

The undead religious right

By [Steve Thorngate](#)

July 29, 2010

The religious right, as you may have heard, is dead. Its death has been pronounced every so often for years. Meanwhile, it manages to continue exercising considerable influence over U.S. culture and public life. Like [Tupac Shakur](#) and [Johnny Cash](#), the religious right has led a pretty productive death.

Of course, activists and public figures use language differently than, say, news writers. Often the goal is to make something so by saying so. Therefore, "there were 100,000 marchers at the protest," not 30,000 as the media reported. "The leadership has the votes lined up to pass the bill," however implausible the math. And the religious right is dead.

A linguist might classify this as a type of "implicit performative utterance." A faith-based activist might put it under the umbrella of "being prophetic," or maybe even "living into the already/not yet of the reign of Christ."

I'm more inclined to call it "saying something that isn't entirely true." So I enjoyed [this bit from Frederick Clarkson](#):

a quiz called "Who thinks the culture wars are over?" Can you match the prominent person with the specific quote echoing the "RIP religious right" meme? I had some trouble—it's a formula that hasn't varied all that much in recent years.