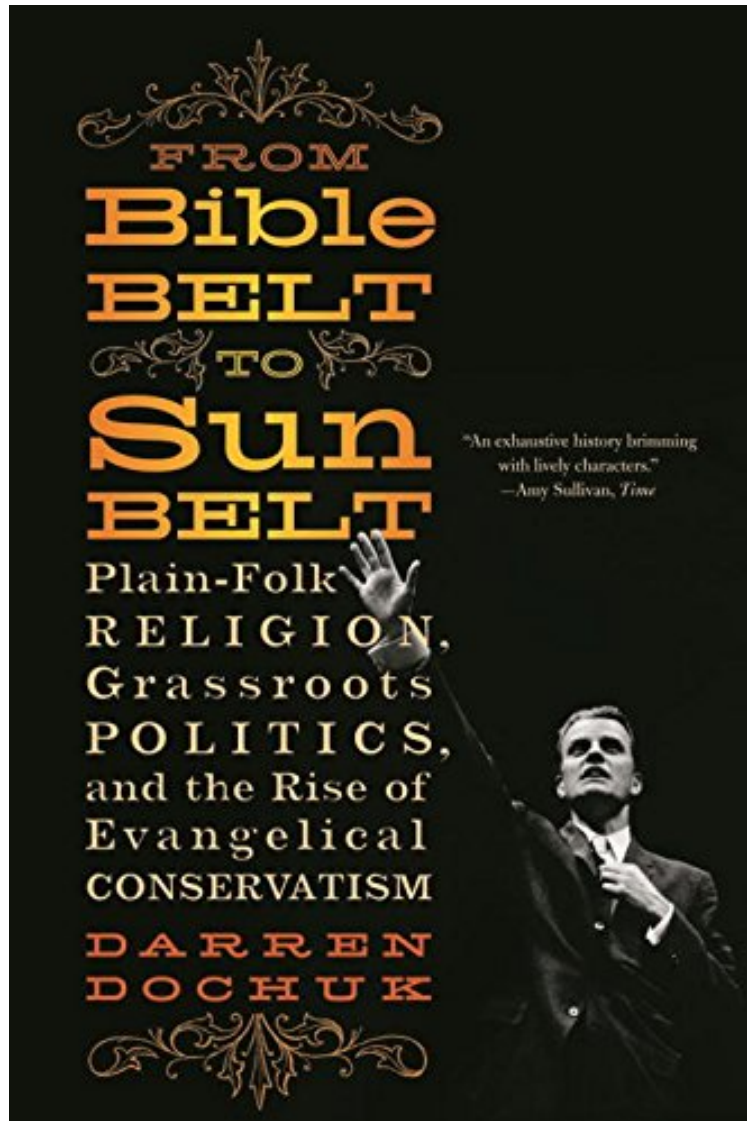


[Library ebook] From Bible Belt to Sunbelt: Plain-Folk Religion, Grassroots Politics, and the Rise of Evangelical Conservatism

From Bible Belt to Sunbelt: Plain-Folk Religion, Grassroots Politics, and the Rise of Evangelical Conservatism

Darren Dochuk

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Darren Dochuk : From Bible Belt to Sunbelt: Plain-Folk Religion, Grassroots Politics, and the Rise of Evangelical Conservatism before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised From Bible Belt to Sunbelt: Plain-Folk Religion, Grassroots Politics, and the Rise of Evangelical Conservatism:

