

The Religious Roots of Third Candidate Voting: A Comparison of Anderson, Perot, and Wallace Voters*

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The existing literature on third-party presidential candidacies indicates little to no influence from religious affiliation or practices, in sharp contrast to studies of two-candidate races. Using the National Election Studies of 1968, 1980, and 1992, supplemented by national church census data, we show that the religious roots of major-party voting impede the electoral fortunes of third candidates. Religious adherence in counties is positively related to major-party voting, meaning that third candidates are disadvantaged by the historical connections among denominations, faith, and the two major parties. The individual-level vote choice models indicate that stronger religious beliefs and practices usually have a negative impact on third candidates. Specific denominations rarely correlate with third candidate voting; white southern Evangelicals in 1968 constitute a notable exception. These findings represent extensions of the literature surrounding third candidacies, the structural barriers they face, and the influence of social environments on citizen behavior.

The existing literature on third-party presidential bids offers some strong theoretical concepts and in-depth case studies (Mazmanian 1974; Smallwood 1983; Rosenstone, Behr, and Lazarus 1984; Chressanthis and Shaffer 1993; Gould 1993). Yet this literature ascribes little to no direct impact to religious affiliation, practice, or belief, especially in the most recent three-way presidential races of 1968, 1980, and 1992. Such an absence stands in stark contrast to studies of typical two-candidate presidential races. Students of mass political behavior know from years of research and analysis that religion's influence on the attitudes and actions of Americans is multifaceted, and that explanations of American voting behavior that omit religion's role are necessarily incomplete (Leege and Kellstedt 1993). Why, then, is religion usually absent as an explanation for the behavior of the citizens who voted for George Wallace, John Anderson, and Ross Perot?

Any consideration of the religious roots of recent third-candidate voting in the United States must begin with acknowledgment of the long-term, deep-seated religious roots of major party voting (Lopatto 1985). Indeed, the historical connections between denominations and political parties point to an initial hypothesis that religion and religious factors should

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have little to no impact on third-candidate voting. Significant religious factors should be more likely to work *against* third-candidate voting, precisely because religious factors have such salience in driving major-party voting. None of the recent third candidates for president used specific appeals to particular denominations; none possessed the means or the time to build a base of support from one denomination or religious tradition, or to weaken significantly the historical ties of specific denominations to the major parties; and none benefited from the other long-term partisan attachments that influence Democratic and Republican voting choices.

Based on these initial thoughts, we assert four hypotheses about the religious roots of third candidate voting:

- third candidates do not develop support along denominational lines, whether by choice or because they have too little time to do so;
- none of the third candidates considered here uses direct appeals based on social issues that are politically mobilizing for denominations; hence social issue positions do not tend to predict third candidate voting;
- the primary effect of religion on third candidate voting is *negative* — religious factors motivate some people *not* to vote for third candidates, and only rarely do religious factors motivate citizens to choose third candidates; and
- the religious composition of a citizen's social environment plays a subtle and complex role in that citizen's evaluation of third candidates.

This last statement bears further elaboration before we discuss the existing literature and its relevance for our research. National church censuses conducted by the Glenmary Research Center and the National Council of Churches of Christ (NCCC) in 1971, 1980, and 1990 offer the opportunity to develop simple measures of the religious composition of American counties (Johnson et al. 1974; Quinn et al. 1982; Bradley et al. 1992). For the counties that have survey respondents in the 1968, 1980, and 1992 National Election Studies (NES), we use the relevant NCCC data to investigate the relationship between a county's level of church membership (percent adherents in county) and the political fortunes of Wallace, Anderson, and Perot versus their Democratic and Republican opponents in those counties. Table 1 presents these results.

Table 1 reveals that higher levels of church membership in counties lead to higher levels of major-party voting in those counties. The relationship is direct and highly statistically significant for all three elections studied. Although we recognize and do not claim that church membership in and of itself relates to frequent attendance or any depth of belief, these results are nonetheless striking. They demonstrate simply and convincingly that religious adherence strengthens traditional — Democratic or Republican — voting patterns, and that systematic analysis of third-candidate vote choice must take into account some measure of the context in which voters make their decisions.

With these initial findings in mind, we turn now to a more thorough discussion of the literature on third candidates, determinants of third candidate vote choice, and the nature of religious contexts and their impact on political behavior. We then discuss in more detail the survey data used to study third candidate voting in 1968, 1980, and 1992, as well as the methods employed.

