

# **A study of American Nationalism in the late 1970s through Jimmy Carter's election**

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“In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.” (Proverbs 3:5)

## Abstract

The present thesis is an attempt to investigate the role of American nationalism in American history by focusing on the 1976 election of Jimmy Carter. I will make two main claims in the present thesis. First of all, that American nationalism helped to motivate Southern Baptists to support Jimmy Carter, despite suspicions regarding Carter's religiosity. To be specific, the Baptists voted for Carter because of their desire to defend the United States of America as a Christian nation and not simply due to Carter's public confession of faith as a 'born-again' Christian. Second, nationalist words and stories can be found in Carter's rhetoric. His inclusion of this nationalistic content was intended to maintain support for Jimmy Carter among American evangelicals. Meanwhile, publications of the Southern Baptists such as the *Southern Baptist News Press* disseminated nationalistic expressions and connected them to support for Jimmy Carter. In other words, this thesis will provide an alternative answer by arguing that the election of Jimmy Carter was possible thanks to American nationalism, which was permeated with religion.

## Introduction

“You know what? I am a nationalist, okay? I am a nationalist. Nationalist. Nothing wrong. Use that word.”<sup>1</sup> On October 22, 2018, whilst on a campaign appealing for support for Ted Cruz in the southern U.S. state of Texas, Donald Trump, the forty-fifth U.S. President, publicly declared himself to be a nationalist. This thesis began with a basic curiosity about what American nationalism is. On the one hand, it seems that this nationalist declaration by President Trump is a very exceptional or extraordinary one. This is because the United States of America is generally known as the epitome of a multi-national country. On the other hand, it could be said that this is just a simple reflection of the kind of American nationalism which is in fact prevalent in American society.

More importantly, such a nationalist declaration by an American incumbent president piqued my interest in the relationship between the United States of America and nationalism. I hypothesize that nationalism has permeated through and has played an important role in American history. It has deep relationships with religion, which has distributed American nationalist ideas, concepts, and stories up hill and down dale. Indeed, nationalist ideas, concepts, and stories are found in religious publications as well as in Carter's 1975 autobiography, *Why Not the Best?* In those texts, nationalist words and stories were crucial and promoted American nationalism and nationhood during the 1976 election.

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<sup>1</sup> Peter Baker, “‘Use That Word!’: Trump Embraces the ‘Nationalist’ Label,” *The New York Times*, October 23, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/10/23/us/politics/nationalist-president-trump.html>; Jason Le Miere, “Donald Trump Says ‘I’m a Nationalist, Use That Word’ at Texas Rally for Ted Cruz”, *Newsweek*, October 22, 2018, <https://www.newsweek.com/donald-trump-nationalist-texas-rally-1182223>.

The election of Jimmy Carter in 1976 can be a practical example to substantiate the historicity of American nationalism and its role in American politics. Interestingly, at the beginning of the 1976 presidential election, hundreds of young adults took an opportunity to vote for the thirty-ninth American president during a mock election organized by the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission as a part of its FREEDOM '76 program. During this mock election, the participants were kept in the dark about which candidates would be nominated by the two major parties. It so happened that they picked Jimmy Carter and Gerald Ford, who would later win nominations from the Democrats and the Republicans. At FREEDOM 76, Carter won 145 votes and Ford won 291 votes, a result which failed to predict the outcome of the presidential election in November of 1976. The Baptist voters were not satisfied with the candidates included in their ballot paper. "With the great problems we're facing in this nation, it's a shame that better people aren't running for president," one participant said.<sup>2</sup> Another voter said: "The options weren't very good."<sup>3</sup> There was a considerable amount of time left from the straw vote until the Election Day, and the candidate Baptists would choose as their next American president was still far from settled. Although in the mock vote Carter won only half the number of young Baptist votes that Ford won, eleven months later Carter would win the U.S. presidential election. Then, how was Carter able to win support from the Baptists?

The present thesis will hope to at least partly answer that question through an investigation of the role of American nationalism in American history by focusing on the 1976 election of Jimmy Carter. I would make two main claims in the present thesis. First of all, that American nationalism helped to motivate Southern Baptists to support Jimmy Carter, despite suspicions regarding his

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<sup>2</sup> *Southern Baptist News Press*, "Presidential "Primary" Reveals Conservatism of Young Adults," January 5, 1976.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

religiosity. To be specific, the Baptists voted for Carter because of their desire to defend the United States of America as a Christian nation and not simply due to Carter's public confession of faith as a 'born-again' Christian. Second, nationalist words and stories can be found in Carter's rhetoric. They were a sort of signal as to why Baptists should keep their support behind Carter by evoking American nationhood. Meanwhile, publications of the Southern Baptists such as the *Southern Baptist News Press* disseminated nationalistic expressions and connected them to support for Jimmy Carter.

The first chapter points out that Baptist support for Carter was conflicted in 1976. Such support played an important role in his election as president. Carter's victory in the southern Baptist demographic was decisive, as he won by just two percent of the national vote. However, suspicions about Carter's faith were raised after his interview with *Playboy* magazine. It seemed the faithful Baptists no longer believed in Carter's confession of faith and its purity. Nevertheless, Baptists maintained their support for Carter. In this chapter, the *Southern Baptist News Press* and *The Blue-Print*, a local Baptist church periodical from 1976 will be analyzed as they offer contrasting opinions on Carter. In addition, the first chapter uses both interviews and opinions taken from secondary literature which show the views of Baptists at the time, to compliment these primary sources.

The second chapter argues that American nationalism was one element which helped to maintain Baptist support for Carter. This ideology as expressed by Baptists could be summarized as the desire to establish a specifically Christian identity in America. This chapter discusses the issues related to American Christian nationalism by looking at the *Southern Baptist News Press* from 1976 to 1980. The third chapter argues that American nationalism gave Baptists cause to vote for Carter. Carter expressed his intimacy to American nationalism continuously in his written and

spoken rhetoric. It was a signal that Baptists should support him to protect America as a Christian nation. In this chapter, Carter's 1975 autobiography, *Why Not the Best?*, and news articles in the *Southern Baptist News Press* will be analyzed.

This thesis aims to more comprehensively understand American politics and religion from the perspective of American nationalism by focusing on the election of Jimmy Carter in 1976, so it makes sense that a review of precedent researches should be considered in two directions. The first is to examine how the election of Jimmy Carter has been interpreted in American political history, and the next is to analyze previous research on American nationalism.

In general, an increasing number of scholars have turned their attention to the relationship between politics and religion in the election of Jimmy Carter in 1976.<sup>4</sup> K. Brekus Kraakevik claims that Carter won public support in the presidential election thanks to the fact that he was a white evangelist and a populist.<sup>5</sup> According to Kraakevik's argument, Carter made a lot of gains from his wide coverage in the media, such as in TV show debates. Andrew Hogue argues that the use of "religious rhetoric" was a key element which brought public support to Carter in the election.<sup>6</sup> Peter Goodwin Heltzel has pointed out that evangelicalism has become a crucial factor in U.S. politics since the 1976 election.<sup>7</sup> Likewise, Michael Hammond argues that religion played the most

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<sup>4</sup> K. Brekus Kraakevik. "The Political Mobilization of White Evangelical Populists in the 1970s and Early 1980s," 2004, ProQuest Dissertations and Theses; Andrew Hogue. "1980: Reagan, Carter, and the Politics of Religion in America," 2009, ProQuest Dissertations and Theses; Peter Goodwin Heltzel, "INTRODUCTION." In *Jesus and Justice: Evangelicals, Race, and American Politics*, Xvii. New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2009; Michael Hammond. "Twice Born, Once Elected: The Making of the Religious Right during the Carter Administration," 2009, ProQuest Dissertations and Theses; Lucy Hogan. "Presidential Campaign Rhetoric in an Age of Confessional Politics." *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 41, no. 4 (2011): 861-62.

<sup>5</sup> K. Brekus Kraakevik. "The Political Mobilization of White Evangelical Populists in the 1970s and Early 1980s," 2004, ProQuest Dissertations and Theses.

<sup>6</sup> Andrew Hogue. "1980: Reagan, Carter, and the Politics of Religion in America," 2009, ProQuest Dissertations and Theses.

<sup>7</sup> Peter Goodwin Heltzel, "INTRODUCTION." In *Jesus and Justice: Evangelicals, Race, and American Politics*, Xvii. New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2009.

important role in Carter's election.<sup>8</sup> Lucy Hogan even goes so far as to argue that no American president has been elected president without a religious confession since Carter.<sup>9</sup>

Of course, there is another voice to explain how Jimmy Carter won the American presidency in 1976, even though he was a new comer in nationwide politics. Yanek Mieczkowski argues that Carter was able to win because, ironically, Ford's economic policies failed.<sup>10</sup> There are also claims that Carter's religious faith actually had negative long term effects for him. According to this line of argument, his faith affected his approach to U.S. foreign policy and resulted in his failure to win reelection in the 1980 election.<sup>11</sup> Arlene Lazarowitz, for instance, suggests that Carter's defeat in the 1980 election was a direct result of the failure of Carter's foreign policy approach to the Israel – Palestine conflict.<sup>12</sup> However, these criticisms are of limited use in illustrating how Carter was elected American president in 1976.

Some recent studies suggest that American politics is very closely related to religion.<sup>13</sup> Steven K. Green, a historian of American politics and religion, argues that everywhere in American society, from school textbooks to political commentary, a narrative has gradually been reinforced over time in which the United States was founded as an explicitly Christian nation, a process that

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<sup>8</sup> Michael Hammond. "Twice Born, Once Elected: The Making of the Religious Right during the Carter Administration," 2009, ProQuest Dissertations and Theses.

<sup>9</sup> Lucy Hogan. "Presidential Campaign Rhetoric in an Age of Confessional Politics." *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 41, no. 4 (2011): 861-62.

<sup>10</sup> Yanek Mieczkowski. "Back from the Brink: Ford, the 1976 Election, and the Republican Party." In *Gerald Ford and the Challenges of the 1970s, Gerald Ford and the Challenges of the 1970s*, Chapter 19. University Press of Kentucky, 2005

<sup>11</sup> Yael S. Aronoff. "In like a Lamb, out like a Lion: The Political Conversion of Jimmy Carter." *Political Science Quarterly* 121, no. 3 (2006): 425-449.

<sup>12</sup> Arlene Lazarowitz. "Ethnic Influence and American Foreign Policy: American Jewish Leaders and President Jimmy Carter." *Shofar* 29, no. 1 (2010): 112-136.

<sup>13</sup> Steven K Green. *Inventing a Christian America : The Myth of the Religious Founding*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2015; Paul D. Hanson. *A Political History of the Bible in America*. Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2015; Sam Haselby. *The Origins of American Religious Nationalism*. Religion in America Series 057787093. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2015; Mark Douglas Mcgarvie. *Law and Religion in American History*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016; Jonathan R Peterson. "The Religious Content of the Presidents' Remarks at the National Prayer Breakfast, 1953-2016." *Congress & the Presidency* 44, no. 2 (2017): 212-34.

he as described as the invention of a Christian America. According to his research, the link between American politics and religion is not only a powerful national myth, but also an important component of the state's collective memory rooted in historical events and consistently reinvented and redistributed from its inception. Also, Paul D. Hanson has pointed out that from the early colonial history of the United States, national stories in the Bible influenced the formation of America's political frames.

With regard to American nationalism, many studies have focused on its origins; the main point of interest being whether American nationalism appeared before the foundation of the United States in 1776 or after. However, there have been pioneering studies that also take into account the gradual transitions in American nationalism. American historian Hans Kohn has pointed out that American nationalism at the beginning of the American nation-building process played an important role in the integration of various people. Particularly, the promotion of the American colonies as a nation helped to motivate and mobilize the American people against the British Empire.<sup>14</sup> For Kohn, American nationalism was first and foremost a way to vest political legitimacy in a new nation but it evolved as a way to provide protection against economic competition.<sup>15</sup> Subsequently, Kohn has illustrated how American nationalism developed to embrace other immigrant nations like the Irish and the Germans in the nineteenth century.<sup>16</sup> In conclusion, Kohn writes: "American nationalism faces a continuing difficult reorientation before new expanding horizons."<sup>17</sup> Even though Kohn briefly mentions that "Religion in the United States is a living force as perhaps nowhere else in the West," his research has not demonstrated

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<sup>14</sup> Hans Kohn, *American Nationalism : An Interpretative Essay*, New Ed.], ed. Collier Books ; BS 41. New York N.Y.: Collier Books, 1961, 34-35.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 51.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 149-150.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 233.

how religion and religious publications have been reflected in American identity.<sup>18</sup> Moreover Dr. Jasper M. Trautsch has analyzed American nationalism focusing on its origins and nature in his recent research. Trautsch finished his research with a suggestion that “scholars of American nationalism should also dismiss the exceptionalist claim and instead place the American variant within existing theories of nationalism.”<sup>19</sup> His study concisely presents the development patterns of American nationalism and the concept of nation but lacks descriptions of religious acceptance of American nationalism.