13 of 13 people found the following review helpful. An extraordinary history, and fascinating to read. By John the book guy This book looks at the rise of conservatism in Southern California, as the working class migrants of the 1930s became middle class Californians in the 1940s, 1950s and after. The question of how this transformation took place has been addressed by many historians, who have found many subtly different explanations for this change (the bibliography on the issue is quite large). Mr. Dekok focuses on the change and finds a major explanation for it in the transformations in evangelical Christianity in Southern California from the 1930s to 1980. The migrants he discusses are the people from the western south (Arkansas, Kansas, Oklahoma, Texas, Louisiana thereabouts) who settled in the Los Angeles area. They had much more opportunity to find work there than the perhaps more famous Dust Bowl refugees who ended up as migrant farmworkers, a group that Americans will associate with the Joads of John Steinbeck's novel "The Grapes of Wrath." As the title suggests, it traces the transformation of "plain-folk" evangelical Protestantism, whose followers were accepting of the New Deal, to a form of evangelical Protestantism whose followers supported the USA's military buildup after World War II, an aggressive Cold War stance, a very free-market form of capitalism, and conservative moral values. The author makes fascinating observations, which had never occurred to me, about just how many southern people were settled in Southern California in this period -- the number of southern-born people in the environs of Los Angeles actually exceeded the population of some southern states. The largest percentage of these folks were white, which of course has an influence on their history. The author writes that generally, these folks had always had a vision of America that centered on Jesus and Jefferson -- the Thomas Jefferson who saw the best future for America in small farmers and small businesspeople, unhampered by government interference. Of course, like all political visions, there are many contradictions in that political vision, and some folks would see a contradiction between Christianity and that vision. How the political ideas and religious ideas interacted in the development of evangelical conservatism in California is what the book is about. He focuses on individuals active in the western south and California, and the institutions they created -- for example, churches and church organizations, and colleges and universities, from John Brown University to perhaps the epitome of the evangelical conservative university, Pepperdine. We read about unusual developments, such as the revival of the populist "Ham and Eggs" movement after World War II, and unusual people, such as evangelist/educator John Brown. NB: This John Brown is NOT the John Brown whose body lies mouldering in the grave. The author did a huge amount of research over many years, so of course his arguments are well-documented. The book is also engrossing -- I couldn't put it down, and couldn't stop talking about it. The author's own political and religious beliefs are not stated in the book -- it is a work of scholarship. But you don't have to be a professional historian to learn from the book, or to enjoy reading it. I strongly recommend it to people interested in US politics, US history, religion in the US, and the history of California. Minor point: I've seen other books on the rise of conservatism in Southern California. If I could ask the author a question, I would ask him "What about the many new Californians who did not go to church?" 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Southern evangelicals in southern California give rise to Ronald Reagan and the Christian Right. By Russell Ferrell Have you ever wondered what happened to all the Okies who migrated to California during the 1930s Dust Bowl and Great Depression? John Steinbeck's book *The Grapes of Wrath* chronicled the story of Okies who fled rural Oklahoma in search of agricultural work in the fields of the Golden State - picking vegetables and fruits on large agri-business operations. Exploited by the growers, the vegetable pickers like the Joad family eventually faded into dismal obscurity within the agricultural central valley. But what of those many others who migrated during the extended period of the 1930s-1950s and evaded the pauperism of the farming industry? Those that ended up in the urban centers and munitions factories? Darren Dochuk's book *From Bible Belt to Sunbelt* tells the story of those more fortunate migrants who eventually found urban bliss and economic prosperity outside the confines of the fields of big agri-business. The book documents the amalgamation of politics and religion instituted by transplanted southern evangelicals rising through the ranks of the new evangelical empire established on the soil of southern California during the period of the 1930s-1950s. Transplanted southerners from the western South (Oklahoma, Arkansas, Texas, Louisiana, and Kansas) instituted their brand of evangelicalism into the culture of southern California - particularly in Los Angeles and Orange counties. Southern preachers and evangelical businessmen merged religion into politics, thereby laying the foundation for the Christian Right and the Republican Southern Strategy, while making evangelicals the solid core of the Republican Party. Southern California would become a bastion of right wing politics - enabling the national rise of Richard Nixon and Ronald Reagan. Anti-communist, anti-union, anti-liberal anti-United Nations, these right wing preachers and businessmen saw the New Deal as statism or communism in an embryonic state. Also staunchly anti-New Deal, they considered Roosevelt a threat to capitalism and freedom, when in reality it was Roosevelt's New Deal that had saved capitalism and preserved the privileged class of capitalists. In southern California, working class southerners became middle class Californians as they found economic sustenance in the armament factories. On appeals from their preachers and businessmen, they shifted from New Deal democrats to hard-right republicans. This phenomenon accomplished three things within the social-political-economic sphere; a retreat from the moderate republicanism of President Eisenhower to embrace Reagan-styled right wing republicanism; the rise of a national evangelicalism (Christian Right) and the third great awakening which seeded the emergence of Jerry Falwell's Moral Majority and Pat Robertson's Christian business

