

# Jimmy Carter and George W. Bush: Faith, Foreign Policy, and an Evangelical Presidential Style

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*In this article, we argue that Presidents Jimmy Carter and George W. Bush share a distinctive approach to politics and governing: an “evangelical” style of presidential leadership. Though they differed in terms of party and ideology, we claim, using examples from their foreign policies, that the evangelical faith of Carter and Bush provided them with a particular vision of the presidency and the global role of the United States. Richard Neustadt argued that aptitude for politics is the most essential attribute for contemporary presidential success and that the evangelical approach will inevitably lead to political failure. From our analysis of the Carter and Bush approaches to foreign policy, we conclude, however, that in certain circumstances, the evangelical style can contribute to successful presidential leadership and is worthy of further serious study by presidential scholars.*

“I had a different way of governing . . . I was a Southerner, a born-again Christian, a Baptist, a newcomer.” (Hargrove 1988, 15)

—Jimmy Carter

“My style, my focus, and many of the issues that I talk about . . . are reinforced by my religion.” (Bush 2000b)

—George W. Bush

This article seeks to address a gap in presidential studies by exploring the role of personal religious faith and the style and direction of presidential leadership. Presidential scholarship has focused on political skill (Neustadt 1990), psychology (Barber 1992),

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intellectual and moral leadership (Hargrove 1998), management ability (Burke 2000), a combination of all of these factors (Greenstein 2004), and even chronological position in a political “regime” (Skowronek 1997) in interpreting presidents and presidencies. Beyond some biographical works, however, individual case and comparative studies on the religious faith of presidents are relatively few.

We argue that the presidential style and foreign policies of Jimmy Carter and George W. Bush cannot be fully understood unless the personal religious dimension has been taken into account. Specifically, we argue that Carter and Bush exhibit a similar style of leadership, one that draws heavily from their evangelical faith. Although they pursued different means to fulfill their missions, they share what has been termed an evangelical “family resemblance” (Johnston 1991, 254).

All too often, the religion of President Carter is ignored in the scholarly literature on his presidency. Much of the Carter scholarship either entirely ignores Carter’s faith, or notes it so briefly that one gets the sense it was not that important to him, or that he separated it from his politics. Carter himself (1994, vii) once wrote that the impact of religion on politics is not “commonly recognized or easily quantified.” While the scholarly literature on President Bush is much scantier as yet, there is a similar reluctance to examine Bush’s religious faith and its potential impact on day-to-day political decisions. Campaign biographies in 2000 and subsequent journalistic works on the Bush administration refer to the president’s faith but do not seriously explore whether it has affected his conduct in office. In five recent scholarly collections on the Bush presidency, there are only two chapters on Bush and religion. One includes a brief discussion of his use of religious rhetoric, his preference for moral certainty, and his belief in universal values (Pfiffner 2004, 167-69), and the other explores Bush’s political relationship with the so-called religious right rather than his personal religious faith and its impact on his politics (Guth 2004). A more recent work (Jacobson 2006, 151-57) provides some important analysis of Christian conservative support for Bush and the Iraq War. This author concludes that of all groups, “Christian conservatives have been the most steadfast in following the president” (233-35).

The first section of the article contrasts the evangelical style with Richard Neustadt’s and Max Weber’s writings on political leadership. We then discuss the nature of evangelicalism and the influence of their evangelical faith on Jimmy Carter and George W. Bush. Next, the foreign policies of the two presidents are examined for examples of the evangelical presidential style in action. Finally, we evaluate the evangelical style as an alternative to Neustadt’s prescriptions for presidential leadership and then assess the implications for future presidential research.

## The Wilsonian Alternative

“He thinks he is another Jesus Christ come upon the earth to reform men.” (DeGregorio 2004, 427)

—French President Georges Clemenceau

"I really think that at first the idealistic President regarded himself as a missionary whose function it was to rescue the poor European heathen from their age-long worship of false and fiery gods. He was apt to address us in that vein." (Hoover 1992, 254)

—British Prime Minister David Lloyd George

Richard Neustadt (1990, 151-53) argued that modern presidents need to be activists, experienced politicians, and possess a passion for politics. "The Presidency is a place for men of politics," in fact, "extraordinary politicians." Presidents must be political and learn the art of political compromise; they must exercise "the power to persuade" and "the power to persuade is the power to bargain" (11, 32). James David Barber (1992) similarly sees a generally positive attitude toward the machinations of politics and an active disposition as the two principal determinants of a desirable "presidential character." The assumption that a passion and aptitude for politics and its attendant arts of persuasion and bargaining are the essential qualities for a successful presidency has pervaded the scholarly literature on the presidency since Neustadt, yet when we consider the list of American presidents since 1900, relatively few (Theodore and Franklin Roosevelt, and perhaps John F. Kennedy, Ronald Reagan, and Bill Clinton) seem to possess the elemental presidential skill.

The accession to the presidency of at least politicians of a very different disposition—Woodrow Wilson, Jimmy Carter, and George W. Bush—indicates that Neustadt's desired attributes are certainly not essential to attaining the office. Periodically, political circumstances in the United States appear to call for chief executives who are "amateur" political outsiders and "men of faith" who pursue, what Max Weber (1946, 119-20) variously called "the ethic of the Sermon on the Mount," "the absolute ethic of the gospel" or "the ethic of ultimate ends." These are also the presidents who demonstrate an evangelical style of presidential leadership in contrast to the political professionalism valued by Neustadt and his followers.

Of course, Neustadt believed such leaders were bound to fail as presidents because they failed to comprehend both the institutional limitations on presidential power and the diminishing utility of moral exhortation in achieving presidential goals in a pluralistic political system of multiple independent interests. Decades earlier, during the time of Wilson, in "Politics as a Vocation," Weber (1946) warned that moral absolutes should not have a place in politics, as politics is a human, this-worldly phenomenon that requires the recognition of "ethical paradoxes" and the "ethical irrationality of the world." From this he strongly prescribed two general rules for politicians: (1) "politics is made with the head, not with other parts of the body or soul" (115), and (2) "whoever wants to engage in politics at all . . . has to realize . . . ethical paradoxes," namely good means can and often do produce evil results and evil means can and often do produce good results (125). The responsible politician, claimed Weber, must pursue the mundane, yet necessary, activities of compromise, bargaining, logrolling, pork spending, patronage, burden sharing, and the occasional use of force.

Weber's concerns admittedly do not appear to apply to most American presidents. All presidents may, and often do, offer vague, largely noncontroversial acknowledgments of God and some transcendent purpose for the country (Cronin 1989; Reichley 2002, 5).

Nevertheless, out of respect for the church-state principle of separation and the country's religious pluralism, presidents and presidential aspirants tend to keep their personal faith separate from their politics, avoid sectarian religious language, or claim that their faith is too personal to discuss publicly (Hutcheson 1988, 2; Dunn 1984).

According to Richard Hutcheson (1988, 55), however, the one exception to the normal relationship between a personal faith and politics among presidents in the pre-New Deal era was Woodrow Wilson. "Wilson's importance lay in his uniqueness—as the most overtly religious of the pre-modern presidents and the one whose personal religion had the most effect on his approach to public policy." Robert Alley (1972, 33, 35) also noted that "Wilson came to the White House as the most Christian of Presidents" and "saw most political decisions in moralistic terms." Similarly, Kenneth Woodward (2003) remarked, "Woodrow Wilson . . . was one of the few presidents of whom it could be said that to know his religious pedigree was to know the man."

