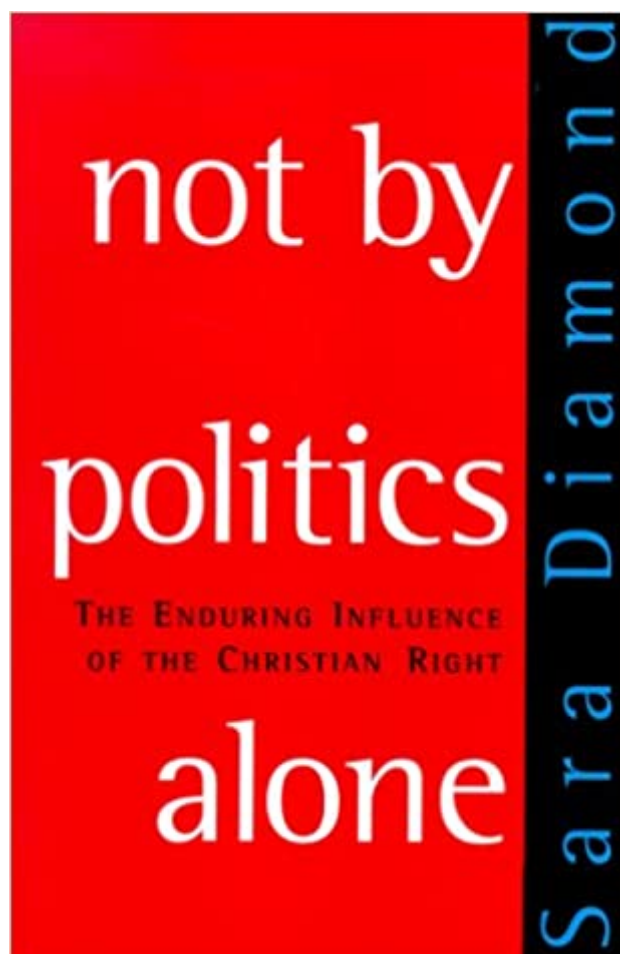


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# Not By Politics Alone: The Enduring Influence Of The Christian Right



## Synopsis

In this incisive work, Sara Diamond expands our understanding of the Christian Right beyond what is commonly known about its electoral clout, shedding light on the rarely seen boundaries and intersections where politics and culture converge. The book examines the web of grassroots cultural institutions, including publishing houses, law firms, broadcast stations, and church-centered community programs, that have helped conservative evangelical groups maintain their influence for over two decades. Highlighting the movement's complex alliance with the Republican Party, Diamond provides a rare behind-the-scenes look at the formation, organizing strategies, and heated internal debates of such powerful national organizations as Focus on the Family and the Christian Coalition. She offers a richly textured analysis of how the rubric of "family values" has been used to infuse evangelical beliefs into local and national discussions around such disparate issues as childrearing, gay rights, abortion, public education, and funding for the arts.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

The Christian Right's growth into a formidable social movement and political power over the last couple of decades has provoked alarm in many quarters. In this sweeping and well-documented survey of the movement, Diamond concludes that its survival is due to the diversity of its many subcultural institutions and to its links with the Republican Party. The author doesn't bother defining "the Christian Right," nor does she offer more than a nutshell history. Her purpose is not primarily to critique, although her own bias emerges from time to time in expressions such as "simple-minded,"

"fractious," "irrational," and they "fight change and punish those responsible for it." Diamond generally avoids direct condemnation, however; in fact, she is occasionally critical of the criticisms leveled at the Christian Right, moderating the knee-jerk stereotyping that fails to take it seriously. She prefers instead to let the movement's rhetoric speak for itself through myriad groups such as Promise Keepers, the Christian Coalition and Operation Rescue, as well as a seemingly endless list of publications and TV and radio shows. While Diamond doesn't challenge the personal motivations of prominent individuals in the Christian Right, she notes that shrewd business tactics, political hardball, scare tactics and sometimes outright deception seem to have more to do with the movement's staying power than any divine intervention. Like her *Roads to Dominion: Right-Wing Movements and Political Power in the United States*, this is a balanced, eye-opening and accessible read. Copyright 1998 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

What explains the persistent influence of the Christian Right, even in periods when its declared goals are not being achieved? Sociologist Diamond--author of several thoughtful (if critical) studies of the movement, including *Spiritual Warfare* (1989), *Roads to Dominion* (1995), and *Facing the Wrath* (1996)--argues that its "tenacity . . . may count as much as the moral appeal of its arguments." In addition to its base in evangelical Christianity (which both dictates elements of its "family values" agenda and allows leaders to consistently portray the movement as an underdog in the political and cultural arenas), today's Christian Right is notable for maintaining a wide range of "mobilizing structures" --among them, religious broadcasting; evangelical fiction, magazines, music, think tanks, law firms, and political activity; and such movements as Promise Keepers--that "give people a sense of personal satisfaction as well as political efficacy." Opposing the Left's tendency to demonize the Christian Right, Diamond insists on taking it seriously, endeavoring to understand the sources of its strong appeal to millions of U.S. citizens. Mary Carroll --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Sarah Diamond is great.