empire that evolved into prosperity theology. Closely aligned with the defense industry, this part of the Republican base nourished the ascension of the military industrial complex, bloated defense budgets, and military interventionism (wars), especially those supposedly bringing about Armageddon and the Rapture. This faction, while being staunch anti-regulation and anti-environmentalism, now stands against any remedial addressment of global warming and environmental degradation. Southern evangelicals, especially those who migrated to southern California and joined the ranks of the middle class, had embraced New Dealism during the 1930s, but by the 1950s had repudiated it once becoming prosperous while under the sway of right-wing evangelical preachers who provided a stringest dose of propaganda under the cloak of conservative political ideology. A major objective of these southern preachers and capitalists was to end the New Deal and destroy Roosevelt's legacy. An entire systematic framework of ideological implantation had sprung up to inculcate acceptable ways of thinking and seeing the world. Plain folk gospel spurred the popularity of Billy Graham and other evangelicals that gave rise to the Christian Right and the political careers of Ronald Reagan and Richard Nixon. The movement helped Reagan win the governorship in California in 1966, while Nixon took advantage of the rise of evangelicalism to enact his Southern strategy and win the South in 1972. Evangelicals were in the forefront of Reagan's bid to win the presidency in 1980. This book documents the rise and ascendancy of the evangelical Christian right in southern California, which has had a profound effect on the nature of today's Republican Party with its courtship of evangelicals by politicians like Cruz and Santorum. This movement has profoundly shaped American society, economics, foreign policy, and politics since the 1960s. Those Okies we assumed had vanished into the central valley hinterland of blissful sunny California took root in the urban metropolis of Los Angeles-Orange County, prospered, and became ultra-conservative in their political ideology - supporting Cold War military budgets and virtually all military interventions, including the invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan. Their legacy is also the legacy of the Republican Party. This book is highly recommended for those wishing to learn about the enculturation of southern evangelicals in California and their impact on the modern world. 2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Californians, not religious or political elites, were the most significant actors in realigning the nation's political parties. By Jonathan Andersen Darren Dochuk's *From Bible Belt to Sun Belt* narrated the significant population, religious, and political shifts that occurred in Southern California between 1930 and 1980. Transplanted Southerners led these shifts as their brand of evangelicalism, never far removed from politics, was translated into the culture of Southern California. As "plain folks," preachers, and entrepreneurs adopted and promoted evangelicalism in the midst of wayward California culture, they shifted loyalties from the Democratic to the Republican parties and became champions of modern conservatism. Dochuk's arguments challenged typical narratives regarding the relationship between evangelicalism and modern conservative politics. Instead of beginning with the realignment of political parties in the 1960s, or the Moral Majority, Dochuk argued that Southern transplants who loved "Jefferson and Jesus" began the relationship, preachers who were active during mid-century political battles fostered it, and entrepreneurs whose institutions promoted capitalism and Jesus energized it. Californians, not religious or political elites, were the most significant actors in realigning the nation's political parties. Institutions, not just ideologies, consolidated the fusion of fiscal and social conservatism. One strength of Dochuk's work was the construction of his historical narrative. While the narrative spanned almost forty years, Dochuk limited each chapter to a timeframe of approximately five years. This structure enabled readers to gain in-depth knowledge of a specific period while also moving the narrative forward. Dochuk's deep knowledge of political, religious, and economic history - present in every chapter - gave credibility to his work and enabled me to better understand the numerous factors involved in the rise of evangelical conservatism. The epilogue served as a great tool to conclude the narrative, and it foreshadowed the continuation of this movement into the twenty-first century.

Winner of the American Historical Association's John H. Dunning Prize and the Organization of American Historians' Ellis W. Hawley Prize. A prize-winning, five-decade history of the evangelical movement in Southern California that explains a sweeping realignment of American politics. *From Bible Belt to Sun Belt* tells the dramatic and largely unknown story of "plain-folk" religious migrants: hardworking men and women from Oklahoma, Texas, and Arkansas who fled the Depression and came to California for military jobs during World War II. Investigating this fiercely pious community at a grassroots level, Darren Dochuk uses the stories of religious leaders, including Billy Graham, as well as many colorful, lesser-known figures to explain how evangelicals organized a powerful political machine. This machine made its mark with Barry Goldwater, inspired Richard Nixon's "Southern Solution," and achieved its greatest triumph with the victories of Ronald Reagan. Based on entirely new research, the manuscript has already won the prestigious Allan Nevins Prize from the Society of American Historians. The judges wrote, "Dochuk offers a rich and multidimensional perspective on the origins of one of the most far-ranging developments of the second half of the twentieth century: the rise of the New Right and modern conservatism." 8 pages of photographs

"An exhaustive history brimming with lively characters."--Amy Sullivan, *Time* "[Dochuk] skillfully traces a continuous narrative stretching from the Dust Bowl to Ronald Reagan, and demonstrates with prodigious research how this narrative fits into a much broader canvas of...political change. A superbly researched study of grassroots

mobilization.... An important book."--Mark A. Noll, *The New Republic*"Very impressive.... From Bible Belt to Sunbelt is the product of prodigious research."--Randall Balmer, *Christian Century*"Dochuk excels in his profiles of early 'plain-folk' settlers and their world, and the tangled personal, institutional, and doctrinal motives of the ministry that served them.... [A] fascinating portrait of the early Christian Right."--Ed Kilgore, *Washington Monthly*About the AuthorDarren Dochuk is Associate Professor in the Humanities at the John C. Danforth Center on Religion Politics at Washington University in St. Louis. His writing has appeared in the *Washington Post*, *Huffington Post*, and other venues.