

ATHENAEUM SOCIETY - JANUARY 5, 1995 - WILLIAM M. ROWLETT

CPI or CPA?

Mr. President, Mr. Secretary, distinguished Guests(s) and Members. It is a real pleasure to appear on this program with Dr. Mark Schweizer who will be making his initial presentation to this august society. As we all are aware, the two topics generally avoided in an Athenaeum paper are politics and religion. In order to avoid this interdictum, it will be necessary to redefine a few terms and clarify them so that the membership will not rise up in arms and bodily throw me out the back door. By definition - mine - the topic of religion means to not bring up subjects of a controversial manner which might arouse partisan emotions among different denominations and result in a brawl. And politics likewise can be explained to mean that the subject will not be entered into in a way which might pit Whigs against Federalists and the No-nothings vs the Bull Moosers on a base level. However, unlike the States of Kentucky or Tennessee, there have been no duels at sunrise mentioned in Athenaeum annals. I would like to immediately extend credit to the major sources for this paper. First, the seminal article "Christian Conviction and Democratic Etiquette", by George Weigel which appeared in First Things Magazine March 1994. The second main source is "The Samaritan Strategy" by Colonel V. Doner, published by Wolgemuth and Hyatt Publishers in 1988. A third but highly unlikely source is "In Defense of Secular Humanism", by Dr. Paul Kurtz and published by Prometheus Press in 1983.

Having dispensed with the niceties, we will get on with the subject. CPI or CPA. Christian Political Initiative or Christian Political Apathy. What is an appropriate way for Christians to express their beliefs so that moral judgement born from religious conviction be heard and thoughtfully considered by all Americans? How can we interject moral judgements so that they can play a crucial role in the public policy process? How can Christians of different theological persuasions talk with one another and arrive at a reasonable consensus in order to present a more unified front to the body politic?

That evangelical, conservative and fundamentalist protestants have returned to the public square is quite evident. In the aftermath of the Scopes Trial in 1925, these groups largely withdrew into their own enclaves to concentrate on worship, educating their children in the Bible and fighting sin on the local level, only asking to be left alone. On the national level, the tokens of religion on the public scene were treated with noncritical acceptance. Our coins were imprinted with "In God We Trust", Congress and the Courts were opened with Prayer. The Ten Commandments appeared on School House walls without opposition. Even the politicians thought it was a good idea to oppose lying, stealing, killing, and adultery

so it is unlikely that the impressionable young minds of this era were corrupted by moral values implicit in the Judeo-Christian ethic. We had bible reading and prayer at the teachers discretion and it was even their quaint idea that children should grow up knowing the difference between right and wrong, and to learn how to respect authority in and out of the classroom. We didn't have prayer for the fans over the PA system before our High School Ballgames but thought nothing about praying with our teammates in the pre-game huddle. School, after all, was a local and State function and the Federal Government pretty well left us alone since it was none of their business. Meanwhile the winds of change blew across the nation. President Ike in a conciliatory gesture, appointed Earl Warren to the US Supreme Court. Thus began a new wave of Judicial activism used as a tactic to sneak around the end and circumvent the intent of congress and the American people, turning on end the unquestioned interpretations and understandings of the past. The Civil Rights movement also came to the fore and the Civil Rights Act of 1964 plus the Brown vs. Board of Education Decision brought anxiety to people in the South. Private Church schools and academies were organized, scornfully referred to as Segregation Academies many of which probably were. As time went on and the condition of the public schools deteriorated, the private schools often offered a superior education. In the 1970s, the Carter Administration's Justice Department began assaulting Christian Day Schools which not only aroused the ire of the religious leaders but pushed them into political activity. The Church had heretofore concentrated on improving society by improving the individual. Better men and women make a better society. Of course Liberal Church groups, notably the National Council of Churches, had long engaged in political action such as Vietnam Anti-War Demonstrations, Anti-Nuclear demonstrations, Civil Rights marches and in supplying guns and ammunition to rebel groups in Africa. What was new was the active involvement of Conservative Christians. Both groups wanted the same thing - a just and humane society where people can live in peace. The Liberals believed that the Government could solve all social problems given enough time and money. Big Government, massive Welfare spending, behavioral and environmental modification were their answers. Conservatives on the other hand felt that tax and spend measures, massive welfare programs and big Government knows best. etc. were not the answers and that Free Enterprise with a minimum of Big Government intervention was more effective. There tended to be an alignment of political and theological perspective. Thus the trend began to influence public decision-making by bringing the not inconsiderable weight of conservative Christian society into the arena. There was much less reluctance to becoming politically active as the need for confrontation became more evident. When unborn children have less legal rights that endangered owl species in public forests, when any possible configuration of consenting adults