In the area of foreign policy, in particular, scholars have long noted a particular "Wilsonian" style which included the frequent use of religious or moralistic rhetoric, a view of politics as a religious calling, idealism, a propensity for unilateralism, an uncompromising posture, and a personal evangelistic style that included efforts to personally convert or actively bring others to democracy, human rights, and peace. Perhaps one of his successors, Herbert Hoover (1992, xxvii), best summarized and captured the nature of Wilson's foreign-policy style and vision. He described Wilson as a man of "deep convictions," "staunch morals," having a mind that "ran to 'moral principles,'" and was "the personification of the heritage of idealism of the American people," who "brought spiritual concepts to the peace table." Wilson was "a born crusader." Wilson's active presence at Versailles and his campaign for the League of Nations at home, Hoover believed, were illustrative of his style. Fundamentally, Hoover said, Wilson's foreign policy was "evangelistic idealism" (xxv), a "gospel of peace for mankind" (78). "It was," Hoover remarked, like "the star of Bethlehem rising again" (69).

If these assessments of Wilson are right, we may say that Wilson offers an alternative leadership model and style to the predominant Neustadtian/Weberian paradigm, an approach to governing that we characterize as an "evangelical" style. The attributes of such a style are directly at odds with the aptitude for politics and political professionalism characteristic of Neustadt's model president. Indeed, the evangelical style is distinguished by a disdain for "politics as usual" and day-to-day political bargaining. In their analysis of his involvement at Versailles, Alexander and Juliette George (1964, 201) described Wilson as viewing the political concerns of the other Allied powers as "immorality incarnate." Hoover (1992), too, observed that Wilson was inclined to view political bargaining as beneath him (76), was "impatient with honest and proper argument with his conclusions," and that he took questions and concerns about his policies as "personal criticism" (xxvii).

Where Neustadt, following Weber, has little use for religious faith or moralism in conducting the presidency, the evangelical style is characterized by open professions of religious faith and moralizing rhetoric. As a consequence of their disdain for political bargaining, evangelical presidents find compromise difficult and are more inclined to try to short-circuit the Washington political process and make direct appeals to the public,

with whom such presidents are particularly inclined to claim a special relationship. In the modern era, they are assisted in this regard by the evolution of mass communications media—radio and television—that reduce the costs of “going public” (Kernell 1997). Evangelical presidents also now benefit from the legitimacy accorded to the notion of a presidential election “mandate” in contemporary American political culture, no matter how slender the president’s margin of victory. Due to these developments, it is now probably easier to conduct an evangelical-style presidency than it was for Wilson in the pre-radio era.

Of the modern, post-FDR presidents, Jimmy Carter and George W. Bush are the most often described as having a “family resemblance” to Wilson. Here are some examples:

- “Certainly Carter was the most theologically literate president since Woodrow Wilson” (Hutcheson 1988, 109).
- “Carter became the first American president since Woodrow Wilson to try actively to reform repressive regimes in other nations” (Brinkley 1998, 19).
- “Like Woodrow Wilson, [Carter] saw the United States as a beacon for the ideals of democracy and human rights” (Hargrove 1988, 168).
- After September 11, the Bush “administration appeared to embrace the Wilsonian idealist tradition in its foreign policy” (McCormick 2004, 205).
- “In the sweep of his ambitions to make the United States the driving force for democratization of the world, [Bush] resembles no president as much as the idealistic Woodrow Wilson” (Broder 2005).

If Wilson, Carter, and Bush share an approach to governing distinctive from other twentieth-century presidents, this suggests that there is a subset of intensely religious presidents who have a comparatively harder time in being secular professional politicians—participating in the give and take of politics and recognizing the limited malleability of the world. Indeed, these presidents may never fully assimilate to the secular political world; they may never want to become Neustadtian-Weberian presidents.

Carter admits that he never had the stomach for “politics as usual,” whether in international or domestic affairs; he did not love politics. Vice President Walter Mondale said, “Carter thought politics was sinful. The worst thing you could say to Carter if you wanted to do something was that it was politically the best thing to do” (Gould 2003, 182). Bush, as well, has difficulties with politics as usual. He told Bob Woodward (2002, 342), “I’m not a textbook player, I’m a gut player.” On another occasion, he (Bush 2004d) told a group of religious reporters that he lives in a political “world of fakery, obfuscation, and political back-shots.” David Frum (2003, 150) also observed that Bush has “a deep distaste for the necessary insincerities of political life,” such as saying something good about or flattering those he dislikes, especially international leaders who do not see the world as he does. He takes political rejection and opposition personally (Woodward 2002, 327).

Thus, although the scholarly literature on the presidency generally follows Weber and Neustadt in seeing the evangelical style as inimical to the successful conduct of the

presidency, we are faced with at least three presidents in the past century who appear to have embraced this approach to governing. The evidence from the presidencies of Wilson and Carter appears on first glance to corroborate Weber and Neustadt in that both presidents left office regarded as political “failures.” (The jury is still out on George W. Bush, although it is evident that the evangelical style has produced similar problems for this president in terms of living up to the high moral tone and visionary rhetoric that has characterized his self-declared “war on terror” in response to September 11, 2001.) On the other hand, these evangelical presidents have some singular policy achievements to their credit and both Wilson and Carter made an impact on the presidency as an institution. Interestingly, the most singular and memorable achievements of both appear to have been in the area of foreign policy, which would appear to be the area of presidential activity least conducive to such an approach to politics. In fact, later in this article we will argue that in certain albeit rare and specific circumstances, the evangelical style can be an asset in achieving presidential objectives (Carter and the Camp David accords). We thus believe that presidential scholarship should accord more respect to the evangelical style of presidential governance rather than dismissing it as inherently ineffectual or even dangerous.

## The Evangelical Faith of Jimmy Carter and George W. Bush

Evangelical Christians are not monolithic religiously or politically (Nash 1987; Rothenberg 1987). Though most likely to be Baptist or Methodist, evangelicals can be found within nearly every Protestant denomination in the United States. Politically, they may be Democrats like William Jennings Bryan, Bill Clinton, and Al Gore, Republicans like former Senators Mark Hatfield, Dan Quayle, and John Ashcroft, or even an Independent like John Anderson. There are many prominent personalities and various subcultures, many kinds of evangelicals and evangelicalisms. Given this variety, some have proposed to even discard “evangelical” and “evangelicalism” as useful concepts (Dayton 1991).

Still, most scholars seem to agree that in spite of its radical internal diversity, there is a “family resemblance” among evangelicals, a “unity despite diversity” (Johnston 1991; Marsden 1987). There are “common heritages, common tendencies, an identity, and an organic character” that broadly unify evangelicals (Marsden 1987, 60). According to both qualitative and quantitative studies (*Christianity Today* 1979; Hunter 1983; Kellstedt 1989; Greenberg and Berkman 2004), the commonly cited evangelical traits are:

1. Protestant; evangelicalism is a broad, transdenominational movement within Protestant Christianity that can be traced back to the Protestant Reformation;
2. an evangelical self-identification; claiming to have had a personal conversion, or “born-again,” experience;
3. sola fide; salvation through Christ by faith alone;
4. sola Scriptura; viewing the Bible as the sole authority for faith and morals;

5. Christocentrism; the centrality of Jesus Christ in faith discourse and the personal experience of salvation;
6. personalism; a direct experience with God through Christ, greater focus on individual religious experience, one-on-one encounters;
7. pietism; a quest for personal holy living (e.g., frequent prayer, Bible reading, church attendance, and abstinence from alcohol and tobacco);
8. evangelism; a sense of mission (the conversion of others, reforming the world); “winning the world for Christ.”