Studies of the relationship between American nationalism and religion have been led mainly by Christian historians. Church historians have emphasized the relationship between American nationalism and religion, especially noting the role of religion in American nationalism. Christian historian Winthrop S. Hudson has underlined the significance of religion and religious publications to understanding American national identity. Hudson argues “no one can understand American national self-consciousness without taking into account the religious heritage of the American people.”<sup>20</sup> Furthermore, Hudson contends that “a common religious tradition - the Puritan Protestantism of the British Isles” has played an important role in the dissemination of “national self-consciousness.”<sup>21</sup> Particularly, Hudson points to the Great Awakening as a watershed in “the birth of an American national consciousness.”<sup>22</sup>

British author Anatol Lieven also emphasized the religious characteristics of American nationalism itself and its relationship to religion. Lieven has argued that interest in American

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 16.

<sup>19</sup> Jasper M. Trautsch, “The Origins and Nature of American Nationalism.” *National Identities* 18, no. 3 (2015), 304.

<sup>20</sup> Winthrop S. Hudson, *Nationalism and Religion in America : Concepts of American Identity and Mission*. Repr.. ed. Harper Forum Books. Gloucester, Mass.: Smith, 1978, xi.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., xxiii.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., xxv.

nationalism increased after the 9/11 terror attacks which were a direct attack on the American mainland. For Lieven, American nationalism originated from an “American Creed,” in which the achievement of democratic systems and principles buttressed America and helped to unite and mobilize the people as one country. It can be described as ‘civic nationalism,’ which constantly encouraged the developments of civil rights and has invested them with a mythical quality.<sup>23</sup> Lieven has urged scholars to study American nationalism from the objective view deviating from “American national myths.”<sup>24</sup> His argument gives a broad view to understanding American nationalism in regard to American foreign policy and its consequences, which affected Americans in the mainland and led to a strengthening of their nationalist consciousness. Lieven has rightly pointed out that the American churches, through educational institutes and networks, have played an important role in shaping an American culture which “generate[s] American populist nationalism.”<sup>25</sup> This perspective provides validation related to understanding the role of churches in shaping American nationalism, the main topic in this thesis.

In order to approach Carter’s election from the perspective of American nationalism, it is necessary to understand the relationship between American nationalism and religion through the political, social and cultural contexts of the United States of America. American historian Warren L. Vinz has argued that “American nationalism was pervasive in the twentieth century” based on empirical investigations into a considerable number of nationalistic expressions from 1900 to the Vietnam War era.<sup>26</sup> According to Vinz, the concept of nationalism is apt to be constructed in

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<sup>23</sup> Anatol Lieven, *America Right or Wrong : An Anatomy of American Nationalism*. London: HarperCollins, 2004, 48-49.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 222.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 138-139.

<sup>26</sup> Warren Lang Vinz, *Pulpit Politics : Faces of American Protestant Nationalism in the Twentieth Century*. Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1997, 1.

different ways by scholars, and some writing on the subject can lead readers to a superficial understanding.<sup>27</sup> In particular, the symbolic word “melting pot” emphasizes the ethnic diversity of American society and presumes that this multiethnic society should be a model for other societies, as well as that all different ethnic cultures should be incorporated into the American core of Anglo-Saxon culture.<sup>28</sup> Vinz argues that American nationalism has three interlocked dimensions: messianic, materialist, and egalitarian nationalism. Amongst them, the messianic character plays a central role in imbuing citizens with a proud identity as an American, which is presented as the most advanced state with a divine responsibility to distribute its brilliance to other states.<sup>29</sup> His research suggests two implications. First, empirical research on American nationalism after the Vietnam War is needed. Second, it should be noted that American nationalism is based on vague and ambiguous concepts of nation and national identity.

In particular, to approach empirically how American nationalism relates to the history of the United States of America, one must pay attention to the abstractness of the concept of nation and national identity held by Americans. Sociologist Manuel Madriaga has tried to analyze ‘American national identity’ with an empirical study related to United States military veterans. This case study has shown American national identity is “symbolic, subjective and ambiguous.”<sup>30</sup> On the one hand, people can sense a national identity thanks to its vagueness. On the other hand, it reminds us how difficult it is to define a unitary national identity. According to Madriaga, American national identity “is always in the process of being invented, imagined and re-imagined. Although

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 4-5.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 7-8.

<sup>30</sup> Manuel Madriaga, “Why American Nationalism Should Never Be Considered Postnationalist.” *National Identities* 12, no. 1 (2010), 81.

imaginary, a sense of Americanness is very real.”<sup>31</sup> His research is centered around interviews with veterans, so it is not enough to refer to how the identity of American religious people was formed. Contrastively, a religious case study by scholar of sociology, Rebecca Barrett-Fox has provided detailed images and descriptions of zealous devotees’ responses to moral issues, such as abortion and homosexuality. This examination seems to give weight to social and cultural aspects and to explain the way a particular sect of the Baptist church has protested and the content of their demonstrations. It shows how these religious activists have reacted to the social dilemmas as a homogeneous Christian community.<sup>32</sup> The study illustrates the shared thoughts and views of members of a Baptist church, but it is a case of sharing a very extreme position, hence there is a limit to applying the results to the Baptist community as a whole.

Now let’s put together the preceding studies of American nationalism and religion. It is summarized into three implications, which must be considered in the present thesis. First, both Kohn and Trautsch’s research emphasizes the origin of American nationalism, but fails to fully prove its historical continuity, and rather exposes its discontinuity. Second, the research of church historians emphasizes that religion has significance in the process of understanding American nationalism and its historical continuity. Third, a review of the abstract concept of nation and national identity is needed in order to more specifically identify the role of American nationalism.

Another purpose of this research is to investigate American nationalism through history using an empirical approach. However, the focus of this study is not the nationalist discourse but the practical use of the concept of nation during a single historical event, the 1976 election of Jimmy Carter. Using an empirical approach can help to overcome the theoretical perspectives

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Rebecca Barrett-Fox, *God Hates : Westboro Baptist Church, American Nationalism, and the Religious Right*. University Press of Kansas. 2016.

traditionally used to understand American nationalism. In addition, it will adjust the balance between history and sociology in studies of nationalism. Studies of nationalism have been dominated by sociological studies since the 1980s. In these studies, theoretical perspectives were important in understanding nationalism as well as confining it to being both an ideology and a discourse.<sup>33</sup> These kinds of theoretical approaches<sup>33</sup> have tended to contradict empirical evidence like the day-to-day words, conversations, and writings of ordinary people.<sup>34</sup>

With regard to methodology, this thesis approaches both its primary and secondary sources from a qualitative perspective. At the same time, it discusses concepts, definitions, and insights from other theoretical studies. In particular, an analysis of the term, 'nation' is at the heart of this thesis. This thesis uses an empirical perspective when understanding the American nationalism that influenced the election of Jimmy Carter in 1976.<sup>35</sup> There are three distinct benefits to using this approach. First of all, this approach highlights an alternative reason for why the American Baptists enabled Jimmy Carter to win the election. Secondly, this approach proves the importance of empirical research, an approach which has been somewhat underestimated in the study of nationalism.<sup>36</sup> Finally, this approach makes room for American history in studies of nationalism, something which has often been overlooked, then paves the way for writing transnational history.

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<sup>33</sup> Stefan Berger and Eric Storm (Eds.). *Writing the History of Nationalism*. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2019, 4-5.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 6. Stefan Berger and Eric Storm suggest the importance of studying "everyday life" in studies of nationalism.

<sup>35</sup> To overcome theoretical methodology in studies of nationalism, some scholars have tried to develop alternative perspectives. I got inspiration from a study by the eminent historical sociologist, Anthony D Smith, *The Nation Made Real : Art and National Identity in Western Europe, 1600-1850*. 1st ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013. In short, Smith illustrated that national paintings disseminated national consciousness as a Real.

<sup>36</sup> According to historians of nationalism, Berger and Storm, scholars have traditionally approached nationalism from Marxist, modernist, perennialist, and constructivist perspectives. Recently, they have developed alternative approaches like postcolonialism, postmodernism, psychoanalytical interpretations, and transnationalism. For more details on each approach to studying nationalism, especially from a historical perspective, see each book chapters in *Writing the History of Nationalism* (2019) edited by Stefan Berger and Eric Storm. "National histories and the promotion of nationalism in historiography – the pitfalls of 'methodological nationalism,'" Stefan Berger, 19-40; "Marxism and the history of nationalism," Miroslav Hroch, 41-59; "Modernism and writing the history of nationalism," John Breuilly, 61-82; "Nations are (occasionally) forever: Alternatives to the modernist perspective," Aviel Roshwald, 83-103;

This thesis could be categorized as a micro-historical study as it focuses specifically on the use of the words, 'nation' and 'national.' And this thesis could be criticized for focusing too heavily on the usage of these words. But in order to produce an accurate picture of the millions of ordinary people in America living their day-to-day lives it is necessary to focus on the language they used.<sup>37</sup>

As a primary source, *the Southern Baptist News Press* presents us with two advantages when investigating perceptions of the American nation and American nationalism. First of all, it reflects the ideas and activism of the Southern Baptists, as it covered "Baptist events, activities, institutions, and people."<sup>38</sup> Indeed, it was the official organ of the American Southern Baptist Convention, the biggest religious denomination in the USA. These newspapers had an influence over Baptist ministers as opinion makers, as well as impacting their congregations through sermons, church brochures, and so forth. Secondly, non-Baptists would have also been interested in the newspapers, which were sometimes cited in secular news articles.<sup>39</sup> This highlights how the influence of the Baptist newspaper was not limited to the Baptist community but had an impact more widely. Naturally, the authors of the Baptist newspaper may have also considered how their news articles would be viewed by these other readers. Baptist newspapers could provide clues to understanding the American consciousness in regards to how America was perceived as a nation, which the articles conveyed to their readers, Baptists as well as laymen.

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"Cognitive and psychoanalytic approaches to nationalism," Steven Mock, 105-129; "Constructivism in the history of nationalism since 1945," Christian Wicke, 131-154; "Deconstructing nationalism: The cultural turn and poststructuralism," Gabriella Elgenius, 155-169; "Postcolonialism and the history of anti-colonial nationalism," Sanjay Seth, 171-190; "Gender approaches to the history of nationalism," Elizabeth Vlossak, 191-214; "The spatial turn and the history of nationalism: Nationalism between regionalism and transnational approaches," Eric Storm, 215-237; "The global turn in historical writing and the history of nationalism, Matthias Middell, 239-262.

<sup>37</sup> Attention to the use of language like this is an important stream of twentieth century philosophy. The concept, 'linguistic turn,' compresses that trend.

<sup>38</sup> [http://www.sbhla.org/bp\\_archive/index.asp](http://www.sbhla.org/bp_archive/index.asp) (last visited: October 31, 2019)

<sup>39</sup> Brian T. Kaylor, "Gracious Submission: The Southern Baptist Convention's Press Portrayals of Women." *Journal of Gender Studies* 19, no. 4 (2010), 336.

It is clear that there was a relationship between American nationalism and religion. Both elements are still important in understanding American politics and also to providing an answer to the research question here; how was Carter able to win support from the Baptists? Keeping in mind the lessons derived from preceding studies, as discussed above, this thesis will provide an alternative answer by arguing that the election of Jimmy Carter was possible thanks to American nationalism, which was permeated with religion. The following chapter will go into more detail about what happened during the presidential election in 1976.

## Chapter 1: The 'Born-Again' Presidential Candidate

### 1.1. Jimmy Carter, A Born-Again Christian

There is no doubt that the 1976 American presidential election was influenced by the resurgence of evangelicalism. The invigorating climate of evangelicalism was witnessed throughout the United States. According to the American scholar of religion, William Martin, "News media turned their attention to gospel music concerts, the booming religious book market, the phenomenal growth and success of religious radio and television, and even the existence of Christian supper clubs, where pious folk could enjoy a good meal, listen to music that did not assault their eardrums, and laugh at comedians who told jokes about preachers' kids, all in a smoke-and-alcohol-free atmosphere."<sup>40</sup>

George Gallup Jr., the prominent American pollster, christened the year 1976 as the "year of Evangelicalism" based on some intriguing figures. According to his public opinion-based research, 50 million adult Americans answered that they were a born-again Christian experiencing a spiritual awakening. The results from this survey showed that the proportion of Protestants and Catholic respondents believing the Biblical inerrancy was forty-six percent and thirty-one percent, respectively.<sup>41</sup> On October 25, 1976, *Newsweek* published its magazine with the cover page filled with two pithy headlines, "Born Again!" and "The Evangelicals." Indeed, the evangelicals received a lot of attention from the nationwide public because "the presidential election of 1976 proved to be the first time evangelicals voted in large numbers with the force of an incipient special interest

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<sup>40</sup> William Martin, *With God on Our Side : The Rise of the Religious Right in America*. New York: Broadway Books, 1996, 156.

