

## Abstract

### The Rise of the Traditionalist Alliance

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During the 2004 presidential campaign, commentators became fascinated by the “religion gap,” the tendency of more frequent worship attenders to vote Republican and the less observant to vote Democratic. Although strong in 2004, this pattern had been developing for more than a decade, and was just one part of a broader phenomenon: the development of new patterns of political cooperation and conflict among religious groups in the United States. These new patterns were based on belief and practice rather than affiliation. So, for example, more traditional Catholics, Protestants and Jews found they had more in common than with each other than with the less traditional members of their own traditions—and much the same thing happened among the less traditional.

These developments extended to denominational leaders, the clergy, political activists and the general public, changing the linkages between religious communities and politics. Evangelical Protestants were central to the new “traditionalist” alliance that gained considerable influence within the Republican Party and national politics early in the new century. The rival “modernist” alliance has had somewhat less success in national politics in recent times, but appears to be gaining new vigor after the 2004 election.

This paper will review the “rise of the traditionalist alliance” in contemporary American politics, illustrating this change with survey data of clergy, political activism, and the mass public.