By these measures, Jimmy Carter and George W. Bush are highly evangelical and appear to share characteristics that constitute an evangelical political style. They are, what Carl Henry (1990, 94) called self-confessed “spiritually regenerated sinners” and “people of the Bible” who have privately and publicly affirmed the salvific role of Christ in transforming their personal lives, renewing their sense of purpose, and encouraging them to bring the “good news” into the world of politics.

### **Jimmy Carter’s Evangelical Faith**

“I’m a father and I’m a Christian; I’m a businessman and I’m a Christian; I’m a farmer and I’m a Christian; I’m a politician and I’m a Christian. The most important thing in my life beyond all else is Jesus Christ.” (Quoted in Nielsen 1977, 18.)

—President Carter

Jimmy Carter was different, and observers of his 1976 bid for the presidency readily recognized it. As a candidate, Carter spoke very openly and candidly about his faith, his commitment to Christ, his love for Scripture, and his desire to bring “a new spirit” to government. He quickly became a symbol of the rekindled religious and political vigor of American evangelicalism.

Carter’s race for the nomination and his election to the presidency established for many the arrival of a new force on the American scene: the Protestant evangelical. (Fowler 1982, 1)

As president, he continued to teach Sunday school, found occasions to share his faith with foreign leaders, readily admits in his postpresidential works that religion was an indispensable guide for his presidential behavior, and believes that Americans “have a responsibility to try to shape government so that it does exemplify the will of God” (Hutcheson 1988, 1). At one point in his presidency, Carter (1978a, 249) even stated that when his presidency ended he was considering becoming a missionary.

Regarding his frequent public displays of faith, church historian Martin Marty explained that Carter knows no other way to be. “Jimmy Carter is a public Christian. . . . It’s O.K. to be a private Christian in America, but he doesn’t know how to be a private Christian. Religion for him goes right to the streets, and he successfully relates his Sunday faith to his Monday world” (Ariail and Heckler-Feltz 1996, 52). Carter (1976, 86) also believed that his faith would make him a different president from his immediate predecessors: “I don’t think I would ever take on the same frame of mind that

Nixon or Johnson did—lying, cheating, and distorting the truth. . . . I think my religious beliefs alone would prevent that from happening to me. I have that confidence.” Those who know and have worked with Jimmy Carter say that his religious faith lies at the core of his existence. To the Secret Service, he was the “Deacon.” Even international observers sensed Carter’s religious political style. Tom McNally (1983, 465), a political advisor to British Prime Minister James Callaghan, said:

I recall my initial puzzlement at this man of apparent deep sincerity and conviction, who was willing to talk about certain values, about God and the family and the American pioneer spirit and to talk about national and international problems in ways which would have been mawkish and embarrassing coming from other lips. In the end, I came to the conclusion that Carter was for real; but I can well understand how he unnerved some of the old Washington professionals.

Carter admits this too. In *Living Faith* (1998, 31), which is a summation of the principles and stories he has shared in Sunday school and wanted to share with the wider public, he forthrightly proclaimed, “Religious faith has always been at the core of my existence.”

It is commonly believed that the born-again experience for evangelicals is a one-time, momentous event. For many, it is. But for other evangelicals, being born-again is a lifelong process of growing and renewing faith. The latter is true for Carter (1998, 21-22; R. Carter 1984, 62). Though Carter has always been religious, he found his faith wanting after his failed bid for governor in 1966. The loss to a staunch segregationist, Lester Maddox, Carter (1998, 202) says, made him question his faith and made him angry with God. “I could not believe that God would let this person beat me and become the governor of our state.” But conversations with his sister Ruth Carter Stapleton, a charismatic evangelist and faith healer, and work as a lay missionary, convinced him to see that God was not the one to blame, but that it was he who was not giving his best for God. Through political defeat, he (1998, 209) came to the realization that he had only been “a lukewarm follower of Christ”; he subsequently rededicated his life to Christ.

For Carter, religious faith is holistic; it is neither one small, concealed part of one’s life nor something showy for all to see. For Carter (1998, 4), “Faith is not just a noun but also a verb”; it is not just what one possesses but what one does. This includes what he (1978i, 1115) called his own “bold mission” in the world and in politics. For Carter, the separation of church and state does not and cannot mean the separation of religion and politics, faith and policy, believer and politician (Pippert 1978, 242; Carter 1998, 9). As president he said, “Separation [of church and state] is specified in the law, but for a religious person, there is nothing wrong with bringing these two together, because you can’t divorce religious beliefs from public service” (Carter 1978i, 1115). Instead, for Carter, politics was a religious calling, a vocation, a form of lay ministry, and an opportunity for Christian witness through public service (Baker 1977, 93-94, 135): “Some of us in public service turn to politics. . . . This is not contrary to Christian beliefs. Isaiah, Jeremiah pronounced God’s judgment in the very center of political power” (Carter 1978i, 1115).

## George W. Bush's Evangelical Faith

"Faith changes lives. I know, because faith has changed mine." (Bush 1999, 139)

—George W. Bush

George W. Bush has been described as the most religious president in recent American history (Mansfield 2003, xvii-xviii; Fineman 2003, 25). While this is maybe an overstatement, in light of President Carter's faith, Bush certainly is among the most religious presidents in the sense of blurring the lines between religion and politics. Bush claims that his faith forms his general "frame of mind, and attitude and outlook," and that his "compassionate conservative" approach to domestic issues is inspired and informed by faith (Bush 2000b, 2004a). He has cultivated strong ties with a diverse group of clergy, white and black evangelical preachers, and Catholic bishops. He won his party's nomination and received his strongest support in the 2000 election from religious conservatives (Guth 2004, 124). Election 2004 shaped up in similar ways. Bush won again with the strong support and turnout of white evangelicals, churchgoers, and those who cited Bush's personal character and moral values as paramount to their decision to reelect him (Carroll and Newport 2004; Jones 2004). Bush voters also thought it important for presidents to be religious and for religion to guide their presidential behavior, that the United States is a religious nation, and that President Bush is a strong man of faith.

As president, Bush transformed the White House into a place of faith—a place of evangelical faith. Bush not only chose several persons with strong religious backgrounds or devotional habits to serve in his administration, he "opened every cabinet meeting with prayer and insisted on a high moral tone" for everyone in the White House (Mansfield 2003, 118). Overall, the Bush White House became "a largely teetotaling, nonsmoking, noncussing affair." Former speechwriter David Frum (2003, 17), an Orthodox Jew, explained that if one wants "to understand the Bush White House, you must understand its predominant creed"—the creed and "culture of modern Evangelicalism." The first words Frum (2003, 3) says he heard spoken to him in the Bush White House were "Missed you at Bible study."

Like Carter, George W. Bush has always been in and near church life. Unlike Carter, who has belonged to only one denomination, Bush was exposed to and experienced a variety of religious styles and practices, all within mainline Protestantism. Bush was baptized as an infant in the Episcopal Church, his father's denomination. After he married Laura Welch in 1977, he joined his wife's Methodist church and had his twin daughters baptized as Methodists soon after they were born in 1981. Though Bush had an active church life, he, like others who become born again, began to recognize that his faith was incomplete, that he was "a lowly sinner" and in need of "redemption" (Bush 2000b). He drank too much, lacked focus and seriousness, was failing in his business ventures, and, presumably, his marriage was under stress too (Andersen 2002). Like Carter's experiences with political defeat and despair, the adulthood experiences of losing a congressional election in 1978, his business failures, and feelings of spiritual emptiness led Bush to make a life-transforming decision for Christ. Bush was thirty-nine years old when he recommitted his life for Christ and began a new walk of faith—a walk that has made "my life better and easier to understand, and clearer" (Bush 2000b).

