

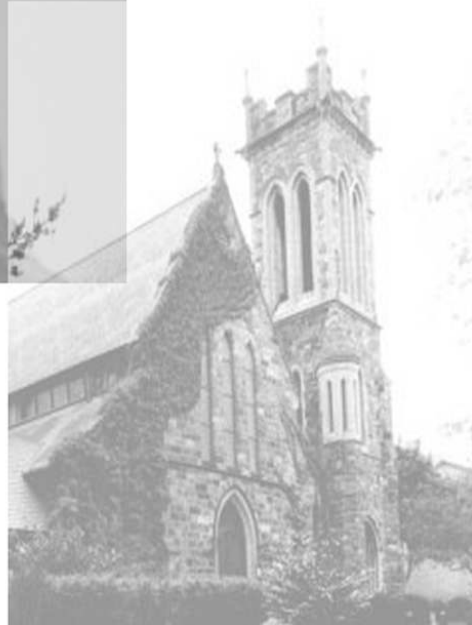


Religion and Politics

How the US can
again become great

A new proposal for increasing
church influence in the solution
of our moral problems

Samuel J. Eldersveld



Contents

Acknowledgements	v
Preface	vii
1 A short history of religion in the United States	1
2 A review of Supreme Court's decisions on religious issues	9
3 The decline in the public's affiliation with religion: Some possible explanations	17
4 A critique of the American congressional system	25
5 Our conceptual model: proposal for increasing church influence over congressional decisions on moral issues	41
6 The role of charity and its inadequacies to deal with our long-range problems	49
7 The importance of the church in society today	55
8 Conclusion: What is the message?	61
9 A brief epilogue	65
Bibliography	67

Acknowledgments

I wrote this small book after I had a rather serious operation in 2005 that almost ruined my career. I was hospitalized for about six months. The help of many people was necessary to complete this book. Since my eyesight was considerably diminished I had to get help. I therefore am grateful to several persons. Robert Kullberg read with me a large number of books on religion. He also did considerable typing for the first version of the book. These were chapters I wrote on a very large yellow pad. But these were sometimes hard to read. The Ann Arbor Library for the Blind sent me many tape recorded books. The final version of the book was completed with the help of my son Sam and my dear wife, Els. I was fortunate to have such able assistance. They not only helped me, but inspired me.

Preface

We wrote this book because our experience has led us to be deeply concerned about the role and relevance of religion and the church in the solution of the major moral problems confronting our society. We do not mean to belittle what the church does. The involvement in charitable causes is very commendable. But charity is not enough. We need to involve the church in the fundamental problems of American society ranging from poverty to global warming.

There are different types of “churches” in the US, including mainline Protestant and Catholic churches, large mega churches which were recently created, as well as Jewish synagogues, Islamic mosques, Buddhist temples, and other small groups like the Quakers, Unitarians, and the Mormons. Thus, in this work when we speak of a “church” we will, in general, be referring to any religious congregation. The author of this book has had experience in several of these churches. He was brought up in the Dutch Christian Reformed Church, spent over 50 years as a member of the Episcopal Church and recently attended the Unitarian church. None of these denominations or churches pressure the government directly to adopt the legislation necessary to solve our social problems.

As we well know we still have 37 million people living in poverty, and over 47 million living without health insurance. These and other serious problems still confront our society and

we need to deal with them now. The United States elected a new president in 2008 who is pressing very hard to solve some of these problems, one of which, a new national health insurance program has been of significant focus. It is our opinion that the church should and can play a distinctive role in the US by pressing Congress for solutions of these and other problems (such as global warming, improved education, etc.). Other countries, especially the West European democracies have worked to solve the problems of poverty and healthcare needs long ago. A wealthy nation such as ours has not confronted these problems directly. The author has sought to involve parishioners and clergy in these efforts but he has been largely unsuccessful. The church has been more involved with saving souls rather than saving society.