sharing body parts is considered a marriage, when US Senators openly express their concerns about harassment of 4 year old girls in kindergartens by their four year old male classmates, when the national illegitimacy rate exceeds 30% , we have big problems and remaining silent does nothing to improve the situation. It was in the 1970s when the New America, represented by Big Government abandoned the policy of benign neglect and rather than taking a neutral or generally supportive stance toward Christian Society as in the past moved into an adversarial position spurred on by the Secular Humanist movement and the ACLU, an acronym standing for either the Anti Christian Legal Union or Atheists, Communists and Lunatics United. Thus the Evangelicals were left standing almost alone in defending what were once assumed to be standard basic American values. The attack was largely based on changing the National Law base by legalizing pornography, homosexuality, abortion on demand and restraints against sexual promiscuity. In 1973 alone, the US Supreme Court by its decisions expanded legal abortions, continued to prohibit prayer and bible reading in schools, and gave flexibility to publishers of pornography which led to increasingly far-our productions. One immediate reaction was the wholesale desertion of Southern evangelicals from the Democratic party into the open arms of the Reaganite Republicans. After all, Reagan stood for traditional values. Carter won 56% of that groups vote in 1976 against Ford but four years later a scant 33% The TV Evangelists came to the fore and supported the Religious New Right, Moral Majority, Religious Roundtable and Christian Coalition. Jerry Falwell, who had previously eschewed becoming active in politics, suddenly entered the scene and became the focal point although not really heading up one of the larger groups. With TV such as the 700 Club, PTL and others and Christian Radio, the Religious right had immediate access to millions of homes at no cost for the expensive advertising. Almost unnoticed in the South, Roman Catholic laymen with the aid and encouragement of prominent Bishops began to speak out and insisted on acting like Catholics in public on issues of Abortion, Gay and Lesbian Rights, pornography and school choice. This surprised the mostly liberal and amoral press, TV Industry, Entertainment Industry and Academia and they reacted in turn, the New York Times even warning the Roman Church of dire consequences if this continued. The New Republic with Bill Buckley, and American Spectator with Emmett Tyrell along with other Conservative Catholics and Neo-Conservatives attracted wide appeal as an alternate voice to the liberal harangue and appealed to the intellectuals. Thus two groups which had viewed each other with distrust and animosity now actually found themselves on the same side of the fence in approaching public issues, a small miracle in itself.

It was to be expected that an open stance would bring about the opprobrium of those committed to the establishment of the

Republic of the Imperial Autonomous Self. Secular humanism is but one example. The Courts with their inversion of the original intent of the Constitution redefined the First and Fourteenth Amendments so that religion - unless it is atheistic or agnostic - is being totally eradicated from public life. Ironically, the US Supreme Court opens with the words "God save this honorable Court. Perhaps "God save the Country from this morally confused Court" would be more appropriate.