After his rededication to Christ, Bush began reading the Bible more regularly, read daily devotionals such as Oswald Chambers's *My Utmost for His Highest*, turned more to prayer, and joined a men's Bible study group. The following year, Bush gave up drinking, later, smoking and chewing tobacco. He attributes his healthier lifestyle and subsequent political successes directly to his decision for Christ. "There is only one reason that I am in the Oval Office and not in a bar. I found faith. I found God. I am here because of the power of prayer" (Frum 2003, 283). George W. more freely discusses his faith than his father; he is quite comfortable sharing his faith with others and sharing his previous moral failings. This was evident during one of the 1999 Republican presidential debates. When it was his turn to answer a question as to who was his favorite political philosopher, Bush quickly said, "Christ, because he changed my heart." "When you turn your heart and your life over to Christ, when you accept Christ as the Savior, it changes your heart. It changes your life. And that's what happened to me" (Aikman 2004, 1).

George W. Bush is quite at home before evangelical audiences. He counts many evangelical preachers as close friends and often surrounds himself, whether personally, in business, or in politics, with fellow believers (Ivins and Dubose 2000, 36). He is fluent in the "Biblical and political language of the evangelicals" (Fineman 2004), and he admits that growing up in the South, instead of New England, has made him a more able communicator of this faith than his father (Bush 1999, 182; Bush 2000a; Andersen 2002, 138; Lind 2003, 1-2). Recognizing this, during the 1988 campaign, George W. Bush became his father's personal representative to the evangelical community.

Unlike most presidents, Bush does not largely separate his faith from his politics. In this regard, his approach to the presidency is akin to Carter's. As Michael Lind (2003, 109) wrote, "No president since Jimmy Carter has been so obtrusive and insistent in sharing his religious faith and pressuring his fellow citizens to do as well" as George W. Bush.

Like Carter, Bush sees politics as a religious vocation, a calling, and a sacred duty to be performed for God and humankind. In *Plan of Attack* (2004, 379, 421), Bob Woodward recounts that Bush told him that he prays that he "be as good a messenger of His will as possible" and for personal strength he consults not his father, the former president, but his heavenly Father. While Bush believes that it is not a president's responsibility to "convert people to religion" or to proclaim "my religion is better than yours," he (Bush 2000b) does believe that it is a president's responsibility "to set an example, to make sound decisions, to respect religion, and, if asked, to herald religion." The title of his campaign autobiography, *A Charge to Keep*, comes from a famous Methodist hymn, written by one of the founders of Methodism, Charles Wesley. When he was governor of Texas, Bush kept a painting, on loan from a friend, in his office, entitled "A Charge to Keep." Shortly after being sworn in as governor, he sent a memo to his staff about the painting. In part, it read:

When you come into my office, please look at the beautiful painting of a horseman determinedly charging up what appears to be a steep and rough trail. This is us. What adds complete life to the painting is the message of Charles Wesley that we serve One greater than ourselves. (Bush 1999, 45)

For Bush (1999, 45), “A Charge to Keep,” hymn and painting, is a divine summons “to our highest and best. It speaks of purpose and direction.”

Bush says that one of the most important sermons he ever heard was given by Mark Craig, his pastor at First United Methodist Church in Austin, Texas. Bush recalls that Pastor Craig spoke of the country’s hunger for spiritual leadership, faithfulness, and honesty from its politicians. Though Bush (1999, 13) recounted that he believed that the pastor was talking to everyone in attendance, he did admit that “the sermon spoke directly to my heart and my life” and that Pastor Craig “was challenging me to do more.”

As I started my second term as Governor, I was struggling with the decision about whether to seek the Presidency, worried about what that decision would mean for my family and my own life. And Pastor Craig had prodded me out of my comfortable life as Governor of Texas and toward a national campaign.

## **The Evangelical Style in Operation: The Foreign Policy of Presidents Carter and George W. Bush**

We now examine how the evangelical style had political consequences for the Carter and Bush administrations—particularly in the area of foreign policy, which came to occupy such a predominant place in their respective presidencies. Fred Greenstein (2004) discusses presidential job performance in light of six qualities that are critical to presidential effectiveness: “public communicator,” “organizational capacity,” “political skill,” “vision” of public policy, “cognitive style,” and “emotional intelligence” or the president’s ability to manage his emotions. We argue that the evangelical style has positive implications for the exercise of at least two of these qualities—presidential policy vision and emotional intelligence—and can even contribute to effective political persuasion in certain instances.

### **Evangelical Mission: The Foreign-Policy “Vision” of Carter and George W. Bush**

As noted above, evangelism, or a sense of mission, is a defining characteristic of evangelicalism. It may be said too that a sense of mission is an element of an evangelical style of governing. That is, in the case of foreign policy, evangelical styled presidents view the world more in terms of what it could be than as it is. They are more idealists than realists. Following Greenstein, it appears that “evangelical” presidents have “political vision.” And if they have a vision of the world and America’s role in the world, using James David Barber’s terms (1992), evangelical styled presidents are likely to be “active” presidents. However, unlike other “active” or politically visionary presidents, there is an ostensible religious or moral dimension to their foreign-policy program. Observers may be tempted to describe them as “Wilsonian.”

Jimmy Carter was frequently criticized for lacking a compelling political vision. It is said Carter took on too many issues; he lacked focus, lacked priorities. While such assessments may be more accurate on the domestic front, Carter did have a foreign-policy

vision. He had a vision for the country's role in the world, a doctrine, an understanding of the use of force, and a passion to find peace in the Middle East, although he (Carter 1978e, 376) recognized that many of his positions, especially ones based on religion, would make him unpopular with certain elements in Washington. In assessing the real power of the United States, Carter (1996a; 2005, 198-200) has rhetorically asked, "What is it that makes a superpower?" For Carter, the answer is not found in material capabilities, economic or military, in simply providing for the security of a network of allies, or in maintaining a particular balance-of-power arrangement.

For too long, our foreign policy has consisted almost entirely of maneuver and manipulation, based on the assumption that the world is a jungle of competing national antagonisms, where military supremacy and economic muscle are the only things that work and where rival powers are balanced against each other to keep the peace. (Turner 1976, 119)

For Carter (1978i, 1117), national "power, wealth, is not enough." Nonmaterial capabilities matter too, and maybe more so. "A country will have authority and influence because of moral factors, not military factors. . . . A nation without morality will soon lose its influence around the world." During the 1980 presidential debate, Carter (1980b, 2480) said "the build-up of military forces is good for our country because we've got to have military strength to preserve the peace. But I'll always remember that the best weapons are the ones that are never fired in combat, and the best soldier is one who never has to lay his life down on the field of battle." To be a real superpower, Carter (1996a) said the United States must be "the champion of peace, freedom, and democracy, of human rights, environmental quality, and the alleviation of suffering." It is about values, nonmaterial, unquantifiable qualities. "Once again, they might very well mirror those of a person. These would include a demonstrable commitment to truth, justice, peace, freedom, humility, human rights, generosity, and the upholding of other moral values" (Carter 2005, 199). The power of the United States, according to Carter (1978i, 1117), rests with its soft power, its values, its generosity for all nations, and its willingness "to analyze our own faults." As he (1978f, 636) once said before the Brazilian congress, "The Bible tells us that to whom much is given, much will be required," and as a great power, "we have much to give in return." Carter believes that other American presidents, especially his immediate predecessors and successors, tend to place too much faith in hard power in solving international problems and are often too willing to take the country to war without exhausting peaceful alternatives. (Carter certainly believed that about Governor Reagan in 1980 and he now believes that about President George W. Bush.) Instead, he (Carter 1990, 1995b) believed, American presidents should courageously assume the more difficult task of peacemaking. In his opposition to President Clinton's use of force in Kosovo, Carter (1999) simply asked, "Have we forgotten the path to peace?"