There are several reasons for this American failure. Obviously a major one is the unwillingness of the U.S. Congress to pass the necessary legislation. This is also due to the unwillingness of the well-to-do, and to some extent also people in the middle class, to pay higher taxes for the solution to these problems. This has not always been the case. Clearly we have had higher tax rates in the past but certainly prior to 1965 very little, if any, of these tax dollars were spent on national health care or to benefit the poor. The wealthy are unwilling to pay for social reform in the United States, but in Europe they have been willing to do that. In addition in Europe there are other groups influencing national policy more than in the United States such as labor unions, business groups and also in some countries churches. It seems that in the United States this is not so. This is what we want to change.

In this book we will present a model or type of approach which could be adopted by the churches today. Positions on actual policies would be adopted by the church and then communicated to the government. This is what we call the “legislative pressure strategy” (see Chapter 5.) I strongly believe that the

US churches should consider themselves as distinctive institutions with a real interest in influencing our leaders to reform and strengthen our society. We know that many Americans say “keep religion out of politics.” Our answer is that this belief is not healthy for us and not for the church. It has never been true in the past and it should not be true today. It is interesting that at the time of this writing a rally was held in Washington, DC under the leadership of Rev. Jim Wallis to mobilize the churches to discuss more actively the social welfare problems confronting the United States.

Finally, you should know that the author had an experience early in his career which probably influenced him greatly. He was elected mayor of Ann Arbor as a Democrat in a campaign which emphasized the need to do something about discrimination against African Americans of which there was a great deal of in Ann Arbor (the year was 1957). He pushed through the city Council a bill which created a Human Relations Commission of 10 persons which was to investigate the extent and nature of this discrimination. As a member of the Episcopal Church he asked his rector, Rev. Henry Lewis, to chair the Commission and the Rev. agreed, thus providing an example of how the church could be involved in social reform. This Human Relations Commission received many complaints from those who reported that they were discriminated against. They were asked to send letters to the Commission that described the nature of their discrimination which they were subjected to. The Commission interviewed many people and reported its results. This led to considerable improvement in employment for African Americans and the change in the way they were treated. There was no violence in Ann Arbor as there were race riots in Detroit 10 years later in 1967. The Commission lasted for several decades in Ann Arbor. Many African Americans obtained jobs in various places: in the city government, schools, university, and businesses. The author returned to the Political Science Department at the Uni-

versity of Michigan to teach. When he was later Chairman of the Department, he participated in the hiring of the first African American woman as professor in the Department in the 1960s.

The Episcopal Church has continued its help to the poor in Ann Arbor by its breakfast program which is admirably done. The author continued his interest through the “Church and Society Committee” of the Episcopal church. However, this Committee has been discontinued unfortunately. The church as not been willing to press politicians at the legislative level to face these moral issues. It is as if the church has withdrawn from further concerns about the basic social and moral problems we face today in the larger society. In this little book we propose a plan by which the Church may get more influence in expressing its position on many of these problems, to help its ministers and parishioners to put their gospel to work to save our society (For a detailed discussion of the Human Relations Commission, see Eldersveld [7], pp. 22–23.)

Chapter 1

A short history of religion in the United States

Americans can be truly proud of their culture of religious freedom and diversity of religious beliefs and practices. No other nation has a culture as diverse as ours. In this chapter we will focus particularly on the key characteristics of the culture which are most relevant in our project. Of course in the colonial period this tolerance of diversity was not at all evident. At Plymouth, in 1620, the Puritans established a very dogmatic, repressive system based on Calvinist principles. Everyone had to believe in the Calvinist doctrine and follow in their behavior the requirements of that doctrinal system. Those who refused were punished and some were even executed.

Thus, in these early colonial days the clergy dominated; they were the government. For example, clergymen like Jonathan Edwards completely controlled the entire community of New Salem. Other Calvinist pastors were almost as doctrinaire, working earnestly to convert the native Americans. And soon thereafter other religious faiths emerged in the new America such as

Anglicans, Lutherans, Catholics, Jews, Quakers, etc. America became a very pluralistic society. Our nation was open to every type of religion and today it is estimated that we have over 200 religious groups and faiths in the United States. During this early period there was some conflict amongst churches, such as some Protestants' opposition to the Catholics. This conflict became subdued over time.