TABLE 1

PERCENT OF TWO-PARTY VOTE AS A FUNCTION OF PERCENT RELIGIOUS ADHERENTS IN COUNTY
(OLS REGRESSION ESTIMATES)

Independent Variable	Coefficient
<i>1968</i>	
Constant	78.57 (1.22)***
Percent religious adherents in county	0.13 (0.02)***
Adjusted R ²	.02
<i>1980</i>	
Constant	92.04 (0.29)***
Percent religious adherents in county	0.03 (0.01)***
Adjusted R ²	.02
<i>1992</i>	
Constant	72.65 (0.53)***
Percent religious adherents in county	0.17 (0.01)***
Adjusted R ²	.20

Source: 1968, 1980, 1992 National Election Studies; NCCC Church Census data for 1971, 1980, and 1990.

Note: Standard errors in parentheses.

* = Significant at 0.10 level.

** = Significant at 0.05 level.

*** = Significant at 0.01 level.

EXISTING FINDINGS

Given the long American two-party tradition, it is not surprising to find political scientists fascinated with the electoral conditions in which third candidacies appear. V. O. Key calls third parties "deviations" in his classic *Politics, Parties, and Pressure Groups* (1948), yet this term seems somewhat misleading. The fact that third candidates appear at regular intervals in U.S. electoral history suggests that the electoral process itself might systematically create — and recreate — the conditions favorable for third candidacies to blossom.

Rosenstone, Behr, and Lazarus (1984) provide the most systematic development of a theoretical perspective to explain third candidacies and voter behavior toward minor candidates. They posit three conditions necessary to prompt voters to choose third candidates:

Citizens do so when they feel the major parties have deteriorated so much that they no longer function as they are supposed to, when an attractive third party candidate runs, or when they have acquired an allegiance to a third party itself. (1984:126)

Perceptions of major party failure may arise from many places. The presence of issues that neither Republicans nor Democrats address adequately is almost always a critical factor (Chressanthis and Shaffer 1993). Key presents several historical examples illustrating the point, concluding that minor parties represent a "safety valve" for the expression of discontent (1948:235-246). Downs (1957) posits that citizens will be more likely to choose third candidates as the distance increases between citizen and major party issue positions. The state of the economy may also be salient; although Rosenstone et al. admit that evidence on this point is mixed, they contend that as national prosperity decreases third-party votes will increase (1984:134-138). Also, Rosenstone et al. provide evidence that the poor are more likely to choose third candidates, because they are more likely to be dissatisfied with the government, the economy, and the major parties (1984:148). Mazmanian (1974) and Gillespie (1993) offer an historical perspective that suggests the theories of Key, Downs, and Rosenstone et al. are not confined to recent third candidacies. Drawing on historical exam-

ples dating back to the early nineteenth century, both Mazmanian and Gillespie argue that political crises exist at the root of the emergence of every viable third candidacy.¹

A more recent investigation of the 1968, 1980, and 1992 elections using National Election Studies data (Peterson, Johnson, and Gilbert 1995) addresses some unexplored questions about the timing of vote decisions and defections from one candidate to another during the campaign. Peterson et al. find that voters in the 1968, 1980, and 1992 elections are willing to choose third candidates even as election day nears, provided there are substantive reasons to do so. A candidate's likely showing is evidently not among these reasons in two of the three elections (1968 and 1992). Peterson et al. conclude that voters do not reject third candidates because of perceptions of their remoteness of winning. Along these same lines, Magleby and Monson (1995) analyze recent independent candidacies in Utah state elections and find that voters who decide late in the campaign favor the independent candidate over the major-party candidates, despite the fact that late-campaign polls show independent support slipping badly (1995:19).

The Political Salience of Religion and Religious Contexts

The proposition that religious factors influence U.S. political behavior is well established (Leege and Kellstedt 1993; Wald 1992; Kellstedt and Noll 1990; Lopatto 1985). The concept of churches as political contexts also has a rich intellectual tradition, perhaps more so in the field of religion and politics than in other areas of mass behavior research (Berelson, Lazarsfeld, and McPhee 1954; Lenski 1961; Wald, Owen, and Hill 1988). The selective political importance of factors in an individual's religious environment offers persuasive evidence that contextual factors must be accounted for when investigating the determinants of vote choice as well as other political attitudes (Wald, Owen, and Hill 1988, 1990).

But how does one account for local contexts using NES data? Absent the richer congregation- or neighborhood-level data found in community studies like those of Wald, Owen, and Hill (1988, 1990) or Huckfeldt and Sprague (1995), the most compelling justification for using county measures is simply that existing findings show connections between county-level measures and individual choices and beliefs (Gaustad 1976; Newman and Halvorson 1980). Salisbury, Sprague, and Weiher (1984) combine 1971 NCCC data with several national surveys conducted between 1964 and 1976; they find that in counties with no single dominant denomination, citizens are more likely to vote along denominational lines. Using a similar approach, Gilbert (1993) examines the presidential elections of 1960, 1976, and 1980 (two major candidates only) with NCCC church census data appended to the appropriate NES surveys. In examining voting behavior, he finds that concentrations of religions in counties have significant effects in 1960 and 1980, but not in 1976. Specifically, in religiously diverse counties Jewish voters develop stronger Democratic ties, whereas mainline Protestant attachments to Republican candidates tend to weaken (1993:59-64). Lieske (1993) provides a richer set of findings for 1980 and 1984 presidential voting, based on his development of ten regional subcultures through factor and cluster analyses of county-level indicators such as racial origin, ethnic ancestry, religious affiliation, and social structure. Lieske's typology explains subcultural variations in the 1980 Democratic and Republican vote (though not as well for Anderson), as well as for both candidates in 1984 (1993:905-910).

