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October 8, 2007: The Fall of the Religious Right

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Title: The Fall of the Religious Right

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10/8/2007—In a story in the Sunday New York Times, Laurie Goodstein chronicled how the religious right has “taken a tumble”. The movement is splintered among several GOP candidates for President, is being taken for granted by the frontrunners, and is panicked by the possible nomination of pro-choice/pro-gay Rudy Giuliani. Plus, polls show that Evangelical Christians are divided on a number of issues, for example global warming, that go beyond the recent emphasis on abortion and gay rights. This is making it harder for the movement to maintain its political influence. In this context, it is good to remind my readers of the premise of my book, *American Religious Democracy*. The point of the book was the establishment of the legitimacy of religion in American politics, despite the earnest effort after WWII to create a genuinely secular politics. That newly reestablished legitimacy is not going away, as the constant God-talk by Democratic candidates for President demonstrates. Secularists must come to terms with religion. This is so not only for obvious short-term political reasons. Unless secularists and religious people can genuinely cooperate, there never will be a popular, progressive movement in America. The troubles of the religious right do not lessen this imperative in the slightest. I should add, though, that I think the political troubles of the religious right are exaggerated. There is not the slightest chance the Republican Party will nominate Giuliani for President. The media thinks his nomination is possible because the media is New York centered and oriented to secularism. And, if Senator Clinton is the Democratic nominee, which seems increasingly likely, the religious right will organize in an aggressive fashion that, whether successful or not, will remind everyone of its political power.