As different types of churches came to America in the late 17th and early 18th centuries, the churches played a variety of roles. Some became interested in having a governing role as the Quakers in Philadelphia, the Catholics in Maryland, and Anglicans in Virginia. Some churches were active at the local level. For example, in the largest cities such as Boston, New York, and Philadelphia local governments relied on the churches to care for the needs of the poor in their cities (see Eldersveld [8].) Scholars discovered that city officials turned to the churches to take responsibility for the building of work houses and hospitals to care of the poor. Although most churches were occupied with establishing themselves, increasing their membership and constructing buildings, they were also becoming aware of local politics and the local and state governments. One consequence of the pluralism of the religious life was the emergence of leadership with quite different religious backgrounds and beliefs. George Washington was an Anglican, but rejected certain doctrines such as the rite of communion which he refused to participate in. Thomas Jefferson was not a believer in many Protestant doctrines rejecting such beliefs as the virgin birth, the resurrection and the ascension (see Holmes [14].) He really believed himself to be closer to the Unitarians. There was therefore great diversity among the top leaders of that time. There was no one church which all of the major leaders supported.

Thus, this basic pattern of religious diversity and tolerance was accepted and had a major role in determining life in a new America. All religions were accepted. The first Jewish group

which came to Newport, Rhode Island, was welcomed by President Washington. Irish Catholics, German Huguenots, Asians, and hundreds of others were readily accepted. The colonists had rejected the European system of having one religion as the state religion. This was never accepted. And this had a major role to play in the adoption of the Constitution and the Bill of Rights. Thus we created a new type of society in America. We rejected the divine right of kings, and moved to create a pluralistic democracy of religion as well as government. We wanted a system which protected the rights of citizens to worship as they pleased, and to be governed by responsible representatives. We did not want to have one national church as in Europe. The development of this type of plural and tolerant society so far as religion was concerned, would have tremendous consequences. It would lead to the adoption of a Constitution in 1789 and the Bill of Rights two years later which would insist on freedom of worship for all religions and sects and which would favor no particular religion nor permit the establishment of one religion as the state religion which still existed in the countries from which they and/or their ancestors had emigrated. This had considerable impact and relevance for the lives of the people. Each religious faith has freedom to exist and grow in the American Society.

Thus, two developments were taking place. One was that no church was to be favored by government; the second condition was that the religious freedom would be applicable for all religions. And a third was also implicit: religious groups and faiths were free to try to influence governmental policy if they wanted to, but without any preferred status for any particular religion. Government could not interfere with religious freedom and the government was not dominated by any one religion. Yet, religious groups could pressure the government to adopt certain policies if they wanted to but with no guarantee of success. These three conditions emerged as the result of the tolerance

of all religious faiths. We must remember that the Constitution says about the role of religion:

1. **Article 4:** “but no religious test shall ever be required as a qualification to any office or public trust under the United States.”
2. **First Amendment:** “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof ...”
3. **Fourteenth Amendment:** “no state shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges and immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws.”

During the 18th and 19th centuries the churches certainly began to demonstrate their interest in governmental action and occasionally to actively try to influence governmental policy. This was so in the actions by the states to adopt their state constitutions. Preference for certain religions varied by states.

When slavery became the dominant issue in America the churches and the clergy certainly took positions on this issue. They sought to influence policy in both the North and the South on slavery. Clergy in the North were giving sermons denouncing slavery, while the churches of the same denominations in the South, white churches, the ministers defending slavery.

The abolitionists were very active in the North aided especially by the churches. Groups of clergy took positions on legislation, such as the Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854, opposing it because it permitted the extension of slavery in the new Territories. Also, further evidence is that the group of clergy had secured an audience with President Lincoln to petition and declare support for the emancipation of the African Americans.