1. Mazmanian, Gillespie, and other researchers generally define a *viable* third candidacy as one where the candidate gains at least five percent of the national vote.

DATA AND MODELING STRATEGIES

Data for this paper are drawn from the National Election Studies of 1968, 1980, and 1992. NES surveys provide by far the richest individual-level data source to study citizen motivations and draw comparisons across elections. As indicated previously, we have appended NCCC data on county religious adherence and denominational membership to each NES data set (1971 NCCC with 1968 NES; 1980 NCCC with 1980 NES; 1990 NCCC with 1992 NES). Although the level of detail in the NCCC data increases with each survey, there is still enough commonality to allow for comparisons across election years. From each NCCC survey we have created variables measuring the percentages of various denominations and groups of denominations (e.g., Evangelicals, mainline Protestants) within counties, as well as the level of religious adherence in each county.² Table 1 has already demonstrated the utility of the latter measure for understanding third-candidate voting.

A final supplement to the NES data comes from presidential voting totals in each county. Warren Miller (1956) finds that Democrats living in highly Democratic counties are more likely to vote Democratic — an amplification effect — than Democrats living among high concentrations of Republicans. Some of the models to follow include vote percentages for third candidates and the major parties to test for similar contextual influences.

The dependent measure used here is vote choice, operationalized as a dichotomous variable: 1 if a citizen chooses the third candidate, and 0 if a citizen chooses either of the major party candidates. Because of this coding scheme, the models show clearly the specific factors that cause voters to *choose or reject* third candidates, but the models do not reveal much about how major-party voters choose among major party candidates; in 1968, for example, the Wallace/not Wallace choice can be explained well, but little can be said about why the non-Wallace voters prefer Nixon or Humphrey. It is obviously our intent to remain focused on third candidates and their appeal or lack thereof; the other candidates necessarily play a role in the voter's decision making, and such roles are discussed when relevant.

For each dependent measure, we construct logistic regression models that attempt to account fully for relevant causal factors.³ Complete specification is essential in order to understand properly the impact of the variables of most interest.⁴ Moreover, specification of individual- and contextual-level effects ameliorates the oft-cited criticism of contextual analysis, that it fails to account for individual factors that are the true agents of causality (Hauser 1974). In each model, a positive coefficient indicates a greater likelihood of choosing the third candidate, whereas a negative coefficient indicates less likelihood of choosing the third candidate.

RELIGIOUS FACTORS AND THIRD CANDIDATE VOTING: AN INITIAL OVERVIEW

We begin the systematic analysis by restating the initial hypotheses concerning religious factors and third candidates: Voting along denominational lines should be rare; social issues should not be good predictors of third-candidate voting; religious factors are likely to

2. For each denomination or group coded, we use the percent of the county's religious adherents who belong to that particular denomination/group.

3. When a dependent variable is dichotomous, ordinary least squares (OLS) regression does not produce efficient or reliable estimates. Hence a logit model, which calculates probabilities based on the relationship between the independent variables and the dichotomous dependent variable using the equation $P = 1/(1+e^{-Xb})$, is the appropriate choice (Hanushek and Jackson 1977:187-203).

4. Coding schemes for all variables are available from the authors. Independent variables are coded identically across elections wherever possible.

work against third-candidate voting; and religious contexts may play a role, though the full nature of that role is unclear.

TABLE 2
IMPACT OF RELIGIOUS VARIABLES ON THIRD CANDIDATE VOTING
(BIVARIATE LOGIT ESTIMATES)