On more than one occasion, Carter specifically cited or indirectly implied the famous beatitude of Jesus as his main reason for making peace a priority: "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God" (Pippert 1978, 138; Hutcheson 1988, 19). "There is no nobler calling on this Earth than the seeking for peace. For it is that reason which caused the Bible to say that peacemakers shall be called the sons of

God" (Carter 1978d, 290). While Carter accepts the occasional necessity to use military force, he rejects the Clausewitzian notion that war is an extension of politics and he rejects tendencies to differentiate between "good wars" and "bad wars." For him, war is evil. For instance, after he won the 1976 Democratic nomination, he (1976, 74) told *Playboy* magazine that he would never use the U.S. military "for the purpose of overthrowing a government" and that he could never use measures against another country "that would be a contravention of the moral and ethical standards that I would exemplify in my own life as an individual."

For Carter (1996b, 55-56), moral law is moral law, mutually binding individuals and states. Though he highly respected the theological work of Reinhold Niebuhr, he emphatically rejected Niebuhr's (1960) notion of a separate moral code for individual conduct and a separate moral code for state conduct.

The standards of government should exemplify the highest attributes of mankind, and not the lowest common denominator. There is no legitimate reason for different standards in our home, our office, our church, or our government. In every component of life we should continually strive for perfection as commanded by God. (Turner 1976, 81)

A nation, like a person, has to continually be on an inward journey and an outward journey. . . . There's a relationship between personal leadership and a people. (Carter 1978i, 1117)

A foreign policy that emphasized human rights, energetic conflict resolution, and the selflessness of the United States was not a naïve or amateurish policy either, Carter insisted. He (1995a, 146-47) adamantly rejected the assumption that policy makers must choose "between idealism and realism, or between morality and the exercise of power." Instead, he believed that "the demonstration of American idealism was a practical and realistic approach to foreign affairs, and moral principles were the best foundation for the exertion of American power and influence." Power was not found in the barrel of the gun and international influence was not gained through deception and diplomatic machinations. Rather, the power and influence of the United States, Carter believed, rested with "morality and a commitment to freedom and democracy," in honest service to the world, in making amends for past abuses, and speaking out against current injustices, all for the purpose of leading the world to a higher moral order. In short order, the foundational principles of Carter's foreign policy were American repentance, prophetic criticism, and purposeful peacemaking. This was the Carterian formula for a superpower to remain a superpower and walk humbly before the Lord.

Fundamentally, President Carter believed that U.S. policy should follow the Golden Rule of Jesus, "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you" (Pippert 1978, 101). Consequently, Carter devoted a great deal of energy to the negotiation and ratification of the Panama Canal treaties. "I was convinced that we needed [it] to correct an injustice" committed by the United States (Hutcheson 1988, 124). Panama was part of Carter's wider vision of a "do what is right for us and what is fair to others" policy (Carter 1978b, 263). A corollary to this was Carter's opposition to imposing democracy or any other form of government on other peoples. Carter explained that God forbids judging, "Judge not, that ye be not judged" (Pippert 1978, 101). Instead, the United States should become an

evangelist of democracy. But such evangelism was not to be by words alone. Rather, the United States was to be the democratic model or light to the world. “The best way, I think, to induce other people to adopt our own persuasion in democratic principles is to make our own system work.” In effect, Carter was using Jesus’ response to those who wanted to judge and punish others for violating God’s law (Matthew 7: 4-5). While such principles may appear paradoxical to the secular, Carter sees no conflict. As president, he believed one can maintain alliances with the dictatorships of Iran, the Philippines, and Nicaragua, negotiate with the Soviet Union and China, and simultaneously promote human rights, and remain consistent with the teachings of Jesus. The saint can associate with sinners with the hope of redeeming them, while at the same time keeping himself sin free (Hertzberg 1995, 178; Hefley and Hefley 1977, 250; Anderson 1994, 2).

To a significant degree, Carter’s role as partner and mediator in the Camp David peace process between Israel and Egypt was driven by profound religious convictions and sentiments. More than Catholics or mainline Protestants, evangelicals in the United States tend to view Israel and the Middle East through the lens of the Bible and Bible prophecy (Merkley 2001; Moore 2002; Pew Research Center 2003; Pew Forum 2005).

For me there is no way to approach or enter Israel without thinking first about the Bible and the history of the land and its people. The names and images have long been an integral part of my life as a Christian. (Carter 1986, 31)

The power of faith is a unifying bond between Christian and Jew and between the heroes of ancient Israel and those of New Testament times. (Carter 1998, 36-37)

In my affinity for Israel, I shared the sentiment of most other Southern Baptists that the holy places we revered should be preserved and made available for visits by Christians, and that members of other faiths should have the same guaranteed privileges concerning their sacred sites. (Carter 1995a, 281)

The establishment of the nation of Israel is a fulfillment of Biblical prophecy and the very essence of its fulfillment. (Carter 1978h, 813)

Though peace in the Middle East would serve U.S. interests in the region, Carter (1979a, 406; 1979c, 417; 1979e, 428) believed the quest for peace, especially in the Middle East, was not only good policy, it was “sacred work,” a “sacred task,” and a “sacred cause.” It was part of an ancient vision. As the prophet Isaiah foretold, Carter (1979d, 425; 1979f, 518) believed, the Camp David project was a good-faith step toward “pounding Middle East swords into plowshares.”

As presidential candidate and president before September 11, George W. Bush promised and implemented a more “humble” foreign policy (McCormick 2004, 189), a policy that required not “the paternalistic leadership of an arrogant big brother, but the inviting and welcoming leadership of a great and noble nation” (Bush 1999, 240). Indeed, Bush advanced a return to a sort of unilateralist “America-first” policy, an “assertive nationalism,” or, to use his words, a “distinctly American internationalism” (McCormick 2004, 194; Daalder and Lindsay 2003, 2; Dietrich 2005, 9-11). He was skeptical of humanitarian interventions abroad (which he dismissed as “nation-building”), reluctant to take the lead in brokering peace in the Middle East, and ready

either to withdraw or distance the United States from international agreements, such as the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty with Russia, the Kyoto Protocol on global warming, and the International Criminal Court, that he perceived as contrary to American interests (Pfiffner 2004, 169). For Bush, at the time, his “charge to keep” was seemingly confined to the domestic front and the administration’s “faith-based initiative” that sought to increase the role of religious organizations in implementing federal welfare policy.

September 11, 2001 changed the course of the Bush presidency; it was on that day that what has been called his “democratic evangelicalism” began to take shape (Gibbs 2005). For Bush, September 11 became a catalyst for exporting his brand of compassion and it clarified the means by which it would be exported (Kengor 2004, 102-5). As Bush committed himself “to rallying the armies of compassion in America, to help our fellow citizens in need,” to promote and “build a culture of life,” and to promote and “defend the sanctity of marriage” (Bush 2004c), it may be said that September 11 prompted him to rally the armies of compassion (the U.S. military and the coalition of the willing) to help fellow human beings in need throughout the world. As God “is a God to everybody, every person” and intends every person to be “born to freedom in the image of God,” Bush (2003a) believes that “we can be confident in America’s cause in the world” and be “dedicated to the equal and undeniable worth of every person.” By Bush’s reckoning, the extension and expansion of compassionate conservatism, liberty, and democracy are not American gifts to the world, they are God’s. Logically, it seems to follow from Bush’s thought that though the United States is not the benefactor of these gifts, it may be viewed as God’s deliverer. “The evil ones have roused a mighty nation, a mighty land. And for however long it takes, I am determined that we will prevail” (Freiling 2004, 55).