President Lincoln is reported to have told the group he was considering a proclamation but it was too early to publicize it (see Reichley [22].)

The North was not completely abolitionist. There were the opponents of emancipation also. It is reported that the violent riot occurred in New York City beginning on July 13, 1863 and continued for four days because a group of Irish Catholics were concerned that if the southern slaves were freed, they would come North and take the jobs of the Irish (see Stout [28].) So the churches and clergy are reported to have withdrawn their support for the freeing of the slaves.

In the South, the Bible was quoted as justifying slavery, a position which was controversial. The clergy were deeply involved throughout the war. When the Civil War finally ended, a major question was how the African Americans would be treated. At first, some white churches attempted to include and welcome African Americans. But it soon became apparent that African Americans were not welcome in these churches. The African Americans, therefore, began to build their own churches and attempted to deal with the needs of the African Americans living in poverty. They established numerous churches in the South which were able to help the African Americans somewhat during the Reconstruction Period. In the post-Civil War period, even though government troops were stationed in the southern states, the early attempts by African Americans to get jobs and to get a role in politics was doomed. The whites were determined to resume their control. After some early successes by African American leaders to get some leadership positions, the whites rejected these individuals. And when the troops were withdrawn in 1877, the whites completely recaptured control of the government in the South. The African Americans, even though they were assured of their voting rights, few of them dared to participate and compete for political positions. The African Americans were subjected to terrible inhumane treatment including lynch-

ing. No action was taken by the national government to punish these violations. Many African Americans left for the North. The 9 million African Americans who remained in the South had to wait until the presidency of John Kennedy in 1960 and his successor Lyndon Johnson, before they were protected and enabled to utilize their constitutional rights.

What was the role of religion and the church in this post-Civil War period? It appeared to have been relatively uneventful or subdued. While the Republicans pretty much dominated national politics, religious voices were seldom heard. On the other hand, the Democrats had a very religious candidate for the presidency in William Jennings Bryan, who was their candidate three times beginning in 1896. Bryan was “the best-known layman in the Presbyterian church and a seasoned speaker on the Chautauqua lecture circuit” (see Shriver and Leonard [26], pg. 78) who tried to apply Christianity to presidential and congressional politics. This attack on the financial and manufacturing interest was central to his popular sermon called “cross of gold”. But it produced virtually none of the reforms he advocated. The Republican candidates, the winners, were too much supported by those with strong powerful wealthy financial interests of the country.

Perhaps the greatest involvement of the church was in the Prohibition campaign. Some of the church leaders joined with the women’s groups to get the 18th amendment ratified and the Volstead Act enacted into federal law. The Christian anti-whiskey group played a major role. But nothing was done to separate and to protect the African Americans in the South. Lynchings, assaults, and other harassing practices continued after World War I. Even President Franklin Delano Roosevelt (FDR) could do nothing for the African Americans because he said he had to have the electoral votes from the southern states in order to get his legislation passed by Congress. The African Americans attempted to protest themselves by estab-

lishing many of their own churches and thus taking care of the needs of their own poor. There were Supreme Court cases during this long period concerning religious questions. These will be addressed in a later chapter.

Eventually, the contribution of certain churches began with the civil rights movement of the 1960s headed by Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. a Southern Baptist minister in Atlanta, Georgia. His actions exposed the South and in its violations of the African Americans' civil rights. This campaign as we know led to his unfortunate premature violent assassination in April, 1968. But it also led to the Voting Rights Act and the Civil Rights Act adopted by a Democratic Congress under the presidency of Lyndon Johnson in the late 1960s. Many church leaders played a major role in this historical period. When people talk about "the separation of church and state" they forget most of the history which we have briefly reviewed here. But they also forget that since 1980 or beginning with the Reagan presidency until today we have seen a number of attempts by religious activists to influence governmental policy. If there ever was any doubt about the acceptance of "the separation of church and state" it disappeared with President Reagan's administration. The evangelicals in the South asked Reagan to support some of their policies. Indeed, they depended on him to act in their support. They opposed abortion, favored prayer in the public schools, and encouraged governmental assistance for church charities. Eventually under President George W. Bush they secured direct government allocations to churches to pay for church programs, including help for the church's poor.