Independent Variable	Coefficient	Significant in full vote model?
<i>1968 Variables</i>		
Church attendance	-0.23 (0.05)***	Yes
View on authorship of Bible	0.40 (0.12)***	No (sign negative)
Support for prayer in public schools	0.21 (0.07)***	Yes
<i>1980 Variables</i>		
Church attendance	0.16 (0.09)*	No (sign negative)
Attitude toward abortion	-0.73 (0.14)***	Yes
View on authorship of Bible	-0.92 (0.16)***	No
Born-again Christian	-1.09 (0.42)***	No
Support for prayer in public schools	-0.34 (0.07)***	No
Importance of religion to one's life	-1.29 (0.24)***	No
<i>1992 Variables</i>		
Church attendance	-0.17 (0.06)***	Yes
Attitude toward abortion	-0.19 (0.06)***	No
View on authorship of Bible	-0.22 (0.10)**	No
Born-again Christian	-0.18 (0.15)	No
Support for prayer in public schools	-0.08 (0.04)*	No
Guidance religion gives for daily living	-0.23 (0.09)**	No
Importance of religion to one's life	-0.13 (0.05)***	No
Frequency of prayer	-0.13 (0.05)***	No
Frequency of Bible reading	-0.20 (0.07)***	No

Source: 1968, 1980, 1992 National Election Studies.

Note: Standard errors in parentheses.

* = Significant at 0.10 level.

** = Significant at 0.05 level.

*** = Significant at 0.01 level.

To assess the second and third hypotheses above, Table 2 presents a first look at religious variables and third-candidate voting. The table displays a series of bivariate logit models for each three-candidate election, demonstrating religious links to third-candidate voting in the absence of other causal factors. Few of these variables appear in the fully specified vote models to follow (noted in right column, Table 2), because other causal factors override the effects of these religious measures. Still, Table 2 shows that connections between religion and third-candidate voting do exist, if only to establish how and why most of these connections are subsumed in the full models to follow.

1968 Religious Variables. Compared to the 1980 and 1992 surveys, the 1968 NES contains relatively few appropriate variables for this analysis. The bivariate logit results show that increasing church attendance makes citizens less likely to vote for Wallace; the more a voter believes the Bible to be the inerrant word of God, the more likely he or she is to cast a Wallace vote; and support for prayer in public schools also leads to a greater likelihood of Wallace voting. The church attendance and school prayer results hold in the full Wallace voting model (Table 3 below), but the view on biblical authorship changes signs and is not statistically significant in the full model. These findings suggest that Wallace appeals to fundamentalist voters, and that school prayer — to the extent that it is a states rights issue, as Wallace presented it — also leads voters to the third candidate in 1968 (Gould 1993). Of

all the third candidates studied, only Wallace seems to possess an issue that connects with religiously devoted voters.

1980 Religious Variables. The bivariate results again show that strong religious feelings tend to work against third candidate voting, and once again nearly all of the significant bivariate findings wash out of the full 1980 Anderson vote model (Table 4 below). In Table 2, several factors leads voters away from John Anderson: pro-life views on abortion; belief in biblical inerrancy; support for public school prayer; belief in religion as important to one's life; and being a born-again Christian. All of these indicators usually correlate with conservative political views. Despite being a born-again Christian himself, Anderson is perceived (correctly) as moderate to liberal in political orientation. Hence, not surprisingly, more conservative political and religious beliefs correlate strongly with support for Ronald Reagan. Finally, increasing church attendance leads to an increased likelihood of Anderson voting, but the effect is barely significant; indeed, in the full model the sign is reversed and the measure ceases to be significant. Clearly, when viewed in isolation all religious indicators leads voters away from choosing Anderson.

1992 Religious Variables. Based on the development of improved measures of religiosity, the 1992 NES incorporates more detailed questions about religious practices and beliefs than previous surveys (Leege, Kellstedt, and Wald 1990). Table 2 shows a striking consistency in how these factors affect Perot voting. For every variable tested, the effect on Perot voting in the bivariate models is *negative*. Higher levels of any religious activity — praying, reading the Bible, attending church — make voters less likely to choose Perot. Further, the same attitudes that are negatively related to Anderson voting in 1980 also turned up as negative influences on Perot voting — pro-life abortion views, belief in biblical inerrancy, support for school prayer. These religious effects fall out of the full Perot vote model (Table 5 below), with the sole exception of church attendance. As a well-known salient factor in explaining major party voting patterns (Knoke 1974), the significance of church attendance (and its anti-Perot effect) is no surprise. Clearly, the more important a person's personal religious views are, the less likely that person is to vote for Ross Perot. This conclusion depends to an extent on the denominational adherence of individuals; however, there do not appear to be any overwhelmingly or even modestly pro-Perot denominations among the American electorate (1992 NES, results not reported).

1968 WALLACE VOTING

George Wallace captured 10 million popular votes (13.5%), five southern states, and 46 electoral votes in 1968. Wallace's strength in the south decimated the chances of Democratic candidate Hubert Humphrey, who captured only 10% of the white southern vote. The legacy of the Wallace candidacy carries even more historical significance. Ever since 1968, nonsouthern Democratic presidential candidates have had great difficulty regaining the party's once-solid southern, Democratic presidential core support (Gould 1993:163-165).