In the 1980 and 1984 elections, the Christian right teamed up with Reagan and the Republicans in repudiation of the McGovern-led Democratic left using a variety of method. In less obvious ways than the electronic media, The American Coalition of Traditional Values chaired by Tim LaHaye was given a \$1 Million grant by the GOP and sent out mailings to over 100,000 Conservative Pastors. Moral report cards were distributed which showed how members of Congress actually voted on moral issues instead of their rhetoric. This tactic of course separated the Legislators actions from their apparent positions and exposed their true leanings. Liberal Senators were suddenly very vulnerable and such bastions of the liberal camp as McGovern himself, Birch Bayh, Frank Church, Gaylord Nelson and John Durham all went belly up. Again in 1984 The Christian Right came to the forefront although the Republican Party was beginning to wonder about its bed partner. These people were serious about their beliefs and actually had the nerve to attempt to direct policy rather than being a useful tool in helping Republicans gain Office. After the 1984 Election, Richard John Neuhaus observed that the religious new right may have peaked, while Cal Thomas pronounced it dead. Shortly thereafter, the TV Media Superstars fell into public disrepute with the Jim Bakker/PL scandal, Jimmy Swaggart's antics, Rex Humbards financial woes plus the alienation of the local Churches. Local Churches resented the electronic media siphoning off funds from the local congregations and their parishioners stayed home and worshiping in front of the Tube rather than attending their home town Church. There was a lack of spiritual direction and scriptural accuracy perceived and the TV Moguls seemed to have become enamoured with worldly success and the accouterments thereof. Thus the visible Coalition fell apart. However a deep grassroots feeling was still there and there remained however a more effective means of conveying Christian Positions to the Congress rather than participating directly in a political campaign. What started out as a family-oriented Christian Radio and Media Program, Focus on the Family, led by Dr. James Dobson soon became concerned about the many noxious influences on the family rampant on the social scene - Crime, Divorce, Drugs, Pornography, Sexual deviation, etc. Gary Bauer, former aide to President Reagan, worked closely with the Focus on the Family Group in Washington, acting as a watch dog and reporting on pending legislation and behind the scene

maneuvering plus hidden undercurrents and suggesting what clouds might be arising on the horizon. When items of interest were detected they were reported to Focus on the Family and via Christian Radio evangelicals were spurred to action with a massive voice. The Family Foundation is now active on the State level and cooperates with Focus on the Family. The Christian Legal Foundation headed by Attorney John Whitehead also appears on most Christian Radio Station in the USA pointing out Cases currently under consideration. When a Bill in congress or an amendment which seems inimical to the Christian Public such as Abortion Rights, Gay Rights or Pornography is lurking, the word gets out rapidly and one recent alert resulted in the Capitol Switchboard being completely tied up for three days by Christian listeners trying to contact their Congressmen. Tim Havrilek, local Rep for Tom Barlow, was totally frustrated this fall by local callers who couldn't get into the Capital Switchboard system and bombarded his local office with phone calls, letters and visits. Rep. Barlow has already stated his opposition to the issue in question, one on qualifications of Home School Teachers, requiring them to certified in every area of the curriculum. A Christian's Womans Group, Concerned Women of America led by Beverly LaHaye also functions as a foil to the NOW activists. The recently passed Religious Freedom Restoration Act, with wide bipartisan support was also championed by Christian Radio. Of course it would not have even been necessary had not the US Supreme Court in a 1990 Case, Oregon vs. Smith, declared that the government no longer had to show a compelling interest before interfering with Religion.

The Moral Majority was a failure in many ways including attempting to impose it's influence through a particular party. Not only did it cause anxiety and misgivings among the GOP, who merely wished to use their vote power, manpower and money, but also denigrated the Gospel while trying to use it as a trump card. The first loyalty of a Christian is to God and as Paul stated it "Our Citizenship in in Heaven". We are to support those in power but oppose policies which are in direct conflict with biblical teachings. All Americans have the right to bring their most cherished convictions into play which is the commonly accepted meaning of the First Amendment guarantee of free exercise. When a judicial body makes decisions which prevent the exercise of these expressions in the name of showing no favoritism, they are actually showing favoritism toward the areligious. Thus they trample the rights of the citizenry and demonstrate how morally bankrupt they have become. Again quoting Paul "... professing themselves to wise they became fools". We need more Christian Judges. In the early Church, Christians were admonished by Paul to settle their differences in front of a Church Council rather than going to a pagan court. Roman citizens, unable to secure a fair hearing in front of a corrupt court petitioned to have their cases arbitrated by

Christian leaders and Roman Governors began to appoint early Bishops as judges because they had a reputation for fairness. As a result, the traditional robes worn by modern Jurists date back to time when Bishops wore them.