<sup>41</sup> Sara Diamond, *Spiritual Warfare: The Politics of the Christian Right*, South End Press, 1999, 55.

group.”<sup>42</sup> It is known that about sixty percent of evangelicals, in particular Baptists, voted for Carter on November 2, 1976, although exact figures differ.<sup>43</sup>

The Southern Baptists contributed greatly to Carter's election in 1976. When the Christian historian Neil J. Young discusses Carter's victory, he claimed that “no Democrat since Harry Truman had won a majority of Southern Baptists.”<sup>44</sup> Carter won a majority of support in ninety-six counties with a high percentage of Baptists in population composition, including counties that had not supported a Democratic candidate since Franklin D. Roosevelt.<sup>45</sup> Carter dominated the former Confederate states except Virginia, and the overwhelming support from the south played an important role in Carter's victory.<sup>46</sup> Carter led Ford by only 1.7 million votes in total votes, and although the number of the winning states was less than Ford, he was able to beat Ford in the electoral college 297 to 240. Without the support of the Southern states, the election of Carter would not have been possible.

About six months before the Electoral College decision in November of 1976, several Baptist ministers began expressing their support for the Baptist Sunday school teacher turned presidential candidate. In May of that year, Arthur Rutledge, executive director of the Southern Baptist Convention Home Mission Board, expressed both an affinity with Carter and an expectation that he would win. Rutledge stated: “I feel the reason he (Carter) is doing so well is that some people see elements in his character that they want all of the nation to have.”<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 55-56.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 56.

<sup>44</sup> Neil J. Young, “‘Worse than Cancer and Worse than Snakes’: Jimmy Carter's Southern Baptist Problem and the 1980 Election,” *Journal of Policy History* 26, no. 4 (2014), 487.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> *Southern Baptist News Press*, “Pres. Ford Praises SBC Home Missions Executive,” May 17, 1976.

Within a month, the *Southern Baptist News Press* had published an article in which the declaration of Jaroy Weber, who was the incumbent president of the Southern Baptist Convention, alluded to support for Carter. Even though there was no wording that referred to Carter explicitly, Weber said: “We must be willing to become involved at every level of government by encouraging some of our most capable businessmen, educators, and religious leaders to run for public office... we who are Christians must give ballot support to men who can lead our nation back to those Christian principles expressed in that motto, ‘in God we trust’.”<sup>48</sup> However, the *Southern Baptist News Press* added an interpretative sentence, suggesting to its Baptist readership that it was Jimmy Carter who could realize the Christian principle that Weber had emphasized. The Baptist correspondent Roy Jennings added: “while Weber did not mention a specific presidential candidate, former Georgia governor Jimmy Carter, an active Southern Baptist, is a leading candidate for the Democratic nomination for president.”<sup>49</sup> Indeed, Weber’s address in the Baptist annual convention seemed to encourage Southern Baptists to vote in the presidential election for someone who could defend Christian principles even though there was no direct mention of Jimmy Carter. The additional interpretation by the Baptist reporter implicitly suggested that Carter was the future leader who could restore the United States to its Christian principles.

At the Southern Baptist Convention in the middle of June 1976, Bailey E. Smith, pastor of the First Southern Baptist Church in Oklahoma, all but explicitly appealed to his fellow Southern Baptists from all over the country to support Carter. “The nation needs a ‘born-again’ President...while it would certainly be improper for me to name that man, his initials are the same as our Lord’s,” the Oklahoman minister Smith declared in his address.<sup>50</sup> This sophisticated rhetoric

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<sup>48</sup> Roy Jennings, “Weber Urges SBC to Vote For Men of Principle,” *Southern Baptist News Press*, June 15, 1976.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>50</sup> *Southern Baptist News Press*, “Oklahoma Pastor Almost Endorses Carter at SBC,” June 16, 1976.

reminded the Baptist participants in the annual meeting that the speaker Smith overtly supported Jimmy Carter as an ideal president candidate. An anecdote also shows that the support to Carter was widespread across all Baptists, beyond the Southern Baptist leadership. "I loved Jimmy Carter," Baptist Evelyn Davis confessed.<sup>51</sup> Davis continued, "in the United States of America where we say we offer all people the privilege of their religion, but very few of us say anything about the Lord or Jesus, here was a man running for President, and he said 'born-again Christian.' I can remember the night I heard it, and I was shocked, but I knew what I had to do: I had to work for him."<sup>52</sup> Furthermore, a reminiscence of Jerry Regier, who was a devoted Christian activist and belonged to the Campus Crusade for Christ (CCC), witnessed the extent to which a personal profession of faith in Carter served to convince other Christians. "A number of fellow staff members were very excited about Jimmy Carter. And it was all built around the fact that he had talked about being 'born-again.' It's the first time any of us had remembered any national leader using the term, understanding the term," Regier asserted.<sup>53</sup>

Carter was able to win support from the Baptists because he actively expressed his devout religiosity. American Historian Patrick Allitt argues that "Carter was more openly and actively religious than any other twentieth-century president, not just as a parishioner but as a Sunday school teacher and evangelist."<sup>54</sup> An interview Carter gave to *World Mission Journal's* editor Jim Newton illustrated the candidate's Christian identity. The interviewer asked: "How have you responded to the news media questions when reporters ask what you mean when you say you are a 'born-again' Christian? What do you say and how do they react?" The interviewee Carter answered that "It is

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<sup>51</sup> Martin, *With God on Our Side* (1996), 152.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>54</sup> Patrick Allitt, *Religion in America since 1945 : A History*. Columbia Histories of Modern American Life 270933883. New York [etc.]: Columbia University Press, 2003, 149.

very difficult for anyone who has not had that experience to understand. You do because you have had that experience. But many of the newsmen who ask about this have never had this experience... I became uniquely aware of the Holy Spirit as an integral part of my life... A lot of news reporters are mystified by this. I don't think they doubt my sincerity, but they just don't understand. I don't make a big issue out of it, but neither do I hesitate to say publicly that the most important thing in my life is Jesus Christ."<sup>55</sup>

Carter was the first presidential candidate to actively express his sheer sincerity of faith in the presidential election, which was enough to elicit favor and support from the evangelical public.<sup>56</sup> Church historian Young contends that "If previous presidential candidates had felt the same way, none had so plainly and frequently expressed his faith."<sup>57</sup> In 1976, Carter, the Democratic Party's candidate, had not hesitated to promote himself as a 'born-again' Christian to the electorate, which first contributed to him gaining support from Baptist believers, and paved his way to the White House.<sup>58</sup> Even Carter used the concept of being born-again during his presidency. "President Jimmy Carter emphasized personal faith, the meaning of being 'born again,' family worship and religion as a force for good among the nations at the 26th Annual National Prayer Breakfast in Washington," the *Southern Baptist News Press* reported in 1978.<sup>59</sup>

In 1976, nationwide attention was focused on this core concept of Carter's religiosity: 'born-again.' According to the editorial note in the *Southern Baptist News Press*, "Southern

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<sup>55</sup> *Southern Baptist News Press*, "Jimmy Carter Talks About Religion and Politics," May 11, 1976.

<sup>56</sup> Young, *Worse than Cancer and Worse than Snakes: Jimmy Carter's Southern Baptist Problem and the 1980 Election* (2014), 486.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>58</sup> Martin, *With God on Our Side* (1996), 151-152; J. Brooks Flippen, *Jimmy Carter, the Politics of Family, and the Rise of the Religious Right*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2011, 88.

<sup>59</sup> W. Barry Garrett, "Carter Looks to Religion As Hope for World Peace," *Southern Baptist News Press*, February 3, 1978.

Baptists around the country have received numerous queries from secular news media and others about what Democratic presidential hopeful Jimmy Carter, an active Southern Baptist layman, means when he says he is born again.”<sup>60</sup> Christian ethicist Henlee Barnette elucidated on the concept of being ‘born-again’; “the new birth is the result of a personal encounter with the contemporaneous Christ. This involves a consciousness of being a sinner, repentance from sin, and faith in Jesus Christ as redeemer and lord of life. It includes the commitment of the total self to a Person, not a principle; to the living Christ, not a dead creed. It comes about by divine grace and not merely good deeds (Eph. 2:8-9). The new birth is deeply ethical. It means being born into a new way of life with new responsibilities. Hence, the experience of the new birth is a radical change of life, so radical that it is like being born all over again. This experience makes it possible to ‘see’ or to enter the Kingdom of God and calls for the believer to submit to the Kingdom’s ethical demands of love, justice and righteousness.”<sup>61</sup>

An interview with Baptist Jim Dunn described the sensational interest in the ‘born-again’ aspect of Carter’s faith. “I was asked by the American Jewish Committee to come and speak to their state meeting and explain what being ‘born again’ meant. I was interviewed by the press and local television all over the place about ‘What’s an evangelist?’ ‘What’s an evangelical?’ ‘What’s a Baptist’ ‘What does “born again” mean?’ ‘Where does this come from?’”<sup>62</sup> Moreover, in the keynote speech held in September 1976, Dunn said that “The current interest in ‘born again’ religion is a remarkable phenomenon.”<sup>63</sup> According to the Baptist reporter Robert O’Brien, Dunn mentioned the “wide publicity about Democratic presidential candidate Jimmy Carter’s public

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<sup>60</sup> Henlee Barnette, “‘BORN AGAIN’: What Does It Mean?”, *Southern Baptist News Press*, June 28, 1976.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>62</sup> Martin, *With God on Our Side* (1996), 149.

<sup>63</sup> Robert O’Brien, “SBC Ethical Concepts Also Need To Be ‘Born Again’”, *Southern Baptist News Press*, September 16, 1976.

affirmation of his personal spiritual rebirth and his Southern Baptist affiliation,” in the address to Baptists, who attended the annual conference of the Christian Life Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention.<sup>64</sup>

To sum up, it seems that the ‘born-again’ Christian confession was a key element in Carter’s faith and simultaneously a part of his Christian identity that made a favorable impression on evangelicals, especially Baptists, who were not only impressed by Carter’s ‘born-again’ Christian identity but also made an effort to explain the abstract concept to the secular constituency. However, Carter’s religious identity as a ‘born-again Christian’ took serious damage after an interview, which took place less than two months before the presidential election in November. Nevertheless, religious support for Carter continued, which contradicts the common notion that people supported Carter directly because of their identification with his ‘Born-Again’, evangelical faith. Therefore, we can infer that Baptists’ support for Carter was also stimulated by another factor and could be sustained despite growing doubts over the sincerity of his faith. Interestingly, the term ‘nation’ appears uniformly in the arguments of the Baptist pastors who expressed their support for Carter. We should keep in mind the frequency with which this term was used, what it meant, and how it related to support for Carter, as this thesis develops. Now, let’s find out what happened to Carter during the U.S. presidential election in September 1976.

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

## 1.2. Doubts about faith and conviction

Although Jimmy Carter, at first glance, seemed to have received enthusiastic support from the Baptists thanks to his sincerity, it is not actually clear to what extent the Baptists firmly supported Carter. On the one hand, the propagation of Carter's faith was a good strategy to gather the vote from Christians, in particular Baptists, on the other hand, it was also something of a double-edged sword as it prompted a huge backlash.

The turning point was Carter's notorious interview with *Playboy*. In 1976, the cover of the November issue of *Playboy* featured a high profile interview with the provocative title of "Now, the Real Jimmy Carter on Politics, Religion, the Press and Sex in an Incredible Playboy Interview" and an incendiary cover picture.<sup>65</sup> Unfortunately, some excerpts of the controversial interview went to the public much earlier than November 2, the day of the presidential election in 1976. On September 21, 1976, *The New York Times* distributed an article entitled "Carter, on Morals, Talks with Candor."<sup>66</sup> According to the news article, "Jimmy Carter has said in an interview that he has looked on a lot of women with lust and that he has committed adultery in my heart many times," but that "God forgives me for it." Then Carter answered in the interview that "This is something that God recognizes I will do – and I have done it – and God forgives me for it. But that does not mean I condemn someone who not only looks on a woman with lust but leaves his wife and shacks up with somebody out of wedlock."<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> *Playboy Magazine*, November, Playboy Publishers, 1976; Stuart E. Eizenstat, *President Carter: The White House Years*. Thomas Dunne Books, 2018, 60.

<sup>66</sup> Charles Mohr, "Carter, on Morals, Talks With Candor: Carter Talks With Candor on Issue of Personal Morals," *The New York Times*, September 21, 1976.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*

An interview with an obscene magazine, especially because of Carter's opinion over sexual values, rapidly soured the Baptist's trust in Carter. "It was bad enough that Carter had met with a pornographic publication," Church historian Neil J. Young argues.<sup>68</sup> Carter's interview immediately reminded conservative Baptists of the Ten Commandments and Christian Ethics. "Thou shalt not commit adultery" was, after all, the seventh rule of the Ten Commandments.<sup>69</sup> The Mosaic Law was the order of God, which repeatedly appeared in the Old and New Testaments and was tantamount to a golden rule that had to be observed. In the Bible, there are thirty-three expressions which state that adultery is a sin, twelve of which are in the four Gospel books, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, which record the deeds of Jesus. In particular, the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Romans states: "For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."<sup>70</sup> Additionally, another epistle in the New Testament, James, affirmed: "For he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law."<sup>71</sup>

Moreover, the immoral wording in the excerpt from *Playboy* magazine reminded enthusiastic believers of the lesson from the Sermon on the Mount, the so called 'Christian Charter.' Jesus Christ said: "Verily I say unto thee, Thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing. Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not

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<sup>68</sup> Young, *Worse than Cancer and Worse than Snakes: Jimmy Carter's Southern Baptist Problem and the 1980 Election* (2014), 486.