The terrorist attacks in New York and Washington transformed Bush from the lamb into the lion, from “self-help Methodist” to “a messianic Calvinist” (Wallis 2003; Caldwell 2003). “We are a country awakened to danger and called to defend freedom. Our grief has turned to anger, and anger to resolution. Whether we bring our enemies to justice, or bring justice to our enemies, justice will be done” (Bush 2001b). Either way, war had come and he had a responsibility. “This conflict was begun on the timing and terms of others. It will end in a way, and at an hour, of our choosing” (Bush 2001a). From this point forward, President Bush would no longer promote an image of a humble president, a humble policy, a humble America. Standing on the rubble of the Twin Towers, shouting into a bullhorn, Bush vowed to America and the world that “the people who knocked these buildings down will hear all of us soon” (Frum 2003, 140). The country was now at war and he was now a war president.

Since September 11, Bush has set out to remake the world. In the tradition of Woodrow Wilson’s faith-based mission “to make the world safe for democracy,” Bush has led the United States into two wars, in Afghanistan and Iraq, as what he believes to be complementary parts of the “war on terrorism.” Just as he believes that he had been called into politics and stirred to run for president, he believes that September 11 has called him to lead the country to a new calling.

America is a nation with a mission. We’re called to fight terrorism around the world, and we’re waging that fight. As freedom’s home and defender, we are called to expand the realm

of human liberty. And by our actions in Afghanistan and Iraq, more than 50 million people have been liberated from tyranny. (Bush 2004b)

At the National Cathedral, days after September 11, President Bush (2001a) proclaimed that the tragic events of that day warranted a change in policy and for him to be a different kind of president. “Our responsibility to history is already clear: to answer these attacks and rid the world of evil.” He reminded his listeners, at home and abroad, that the United States is a peaceful country; however, when attacked, it will furiously respond and will attack preemptively if necessary.

Bush rejected arguments that September 11 was the consequence of years of U.S. support for corrupt and cruel dictatorships in the Middle East, for its unwavering support for Israel, and for past military interventions in the region. By contrast, Bush believes that the United States was attacked for its values: “They have attacked America, because we are freedom’s home and defender” (2001a). The war on terror is simply a fight between “good people and evil people” (Bush and Bush 2004). Unlike Carter, Bush did not call on America to repent, for it had nothing to repent, but had every justification to respond. With the confidence that nothing “can separate us from God’s love,” Bush believed that this evil must be resisted, defeated, and he and his country have been called by God to do it—to be freedom’s champion. Bush was now, according to Frum (2003, 265), “a crusader after all.” And for Bush’s strongest supporters, conservative evangelical Christians, Bush increasingly came to be seen “as God’s instrument in the battle between good and evil” (Jacobson 2006, 93).

On September 20, before a joint session of Congress, Bush (2001b) unambiguously and boldly announced that “enemies of freedom committed an act of war” against the United States and that from now on, “every nation, in every region, now has a decision to make. Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists.” One cannot serve two masters, if you will, one cannot befriend good and evil simultaneously. “From this day forward, any nation that continues to harbor or support terrorism will be regarded by the United States as a hostile regime.”

He gave the Taliban regime of Afghanistan, who harbored Osama bin Laden and al-Qaeda, a unilateral ultimatum “not open to negotiation or discussion.” “The Taliban must act,” Bush said, “and act immediately. They will hand over the terrorists, or they will share in their fate.” In the 2002 State of the Union address, Bush (2002a) again unequivocally stated that “evil is real,” it has a face and it can be located. In the speech, he widened the scope of where evil physically lurks. Bush identified Iraq, Iran, and North Korea as an “axis of evil” for their efforts to develop and potentially use weapons of mass destruction, or provide such weapons to terrorists. These efforts, the president said, therefore constituted “a grave and growing danger” that he could not ignore or tarry. Boldly, he proclaimed that it is his presidential duty to act. “I will not wait on events, while dangers gather. I will not stand by, as peril draws closer and closer.”

Although President Bush insists that the war on terror is “the world’s fight,” “civilization’s fight” (2001b), in a definitive speech at West Point (2002b), Bush declared that neither the identification of threats nor actions taken would be decided by the world, the United Nations, or any other multilateral institution. Ultimately, this would be a

fight led by an American president, decisions made by an American administration, and fought mostly by American troops. It appears that Bush has been willing to go it mostly alone because he does not trust most world leaders, even allies, to take part in the leading role. As he later declared, in the 2004 State of the Union address (2004b), "America will never," under a Bush presidency, "seek a permission slip to defend the security of our country." Others, even allies, who fail to see the reasons for war will not have veto power over American action because, unlike most countries, "America has always been willing to do what it takes for what is right."

### **Evangelical Personalism and Political Skill**

The evangelical style appears to be fundamentally at odds with an approach to governing that focuses on political skill. We argue, however, that the personalism inherent to the evangelical style can lend itself to effective presidential negotiation particularly when in Greenstein's terms "it is harnessed to a vision of public policy" (2004, 5-6). Evangelical Christianity is a personalistic faith tradition. It stresses the individual decision to choose God, the confession of one's depravity, the development of a strong personal relationship with God through Christ, and subsequent fellowship with other like believers as "brothers and sisters." Evangelicals tend to publicly share very personal stories about one's moral failings, their recognition of their status as a sinner, and their decision for Christ. For instance, Jimmy Carter has frequently talked about his struggles with pride and George W. Bush his struggle with alcohol. Another trait shared by Carter and Bush is that they looked on politics in a very personal, evangelical way. Both found leaders with whom they developed a faith bond.

Carter embarked on initiatives he considered morally right, not politically expedient. In this regard, he was not an ambitious politician who made protecting his reputation and prestige a priority as urged by Neustadt, much to the ire and dumbfounding of his fellow Democrats and supporters. However, it was part of the Carter style to share his faith. In his relations with foreign leaders, Carter (1980a, 181) noted how discussions of faith were common: "I've shared my faith with leaders of Korea, Poland, and other nations that I've visited." On one occasion, he (1978c, 264) revealed how he bonded with Indian leaders:

A few weeks ago, I was in India. As part of my preparation for meeting with Indian leaders, I read the Bhagavad-Gita and later visited the site where Mahatma Gandhi's body was cremated and thought about his simple, deeply committed life, his knowledge of Christianity and Judaism, his worship of God, the simplicity and humility and sensitivity of his life. And I felt a kinship with him and a kinship of Indian leaders who have not only been our friends in recent years. And as I talked to Prime Minister [Morarji] Desai, this was a common thread that ran through the conversations between us—how we shared something.

Probably more than any other leader, Carter was closest to Egyptian President Anwar Sadat. For Carter (1979b, 411), Sadat was not just a partner for peace, he was a "brother."

