

## Op-Ed: Farewell Mr. Falwell

By [Bill Pritchard](#)

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From Grandson Of An Atheist, Son Of An Agnostic, Falwell Became Self-appointed Crusader for Christian Morality

May 15, 2007, the reverend [Jerry Falwell](#) dies at age 73. Like many others, I have some mixed feelings about this piece of news. For over 50 years Falwell has been preaching against homosexuality, a woman's right to choose and a whole host of things.

Shortly after the 1973 Supreme Court ruling of Roe v. Wade that gave women the right to have an abortion came through, Falwell founded the Moral Majority, the Christian right political movement, and made politics what it is today. Using the Moral Majority as a bully pulpit to argue against abortion, the LGBT community, pornography, Jews and until recently civil rights, Falwell became an icon of controversy, notoriously saying AIDS is God's punishment for homosexuality.

His most famous statement was in regard to September Eleventh saying, "I really believe that the pagans, and the abortionists, and the feminists, and the gays and the lesbians who are actively trying to make that an alternative lifestyle, the ACLU, People For the American Way, all of them who have tried to secularize America," he said. "I point the finger in their face and say 'You helped this happen.'" A day later, he retracted his statement.

Falwell was a relentless crusader against same-sex marriage. "The issue of marriage is simply an eternal one. That is, one man married to one woman," he said.

Would it surprise you to read that I don't hate Jerry Falwell? In fact, I am grateful for the roll he played in the nation's politics. You see, if it weren't for Jerry and people like him, I don't believe the LGBT community would have rallied against the conservative base as much as they have. With remarks like "AIDS is God's punishment for homosexuality," the reverend Falwell pissed us off enough to speak up. He motivated us to not allow others to tell us what we should think or feel. I'm thankful for that!

I also have to say that I admire his determination and consistency. Even though I do not agree with most of what he preached, he had a certain commitment that I think we can learn from. Like many in the LGBT community, I came from a Christian background and even participated in the ministry for a time. The lessons that I gained from that experience were not all a loss. Commitment, integrity, resolve and love are all things that I want to convey in my life. Like him or not, Jerry Falwell sought those things as well. Perchance now, he sees the whole picture; the vision that I was always taught by my parents, of a loving, accepting and forgiving creator. Perhaps you can finally give it a rest Jerry and be in peace!

--Bill Pritchard

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