<sup>69</sup> Exodus 20:14 (KJV)

<sup>70</sup> Romans 13:9 (KJV)

<sup>71</sup> James 2:11 (KJV)

commit adultery: But I say unto you, that whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.”<sup>72</sup>

The frank interview by Carter provoked the Baptists, even those who were on his side. Immediately after the arguably blasphemous interview was released, Bruce Edwards, the pastor in Plains Baptist Church, where Carter was registered as a member, said: “I have no particular objections to it myself, but I would have used other words to describe the same thing.”<sup>73</sup> Moreover, George M. Docherty, the pastor in the New York Avenue Presbyterian Church, where seventeen former U.S. presidents had attended services, commented that “Off the cuff, that’s a very foolish thing for anyone to say...There is a distinction between witting lust and unwitting lust. It is not holier-than-thou to condemn another man for shacking down with another man’s wife.”<sup>74</sup> At the same time, Christians including Baptists doubted Carter’s confession of faith, which emphasized a born again Christian identity. According to the research of Neil J. Young, Harold Lindsell, who himself espoused biblical inerrancy, reproached Carter, saying that “a man who...professes to be a Christian...gets himself all tied up in speaking words which at best are most questionable.”<sup>75</sup> Jerry Vines severely condemned: “a lot of us are not convinced that Mr. Carter is truly in the evangelical Christian camp, and this tends to indicate to us that he isn’t.”<sup>76</sup>

Suspicion regarding Carter’s religious sincerity spread throughout the country. *The Blueprint*, periodical literature published by Foothill Baptist Church in California, expressed concerns over Carter’s morals by borrowing words from the secular newspaper, *Oakland Tribune*. The

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<sup>72</sup> Matthew 5:26-28 (KJV)

<sup>73</sup> Robert G. Kaiser, “Carter on Sin: Joining Bible and Blunt Talk, Candidate Outlines Beliefs,” *The Washington Post*, September 21, 1976.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>75</sup> Young, *Worse than Cancer and Worse than Snakes: Jimmy Carter’s Southern Baptist Problem and the 1980 Election* (2014), 486.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*

Baptist local periodical entitled “Jimmy Carter’s Kind of Religion,” censured “Carter’s Adultery of the Heart”, saying that “Many Evangelicals who expected to vote for Carter were stunned when their favorite “born-again” candidate gave an interview to *Playboy* magazine, the leading pornographic candidate for the most obscene magazine in the USA... (An) absolutely unbelievable interview, which no Christian should have ever given.”<sup>77</sup> Continuously, the magazine cast doubt on Carter’s religiosity. “From hundreds of pulpits throughout this land this week, and they will condemn him sure, for some of the following reasons: 1. For ever giving an interview to this wicked paper of commercial lust, 2. For using gutter language that scarcely fits any aspirant to the White House, 3. For casually expressing a careless view of sin and adultery in the life of a professing Christian, 4. For giving a false idea of the provision for and forgiveness of God, 5. For refusal to sit in judgement on an immoral way of life which is harshly and sharply condemned by Christ and the Bible.”<sup>78</sup>

Indeed, the infamous interview with *Playboy* was the trigger that turned any of the conservative Baptists’ doubts regarding Carter’s religiosity into conviction. This is because, from the perspective of conservative Baptists, Carter’s values seemed to be close to those of the liberals. Baptists now doubted whether Carter would be the ideal president to protect traditional Christian values. The weekly magazine of Foothill Baptist Church had already criticized the pro-liberal position of Carter related to his human resources. “The editor of the left-wing *Christian Century*, regarded as the most radically liberal theological paper in America, has been named as the manager for Jimmy Carter in the key state of Illinois...His name is James Wall...It is evident to anyone who takes the *Christian Century* regularly, that this paper rejects every single vital doctrine of the

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<sup>77</sup> *The Blu-Print*, “Jimmy Carter’s Kind of Religion,” Foothill Baptist Church, Vol. XXVII NO. 35, September 28, 1976.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*

historic Christian faith which Jimmy Carter leads his Southern Baptist friends to believe that he holds,” an editor of *The Blu-Print* argued.<sup>79</sup> The critic of Foothill Baptist Church finished the column with an aggressive, candid comment: “The appointment of such a left-wing denier of the historic Christian Faith simply tears the mask off of Jimmy Carter’s pious profession of Christ which has swept the whole charismatic movement into his corner.”<sup>80</sup>

Furthermore, Carter’s favor towards the Christian Realist, Reinhold Niebuhr, continued to provoke the conservative Baptist suspicion with regard to Carter’s religiosity. “Jimmy Carter’s religious convictions are as puzzling as the strange dichotomy between his words and his deeds in the political arena. He is a ‘born-again’ Christian – whose favorite theologian is the ultra-modernist Reinhold Niebuhr...who openly derided ‘born-again’ believers. Niebuhr denied the inerrancy of the Bible... For Carter to call himself a ‘born-again believer’ whose favorite theologian is Reinhold Niebuhr is like a rabbi saying his favorite politician is Hitler,” *The Blu-Print* wrote.<sup>81</sup> Even Carter openly announced his intimacy to the radical theologian Reinhold Niebuhr in an interview conducted by Jim Newton. Carter answered a question about his motivations and convictions with reference to Niebuhr: “There are many reasons. I outlined most of them in my announcement speech in 1974. I say often that I agree with theologian Reinhold Niebuhr, who wrote that the purpose of government is to establish justice in a sinful world. I am committed to that purpose. I also have a conviction that whatever talent God gave me should be used to the maximum degree. I believe God wants me to be the best politician I can possibly be.”<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> *The Blu-Print*, “Jimmy Carter’s Key Illinois Manager is a Notorious Liberal Theological Unbeliever,” Foothill Baptist Church, Vol. XXVII NO. 33, September 14, 1976.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>81</sup> *The Blu-Print*, “Observation on Jimmy Carter’s Religion,” Foothill Baptist Church, Vol. XXVII NO. 34, September 21, 1976.

<sup>82</sup> *Southern Baptist News Press*, “Jimmy Carter Talks About Religion and Politics,” May 11, 1976.

Carter's liberal attitude deprived him of his rhetorical title as a born-again national leader who would defend traditional Christian values. Carter had not responded actively against issues such as abortion, pornography, homosexuality, and the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) that were perceived as threatening to the traditional values and morals of Christianity during his presidency. To cite one example, Carter personally opposed abortion, but he did nothing about the policies the Democrats pushed in favor of it.<sup>83</sup> To a significant extent, Carter did not express a clear-cut opinion over ethical issues and instead held ambiguous positions. In an interview on the campaign trail, Carter answered the difficult question about the moral issues: "I don't have position papers on all the issues, but I do on many of the major ones. Every week I am asked about 100 questions that refer to moral and ethical issues. I try to be honest in stating my views. The question I'm asked most about is my stand on abortion."<sup>84</sup> The scholar of Religion, William Martin argues that Carter's passive attitude towards abortion stemmed from the Baptists' low interest in this issue and the comparatively strong position of liberal Democrats on it.<sup>85</sup> According to Martin, "Carter found it awkward to deal with the issue during the campaign, and wound up with a straddle position that both camps found troubling...At one point, he implied he might favor an anti-abortion amendment, then backed off."<sup>86</sup> Such ambiguity would have led to continued questioning of Carter's religious values among Baptists, especially conservative ones.

In brief, the Baptist support for Carter was conflicted in 1976. Baptist support for Carter, a born-again Christian, was met with a critical crisis as the consequence of an interview, but this crisis and mistrust had already been embedded. Nonetheless, Carter won the presidential election

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<sup>83</sup> Martin, *With God on Our Side* (1996), 156.

<sup>84</sup> *Southern Baptist News Press*, "Jimmy Carter Talks About Religion and Politics," May 11, 1976.

<sup>85</sup> Martin, *With God on Our Side* (1996), 156.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*

in 1976 with the support from Baptists. What reason made Baptist vote for Carter regardless of doubt and distrust against Carter's religiosity?

## Chapter 2: The Concept of Nation in the Southern Baptists' Publications

### 2.1. The invocation for America as a nation.

American nationalism helped to motivate Southern Baptists to support Jimmy Carter, despite suspicions regarding Carter's religiosity. Nationalist discourse was present in the statements and the daily words of Baptist publications. For Baptists, support for Carter implied support for the establishment of America as a Christian nation. The Baptists hoped that Carter would protect Christian identity and values in America on a national scale. In other words, Baptists voted for Carter because of their hope that he would defend America as a Christian nation and not only because of Carter's confession of his Christian faith.

Baptist support for Carter was closely related to their conceptualization of the Nation. Immediately after Carter's election as president, Baptists expressed hope that he would become a moral and spiritual leader of the American nation. For instance, less than a week after Carter was elected president, the West Virginia Convention of Southern Baptists emphasized the spiritual responsibility which accompanied the presidency. The resolution urged Baptists to support Carter and his advisors, "Noting the awesome responsibility of the office of President of the United States and the far-reaching effects of what is decided in that office."<sup>87</sup> The *Southern Baptist News Press* also urged Christian citizens to "do all that is within our power, under God, to help our President to uphold the spiritual and moral integrity of our nation and our world."<sup>88</sup> For the Southern Baptists, the U.S. presidency was not simply a public representative in charge of secular administrative

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<sup>87</sup> *Southern Baptist News Press*, "W. Va. Baptists Pray For Carter, Plan Relocation," November 9, 1976.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*

affairs but a spiritual vocation destined for one with the mental and moral talent to unite and lead all the nations. Furthermore, the delegates of the District of Columbia Baptist Convention in Washington, D. C. prayed for “President-elect Carter in both our private and public prayers asking God to give him the moral courage, the spiritual vision and the physical strength to lead our nation.”

<sup>89</sup> Irish historian Conor Cruise O’Brien has described this kind of tendency as “the cult of the deified nation, incarnate in the President.”<sup>90</sup>

Moreover, Baptist statements of support for Carter often invoked the idea of nationhood. As examined in Chapter 1, Baptist ministers in 1976 had referred to America as a nation by making reference to nationalist concepts during key speeches declaring their support for Carter. They employed phrases in which references to the “nation” were used to validate their support; for instance, “all of the nation to have,”<sup>91</sup> “support to men who can lead our nation,”<sup>92</sup> and “the nation needs.”<sup>93</sup> In particular, James E. Wood, the Executive Director of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, wrote, in a booklet issued in January 1976, the “observance of the Bicentennial has profound implications for the community of faith as well as the nation as a whole. The Bicentennial is far more than a celebration of two hundred years of America’s nationhood.”<sup>94</sup>

Indeed, in 1976 the concept of the nation was commonly adopted to express the self-identity of Southern Baptists. Southern Baptists shared a self-conscious relation to the concept of the nation. The *Southern Baptist News Press* underlined that the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) was ‘the

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<sup>89</sup> *Southern Baptist News Press*, “Carter Invited to Address D. C. Centennial Convention,” November 15, 1976.

<sup>90</sup> O’Brien, Conor Cruise. *God Land : Reflections on Religion and Nationalism*. The William E. Massey Sr. Lectures in the History of American Civilization ; 1987 851139531. Cambridge, Mass. [etc.]: Harvard University Press, 1988, 66.

<sup>91</sup> *Southern Baptist News Press*, “Pres. Ford Praises SBC Home Missions Executive,” May 17, 1976.

<sup>92</sup> Roy Jennings, “Weber Urges SBC to Vote For Men of Principle,” *Southern Baptist News Press*, June 15, 1976.

<sup>93</sup> *Southern Baptist News Press*, “Oklahoma Pastor Almost Endorses Carter at SBC,” June 16, 1976.

<sup>94</sup> *Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs*, “Baptists and the American Experience: A National Bicentennial Convocation.” Washington, D.C.: Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, 1976. <http://digitalcollections.baylor.edu/cdm/ref/collection/cs-vert/id/749/>

nation's largest Protestant denomination.' This phrase continued to evoke a feeling of nationalist identity to Southern Baptists, placing them in a context relative to America as a nation-state. This self-identification appeared in the Baptist organ thirteen times in 1976.<sup>95</sup> Likewise, the use of nation can be found in phrases like 'the nation's largest Protestant body'<sup>96</sup> and 'the nation's largest evangelical group,'<sup>97</sup> which are a kind of modified version of the same self-identification.