This so-called "faith-based" support of government of churches has been questioned recently and modified by the Obama administration. These were presumably faith-based allocations given for charities to the poor but questions as to whether these funds were also used for other church expenses. Presumably the Obama administration has changed the rules for which these funds were

allocated to ensure that these are used for charity.

A final example of the attempt by religions to influence the election and policies of presidents is illustrated by the career of Rev. Billy Graham (see Gibbs and Duffy [11].) Rev. Graham was a Baptist minister who became the most famous orator in this country and abroad on the Bible's revelation of salvation and belief in God. Rev. Graham boasted that he had contact with 11 different presidents beginning with Harry Truman and concluding with two Bush presidents. He was proud of his support for President Nixon in his campaign and supported other candidates as well as President Reagan and President Ford. He was accused by the evangelical movement to be too close to these campaigns and wielding much influence, more than was proper.

From this brief history of religion in America it is clear that periodically the churches did claim and exercise the right to influence public policy and political leadership. However, we must remember that the Constitution still prevents any church from being established as the State Church.

Chapter 2

A review of Supreme Court's decisions on religious issues

In understanding the church's place in the development of our society in America, it is necessary to describe the Supreme Court's interpretations of the church's role under the Constitution. One must remember that there was a basic difference between the church's status in Europe and the US. In Europe at that time (16th through the 18th century) the church was dominant in the society. It could dictate the beliefs and behaviors on the individual citizen and the government. In Shakespeare's time according to his biographer he was required to take communion each Sunday (see Ackroyd [3].) The church controlled his behavior. In other European countries this was also true. The church jointly with the government usually governed the society. In America, however, during this time, the government was not controlled by the church.

In the following discussion we present the Supreme Court's decisions chronologically from 1789 to the present to document how the Court interpreted religious practices in American so-

ciety. The United States Supreme Court has dealt with a great variety of cases dealing with religious matters over the entire history of the country. The majority of these have been cases which the Supreme Court has acted on in the last hundred years of our history. Before that there were very few cases before the Court on religious matters. Once the Bill of Rights was in effect, some cases came before the Court. But the Bill of Rights applied only to the national government initially. Dozens of actions of States and communities could not be brought before the US Supreme Court. This was all changed when we adopted the 14th Amendment in 1868. Such religious cases ordinarily were brought under the United States Bill of Rights, which the Courts decided was not applicable to cases against local governments or cities. The famous case in which determined this matter was Barron versus Baltimore in 1833, in which a local property owner brought a case before the court. The plaintiff believed a local government was taking away his property, something he felt was a violation of the Fifth Amendment. The Court ruled that they could not handle this case because the Bill of Rights applied only to cases where a national government action was involved.

The first case which came after the adoption of the 14th Amendment which dealt with religious issues was in 1878. It concerned the practice of the Mormon Church of polygamy in the territory of Utah. The court decided that the practice of polygamy was contrary to the American values and not permissible under the First Amendment to the Constitution (see Reichley [22], p. 121). A second case on polygamy from the Idaho territory was in 1890 decided also by the Court against the church. The Idaho case dealt with the right to vote by a person who belonged to an organization which advocated plural marriages, and this was denied, as was done under the Idaho territorial decision. The next case was in 1923 and it involved a Nebraska case prohibiting the teaching of modern languages such as German to children. The majority of the Court main-

tained that this was a violation of the law and therefore this was not proper. Justice Holmes dissented from the majority position by arguing that “all citizens of the United States should speak a common tongue.”

