



# Republican Theology: The Civil Religion of American Evangelicals

*Benjamin T. Lynerd*

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White evangelicals occupy strange property on the ideological map in America, exhibiting a pronounced commitment to the principle of limited government, and yet making a significant exception for issues relating to personal morality - an exception many observers take to be paradoxical at best. Explanations of this phenomenon usually point to the knotty political alliance evangelicals built with free-market types in the late twentieth century, but sermonic evidence suggests a deeper and longer intellectual thread, one that has pervaded evangelical thought all the way back to the American founding.

In *Republican Theology*, Benjamin Lynerd offers an historical and theological account of the hybrid position evangelicals have long affected to hold in American culture - as champions of individual liberty *and* as guardians of American morality. Lynerd documents the development of a resilient, if problematic, tradition in American political thought, one that sees a free republic, a virtuous people, and an assertive Christianity as mutually dependent. Situating the recent rise of the "New Right" within this larger framework, *Republican Theology* traces the contentious political journey of evangelicals from its earliest moments, laying bare the conceptual tensions built into their civil religion.

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