When Christian historian Winthrop S. Hudson lectured on Baptist history at the National Baptist Bicentennial Convocation meeting in Washington, he adopted the term 'nation' to emphasize the significant place of Baptists in American history. "They [Baptists] had developed a sense of mission and destiny that was related, not only to the gospel," Hudson argued "but also to the emerging nation."<sup>98</sup> In the same Convocation meeting, a reporter of the *Southern Baptist News Press* used 'nation' to explain the lecture by the religious scholar Glenn T. Miller, in which the lecturer underlined the interrelationship between their religious mission and American civilization. The *Southern Baptist News Press* wrote, "Miller attributed this 'imperialism of righteousness,' as it has been called, to the dualistic concerns dominant in the emerging American nation."<sup>99</sup>

Although the Southern Baptists' invocation of American nation and nationhood was evident in 1976, when we consider the terminological confusion embedded in the term nation, it might be difficult to say that their invocation for America as a nation was a unique way to encourage Baptists

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<sup>95</sup> The identity manifestation, 'the nation's largest Protestant denomination', is found in below news articles in the *Southern Baptist News Press* in 1976: February 9, March 3, March 24, April 1, May 3, May 6, June 16, July 7, July 12, July 26, September 16, September 17, November 10.

<sup>96</sup> *Southern Baptist News Press*, February 16, May 3, May 6 in 1976.

<sup>97</sup> *Southern Baptist News Press*, April 19, June 10, June 28, July 22 in 1976.

<sup>98</sup> W. Barry Garrett, "Historian Explains Baptist Rise During Revolution," *Southern Baptist News Press*, January 13, 1976.

<sup>99</sup> Debbie Stewart, "Missions Major Influence Of Baptists On World," *Southern Baptist News Press*, January 14, 1976.

to vote for Carter. This is because nation has had an unsettled definition throughout American history.

## 2.2. The conceptual conflict to understanding the concept of 'nation' in America.

What, then, was a nation for Southern Baptists? Whilst the concept of nation has had complicated meanings, it is an important prerequisite to understanding American nationalism. As such, I would like to review some definitions of nation and nationalism to clarify what kind of American nationalism was at work in the Baptist publications and discourse.

In general, the concept of a nation is defined in different ways. The Oxford dictionary, published in 1975, defined a nation as a “large community of people associated with a particular territory speaking a single language and having a political character or political aspirations.”<sup>100</sup> This definition abstractly explains that solidarity between an individual and land can be a condition of a nation as a political entity. The abstract concepts of politics and communities that constitute this definition illustrate the ambiguity of the concept of nation. The definition of nation in the Collins Dictionary in 1979 gave more detail on the definition of the nation:

*“nation: 1. an aggregation of people or peoples of one or more cultures, races, etc., organized into a single state: the Canadian nation. 2. a community of persons not constituting a state but bound*

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<sup>100</sup> Hornby, Cowie, Lewis, Cowie, A.P, and Lewis, J. Windsor. *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English*. 3rd Ed., 3rd Impr.. ed. London: Oxford U.P., 1975, 569.

*by common descent, language, history, etc. 3. a. a federation of tribes, esp. American Indians. b. the territory occupied by such a federation.”<sup>101</sup>*

According to the Collins Dictionary, the nation is a term denoting a group of people with something in common. There are subtle differences between definitions 1 and 2. The difference depends on whether a single community of people who are united by a common heritage have their own state. What should be looked at in more depth is that the concept of the nation itself is not necessarily the same as a state.<sup>102</sup> This definition shows that the state is an element which gives the nation a certain characteristic, not simply a form of political/territorial body as defined by, for instance, a Constitution. The two dictionaries, published in the 1970s, defined a nation as a community of people and show how the political formation of nations are factors which can be used to distinguish them.

At a glance, ‘the nation’, as a name, seems to be a frame to perceive a sort of community which consists of people who are struggling to acquire their own name as a nation and a state. In this sense, the nation can be used as a framework to define a community of people connected beyond their direct family and acquaintances. In order to maintain a shared sense of community it is necessary to encourage a unified national identity as it is impossible to have blood ties or personal relationships with all members of a national community. Hence, national identity needs idealistic ideas that imbue it with a sense of solidarity that can make an individual feel that they belong to a community, along with physical media that give body to the existence of a nation in reality. In these processes, the members of a nation share abstract national myths, legends, traditions, and

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<sup>101</sup> Patrick Hanks, *Collins Dictionary of the English Language*. London [etc.]: Collins, 1979, 979.

<sup>102</sup> Rogers Brubaker, *Nationalism Reframed : Nationhood and the National Question in the New Europe*. Cambridge [etc.]: Cambridge University Press, 1996, 111-112.

practices, which are considered important in mobilizing a disparate group of individuals under a national flag. There are numerous ways to express national history and values through such symbols, and people tend to show loyalty to their nation and its associated symbols.<sup>103</sup> Benedict Anderson, widely known for his conceptual definition of nationalism and nation-states as 'Imagined Communities,' defines nation as follows in his major book: "In an anthropological spirit, then, I propose the following definition of the nation: it is an imagined political community-and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign."<sup>104</sup> According to Anderson, the United States of America was one of the states in the American Continent like Brazil, "formed and led by people who shared a common language and common descent with those against whom they fought."<sup>105</sup>

To be specific, the nation has a deep relationship with nationalism, though this is more complicated in the United States of America. A prominent scholar of Nationalism studies, Anthony D. Smith, defines nationalism as "a doctrine about the nation, not the state."<sup>106</sup> Smith has argued that it is an "ideological movement to attain and maintain autonomy, unity, and identity on behalf of a population, some of whose members believe it to constitute an actual or potential nation." Moreover, Smith has defined the American nation as one example of "migrant communities of settlers, who have split off from the 'motherland' and their fellow ethnic members, whether for economic or religious and political reasons, and have sought a new life as a community, or communities, elsewhere, usually overseas." To summarize, Smith argues that the American nation has roots in and an ethnic relationship with the British. Smith has emphasized that "biblical and

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<sup>103</sup> Siniša Malešević, *Nation-states and Nationalisms: Organization, Ideology and Solidarity*. Political Sociology Series 375373438. Cambridge ; Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2013, 2-3.

<sup>104</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities : Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. Rev. ed. London [etc.]: Verso, 1991, 5-6.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, 47.

<sup>106</sup> Anthony D. Smith, *Ethno-symbolism and Nationalism : A Cultural Approach*. London [etc.]: Routledge, 2009, 61-62.

providentialist ideologies” were very important in the course of the American nation-building process.<sup>107</sup> In particular, Smith has argued, “the United States was originally formed on the basis of a dominant *ethnie* (white Anglo-Saxon Protestant immigrants).”<sup>108</sup> Of course, we should not overlook his caveat that the success of the USA has been due to multinational cultures of minorities from all around the world.

From Smith’s perspective, the core community of the American nation had an “Anglo-American ethnicity” from the beginning; later it had embraced other minorities and expanded its common “values, memories, myths and symbols” among which early American legacies, like “the declaration of independence, the constitution, and the founding fathers,” have been given important status.<sup>109</sup> Additionally, he has pointed out that the basic core of a nation’s identity (things such as values, myths, and memories) can be altered as the composition of its population becomes more culturally diverse.<sup>110</sup> This shows that the nation and national identity should not be considered perpetually static, but that these concepts could be replaced, reinterpreted, and reaccepted by its own members. We have to approach Smith’s view of the American nation carefully. It is important to keep in mind that Smith never underestimated American civic characteristics that once served to unify its membership against the British empire. When the founders of the United States of America struggled to build their own states with political autonomy, they had to rely on distinct systems like civil rights and a modern constitution defining an individual as a citizen, rather than a

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<sup>107</sup> Anthony D. Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*. Oxford [etc.]: Blackwell, 1986, 156; Anthony D. Smith, *Ethno-symbolism and Nationalism : A Cultural Approach*. London [etc.]: Routledge, 2009, 53-54.

<sup>108</sup> Smith, *Ethno-symbolism and Nationalism* (2009), 111.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, 111.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, 113.

subject belonging to the monarchy, which arguably vests American people with a peculiar character.<sup>111</sup>

American historian, Aviel Roshwald has defined 'nation' as "any community larger than one of mutual and personal acquaintance that claims some form of collective, bounded, territorial sovereignty *in the name of its distinctive identity*."<sup>112</sup> Roshwald has defined nationalism as "a dynamic force fueled by competing visions of an idealized, static community." According to the American historian, nationalism has played a role in encouraging a specific "shared identity" and desire for autonomy. At the same time, he has suggested a distinct understanding of nationhood, in which it can exist independently without statehood because it has been formed the base on "cultural traditions and patterns of association and commemoration."<sup>113</sup> Moreover, he attempted to analyze ancient and modern nationalism separately, which can offer a way to avoid the conflict between the modernist and primordial approach to understanding the origins of nationalism and the nation state. According to his perspective, we have to recognize nationalism itself as an enduring ideology and refrain from seeing impellent continuities between ancient national identities and modern ones.

More importantly, Aviel Roshwald argues, America is an example of a covenant nation.<sup>114</sup> Simply put, a covenant nation is a prototype-nation formed from the special relationship between the Israelites and Jehovah through the contract of Mount Sinai (so called the Mosaic Covenant) in the Bible.<sup>115</sup> According to Roshwald, "it is one of the cardinal principles of the Mosaic Covenant that it be taught and passed on from generation to generation and that straying from its previsions

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<sup>111</sup> Ibid., 140.

<sup>112</sup> Aviel Roshwald, *The Endurance of Nationalism : Ancient Roots and Modern Dilemmas*. Cambridge [etc.]: Cambridge University Press, 2006, 3; Aviel Roshwald, On nationalism. In J. McNeill & K. Pomeranz (Eds.), *The Cambridge World History*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015, 306.

<sup>113</sup> Roshwald, *The Endurance of Nationalism* (2006), 2-3.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid., 175.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid., 174.

will bring down the wrath of heaven upon the nation.”<sup>116</sup> Although each epoch and its residents seem to have their own concept of nationalism, there is an inherited element, as in a covenant nation. Roshwald has shown how this awareness could be a part of American national identity and could have influenced its development during the two centuries after American Independence. Modern nation-states, including the USA, have been successful in replacing monarchical loyalty with ideas such as civic consciousness and citizenship. In particular, this sophisticated maneuver had provided a way to use their human and material powers to concentrate on expanding their influence on a global scale in which the driving force was “the twinned ideas of popular sovereignty and nationalism.”<sup>117</sup>

As discussed above, one tendency is found in the conceptual definitions from English dictionaries and scholars. The nation is a name referring to a group beyond the individual, a group whose members share national history, traditions, values, and so forth. Nationalism includes an emotional element, such as the attachment of members to their national community. Nationalism is subjective precisely because it is associated with sentiment, which is intangible.

Additionally, modern France and America are significant because the American Revolution in 1776 and the French Revolution in 1789 are seen in the west as the starting point of the modern world generally, as well as of the idea of the nation-state.<sup>118</sup> Especially as the term ‘nation-state’ is used to describe the appearance since the late eighteenth century of modern states, which have

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<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

<sup>117</sup> Roshwald, *On nationalism* (2015), 312.

<sup>118</sup> John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith, *Nationalism*. Oxford Readers 118572733. Oxford [etc.]: Oxford University Press, 1994, 7; Anatol Lieven, *America Right or Wrong: An Anatomy of American Nationalism*. London: HarperCollins, 2004, 36; Siniša Malešević, *Nation-states and Nationalisms: Organization, Ideology and Solidarity*. Political Sociology Series 375373438. Cambridge ; Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2013, 78; Eric Storm, “Overcoming Methodological Nationalism in Nationalism Studies: The Impact of Tourism on the Construction and Diffusion of National and Regional Identities.” *History Compass* 12, no. 4 (2014), 364; Roshwald, *On nationalism* (2015), 310-311; Eric Storm, “A New Dawn in Nationalism Studies? Some Fresh Incentives to Overcome Historiographical Nationalism.” *European History Quarterly* 48, no. 1 (2018), 114.

modern political systems like democratic governments and constitutional legal systems. This terminology has been considered as revealing of the distinct characteristics of modern states and it has been supposed that formation of the nation is a critical stage in the establishment of a modern state. That is why both the nation and the state have been identified and even taken for granted as bedrocks of modern sovereignty. Technically speaking, all nation-states take their political legitimacy from “the concept of popular sovereignty,” which many politicians and political organizations sought after the Second World War. In the course of a power struggle, nationalism has influenced political ideologies and various parties in a nation. Because nationalism has played a role as “a ubiquitous substratum,” on which each polity could accumulate their political legitimacy and power it should be considered a precondition to becoming a nation-state.<sup>119</sup>

In particular, America has often been considered to be the epitome of a multinational country.<sup>120</sup> This multicultural characteristic makes America more distinctive in comparison to other nation-states like France, Germany, or Italy. American exceptionalism can condense this distinctive perspective to perceive American society and to interpret its history. As American historian Peter S. Onuf has pointed out, American exceptionalism stands on cross-national comparisons, in which the United States of America tends to have the advantage as well as this peculiarity.<sup>121</sup> From the beginning of American history two terms, empire and nation, have been in an intimate relationship and been vulnerable to misunderstandings and confusion.<sup>122</sup> Even

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<sup>119</sup> Özkirimli, Umut. *Theories of Nationalism : A Critical Introduction*. 2nd[rev. and Substantially Enl.] ed. Basingstoke [etc.]: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010, 86-87; Roshwald, *On nationalism* (2015), 316.