The existing literature has established a plethora of indicators of Wallace voting. The results in Table 3 reflect these known determinants, which are independent agents and not significantly related to any religious variables. Significant demographic indicators include variables such as age, economic and political background, and class. Additionally, salient issues such as civil rights, crime, and foreign affairs are significant predictors of Wallace voting. Finally, several indicators of attitudes surrounding Wallace and the major parties affect a citizen's vote decision.

TABLE 3
ESTIMATED 1968 VOTE FOR WALLACE
(LOGIT ESTIMATES)

Independent Variable	Coefficient
Constant	-6.20 (1.81)***
White southern Evangelical Protestant	1.29 (0.70)*
Evangelical Protestant, not a white southerner	-1.03 (0.56)*
Church attendance	-0.38 (0.12)***
Percent religious adherents in county	-0.03 (0.01)**
Support for prayer in public schools	0.43 (0.15)***
View on authorship of Bible	-0.19 (0.29)
Age	-0.31 (0.05)***
Social class when growing up	2.39 (0.53)***
Father's party identification	-0.69 (0.23)***
LBJ job approval	-0.70 (0.20)***
Makes negative comments about Democrats	0.50 (0.13)***
Makes positive comments about Nixon	-1.07 (0.15)***
Sees no difference between two major parties	1.03 (0.36)***
Sees no difference in which party would better handle foreign affairs	0.59 (0.12)***
Has reason(s) to vote against some party, candidate	-2.15 (0.43)***
Believes Wallace is not going to be close to winning election	1.36 (0.24)***
Believes Wallace is leader of a party	2.35 (0.38)***
More approving of segregation	1.10 (0.28)***
More disapproving of protest marchers	0.52 (0.16)***
Favors law and order approach to handling urban issues	0.42 (0.10)***
Percent Wallace vote in county	-0.00 (0.02)
Weighted number of cases	1169
Percent of cases correctly predicted	92.7

Source: 1968 National Election Study; 1971 NCCC Church Census.

Note: Standard errors in parentheses.

* = Significant at 0.10 level.

** = Significant at 0.05 level.

*** = Significant at 0.01 level.

Table 3 also includes an additional set of variables assessing the impact of religion on Wallace voting. The most important finding describes the interplay among race, region, and religion. A voter who is white, southern, and a member of an Evangelical Protestant denomination is more likely to choose Wallace. The reasons for this connection are partly racial (and racist), partly regional and historical, and partly religious. White southern Evangelicals hold extreme conservative views on race compared to the 1968 population as a whole. Their support for Wallace extends the anti-civil rights-based voting trend that emerged in the 1964 presidential election, when Southern states supported a Republican (Barry Goldwater) over a Democrat (Lyndon Johnson) for the first time since the end of Reconstruction. The century-old tie between southerners and the Democratic party is also a religious one, primarily Southern Baptist. Hence Wallace — the product of this historical/religious *Democratic* heritage and an independent only for purposes of this election — represents an option that allows white southern Evangelicals to reject Hubert Humphrey and return to their traditional denominational, Democratic voting pattern.

The characteristics of Wallace's white Southern Evangelical support are further refined by two other religious variables. First, increasing church attendance leads to decreased likelihood of Wallace voting. This means that less frequent church attenders are more likely to choose Wallace. Second, higher percentages of religious adherents within a

county make county residents less likely to choose Wallace; in other words, Wallace draws more votes from counties with *fewer* religious adherents.

These two findings again demonstrate how region and religion affected Wallace voting. His southern base allows Wallace to gain majorities in many counties, a rare event among third presidential candidates. The findings in Table 1 show that these southern counties are likely to have lower concentrations of adherents. Further, increasing church attendance is known to be an indicator of Republican voting ties (Knoke 1974). This hampers Wallace's chances, because individuals who are more connected to organized religion and who attended more often also appear to be more connected to one of the two major parties. Voters who possess neither the county nor the institutional religious connection also happen to be southern and white — the very groups from whom Wallace draws the most support. Less attendance and less adherence together provide favorable conditions for the Wallace candidacy.

By contrast, Evangelicals who are not white southerners are less likely to support Wallace.⁵ Their traditional attachment to the Democratic party (Kellstedt and Noll 1990) is not primarily racially motivated, nor does it have the historical anti-Republican heritage that has guided southern Evangelicals. Additionally, the social attitudes of Evangelicals who are not white southerners fall along the lines that are salient for other Wallace voters: race, law and order, Vietnam. Whether their vote choices are religiously motivated or not, Evangelicals who are not white southerners show little propensity to support Wallace.

