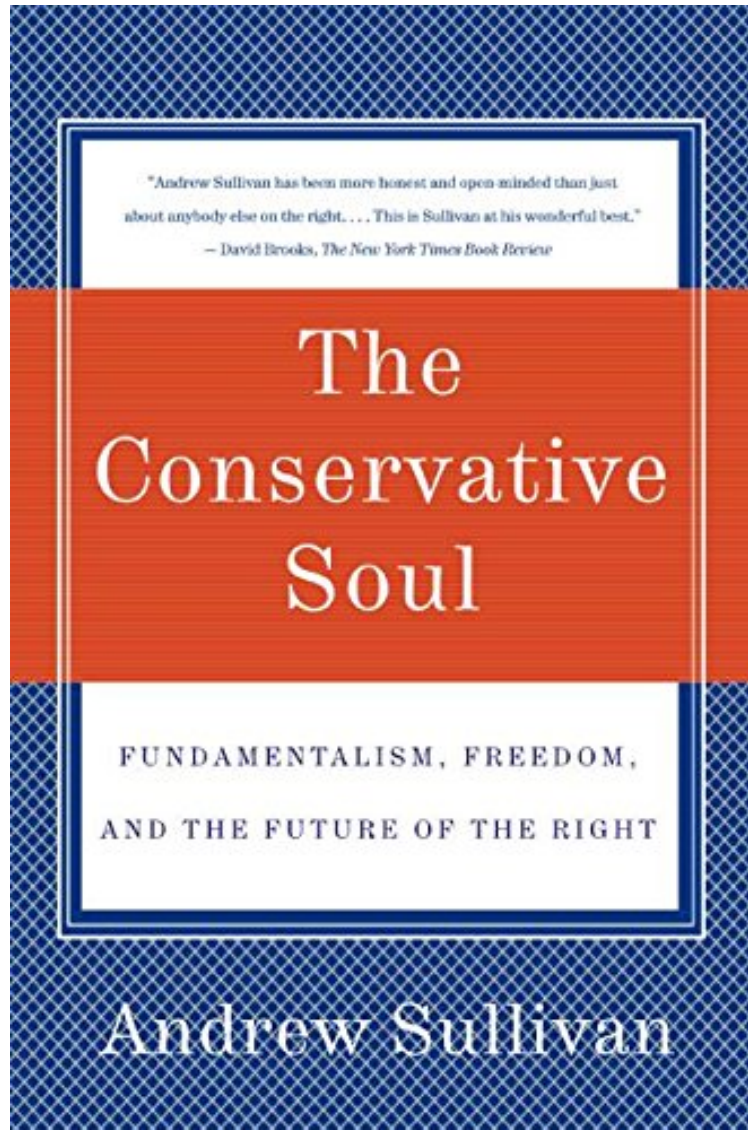


The Conservative Soul: Fundamentalism, Freedom, and the Future of the Right

Andrew Sullivan

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#594748 in Books Andrew Sullivan 2007-10-09 2007-10-09 Original language: English PDF # 1 8.00 x .68 x 5.311, .51 #File Name: 0060934379304 pages The Conservative Soul Fundamentalism Freedom and the Future of the Right | File size: 21.Mb

Andrew Sullivan : The Conservative Soul: Fundamentalism, Freedom, and the Future of the Right before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Conservative Soul: Fundamentalism, Freedom, and the Future of the Right:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Focus on the means and not the ends By Michael Zucker This book

does more than explore conservative politics. It takes you on an adventure through philosophy and uncovers the mindset of the fundamentalists who are strangling the Republican Party. Sullivan takes an original, clever look at the leadership style of former President Bush, and shows why conservatism is a unique ideology. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. DefinitiveBy AnonymousBelievable beyond words. Sullivan is not running for any elective office, which makes his work refreshingly rare. You will not regret the time spent digesting this book. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five StarsBy Michael HerrleEverything that was advertised

Today's conservatives support the idea of limited government, but they have increased government's size and power to new heights. They believe in balanced budgets, but they have boosted government spending, debt, and pork to record levels. They believe in national security but launched a reckless, ideological occupation in Iraq that has made us tangibly less safe. They have substituted religion for politics and damaged both. In *The Conservative Soul*, one of the nation's leading political commentators makes an impassioned call to rescue conservatism from the excesses of the Republican far right, which has tried to make the GOP the first fundamentally religious party in American history. In this bold and powerful book, Andrew Sullivan makes a provocative, prescient, and heartfelt case for a revived conservatism at peace with the modern world, and dedicated to restraining government and empowering individuals to live rich and fulfilling lives.