<sup>120</sup> Kohn, *American Nationalism* (1961), 232-233; Allitt, *Religion in America since 1945* (2003), xii; Anatol Lieven, *America Right or Wrong : An Anatomy of American Nationalism*. London: HarperCollins, 2004, 123; Kaufmann, Eric P. *Rethinking Ethnicity : Majority Groups and Dominant Minorities*. London [etc.]: Routledge, 2004.

<sup>121</sup> Peter S. Onuf, “American Exceptionalism and National Identity.” *American Political Thought* 1, no. 1 (2012), 78-79.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, 86.

though the USA is still discussing problems such as a sense of belonging and loyalty to a new country, it is better to focus this thesis on the difference between American nationalism and American patriotism. One thing to look for is that there have been various American identities and thus difficulties in how to define America and Americans from the earliest stages of American history. American identity was hardly created from extraterrestrial inspiration, rather it emerged internally from competition against the British Empire. Onuf has argued that “British conceptions of national identity betrayed the same tensions between inclusiveness and essentialist exclusivity that have subsequently characterized the new American nation.”<sup>123</sup> It has shown that American national identity is likely to have inherited certain characteristics from British national identity and that questions of how to define America and the American nation should be answered in this context. American historian, Aviel Roshwald has also paid attention to the revolutionary origin of the American nation. According to Roshwald, Edmund Burke, the archetypal conservative, had espoused “the American rebels in the British House of Commons” because the revolution could be seen as a movement to acquire “their traditional political rights as Englishmen.”<sup>124</sup> It has shown how difficult it is to identify characteristics and identity related to American rebels in this early stage.

To sum up, the United States of America has embodied both exceptionality and universality since its early history. These two incongruent characteristics have presented difficulties with understanding America as a nation. That may be because disagreement over fundamental premises, such as what the origins of the American people are, is inevitable. Naturally, it would be inevitable that the invocation for the United States as a nation by the *Southern Baptist News Press* led to

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<sup>123</sup> Ibid., 87.

<sup>124</sup> Roshwald, *The Endurance of Nationalism* (2006), 186.

raising conceptual conflict and confusion for Baptists. There were more energetic issues for Baptist invocations of nationhood as a nation, in which the main purpose was establishing Christian identity in America as a nation. Such conditions were more likely to remind Baptists how important it was to keep America a Christian nation and to encourage them to support Carter as he seemed to be the ideal Christian candidate and thus president.

### 2.3. What was American nationalism for the Baptists in 1976?

Generally, nationalism shares some similarities with patriotism. British author Anatol Lieven has noted the difference between patriotism and nationalism. As Lieven has rightly pointed out, “Nationalism has not been the usual prism through which American behavior has been viewed. Most Americans speak of their attachment to their country as patriotism or, in an extreme form, superpatriotism.”<sup>125</sup> Americans seem to prefer to be called patriots, not nationalists.<sup>126</sup> Insofar as Lieven defines the usage of American nationalism, nationalism provides suitable terminology “to describe the characteristic national feeling of Americans.”<sup>127</sup> Lieven argues that nationalism emphasizes hope for the future of the people, compared with patriotism which focuses on the celebration of the nation’s past. In other words, patriotism and nationalism in the United States of America can be distinguished by the targets and kinds of sentiment that are aroused. This said, it was American nationalism, and not patriotism, which was emphasized during the heightening of concern’s over America’s security, and its position as the “last bastion of liberal democracy,” after

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<sup>125</sup> Lieven, *America Right or Wrong* (2004), 2.

<sup>126</sup> Daniele Conversi, “Introduction: Why a State Is Not a Nation – and Whether Economics Really Matters. Walker Connor 50 years on.” *Nations and Nationalism* 24, no. 3 (2018), 499.

<sup>127</sup> Lieven, *America Right or Wrong* (2004), 6-7.

the 9/11 attacks.<sup>128</sup> Lieven's concept of nationalism and patriotism seems to understand the two concepts as having somewhat confrontational features.

However, the prominent scholar of nationalism, Anthony D. Smith has argued that nationalism and patriotism share many overlapping characteristics; for instance, the subject of loyalty is the same in each. Smith has emphasized that nationalism typically includes "the shared memories of sacrifice and the values and symbols of a territorial political community," though arguably those factors depend on how a nation was formed.<sup>129</sup>

By the same token, American historian Roshwald has emphasized the mutual compatibility between patriotism and nationalism. According to Roshwald, "It is a common practice to distinguish between patriotism and nationalism such that the former refers to selfless loyalty to a polity and its governing institutions while the latter describes prior attachment to a nation rather than a state. Patriotism is widely used to mean devotion to an already existing, independent state, whereas nationalism is used in a more restricted way to depict the attitude and ideology associated with the struggle for the establishment of a sovereign nation-state."<sup>130</sup> Roshwald has emphasized that these two ideologies have overlapping areas semantically because "treating patriotism as a discrete category, conceptually segregated from nationalism" would be an obstacle to understanding people who have several loyalties to the nation and the state.<sup>131</sup> Through the conceptual definitions of Smith and Roshwald, we can confirm that nationalism and patriotism share similar meanings.<sup>132</sup>

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<sup>128</sup> Susan-Mary Grant, *A Nation before Nationalism: The Civic and Ethnic Construction of America*, in Gerard Delanty and Krishan Kumar (Eds.), *The SAGE Handbook of Nations and Nationalism*. London [etc.]: SAGE, 2006, 536.

<sup>129</sup> Smith, *Ethno-symbolism and Nationalism* (2009), 62-63.

<sup>130</sup> Roshwald, *The Endurance of Nationalism* (2006), 5.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid.

<sup>132</sup> Michael Freeden, "Is Nationalism a Distinct Ideology?" *Political Studies* 46, no. 4 (1998), 764.

Indeed, patriotism towards the nation was almost synonymous with Baptist devotion to faith. In 1976, American historian W. Harrison Daniel announced in his keynote speech that “From the beginning, a cardinal tenet of the church was patriotism...The association of patriotism or nationalism with ecclesiastical aims and policies would be a continuing relationship through subsequent generations of the nation’s history.”<sup>133</sup> At first glance, ‘nationalism’ and ‘patriotism’ seem to be different concepts. Nationalism might have not been a welcome term in America because it has been considered an ideology which originated from Europe and which had had a role in fueling two world wars.

For Baptists, the ideal of American nationalism protected the USA as a Christian nation. Such a religious ideal was different to secular nationalism. Secular nationalism required patriotism and dedication toward the USA as a nation. Such nationalisms raised questions for Baptists who were subject to their own distinct loyalty and devotion to their faith. No Baptist would be free from this question. Theoretically, there is a need to distinguish secular American nationalism and Christian nationalism. In 1976, the latter was concerned with two important issues; civil religion and the separation of state and religion.

First of all, for Baptists, the 1976 presidential election was not an ordinary vote to elect a chief administrator, rather it was a vote to establish America as a Christian nation against civil religion. American sociologist Robert N. Bellah has pointed out that unlike many other nations, the United States has a specific date attached to its origins (July 4, 1776), which gave the nation a unique mythical origin and a kind of sanctity.<sup>134</sup> This mythological origin and belief in the foundation of the United States can be seen as a characteristic of civil religion, and this

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<sup>133</sup> *Southern Baptist News Press*, “Historian Notes Effects of Revolution on Church,” June 10, 1976.

<sup>134</sup> Robert N. Bellah, *The Broken Covenant : American Civil Religion in Time of Trial*. 2nd ed. Chicago [etc.]: University of Chicago Press, 1992, 3-4.

mythological characteristic is somewhat consistent with religious characteristics. Baptists could feel threatened by the traditional values and systems of religion evident in the nature of civil religion. In particular, in the course of the formation of the US nation-state after the American Revolution, American nationalism had been an ideology used to drive the nation building process. American nationalism had granted sanctity to the state, a process in which Christian symbolism had played an important role.<sup>135</sup> American nationalism had shown a tendency to worship the country, like religion, and this can be defined as civil religion. As a result, the civil religion used as a doctrine in the construction of America as a state can be accepted as basically equivalent to American nationalism. In this sense these two concepts formed a belief system that could be seen as potentially threatening to a religion like Christianity.

In 1976, Baptists were interested in the protection of America against civil religion. On the National Baptist Bicentennial Convocation, C. Welton Gaddy, director of Christian citizenship development for the Christian Life Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, warned of the dangers of civil religion to Baptist participants in the conference at the beginning of 1976. Gaddy argued: "my major fear is that civil religion is made synonymous with Christianity... Civil religion represents a fusion of religious principles, cultural mores, and democratic ideals... Civil religion confuses loyalty to the nation with faithfulness to Jesus Christ... Many Americans regard political loyalty more highly than other loyalties."<sup>136</sup> On March, 1976, American theologian Harvey Cox also preached to around six hundreds Baptists about the tendency of Americans to fall into the temptation to devote their loyalty to the nation. The *Southern Baptist News Press* summarized his

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<sup>135</sup> Mark Juergensmeyer, Nationalism and Religion, in Gerard Delanty and Krishan Kumar (Eds.). *The SAGE Handbook of Nations and Nationalism*. London [etc.]: SAGE, 2006, 182-183.

<sup>136</sup> Donald E. Anderson, "Baptist Expresses Cautious Approval of Civil Religion," *Southern Baptist News Press*, January 15, 1976.

speech: “Harvard University theologian cautioned Americans against blindly celebrating the American Revolution during the Bicentennial, urging instead that they continue the Revolution by denouncing American civil religion.”<sup>137</sup>

Baptists assuredly argued for a sense of vigilance against civil religion, which deified the nation as an object deserving of an individual’s highest loyalty. In other words, for Baptists, civil religion was one of the perils which could threaten the establishment of America as a Christian nation. They wanted to elect a president who could protect Christianity against civil religion. They felt it was of paramount important that the American nation adhere to a Christian identity.

More importantly, Baptists wanted to adhere the principle of the separation in 1976. In other words, an emphasis on the principle of the separation was consistently an important issue for Baptists in 1976. The principle, the separation of religion and state, which was proclaimed in the first amendment to the United States, was important to protect national identity for Baptists.<sup>138</sup> On January in 1976, church historian W. Morgan Patterson lectured that “And the goal of separation of church and state was part of their heritage... Baptists did...contribute to the content of what is called Americanism, through their agitation for religious liberty to be safeguarded by effective constitutional guarantees. The fabric of Americanism in its earliest stage was woven in part with the threads of religious conviction, personal determination and courage, a desire to innovate, and freedom from oppressive church authority.”<sup>139</sup> Moreover, James E. Wood Jr., the joint committee’s executive director, argued that “Perhaps no single phrase in our national liturgy is used more often to describe the nature and destiny of America than ‘One Nation Under God’...the

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<sup>137</sup> *Southern Baptist News Press*, “Harvey Cox Warns Against American Civil Religion,” March 24, 1976.

<sup>138</sup> “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.” <https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/bill-of-rights-transcript>

<sup>139</sup> C. E. Bryant, “Baptists, Nation Grew Up Together,” *Southern Baptist News Press*, January 16, 1976.

phrase, 'One Nation Under God,' has also come to be used as a basis of American nationalism. As such, it stands as a potential threat to the free exercise of religion and the separation of church and state."<sup>140</sup> In other words, the expression 'One Nation Under God' may seem to emphasize the principle of separation of church and state, but it implies the possibility that, if stressed in 'One Nation,' the nation as a country would take precedence over religion and would rather violate religious freedom. He argued that religion should carry out its original role, especially that the leadership of the Baptist Church should devote itself to securing religious freedom, not national interests. For Wood Jr., the interests of the country and religion did not coincide but rather that the interests of the country may infringe upon the interests of religion.<sup>141</sup>

The Baptist emphasis on the principle of separation of church and state presupposes the eventual prioritization of religious interests. The concerns for the separation of church and state by Baptists can lead to the argument that Baptist believers were more loyal to the church rather than the state. Weber said "Using the subject, 'Let the Church Stand Up...the Baptists that their forefathers, only a handful in number and a ridiculed people, made a great contribution to the religious liberties the nation enjoys now...Roger Williams, Isaac Backus, and John Leland...the struggles of early Baptist leaders for the adoption of the First Amendment to the Constitution guaranteeing religious liberty for all."<sup>142</sup>

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<sup>140</sup> *Southern Baptist News Press*, "Baptist Agency Opposes Public Programs for TM," October 7, 1976.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.* "It may well be that the most important problem confronting the church in our public life today lies in the Widespread use of religion for political purposes, Wood continued. God and religion are not national resources which our nation can possess or contain within our national life; nor is God some national resource we can harness or use to serve our national interests. The churches must insist on the exercise of the prophetic role of religion, he said. The Baptist Joint Committee does not exist to serve the national interests of either the United States or Canada, but rather to give authentic Christian witness to matters affecting public policy, as the exercise of our religious liberty."