What are the objections to Christian Political Activity? One modern cop-out is "You can't legislate morality". What about laws against murder, theft, rape, incest, lying and fraud - do they legislate morality? Abortion and Pornography are legal but laws have been either passed or interpreted to mean that parents can't spank their children or veto an abortion. Courts may close down Christian Schools or jail Pastors for noncompliance with Government regulations. Those opposed to Christian values certainly believe that immorality can be legislated. Politics are Dirty. Should we stand idly by and allow Abortion, Drugs, Pornography, filthy TV and moral deterioration to drown our communities? Separation of church and State, or even more "A Wall of Separation between Church and State". The First Amendment states "Congress shall make no laws respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof, or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press, the right of people to peacefully assemble and to petition the government for redress of grievances. The framers were not trying to keep religion out of government as much as in to keeping government from meddling in religion, namely establishing a State Church. Jefferson's statement about a wall of separation meant that the Federal Government was not to meddle into areas which the State had control over.

Christians have no option but to serve others but is political action an appropriate expression thereof? Yes, but not to the exclusion of it's basic mission. Carl Henry said "If the Church is to be faithful in matters of social ethics, the Christian cannot remain silent when political movements suggest issues or take stands which are contrary to plain scriptural guidelines. Is the Christian witness only one of criticism and not in suggesting a legitimate alternative?" Paul stated that God instituted government for man's benefit and the God appointed duty of every government is to secure conditions of peace, justice and liberty in which the citizen may obey God. In "The High Cost of Indifference" Bob Dugan says "The Bible tells us that government is ordained by God to provide temporal order and justice. to settle conflicts. restrain sinful tendencies, correct lawbreakers, to promote the common good, provide for the helpless and oppressed, and avoid corruption and misuse of power. Foster wrote "All Believers, but particularly those in democracies are to call the state to it's God-given functions of justice for all people alike. We are to commend the State whenever it fulfills it's calling and confront it when it fails." For God to demonstrate His justice through Government, He must rule through godly men and women. Evil and godless men in government will not be concerned with the rights of the poor,

oppressed and powerless victims of injustice. If the godly people in this country don't take responsibility for the process of government, the only ones left to govern will be the criminals which is what precisely has often happened.

All Christians have noncontroversial ways of participating including those which are obvious such as praying for the country and its leaders, registering to vote, becoming educated on where the candidates stand on moral issues, helping to select, elect and support good men in public life and certainly to vote on election day.

The Churches have also failed because of a lack of moral courage to confront the evils of abortion on demand, exploitation of women and children through pornography, the legitimating of homosexuality, the enslavement and slaughter of third world people, etc. If the motivation is to grow in numbers, finances, buildings and community prestige, then non-confrontation makes sense. But we want blessing not sacrifice, joy not duty, peace not work. With Freudian and Humanistic psychology, Darwinism and Marxism without and liberal theology within, Evangelicals have lapsed into a foxhole awaiting the second coming, their theology going from A - get saved, to Z go to heaven while neglecting B through Y where the action really is. The time has come for Pastors to stand up in the Pulpit and take a stand.

Probably the single most hotly contested issue in U.S. Public opinion was created by the Roe vs. Wade Supreme Court 1973 decision on abortion. Needless to say the sanctity of life is a very basic conviction of Christian orthodoxy and elective abortion as a means of birth control is profoundly offensive to the entire structure of Christian morals. There is a deep cleavage in public opinion but the Right to Life group has been deeply committed to the cause in the teeth of deep opposition from the Cultural elite. A society is judged by its treatment of it's most helpless group and what group is more powerless than the unborn? Abortion on demand greatly damages the American democratic movement by discriminating against the commonly protected. It is lethal violence directed against an innocent member of society - an individual with its own unique set of chromosomes, fingerprints and genetic formulation. Only God can create life - ask ten million childless couples. This is not to defend those individuals who taken the law into their own hands and have killed those who have murdered unborn children by the hundred. Nothing could less Christlike. Legitimate protest is something else however and the Courts have been ridiculous in their treatment of peaceful anti-abortion protests in a more restrictive way than in other public demonstrations. Even at the moment Anti-abortion movements are discriminated against. In Vermont, in 1995, a case before the Vermont Supreme Court is pending in which a printer with Anti-abortion views refused to print Pro-abortion literature

and was sued for it. Euthanasia is not far behind, and in Holland it is not only legal but has been extended to include the termination of infants with birth defects up to one year of age.