Table 3 also indicates that voters who support prayer in public schools were more likely to vote for Wallace. As noted previously, the Christian emphasis on prayer fits neatly with Wallace's attempts to counter perceived deleterious changes in societal values. Furthermore, for Wallace and his southern Evangelical supporters the school prayer issue primarily concerns states rights. Throughout his political career, Wallace attacked any sign of activism in the federal courts that furthered the influence of the national government (Gould 1993); similar beliefs tied to a southern Evangelical identity would lead a voter to support Wallace.

To sum up, Table 3 shows that voter support for Wallace has a religious connection, tightly intertwined with race, region, and practice. Greater religious activity and living among greater numbers of church members do not produce votes for Wallace; thus it is difficult to argue that the primary motivation of the Wallace electorate is religious in nature. Rather, we find that religion is one facet of the discontinuity between the traditional southern Evangelical-Democratic party alliance and the circumstances specific to 1968. To the extent that Wallace develops support along partisan lines (which would be contrary to our first hypothesis), we argue that he does so primarily for secular and partisan reasons.

1980 ANDERSON VOTING

Although John Anderson's presidential bid faded by election day — he received a modest 6.6% of the vote — his candidacy clearly reflects the conventional wisdom about conditions favorable to the electoral viability of an independent candidate. During the 1980 race several crises confronted American voters: the Iran hostage situation, Russia's invasion of Afghanistan, and an economy mired in stagflation. When Anderson defected from the Republican party and emerged as an enticing "middle ground" between Jimmy Carter and Ronald Reagan, voters dissatisfied with the major party candidates were presented with a real alternative (Gillespie 1993). Table 4 shows that younger, upper-class, and independent partisans are more likely to support Anderson. Anderson voters also perceived few clear

5. The *Evangelical Protestant* variable in Table 3 captures the effect of being an Evangelical, but *not* a white southern one, on Wallace voting.

policy positions among Democrats or Republicans. This skepticism is also reflected in perceptions of Carter's leadership and Reagan's competence as an economic problem solver. Voters perceiving Carter as a weak leader, or Reagan as unable to cope with the economy, are more likely to support Anderson. As with the 1968 model, these indicators do not appear to be significantly related to any religious measures in the Table 4 model.

TABLE 4
ESTIMATED 1980 VOTE FOR ANDERSON
(LOGIT ESTIMATES)

Independent Variable	Coefficient
Constant	-8.40 (1.59)***
Southern Evangelical Protestant	-1.98 (1.13)*
Nonsouthern Evangelical Protestant	0.89 (0.44)**
Attitude toward abortion	-0.45 (0.20)**
Church attendance	-0.07 (0.12)
Percent Evangelical Protestant in county	-0.02 (0.01)
Age	-0.03 (0.01)**
Social class	0.32 (0.10)***
Party identification = independent	1.54 (0.42)***
Evaluates Carter as strong leader	-0.73 (0.23)***
Believes Reagan can solve U.S. economic problems	-0.59 (0.22)***
Believes civil rights leaders are pushing too slowly for change	0.71 (0.26)***
Believes parties confuse issues more than they give clear policy choices	0.19 (0.10)*
Number of cases	669
Percent of cases correctly predicted	88.2

Source: 1980 National Election Study; 1980 NCCC Church Census.

Note: Standard errors in parentheses.

* = Significant at 0.10 level.

** = Significant at 0.05 level.

*** = Significant at 0.01 level.

In 1980 the emerging "Religious Right" begins to play a crucial role in presidential politics, realigning toward the Republican party (Kellstedt and Noll 1990). This realignment is reflected in Table 4, most notably in the variables measuring the impact of being either a southern or nonsouthern Evangelical on vote choice. Anderson himself was a Northern evangelical free church member; Carter, also a self-professed born-again Christian, belonged to the southern Evangelical tradition; and Reagan had maneuvered to gain the support of the emerging Christian conservatives. These factors explain why Evangelical adherence leads to different vote outcomes depending on the region of the respondent. Southern Evangelicals have two logical choices — vote for Carter because he belongs to one of their own church families, or for Reagan because he has pledged to uphold their core values and push their social agenda once elected to office. Against these factors, Anderson has little chance among southern Evangelicals; hence this variable has a significant, negative impact on the likelihood of voting for Anderson. The positive sign for the variable *Evangelical Protestants* (representing nonsouthern Evangelicals, with the effects for southerners partialled out) is mainly explained by Anderson's own religious adherence.⁶ Overall, Anderson receives 8.5%

6. The correlation between the variables *Southern Evangelical Protestant* and *Evangelical Protestant* is quite high (.63). Nevertheless, we include both variables to test for the independent effect of each. Since the likely consequence of collinearity is a finding of statistical insignificance, which in the Table 4 model does not occur, we have confidence in the validity of the results.

of the nonsouthern, Evangelical vote, which although small in magnitude represents a substantially higher share than Anderson receives in the population at large.