<sup>142</sup> Roy Jennings, "Weber Urges SBC to Vote For Men of Principle," *Southern Baptist News Press*, June 15, 1976.

Additionally, after the 1976 presidential election, the principle of separation of church and state remained an important issue. Harold C. Bennett, who was executive secretary-treasurer of the SBC Executive Committee, argued: “but we also must be left free to function without government intervention...I support strongly the principles related to the separation of church and state and religious freedom.”<sup>143</sup>

To sum up, the issues of civil religion and the principle of separation were important. As discussed above, the concept of nation played a significant role in encouraging Baptists in the course of dispersing these issues. The prerequisite of America as a nation was a core idea to gather support from Baptists. However, how did this American nationalism of Baptists link to their support for Jimmy Carter in the 1976 presidential election? The answers might be found in Carter's autobiography, speeches, and other publications, in which the concept of nation is mentioned both implicitly and explicitly.

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<sup>143</sup> *Southern Baptist News Press*, “SBC, Others To Examine Government Intervention,” December 22, 1980.

## **Chapter 3: Jimmy Carter and the word 'Nation'**

### 3.1. Signals from Jimmy Carter's autobiography *Why Not the Best?*

American nationalism gave Baptists a cause to vote for Carter. Jimmy Carter used nationalist words and stories in his work. Carter's rhetoric continuously expressed specifically American nationalist concepts. Meanwhile, publications of the Southern Baptists such as the Southern Baptist News Press disseminated nationalistic expressions and connected them to support for Jimmy Carter. Those signals urged Baptists to maintain their support for Carter by evoking American nationhood. Consequently Baptists supported Carter because he would be able to protect America as a Christian nation.

Jimmy Carter employed the concepts of 'nation' and 'country' separately. Carter referred more frequently to the concept of the nation, rather than country, when referring to the United States of America and its people. In particular, Carter often mentioned the concept of the nation in his interviews. This tendency was even more remarkable in Carter's publications, the readers of which were drawn in significant numbers from religious groups, such as the Baptists (which I will explain in more detail later on). Carter did not completely eschew the word 'country' when referring to the United States of America, however it can be seen that Carter mainly used the concept of country to refer to the United States in secular media and interviews. The use of the term 'nation' can be considered to reflect Carter's selective affinity, because the understanding of the concept of nation can be different on the person, as we discussed in the previous chapter (cf. 26-27).

In an interview with the *Washington Post* on March 21, 1976, Carter mainly referred to people living in the U.S. as ‘the people in this country.’<sup>144</sup> He said, “I think there are two issues of substance that are generic in nature. They seem obvious to me. The people in this country are intensely patriotic, they love their government so much it almost hurts.”<sup>145</sup>

Compared with Carter, Republican presidential candidate Gerald Ford used the concept of country more often. After winning the primaries in 1976, Carter and Ford’s presidential acceptance speeches clearly illustrated this difference. In Carter’s acceptance speech for the Democratic presidential nomination on July 15, 1976, Carter used the term ‘our people’ ten times. In comparison, Ford used the term ‘our people’ only once in his acceptance speech for the Republican presidential nomination on August 20, 1976. Ford referred mainly to the United States of America and the American public using the word country. Carter also emphasized America’s national history in his presidential nomination speech, trying to invoke a national consciousness in the American people. Carter argued, “Nineteen seventy-six will not be a year of politics as usual. It can be a year of inspiration and hope and it will be a year of concern, a quiet and sober reassessment of our nation’s character and purpose, a year when voters already have confounded the experts, and I guarantee you that it will be the year we give the Government of this country back to the people of this country.”<sup>146</sup>

In addition, in this acceptance speech, Carter emphasized the historical significance of American history and the need for the United States to set an example for other nations. He said, “America’s birth opened a new chapter in mankind’s history. Ours was the first nation to dedicate

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<sup>144</sup> “JIMMY CARTER: THE CANDIDATE ON THE ISSUES: AN INTERVIEW.” *The Washington Post (1974-Current File)*, Mar 21, 1976. <https://search.proquest.com/docview/146430785?accountid=12045>.

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>146</sup> “Transcript of Carter Address Accepting Democratic Nomination for Presidency.” *New York Times (1923-Current File)*, Jul 16, 1976. <https://search.proquest.com/docview/122889639?accountid=12045>.

itself clearly to basic morals and philosophical principles: that all people are created equal and endowed with inalienable rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness...This, this national commitment, was a singular act of wisdom and courage and it brought the best and the bravest from other nations to our shores...It created a basis for a unique role for America.”<sup>147</sup>

Carter's efforts to awaken national consciousness were very prominent in his short autobiography published in 1975. One of the reasons that Carter, who was fairly obscure in Washington's political scene, wrote his book was to introduce himself to Americans ahead of the start of the 1976 presidential election campaign. Through this book Carter wanted to win favor with American voters, specifically religious people.

Carter's autobiography, consisting of sixteen chapters, addressed his childhood and growth, his youth as a Navy officer, his days working at a peanut farm and his political experience as the governor of Georgia. At the end of the book, Carter explains why he was running for president and what he wanted to do. In the book, Carter mentioned the concept of nation very frequently, and ultimately suggested that he was the right person to lead the United States. Carter's book can be seen as having five characteristics that stimulated a nationalistic awakening in its readers. First, Carter referred to the United States and Americans mainly through the concept of nation. Second, Carter stressed that 1976 marked the 200th anniversary of the founding of the United States and thus was a very important watershed in its national history. Third, Carter associated the American people with the American territory, usually by emphasizing the contributions Americans had made to the nation, respecting the public as having an important role in the country's national history. Fourth, Carter tried to promote American pride by claiming that the United States was the foremost

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<sup>147</sup> Ibid.

nation among nations. Fifth, Carter sought to overcome both the Watergate scandal and the damage done to the United States' image by the Vietnam War by emphasizing that there was hope and possibility for the Nation's image and its history to be improved. It was a combination of the following expressions and content in this book which he used to try to awaken American nationalistic sentiment.

First, as in his public speeches Carter referred to the United States and Americans primarily through the concept of nation. He wrote, "There is only one nation in the world which is capable of true leadership among the community of nations, and that is the United States of America."<sup>148</sup> Carter seems to have enjoyed expressing the concept of nation rather than country. This trend is more pronounced in the context of comparing foreign countries and the U.S.<sup>149</sup> Carter also liked to use the expression 'my nation.'<sup>150</sup> This tendency is similar to his 1976 Democratic presidential candidate acceptance speech. This is even more pronounced in the latter part of the book. Carter referred to the United States and Americans by using the term 'nation' in the section that explains the strategy of the 1976 presidential election. "Our strategy was simple: make a total effort all over the nation."<sup>151</sup> In Chapter 16, Carter concludes his book by saying; "Our nation's security is obviously of paramount importance...Our ultimate goal should be the elimination of nuclear weapon capability among all nations...In our nation's third century, we must meet these simple but crucial standards."<sup>152</sup> Carter used the term 'nation' frequently when he was making significant points.

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<sup>148</sup> Jimmy Carter, *Why Not the Best?* Nashville, Tenn.: Broadman Press, 1975, 123.

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.*, 124-127.

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.*, 141-142.

<sup>151</sup> *Ibid.*, 141.

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*, 153-154.

Second, Carter stressed that 1976 was the 200th anniversary of the founding of the United States and emphasized how it marked an important watershed in the nation's history. Carter continued to highlight what the bicentenary of the establishment of the United States meant, explaining that the purpose of the book was primarily to express his view of the nation. Carter said, "as we observe the two hundredth birthday of our nation... This is an autobiographical book, written by one who is still actively involved in politics. But it is not a political autobiography. It is written as a kind of summing up of my opinions about our nation-based on my own observations and experiences."<sup>153</sup>

By linking this one implication of the American nation's 200 years with his own personal anecdotes, Carter made it possible for the American voters that read his autobiography to see him as a candidate who loved the history of the American nation and who could be given its national legacy rightly. Carter said, "we must remember that our nation still retains its own inherent greatness... On September 5, 1974, I met with the governors of the other twelve original states in Philadelphia. It was exactly 200 years after the convening of the First Continental Congress as we walked down those same historic streets, then turned left, and listened to the same prayer and sat in the same chairs once occupied in 1774 by Samuel Adams, John Jay, John Adams, Patrick Henry, George Washington, and about forty-five other strong and often opinionated leaders."<sup>154</sup> This 200-year motif reemerges in the section of the book where Carter explained his family history; "I have been able to determine this was-at that time-the most advanced education of any Carter man since our family moved to Georgia more than 200 years ago."<sup>155</sup>

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<sup>153</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid., 17.

Carter also emphasized how he and his wife Rosalynn's family, had lived in the United States since the country's early history; "the Carter family cemetery is located a few miles north of Plains, and the first person buried there was Wiley Carter, born in 1798. My ancestors moved into the area from Northeast Georgia shortly after the Indians moved out around 1830. Rosalynn's family cemetery is located a few miles South of Plains, and her first ancestor to live there, Drury Murray, was born in 1787...Our children will be the sixth generation to own the same land."<sup>156</sup>

Third, Carter combined Americans and American territories, highlighting that the people had significant meaning in American national history, usually by emphasizing the contributions Americans had made throughout American national history. Carter emphasized ordinary peoples' attachment to America's land, just as he stressed the connection between his family and his wife's family to American history and land. Carter argued that it was ordinary people with an attachment to the land that ultimately decided great conflicts, such as the Napoleonic invasion of Russia;

*"The book (War and Peace) is about the French army under Napoleon, who believed that he was destined to be the conqueror of the world. He attacked Russia with every expectation of an early victory, but he underestimated the severity of the Russian winter and the love of the peasants for their land...one of the most important events in modern history. This was the crucial campaign of Napoleon, who led the greatest army ever assembled until then-with fighting men from twenty nations...The course of history was changed as great men struggled for military and political power. But the book is not written about the Emperor or the Czar. It is mostly about the students, farmers, barbers, housewives, and common soldiers."*<sup>157</sup>

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<sup>156</sup> Ibid., 61.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid., 31-32.

Carter's affection for America's territory, more specifically, nature, is also expressed as his will to protect it. Carter did not assert an economic rationale for his conservation policies, but rather focused on romanticized descriptions of American nature; "our favorite place was Cumberland Island, off the Southeast Georgia coast...We observed alligators and pileated woodpeckers, and fished for bass in the fresh water lake...An hour in a flat boat would produce enough conches, clams, and oysters to last our family for several days, and wild pigs were always available...Some of the northernmost of Georgia's coastal islands still contain the ruins of European settlements...almost a hundred years before the first English settlers landed at Jamestown."<sup>158</sup> Carter's romantic portrayal of nature conveyed to the American electorate his attachment to American territory, which sent a message that he was the right man to defend the land.

Fourth, Carter wanted to promote American pride by claiming that America was the foremost nation among nations. Carter's way of calling the American public 'nation' was more prominent when referring to American foreign relations. Carter described the U.S. as a 'nation' and other countries as 'nations' often in the context of American foreign relations; "there is only one nation in the world which is capable of true leadership among the community of nations, and that is the United States of America...In addition to learning about the business and political affairs and becoming acquainted with the leaders of other nations," etc.<sup>159</sup>

Fifth, Carter sought to restore American pride lost in the Watergate scandal and the Vietnam War by emphasizing that there was hope and possibility that the American image could be rebuilt. Carter expressed his respect for the public by highlighting the experiences of ordinary

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<sup>158</sup> Ibid., 120-121.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid., 123-125.

Americans. Carter stressed that it was the honest and courageous public who could restore the American moral values which had been tarnished by the Watergate scandal; “I begin to realize how vulnerable our political system was to an accumulation of unchallenged power. Honest and courageous people could be quieted when they came to realize that outspoken opposition was fruitless.”<sup>160</sup> Carter had argued that ordinary people’s courage could change politics. This would have been enough motivation for the American public to like Carter and helps to explain why he received so much public support.

Carter stressed, particularly in the final chapter of the autobiography, that so far Americans, or the public, had been excluded from the U.S. political decision-making process. Carter insisted that “for too long political leaders have been isolated from the people. They have made decisions from an ivory tower. Few have ever seen personally the direct impact of government programs involving welfare, prisons, mental institutions, unemployment, school busing, or public housing. Our people feel that they have little access to the core of government and little influence with elected officials.”<sup>161</sup> Soon after, Carter declared that the power to solve these problems lay with the American people, the ordinary people; “now it is time for this chasm between people and government to be bridged, and for American citizens to join in shaping our nation’s future.”<sup>162</sup>

As we have seen, Carter referred to both the U.S. and the American people using the term ‘nation.’ It seems clear that Carter appealed to the public for support, and that the important wording that connected him to the masses was the concept of a nation. This was a strategic word choice which allowed ordinary voters in the U.S. to feel a certain closeness with Carter. This approach also encouraged Christians, including Baptists, to believe that Carter was the right person

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<sup>160</sup> Ibid., 85.