I felt an instant friendship with President Sadat. And in his message to me and in my talks with him, he never fails to point out that the Egyptians and the Jews are sons of Abraham,

worship the same God, share a common heritage and a common faith, and that this is a transcendent thing, quite often forgotten, but still there; that it doesn't change. (1978c, 264)

Carter (1980a, 181) believed discussions of faith and fellowship played a crucial part in the Camp David peace negotiations with Sadat and Israeli Premier Menachem Begin. "I've found a sense of brotherhood with a Moslem leader of Egypt, Anwar Sadat, and a Jewish leader of Israel, Menachem Begin, as we worked together trying to find the ideal of Christ: peace on Earth." For his own part, assuming the role of partner and mediator, Carter (2002, 16-17) told the world, upon his reception of the 2002 Nobel Peace Prize in Oslo, why he gambled on peace in the Middle East. "The unchanging principles of life predate modern times. I worship Jesus Christ whom we Christians consider the Prince of Peace. As a Jew, he taught us to cross religious boundaries, in service and in love. He repeatedly reached out." And that is what Carter did. He reached out, crossed religious boundaries, and aimed to imitate Christ as America's chief diplomat.

Carter's successful mediation, deemed at the time exceedingly risky and politically foolish, was the crown of his foreign-policy objectives and accomplishments. What other presidents had been unwilling or unable to do, Carter did. Sadat and Begin made clear that without Carter and his tireless efforts, the treaty would never have been signed.

Though Bush has had problems connecting with most international leaders, he has developed at least one unshakable bond. Of all international leaders, British Prime Minister Tony Blair is George W. Bush's closest friend and ally. No other international leader has put so much of his own personal prestige and party leadership on the line for the American president (Broder 2004a). It appears curious that a Republican president and a Labour prime minister have forged such a powerful relationship, but the answer may be found in the fact that both men are strong believers in Christ.

Unlike most British prime ministers of the twentieth century, particularly Labour, who "were agnostics or atheists," Tony Blair "is the first Prime Minister since Gladstone to read the Bible habitually," is a frequent churchgoer, and "identifies his political practice with his religious belief" (Rentoul 2001, 350-57). Another Blair biographer, Philip Stephens (2004, 209-37), claims that Blair intensely shared Bush's contention that the 2003 Iraq War was a moral and just war and that their combined efforts would be acknowledged by history. Though Blair is clearly much more polished and articulate than President Bush in presenting and defending the case for war and reconstruction, his argument was fundamentally the same as the president's: it was simply "the right thing to do." Bush biographer David Aikman (2004, 150), too, sensed that "Blair's own Christian faith was strangely fortified by his encounters with his counterpart across the Atlantic."

In an interview with the BBC's David Frost, Bush (2003b) admitted that faith was a key factor. Frost asked, "Is partially the bond that you're both men of strong faith?" Bush said, "I think so. Tony is a man of strong faith. You know, the key to my relationship with Tony is he tells the truth, and he tells you what he thinks and when he says he's going to do something, he's going to do it. I trust him."

Speaking in London, Bush (2003c) addressed the charge that the United States too frequently mixes faith and foreign policy. He recognized that he and his country have often been criticized for having “a naïve faith that liberty can change the world,” for being at times “moralists who often speak in terms of right and wrong,” for having “a puritan streak.” He also noted that the earlier French criticism of Wilson’s “Fourteen Points,” particularly Clemenceau’s complaint that “God, himself, had only ten commandments,” and the current criticism of his policy, “sounds familiar.”

To these criticisms, Bush pleaded guilty as charged. “It’s rightly said that Americans are a religious people.” For this, he reminded his British audience that much of what the United States had become was inherited from them. He proceeded to argue that the heart of the American-British alliance is “an alliance of values” and a shared “mission in the world beyond the balance of power or the simple pursuit of interest.” With these words, Bush may have revealed why he has bonded so well with Blair and why he has had such problematic relations with other more secular international leaders, such as French President Jacques Chirac and former German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder. Bush’s faith leads him to view foreign leaders in very personalistic terms. Most notably, Bush once remarked that when he first met Russian President Vladimir Putin, looking “the man in the eye,” he “was able to get a sense of his soul” (Frum 2003, 88).

### The Calmness and Certainty of Evangelical Faith and Emotional Intelligence

Evangelicals may be described as Christians of certainty. They are certain the Bible is the Word of God, Christ died for their sins, and that they have the “blessed assurance” of a heavenly reward. One could expect then that evangelical styled presidents exhibit certainty and calm in policy areas they view in religious or moral terms, and according to critics such as Neustadt and Weber, this is precisely what condemns such leaders to failure in the murky world of day-to-day politics characterized by horse trading and deal making. Such critics view the faith-based certainty and calm of such presidents as naïve, arrogant, “negative,” or “rigid,” and this is precisely what more contemporary critics have charged against Carter and Bush. It is argued that their moral clarity and confidence tended toward arrogance, naïveté, simplicity, and the alienation of would-be friends and allies who did not view the world with their clarity and certainty. Moreover, their tendency for moral unilateralism offended allies, weakened the country’s alliances, and only emboldened enemies (Hutcheson 2004).

On the other hand, this aspect of the evangelical style is less at odds with other presidential scholars who have a broader focus than Neustadt’s preoccupation with political aptitude and bargaining skills. According to James David Barber’s model (1992), successful presidents will inevitably have a positive view of themselves and the presidency. Moreover, the personal confidence and equanimity engendered by strong evangelical faith should strengthen “emotional intelligence,” which Fred Greenstein perceives as the absolutely essential presidential attribute (2004, 223).

Barber (1992) predicted that Jimmy Carter would be a “positive” president, and, by and large, he concluded, his predictions were accurate. Carter, Barber said, endured tough

times, namely the Iranian hostage crisis, and “did not freeze onto some disastrous line of policy and ride it to the end like” active negative presidents had previously done or would do in similar situations. Most importantly, said Barber, he refused to take the country on any “deadly adventures.”

Greenstein (2004), on the other hand, concluded that Carter unnecessarily complicated his presidency and his relations at home and abroad. He lacked the requisite degree of emotional intelligence (pp. 142-43), because “he was fixed in his ideas” and had a “predilection for authoritarian role models” (his father Earl and Admiral Hyman Rickover). Yet the essence of Greenstein’s critique of Carter lies more in Carter’s lack of political skill: “If there ever was reason to doubt Neustadt’s diagnosis, it was eliminated by the presidential experience of Jimmy Carter” (Greenstein 2004, 219).

Rather than being emotionally overwrought, however, Carter appeared to have found satisfaction in being president.

I feel at ease with the job, I’ve enjoyed it. I roll easily with the punches of criticism, whether I think it’s deserved or not deserved . . . I’m doing the best I can with difficult problems. (1978g, 728-29)

A key part of that satisfaction and ease Carter attributes to his religious faith. He (1978e, 370) calls it “a stabilizing factor” in his life, something he can always rely on, and that it “doesn’t change” amid “changing political and military and economic circumstances.” Further, Carter claims, the presence of God in his life, the living model of Christ, and a daily routine of worship and prayer with his wife Rosalynn, sustain him in his low moments.