This book does a good job of exposing one of the most insidious power grabs in history! Fundamentalists of any religion are pretty darn scary because they are so sure they are right. For example, I once talked to a woman who was distributing anti-abortion literature. I pointed out that Ronald Reagan's cuts to social service programs caused the US to go from the fourth highest infant

mortality in the FIRST world to the highest in just 4 years and that this killed more babies than abortions. The woman looked upset and said, I don't know, I voted for him because my pastor told me to. The "Christian" right has tried to pass "pro-family" referenda in Colorado that would have prevented the state from interfering when a father sexually abused his children. I grew up in a southern Baptist church in a very small town. I got tired of being told I should obey the men and that men were smarter than women. By the way, the governor of one state is a leading Southern Baptist. His son and another Boy Scout, tortured a dog to death a few years ago. These boy scouts were never prosecuted. At the local evangelical church, cards are passed out telling people how to vote! Federal family planning funds are being given to "faith-based" groups who preach abstinence. The head of the US Baptist church this last fall said that the US should attack Iraq. IF that's not wielding right-wing power, I don't know what is. The wife of the head of the Southern Baptist convention said that she always defers to her husband if they cannot agree on an issue--then she goes out and buys a new hat! I got all of this out of the mainstream, not the liberal press. Remember, Hitler was a Christian. His first successful campaign slogan was "Kinder, Kirchen, Kuchen." In the early 1920's, he began his rise to power being against women's rights--women should only care for children (Kinder) and stay in the church (Kirchen) and kitchen (Kuchen). The main reason fundamentalists in this country complain that they have no power is that they, so far, can't have everything their own way. They have no idea about give and take and the possibility that they might be wrong. They want to punish evil--but we are all evil and good. I read the New Testament a lot, it sustains me in this world of violent religious people. "Let him who is without sin cast the first stone." "As ye have done to the least of my brethren, so have ye done to me." I have had fundamentalist neighbors tell me that it is all right to destroy the environment because God put all this here for humans to use. I can't imagine what we are going to say to God when we stand before him and explain why we destroyed so many parts of his beautiful creation.

I'm not sure whether the other reviewers have actually read the book or are simply engaging in political arguments. Like the blurb says, she allows the Christian Right to speak for itself (and to call her 'uninformed' is just ignorant - she has a massive array of sources and factual information). Enjoy.

The Christian Right is an enduring myth that has haunted left-wing academics ever since the election of Ronald Reagan. In the view of many liberals, a Protestant Taliban has emerged in the nation's heartland, with the goal of taking over the United States and wiping out all the "progress"

society has made since the 1920s. Mainstream religious organizations - such as the Baptist Church, the world's largest non-catholic Christian communion - are really only fronts for this insidious, anti-modern movement. For reasons that are never explained, Roman Catholics, Muslims, and others whose social beliefs are far more conservative and politically-inclined than evangelical Protestants are never similarly excoriated or held as objects of terror by the liberal elite. This lapse is especially striking when one considers that Islam exists with the express purpose of becoming one with the State, and that Catholic social thought (which is the guiding ideology of JP2) is based on the idea of one national church, and that Catholic bishops routinely tell the laity how to vote not just on a few issues, but on virtually every issue facing voters. For some vague reason, it is Evangelicals - people like Baptists, who oppose state-established religion and government compulsion in spiritual affairs - who are the subversives we must fear and restrain. While a number of religious personalities (Tim LaHaye, James Dobson, Jerry Falwell, etc.) have espoused views that congeal with the agenda of the Republican Party, none of these individuals have ever "crossed the line" into subversive or illegal activity. They have simply expressed their views; until the First Amendment is withdrawn, they have every right to do so. The few genuine "Christian Right" movements - Christian Reconstructionism, for example - are smaller and less influential than PETA, let alone established, effective public policy groups like the Cato Institute or NOW. Why do people like Sara Diamond insist on portraying Evangelical Christians as demons? The truth is Evangelicals are fairly moderate compared to other religions - they permit divorce; they permit non-reproductive sex within marriage; many of them embrace the ordination of women in the church and complete equality of women in the social sphere. Their churches are generally democratic, with all members having an equal say in the spiritual and economic administration of the church. They believe in purely voluntary religion - no forced conversions or forced retention of members. America, you have nothing to fear from Baptists or Pentecostals. You have more to fear from misguided, misinformed people like Sara Diamond, who'll set you against your neighbor and close down the possibility of real dialogue about the issues facing our society.

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