<sup>161</sup> Ibid., 145.

<sup>162</sup> Ibid., 145-146.

to protect America's Christian identity. Carter, contrary to what is known, did not actively express his religious integrity to voters. Carter's aides had been concerned that Carter's excessive religious beliefs could adversely affect the election. Rather than discussing the religious experience and employing confessional language, Carter focused on America's moral recovery and the renewal of American values. Carter's detailed account of his faith and religious life made up only a small part of his autobiography. Carter spoke frankly about his experience of not paying his contribution to Sunday school as a child; "I had been to my Sunday School class, and as was his custom Daddy have given me a penny for the offering... There was two pennies lying there. Daddy thus discovered that when they passed the collection plate I had taken out an extra penny, instead of putting mine in for the offering."<sup>163</sup> It was his last crime in his life; "That was the last money I ever stole."<sup>164</sup>

In short, it is very clear that Jimmy Carter used the word nation very often. It is also clear that Carter sought to convey to the American public his views on what 1976 meant in America's national history and what he felt the foundation myths of the state should mean today. Carter's autobiography, published in 1975, was a good means to transfer his ideas to ordinary voters in the United States of America. These kinds of ideas can be considered an aspect of American nationalism. The following section of the present thesis will address how this American nationalism was conveyed to American Christians.

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<sup>163</sup> Ibid., 17.

<sup>164</sup> Ibid.

### 3.2. *Why Not the Best?* and the Southern Baptists

How was Carter's idea of America as a nation transferred to American Baptists? Carter's 1975 autobiography revealed themes of American nationalism as he made frequent reference to the concept of the nation. According to the *Southern Baptist News Press* on May 24, 1976, *Why Not the Best?*, which had very successfully spread across the United States of America, helped to raise his nationwide reputation. According to James W. Clark, director of the Broadman division of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board; "Broadman is promoting the book through advertising and sales as we would any book we publish. Carter's national political prominence has prompted increased attention for the book not only from the standpoint of sales but also interest from other publishers."<sup>165</sup>

The book was also published by another publishing company that even more popular than Broadman; "Bantam Books, a major paperback publisher in the United States, has been granted permission by Broadman Press to publish the fast-selling book in paperback form for nationwide marketing in secular bookstores. Bantam considered the Carter book important enough to make it an "extra," meaning it will not be held to normal publishing schedules, but will be printed immediately. Bantam has selected approximately a dozen extras in its history. On the first printing, Bantam will release 150,000 copies of the book, making a total of approximately 250,000 copies in print."<sup>166</sup> Which proved that Carter's autobiography was not only favored by religious-leaning readers like Baptists, but also by non-religiously-minded readers.

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<sup>165</sup> Jim Lowry, "Carter Book Target Of Recent Criticism," *Southern Baptist News Press*, May 24, 1976.

<sup>166</sup> *Ibid.*

Indeed, hundreds of thousands of copies of Carter's autobiography were sold less than a year after it was published. Clark revealed that "Nearly 800,000 copies of former Georgia Governor Jimmy Carter's autobiography, *Why Not the Best?*", are in print less than one year after release, making it the fastest selling book ever published by Broadman Press. The Democratic presidential nominee's national political prominence has drawn attention to the book from some unexpected places."<sup>167</sup> One of the reasons was that it was the only book Carter wrote ahead of the 1976 presidential election. Clark argued that "part of the book's popularity could be that Broadman's book is the only one written by Carter, a Southern Baptist deacon and trustee for the Southern Baptist Brotherhood Commission. All other books written about him are by observers and listeners on the presidential campaign trail."<sup>168</sup> As Clark said, the autobiography showed Carter's unique ideas about the U.S. and Americans very clearly. The popularity of the book attests to the fact that there were many people who agreed with his ideas.

In particular, Carter's autobiography was popular with the Baptists who attended the Baptist Convention held in mid-June 1976. Whilst Ford, another presidential contender, promoted himself through his speech at the Baptist Convention, Carter, who was not invited to the event, was forced to promote himself to Baptists through the autobiography alone. However, Carter's modest public relations strategy achieved considerable success. "While President Gerald Ford was addressing the Southern Baptist Convention, copies of a book written by his probable Democratic opponent, Jimmy Carter were selling in the Convention Book Store at the expected pace. Actually, 200 to 250 of these books have already been sold." (on the first day of the convention), said an official of Broadman Press, the original publishers of *Why Not the Best?*<sup>169</sup>

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<sup>167</sup> *Southern Baptist News Press*, "Carter Book Sales Reported Rapid," August 16, 1976.

<sup>168</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>169</sup> Jennifer Bryon, "Jimmy Carter Book Best-seller At SBC," *Southern Baptist News Press*, June 15, 1976.

At the same time, Carter's absence from the Baptists' biggest annual conference served to illustrate another aspect of his politics. As addressed in the previous chapter, Carter was a presidential candidate who respected and defended the principle of separation of church and state, and this book served as a reminder of that to Baptists. Even though Carter could have attended the annual event, in his usual humble manner he expressed his willingness to respect the principle of separation of church and state with his absence from the Baptist conference, as is shown in an interview in May 11, 1976. When an interviewer asked Carter about his future absence from the scheduled Baptist event in June, Carter replies: "I have had no adverse reaction to that. I don't feel excluded by not being invited this year, I spoke to the Southern Baptist Convention when it met in Dallas in 1974 and introduced Gerald Ford (then vice president) at the Brotherhood Commission sponsored prayer breakfast."<sup>170</sup>

Carter was able to win public support, especially from Baptists, through his short autobiography published in 1975. In particular, the frequently mentioned word 'nation' in the book must have been more favorable to Baptists who were interested in defending America's national Christian identity. In particular, the concept of nation served as a concept that could encompass American identity for both Christian and non-Christian American citizens.

More importantly, the word 'nation' had a special importance for Christians, especially for Baptists with an intimate knowledge of the Bible. In the King James Bible the word 'nation' appears 137 times, and the word 'nations' 319 times. When Baptists heard and read the word 'nation' in Jimmy Carter's work, it may have reminded them of Christian faith, value, history, ideas, etc. In the Southern Baptist Convention in June of 1976, the Bible was certainly the most popular

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<sup>170</sup> *Southern Baptist News Press*, "Jimmy Carter Talks About Religion and Politics," May 11, 1976.

reading material amongst participants. According to the *Southern Baptist News Press*, “the Bible is the all-time bestselling book. It is also the bestseller at the SBC book store every year, Broadman officials said. Approximately 6,000 copies of the Bible were brought to Norfolk for the 3-day Convention.”<sup>171</sup>

The Living Bible has been especially popular with evangelical Christians, including Baptists, since it was published in 1971. “The Living Bible, a Bible paraphrase published by Tyndale House, was the most successful book of nonfiction in 1972 and again in 1973... The Living Bible, having sold more than 18 million copies in all, was one of those being sold at a special price at the Convention book store.”<sup>172</sup>

The American public’s high interest in such a Bible proves that it was a very familiar book to the American public. At the same time, it supports the familiarity of the American Christians with the word, ‘nation,’ that appears in the Bible. The concept of nation Carter used frequently would have made American Christians feel affinity with the Democratic candidate. Carter showed his intimacy with the Bible in his work, often citing Bible verses in his 1975 autobiography. “I begin to read the Bible with a new interest and perspective, and to understand more clearly the admonitions about pride and self-satisfaction. I read again the parable (Luke 18:10-13) about the Pharisee who came into the Temple and said... “God, be merciful to me a sinner!” For the first time I saw that *I* was the Pharisee.”<sup>173</sup>

Moreover, Jimmy Carter cited the Book of Micah 6:8 in the Bible to illustrate a blueprint for his administration of state affairs at the presidential inauguration ceremony held in January

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<sup>171</sup> Jennifer Bryon, “Jimmy Carter Book Best-seller At SBC,” *Southern Baptist News Press*, June 15, 1976.

<sup>172</sup> Ibid.

<sup>173</sup> Carter, Jimmy. *Why Not the Best?* Nashville, Tenn.: Broadman Press, 1975, 133.

1977. More precisely, he made a vow by using the words of the Old Testament prophet to describe the kind of mindset he would employ in his role as President.

*“President Jimmy Carter took his oath of office with his hand on Micah 6:8 in the Bible given to him by his mother a few years ago. This prophetic admonition for social justice also set the tone for the new President’s inaugural speech. Micah exhorted, “He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God” (KJV). Carter’s 15-minute speech was interrupted frequently by applause and shouts of approval from the crowd of more than 100,000 people who jammed the east side of the Capitol grounds.”<sup>174</sup>*

Indeed, Carter had carefully considered which biblical phrase to quote in his inaugural speech. Carter had originally intended to quote the Second Chronicles in the Bible, but with strong advice from his aides, he cited the Micah. “President Carter observed...The President explained that when he was preparing his inaugural address, he included II Chronicles 7:14 in his text, but that his staff insisted that the people of the country objected because they might think he was being proud and would misunderstand his motivation. He used Micah 6:8 instead.”<sup>175</sup> This anecdote showed how important the Bible was in the course of writing the political message of the new American president. It also proves that the American public, including Carter’s supporters, were interested in the Christian identity, value, moral, and ideals represented by the Bible.

To sum up, the word choice by Jimmy Carter was not accidental. Carter was interested in the Bible and had greater affinity to the term nation than to other words, such as country or state.

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<sup>174</sup> W. Barry Garrett, “Carter's Inaugural Speech Based on Bible Concepts,” *Southern Baptist News Press*, January 21, 1977.

<sup>175</sup> W. Barry Garrett, “President Hits Pride At National Prayer Breakfast,” *Southern Baptist News Press*, January 27, 1977.

Carter's intentional maneuver seems to have contributed to his success in the 1976 presidential election as many American Christians shared his affinity for the Bible. In the course of communication between Carter and Christians, including Baptists, the word, 'nation' played a crucial role, as it evoked how Carter could be the right presidential candidate to promote the Christian national identity of the United States of America.

## Conclusion

This thesis has found an alternative answer by arguing that the election of Jimmy Carter was possible thanks to American nationalism, which was permeated with religion. This argument is underpinned by empirical pieces of evidence in many texts, speeches, and newspapers related to former American president Jimmy Carter and the Southern Baptists. It has been observed that American nationalism played an important role in the 1976 presidential election in the United States of America.

Above all, American nationalism was a key element that stimulated Southern Baptists to support Carter, despite suspicions regarding his religiosity which emerged after his interview with *Playboy* magazine. It has shown that there was another factor behind Baptist support for Carter. It was American nationalism expressed as a desire to defend the United States of America as a Christian nation.

Indeed, American nationalism can be observed in the nationalist words and stories that have been found in Carter's autobiography, interviews, and speeches. They were positive signs as to why Baptists should cast a vote for Carter which evoked American nationhood. They were echoed by diligent supporters like the *Southern Baptist News Press*, which disseminated nationalistic expressions nationwide.

It can be said that American nationalism is a real phenomenon and that it influenced the history of the United States of America. It is clear that the result of a mock vote by the young Baptists in early 1976 (as mentioned in the Introduction, cf. 2), ended with Ford's victory, but only a few months later the Baptists endorsed Carter. One factor that can help to explain such a significant change is American nationalism. Carter frequently mentioned and emphasized the word,

'nation,' bringing together both the United States of America and its people into a conceptual national community. Additionally, it seems that Carter's strategy was successful.

This perspective is insightful but it has its limitations. As discussed above in Chapter 2, the concept of the nation itself is controversial. Even the United States of America is a country of citizens with various national identities. It is still a matter of debate as to how the concept of the nation itself has been understood in the history of this multinational country.

Hence, this thesis focused on and described an aspect of American nationalism in the year 1976 with empirical evidence. The significance of this thesis is that it promotes an academic interest in American nationalism and also provides a compelling basis for explaining Carter's election to the presidency in 1976. Also, this study is significant in that it did not approach nationalism as a sociological discourse, but rather investigated the reality of nationalism by focusing on the historical event of Carter's election. Thus, it could be a humble stepping stone towards an interdisciplinary approach combining history and sociology.

Ironically, Carter did not receive much support from Baptists, especially conservative one, in the 1980 election and became one of five incumbent presidents in U.S. history who failed to be re-elected. Why did Carter fail to be re-elected, and what does American nationalism have to do with this failure? What is the difference between Carter's position and strategy in the 1976 presidential election and the 1980 presidential election, and what relationship did Carter have with American nationalism during his presidency? These research topics emerged within this thesis as a result of this study. They could certainly be explored in future studies on this topic.

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