Three other religious variables are included in Table 4. Church attendance is not a significant predictor of Anderson voting, nor is a contextual measure of the concentration of Evangelical Protestants in a county. By contrast, an individual's attitude toward abortion is a significant predictor. Increasingly pro-life attitudes make voters less likely to vote for Anderson, and therefore increasingly pro-choice attitudes lead to a greater likelihood of voting for Anderson. The contrast between Reagan's pro-life stance and Anderson's support of choice accounts for the salience of abortion attitudes.

The Table 4 model of Anderson voting correctly predicts 88% of the cases. Along with the various demographic and perceptual factors that explain Anderson voting, there is a definite religious component. Those who are traditionally religious and those who adhere to values propagated by the emergent Christian conservative movement are less likely to vote for Anderson. Although the nonsouthern, Evangelical denominational tie works in Anderson's favor, there seems to be little substantive religious content behind this tie. Thus the findings correspond to initial expectations — third candidate vote choice in 1980, it seems, is never *supported* by a religious-based factor.

1992 PEROT VOTING

Ross Perot's shrewd 1992 presidential bid garnered 19% of the popular vote and showed him to be a master of media manipulation and grass-roots organizing (Feigert 1993). With the notable exception of a considerable personal fortune to support the campaign, the Perot candidacy fits many of the familiar patterns already observed in 1968 and 1980. Perot supporters are displeased with the political status quo, expressed through dissatisfaction with the major party candidates and George Bush's job performance. Perot voters tend to be young, white, and male, believing that Perot can rescue the nation's economy. More frequent political discussion with friends and family increases the likelihood of Perot voting, but Perot voting is negatively related to following public affairs: The more a voter follows what goes on in politics, the less likely she is to vote for Perot. Being independent (measured through folded partisanship) is also a statistically significant predictor of Perot voting. These findings are somewhat parallel to factors predicting Wallace voting, though the impact of race as seen through issues is far less significant in 1992 than it is in 1968.

Some other variables delineate marked differences between Perot voters and third-candidate voters in 1968 and 1980. Voters who find favorable reasons to vote for Bill Clinton do so, and are less likely therefore to vote for Perot. Unlike 1968 and 1980, *the third candidate is not the sole alternative* for voters who are unhappy with status quo politics and traditional choices. The findings in Table 5 suggest that the Clinton "new Democrat" appeal to disaffected voters mitigates the pro-Perot effects of anti-major-party and anti-Washington attitudes. Hence dislike for the parties or the federal government does not automatically translate into support for Perot; large numbers of Clinton voters show similar attitudes.

Many of the factors that explain Perot voting also account for the paucity of significant religious factors in Table 5. Younger males are less frequent churchgoers and less certain believers. The seeming antireligious character of Perot voters is borne out by the results in Table 2, and it can be found again in Table 5. Some researchers have observed that white Protestants constitute the overwhelming majority of Perot voters (Kosmin and Lachman 1993:168); others find evidence of Catholic support (Leege 1993). But in Table 5, no dichotomous denominational variable is a positive influence on Perot voting. Pentecostals vote against Perot (they support Bush in large numbers), and frequent church attendance also decreases the probability of a Perot vote. This points to the conclusion that Perot voters are primarily secularist in orientation (Leege 1993).

TABLE 5
ESTIMATED 1992 VOTE FOR PEROT
(LOGIT ESTIMATES)

Independent Variable	Coefficient
Constant	-0.74 (0.95)
Pentecostal	-1.28 (0.67)*
Church attendance	-0.14 (0.08)*
Importance of religion to one's life	-0.13 (0.16)
Percent mainline Protestant in county	-0.03 (0.07)
Age	-0.01 (0.01)*
Nonwhite respondent	-2.17 (0.62)***
Male	0.40 (0.21)*
Follows public affairs	-0.52 (0.14)***
Discusses politics frequently with friends and family	0.17 (0.10)*
Folded party identification	-0.27 (0.12)**
Bush job approval	-0.35 (0.12)***
Positive feelings toward federal government	-0.02 (0.01)***
Positive feelings toward feminists	0.01 (0.00)***
Has reasons to vote for Clinton	-0.18 (0.07)**
Dissatisfied with choices among presidential candidates	0.56 (0.14)***
Believes Perot will better handle economy	0.57 (0.22)***
Favors new limits on imports	0.47 (0.23)**
Percent Perot vote in county	0.04 (0.02)**
Weighted number of cases	820
Percent of cases correctly predicted	76.7

Source: 1992 National Election Study; 1990 NCCC Church Census.

Note: Standard errors in parentheses.

* = Significant at 0.10 level.