From Publishers WeeklyAs editor of the *New Republic* and on his blog *The Daily Dish*, Sullivan has been a major conservative voice in U.S. politics for 15 years. Now, he attempts "to account for what one individual person means by conservatism" not repudiating his former political beliefs but trying to "rescue" modern U.S. political conservatism from "the current [Christian] fundamentalist supremacy" that now dominates it. Sullivan (*Love Undetectable*) has a breezy, readable style that allows him to address such diverse issues as religious fundamentalism's reliance on "the literal words of the Bible," the "excessive witch-hunt" surrounding Clinton, and the secular Enlightenment foundations of the Constitution. He's most approachable when he writes autobiographically through a critical lens "Looking back I see this phase of my faith life as a temporary and neurotic reaction to a new and bewildering school environment." But that reflection is not as readily apparent when he makes sweeping pronouncements on politics ("post-modern discourse... opposed basic notions of Western freedom: of speech, of trade, of religion"). Much of the book is a meditation on his own evolving faith as a devout Catholic and will appeal most to readers interested in personal religious evolution. (Oct. 3) Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. About the Author Andrew Sullivan is one of today's most provocative social and political commentators. An essayist for *Time* magazine, a columnist for *The Sunday Times* of London, and a senior editor at *The New Republic*, he is also the editor of "The Daily Dish," one of the most widely read political blogs on the Web. He lives in Washington, D.C. From *The Washington Post* I don't spend much time in Washington; maybe it's different down there. But let me tell you, out here in the wilds of the New Jersey suburbs, it is pure hell being a Republican these days, or a conservative, which used to be the same thing. The party I grew up in, which stood for fiscal discipline and strong defense and avoided the sloppiness and stained dresses of so many good-hearted Democratic administrations, seems to have been conquered by people who think stem-cell research is murder, who want to ban unpopular sex acts and who have proven incapable of managing such basic government tasks as disaster relief and a war. A war! That used to be the one thing you knew the GOP could run efficiently. Now, well, now it's gotten to the point where I'm just too embarrassed to admit that I'm a Republican. Conservatism is facing a crisis that won't be solved, one suspects, merely by switching presidents. To those of us far removed from Beltway philosophical battles, Andrew Sullivan -- a columnist for *Time* magazine, a prominent blogger and a senior editor at the *New Republic* -- might seem an unusual candidate to parse the problem. He's British. He's Catholic. He's gay. But Sullivan is also smart and well read, and in his new book, *The Conservative Soul*, he calmly and rationally attempts to deduce the malady that in barely 15 years has rendered Reagan-era conservatism all but unrecognizable. The pathogen he identifies is Christian fundamentalism. *The Conservative Soul*, in fact, is one of several similar books issued this fall that collectively serve as a call to arms to American elites to put down their *New York Times* crossword puzzles and their glasses of Fum Blanc and wake up to the idea that the fundamentalists most dangerous to our future are not Islamic and foreign but Christian and homegrown. Sullivan's is at once an obvious yet much-needed siren; his text calls to mind the book Mary Lefkowitz wrote several years back, *Not Out of Africa*, to rebut charges that the foundations of ancient Greek culture were built by black Africans. Afrocentrism was so nutty that most intellectuals couldn't be bothered to answer it. The same, I fear, is true for Christian fundamentalism. Its political tenets are so addlebrained and its leaders so difficult to take seriously that it's only now -- after the country has been run by a born-again Christian for six years -- that thinkers like Sullivan realize that it's time for reasonable people to do something about it. *The Conservative Soul*, unfortunately, is not only too polite but too high-minded to galvanize anyone without a graduate degree in philosophy. This is not a bad thing, just a warning. If you belong to the Elks Club, apply catsup to your scrambled eggs or have ever read anything by Ann Coulter, this is not a book for you. It is written by a card-carrying intellectual and aimed at card-carrying intellectuals. Sullivan wades deep into the high grasses here; he is more interested in Hegel, Hobbes and Leo Strauss

than anyone you've seen arguing on television, much less voted for. Further, the book doesn't really explain how conservatism lost its soul, just that it did, and it doesn't offer any real prescription for getting it back. Instead, and this is the book's great value, Sullivan takes us back to basics -- we're talking Plato here -- to remind us of the bedrock differences in the two schools of belief that, like squabbling conjoined twins, inhabit the Republican Party's tortured body. The first half of *The Conservative Soul*, which explores the philosophical underpinnings of Christian fundamentalism and explains how they are anathema to a free society, made me as angry as anything I've read in months. That there are people in 21st-century America who believe the Bible is literally true, who believe the Earth was created 6,000 years ago, and who believe that our lives today should be dictated by codes of conduct written by people who lived 2,000 years before modern medicine, electricity or equal rights -- and that these same Americans have influence in national affairs -- should infuriate anyone with a functioning mind. Fundamentalism, Sullivan reminds us, is the antithesis of reason. Its adherents -- Christian, Muslim, Jewish or otherwise -- have been handed The Truth and cling to it, facts be damned. Quoting figures as varied as Pope Benedict XVI and Sen. Rick Santorum (R-Pa.), Sullivan repeatedly emphasizes how fundamentalism abhors the thinking mind, insisting that an individual's conscious choices -- whether to have an abortion or what to order at Burger King -- amount to moral anarchy. In the book's second half, Sullivan switches from anger to nostalgia, reaching back to remind us of the things that made Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher's brand of conservatism so appealing and so successful as a mode of governance. He traces the influence of fundamentalists to Bill Clinton's various personal deficiencies, which triggered a moral counterattack from Christian leaders who felt they knew something about morality. It's a good story, but Sullivan doesn't tell it with any narrative grace. Instead, he gnashes his teeth in frustration at the changes this period brought to conservatism. It's the hallmark of his book -- a fine intellectual effort that, for all Sullivan's clear thinking and clear prose, probably won't change any minds that fundamentalist beliefs haven't already ossified. ed by Bryan Burrough Copyright 2006, The Washington Post. All Rights Reserved.