Scholar/ activist/ lawyer |
| Domestic Life | "Traditional Family" |
| | ...husband/ head of household |
| | "Non-traditional Family" |
| Social Circle | Business/ Industry |
| | ...presidential dignity |
| | Intellectuals/ celebrities |
| Leadership Role | "Father" |
| | ..."I'll tell you what to do" |
| | "Brother" |
| | "Let me help you" |