** = Significant at 0.05 level.

*** = Significant at 0.01 level.

Pulling together the evidence from Tables 1, 2, and 5, the logical conclusion about the electoral appeal of Ross Perot is that it has next to nothing to do with organized religion. Like all third candidates, Perot fares best in places where religious membership is weakest, and in fact a modest contextual amplification effect is found. Perot also does well with voters who are least connected to their religious faiths, and voters least likely to perceive consonance between their faith and their politics. Although it may be true that Perot voters tend to be white and Protestant, the religious side of this characterization is most definitely *not* the salient factor in choosing Perot.

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

American voter behavior can best be understood as a complex interaction among long-term factors (prior behavior, partisanship), group-based attachments, and short-term influences (economic assessments, rational decisions, election-specific characteristics) (Flanigan and Zingale 1994). Moreover, most elections and theories explaining electoral outcomes arise within the confines of the two-party system, in which researchers have established the political salience of religious activity and denominational ties (Wald 1992). Given this body of empirical evidence to support theories of vote choice, our results shed light on three crucial puzzles: the structural barriers that impede the ability of third candidates to gain and sustain voter loyalty; the determinants of third candidate voting; and the salience of connections between citizens and their social surroundings.

Religious adherence appears to be one such structural barrier. The finding that religious adherence strengthens major-party voting loyalties in recent three-candidate presidential elections (Table 1) does not appear elsewhere in the literature, yet it makes obvious and intuitive sense to anyone familiar with religion's impact on partisan ties and presidential voting. Decades of research have established that denominational adherence and church attendance are significant predictors of partisanship (Leege 1993). Further, the parties themselves reinforce these connections through elite-level cue giving or through the influence of mass movements with religious connections (Lopatto 1985). Third candidates are not privy to the ties that bind Democratic and Republican voters to their parties; one of the factors that create and strengthen such ties is religion; therefore third candidates will do best where party loyalties are least strong (counties with fewer church members) or where the third candidate has an underlying base of his own (Wallace in the south). The fact that this same structural barrier is present with three idiosyncratic candidates running in three different electoral contexts strengthens the theoretical importance of this finding. Additional research exploring the impact of aggregate religious adherence on other politically relevant behaviors (e.g., participation) and in other electoral situations (e.g., senate or gubernatorial races) clearly is warranted.

Having established this baseline factor working against third candidates, our models then detail variables that predict individual vote choice. In demonstrating again that third candidate voting follows the theoretical argument advanced by Rosenstone et al. (1984), we also show that in general, stronger religious beliefs and practices usually work against third candidates. Further, when religious variables are related to third candidate voting or support, more conservative personal religious views lead to electoral rejection of third candidates. Wallace voting is heightened when voters agree with his support for public school prayer, but this affinity comes from a nonreligious aspect of the issue. Anderson loses support from pro-life voters, and the attitudes of religious Americans toward Perot are most appropriately described as hostile.

Two further hypotheses related to vote choice are explored: denominational tendencies and the salience of county religious membership patterns. There is a significant relationship between Evangelical church attachment and support for George Wallace in 1968. Considered in the context of other salient factors such as race, region, and church attendance, we conclude that this relationship reflects Wallace's positioning as the true Democrat in the eyes of white southern Evangelicals. Their support for Wallace represents a return to their voting roots, part of which are religious in origin. For both Anderson and Perot, the realignment of Evangelicals toward the Republican party cuts into potential support. Anderson finds a modest base among his fellow northern Evangelicals, but no other denomination or religious tradition serves as a base for either Anderson or Perot.

Finally, the role of the county religious context, beyond the adherents-major party link, is rarely significant. Contextual theories of political behavior generally assert that spatially defined contexts such as counties are less salient than contexts defined by an individual's life choices — residential neighborhoods, churches, and other group memberships (Huckfeldt and Sprague 1995). Our results support this claim. In 1968 residents of counties with fewer adherents vote in greater numbers for Wallace; this is not true for 1980 or 1992, although in 1992 Perot benefits from an amplification effect that is contextual but not religious in nature. If the influence of religion on third candidate voting is slim and generally negative, it should hardly be surprising that religious concentrations at the county level are rarely salient factors for individual vote choice.

The results presented here confirm existing theories about third candidate support and persuasively show that third candidates do not benefit from the religious factors that help major-party candidates. It would be premature, however, to conclude that third candidates never can tap into such bases of support. Our three third candidates share the com-

mon characteristic of being "outsiders," at least in the context of the campaigns in which they arise. It is certainly plausible to imagine another "outsider" third candidate who cultivates a solid base of support centered around some denomination or group of churches. The two-party system is self-reinforcing precisely because institutions like churches assist the process on an ongoing basis. A countertrend — a state, regional, or national third candidacy based in churches — would provide a real-world test of how religious beliefs, partisan ties, and the success of political outsiders intersect.

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