The position of the Orthodox Christian Morality on Homosexuality is unambiguously clear. The Bible speaks in a way not to be misinterpreted. Old testament and New the message is the same: homosexual acts violate the structure of the divinely created plan of love by which men and women can exercise their sexuality in virtue and procreative responsibility. It is an abomination to God. Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed because of it. Josiah was commended for exiling the Homosexuals from the land as a part of his reforms. The militant homosexual movement not only wants to come out of the closet but to become a protected minority with special rights and privileges with free reign in propagating their perversion in the classroom, Scout Troup and other situations, plus legal standing as married couples. This despite the grave risks which AIDS pose to the entire world population. Why is AIDS not treated in the same way as any other communicable disease? Why should immigrating aliens with TB be denied entrance but those with AIDS let in freely?

As for an Amendment to allow Prayer in the Classroom is concerned, I don't personally feel this is a moral question as much as a symbolic one. Most denominations are pretty well split and a consensus is unlikely to be reached. Even the Baptist find that the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs leans in one direction, and the Baptist Christian Life Commission another. Hardly anyone wants a government prescribed prayer which would be so innocuous as to not mean anything. The Secular Humanists are even opposed to a moment of silence because someone might sneak in a silent prayer. I would suspect that Congress will come up with a Rube Goldberg contraption which will be so ambiguous as to defy meaning which the ACLU will promptly contest in the courts, and the US Supreme Court will then reject or nullify the intention by it's own interpretation.

One of the biggest problems facing the country is that of the poor. The standard liberal answer has been to increase their dependency on the government which also increases their lack of hope. Government checks do not increase confidence in one's ability to provide a stabile income. Social welfare programs aren't capable of instituting the values necessary to succeed outside of the welfare rolls. Charles Murray noted that Black citizens were losing ground since JFK launched the modern American welfare state in 1962 with the announced goals of preserving the family unit, attacking dependency, reducing juvenile delinquency and family breakdown, cutting down on illegitimacy. Worthy goals to be sure but after Lyndon Johnson pushed through these programs in his Great Society, the policy of getting people on their feet had been



abandoned in favor of permanent income transfer. This mandatory transfer from the haves to the havenots decided by Government bureaucrats resulted in a tremendous increase in welfare costs. People on Public Assistance increased from 6 million in 1950 to 30 million in 1984 and gosh knows what now. In 1983 the combined governments spent 458 billion on PA and social welfare programs, 39% of all government spending and 15 % of the GNP. Black illegitimacy rose to 48% mostly teenagers. Murray pointed out that the government policy made it more attractive to stay on welfare than to work. He wrote that there were three fundamental principles. (1) People respond to incentives and disincentives.(2) People are not inherently hard working and given a chance they won't. (3) People must be held personally responsible for their own actions. This is from a serious Black.

So where do the Churches fit into the equation? Habitat for Humanity has done a great job in helping. Instead of Christians tithing 10% To their church to help take care of the poor, we are taxed at 33% to support a system which doesn't work, and indeed keeps people mired down into it. The Cost, #4 to deliver \$1. If we gave an outright gift of \$1200 to each poor person or \$20,000 to a family of 4, it would cost \$232 Billion a year. Since we spend \$642 billion a year currently we could give the poor a higher income and still have \$140 left over to apply to the national debt per year. Salvation Army programs supported by various local groups are a wonderful way in helping local hunger. It would cost the government 10 times as much to do the same thing. The St. Luke's Clinic for the working poor is yet another program done voluntarily by Church people, not just evangelicals, and yes this is political action because it involves Christians at the grass root level where the most good can be done at the least cost. Christian Political Apathy or Involvement - we really have no choice if we are to retain our hard won religious freedom.