To me, God is real. To me, the relationship with God is a very personal thing. God is ever-present in my life—sustains me when I am weak, gives me guidance when I turn to him, and provides for me as a Christian through the life of Christ, a perfect example to emulate in my experiences with other human beings. My wife and I worship together every night, and often during the day I turn to God in a quiet and personal way. (1978c, 263)

As with Carter, domestic and international critics have charged that Bush’s post-9/11 worldview is naïve and simplistic. He fails to see the complexity and ambiguity in the world, seeing international problems in basic Manichean, black and white, good versus evil, civilized versus uncivilized, terms. This, they charge, makes him seem arrogant, self-righteous, uncompromising, dangerous, single minded, and reluctant “to recognize errors or correct them” (Broder 2004b; Suskind 2004). “The problem isn’t with Bush’s sincerity,” explained Martin Marty (2003, 32), “but with his evident conviction he’s doing God’s will.” *Time* magazine’s Joe Klein (2003, 2005) explained that what especially troubled him about Bush is his certainty, his simple faith, and his tendency to stubbornly stick with failing courses of action. Referring to the imminence of war in Iraq, Klein (2003) wrote,

It does not discomfort him enough; it does not impel him to have second thoughts, to explore other intellectual possibilities or question the possible consequences of his actions

. . . George W. Bush's faith offers no speed bumps on the road to Baghdad; it does not give him pause or force him to reflect. It is a source of comfort and strength but not of wisdom . . . [Bush is] always bathed in the blinding glare of his own certainty.

To the pleasure of supporters and to the ire and frustration of his detractors, Bush is a confident, calm politician. Like Carter, he is a president who claims he enjoys being president. Bush is a president who says that he finds decision making "pretty easy" because he knows what he believes and who he is (Frum 2003, 91-92). Bush believes that his faith provides a lens through which to see the world as it is and what it could be, inspires his political style, and is the source of his willingness to take bold risks, even in face of severe criticism, calls for caution, and ebbing popularity at home and abroad.

I build my life on a foundation that will not shift. My faith frees me. Frees me to put the problem of the moment in proper perspective. Frees me to make decisions that others might not like. Frees me to do the right thing, even though it may not poll well. Frees me to enjoy life and not worry about what comes next. (Bush 1999, 6)

In contrast to his critique of Carter, Greenstein (2004, 209) commended Bush for his vision, "because he holds that if a leader does not set his own goals others will set them for him," and emotional intelligence, "whatever the merits of his actions, his emotions appear to have been well in hand" (p. 210). Clearly, Greenstein's more nuanced model of presidential leadership would appear to be able to incorporate elements of the evangelical style as positive attributes notwithstanding his negative appraisal of Carter.

## Conclusion: Reevaluating the Evangelical Style

In this article we have attempted to define an evangelical presidential style, by illustrating its characteristics and demonstrating the evangelical style of presidential leadership in action in the foreign policies of Presidents Jimmy Carter and George W. Bush. Aside from Woodrow Wilson, no other twentieth-century presidents have simultaneously possessed such solid evangelical credentials and so obviously demonstrated an evangelical leadership style. Almost all of these presidents were raised in a religious home, were privately devout, could effectively appeal to evangelical voters at election time, or knew the language of faith. However, in our assessment, they lacked the whole evangelical package: private devotion and public witness, use of "Christ-talk," not just "God-talk," changed personal lives and a desire to morally clean up Washington, a fellowship bond with international leaders (e.g., Carter-Sadat, Bush-Blair), faith-based foreign missions (e.g., the quest for peace or wars of liberation in the Middle East), and a view of politics as a form of ministry or religious calling.

To a greater degree than other presidents, stories and anecdotes of faith figure large in the presidential narratives of Jimmy Carter and George W. Bush (Cornog 2004; O'Connor 2005). One pursued a "living faith," the other "a charge to keep." Neither would leave their personal faith at the door of the Oval Office, and both made it clear to

press and public that they would not do so. As far as it can be determined, Carter and Bush are sincere men—presidents of faith—and both found allies and partners for peace/war who shared a similarly strong religious faith. While their faith and political circumstances led Carter and Bush to pursue different courses in foreign policy, one toward diplomacy and peace and the other toward war and security in the Middle East, both aggravated European allies with their moral talk and willingness to pursue unilateral action. Presidents Carter and Bush spent political capital on foreign policies or took certain actions, or inactions, that either yielded them little political return or were incredibly politically risky. Nevertheless, both pursued them anyway and made it clear that they would give up the presidency for their principles. Different as they were, Carter and Bush clearly share an evangelical “family resemblance.”

The evangelical style is clearly at odds, however, with Richard Neustadt’s paradigm for a successful president. According to Neustadt, the successful president must be aware of the limitations on his political power and understand that the only real power the president has is the power to persuade the other relevant actors in the political system to go along with him. To do this successfully, the president must have a clear aptitude for and enjoyment of politics, defined as a prolonged process of negotiation and bargaining. The evangelical style thus appears clearly antithetical to Neustadt’s prescriptions, as the evangelical style repudiates a preoccupation with day-to-day politics and the accumulation of personal power. Most presidential scholars following Neustadt would argue that presidents attempting to govern in this manner are almost bound to fail. Even if one does not fully accept Max Weber’s warnings regarding religious or moralistic political leaders, it is clear that there are particular political problems awaiting American presidents with an evangelical style of governing.

While there is controversy over the presidential legacy of both Woodrow Wilson and Jimmy Carter, both are generally adjudged to have been political failures. (Wilson failed to get the Senate to adopt his life’s work, the League of Nations, and Carter was defeated for reelection.) In foreign policy, where *realpolitik* often appears to be a fact of life, the evangelical style has particular perils. Yet these presidents and George W. Bush were elected due to a national popular feeling that “moral improvement” of some kind was required in the Oval Office, and all to some extent delivered on that promise, if not always in the manner that they originally intended. Ironically, despite the Neustadtian consensus among presidential scholars, both Wilson and Carter are generally credited with singular achievements in foreign policy.

The recurrence and occasional successes of the evangelical style should lead us to question whether the Neustadtian focus on political persuasion is, by itself, too narrow a yardstick by which to assess presidents. Later presidential scholars such as Greenstein have modified the Neustadt model by adding other variables to Neustadt’s focus on political skill. Indeed, Greenstein sees “emotional intelligence,” not “political skill,” as the key determinant of presidential success. Greenstein still dismisses Carter as a political failure due to his deficiencies in communications, political skill, and organizational capacity. His early assessment of George W. Bush (Greenstein 2004), however, acknowledges Bush’s capacity for policy vision and allows that Bush’s discovery of religious faith has helped him keep his emotions in check during his presidency.

From our analysis of Carter and Bush, it is clear that an evangelical style can help provide presidents with two of Greenstein's requisite qualities—vision and the “master quality” of emotional intelligence. Moreover, we have discussed situations in the Carter and George W. Bush administrations where a “faith bond” helped the president in political negotiations by winning over another critical political actor (Sadat, Blair). Given the controversy and national political polarization engendered by the George W. Bush presidency (due in large part, we admit, to Bush’s evangelical style), it appears quite possible that the Bush presidency may be adjudged a political failure on the same level as Wilson’s or Carter’s. Greenstein’s positive assessment gives us pause, however, and if Bush leaves office in reasonable political shape, future scholarship may have to reassess the relationship between the evangelical style and presidential failure.

In this article, we believe we have shown that the evangelical style is likely to be *more* effective than the Neustadtian approach to presidential leadership in specific situations, and it thus behooves presidential scholars to pay it more attention than they have hitherto. Future research might possibly explore the circumstances in which evangelical presidents get elected and (in the case of Wilson and George W. Bush) maintain themselves in power. The occurrence and occasional successes of the evangelical style may also lead us to reassess the balance of qualities necessary for presidential success. Given that evangelicalism is deeply rooted in American political culture, and also the enhanced political influence and visibility of evangelical Christians in American politics over the past half-century, we should certainly expect to encounter recurrent examples of the “evangelical style” among American chief executives. Had Herbert Hoover (1992, 302) lived to see the Carter and George W. Bush presidencies, he may have said, “The spirit of Woodrow Wilson came to the world again.”

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