In the years following the adoption of the 14th Amendment the Court began to hear a series of cases for which the Bill of Rights was relevant. We refer here primarily to religious cases. The first of these probably was the 1925 case concerning the Catholic Church's role in determining the education of young children. The Court decided that the state should not interfere with the education of children even if it was not conducted in public schools. This was a unanimous decision of the Courts. The next case was in 1930 and it concerned the propriety of providing school books at public expense for children attending parochial schools. The Court ruled in favor of the parochial schools and stated that the Constitution emphasized the benefits of this for the children rather than the schools. This was called the “Child Benefit” theory (see Gaustad and Schmidt [10].)

After World War II the number of Supreme Court cases on religion increased. The Court was asked to interpret the First Amendment to the US Constitution and other references to religious freedom in the Constitution. There were many more such cases on religious freedom from 1940 than there had been in the periods going back to 1789. We have grouped these cases into certain types or classes coming before the Court's decision on religious freedom, based on the discussion of Gaustad and Schmidt.

1. Free exercise of religion. Under the Constitution free exercise of religion was considered by many to be exceeded by the Jehovah's Witnesses in public places and how the Jehovah's Witnesses practiced their religion. The immediate case was challenged by the Witnesses because of the requirement of the salute to the American flag Pledge of Allegiance and to the commitment for which it stands “one

nation under God with liberty and justice for all.” The Witnesses claimed that this pledge in schools was idolatrous and forbidden. The Court decided overwhelmingly against the Jehovah's Witnesses claiming that the flag was a major symbol of unity of our nation. In a later case the Court reversed its position, arguing that it was unjust compulsion to impose rules like this in our schools.

- 2. Sunday closing laws.** The second type of case dealt with Sunday closing laws in states and the Court considered several cases in this area. The first decision concerned the rights of a person not to close a business on Sunday. This applied also to a Jew who worshiped on Saturday and closed his business and opened it on Sunday and forewarned the Seventh Day Adventists who had the same problem, was unjust under the Constitution and should not be required.
- 3. Military service.** One of the most difficult cases the Court faced was in the 1960s over conscientious objection to serving in the war particularly based on religious convictions. A good deal occurred during the fighting in the Vietnam War. One of the most important objections in the war came from the religious conviction that the war was wrong and the Courts therefore had the task of interpreting the application of congressional acts of 1948 and 1967. The big issue was whether a person could be exempt from military service because of his or her religious conviction. The first case came in 1965 which the Court unanimously agreed that religious belief which is in conflict with going to the war would exempt a person from having to enter the draft. Later on the Courts considered other cases and took a less extreme position but still endorsed the rights of the conscientious objections.
- 4. The schools.** There have been two kinds of issues. The first

is a requirement for the reading of the Bible and the second is whether creationism should be taught. For private schools the key issue has been whether the government should provide funding of any kind to private schools. On the first of these the issue came before the Court over the reading of a prescribed prayer in the schools and this was declared by the Court as unconstitutional under the First Amendment. But the public reaction to this decision was considerable, a large number of religious leaders as well as members of the public objected strongly to this decision. There was also a large segment of the media and the public which supported the Court's decision. In a follow-up decision a few years later the Court made the interesting distinction between studying religion in the schools and practicing it, the latter being disallowed. An amendment to the US Constitution was proposed in Congress allowing for prayer and Bible study in the schools. This was defeated by a vote in the US Senate.

One of the major issues confronting the Court from the 1920s on was whether the schools could teach creationism based on the biblical explanation in Genesis of the origins of the human race. In a series of cases the Supreme Court as well as lower Courts have ruled that the Constitution does not permit the teaching in public schools of any doctrine which emerges from Biblical literature. This also produced great dissension among the public for both sides of this issue and this led to education in private schools by religious groups.

A whole series of cases came before the Court concerning whether the government should in any way finance private education, such as tax reductions, purchase of books, bus fares, etc. The Court had to develop a whole new set of conditions and rules governing these cases. Essentially they came to the conclusion that if the proposal benefited

the student and was neutral as to whether it benefited the church. The government help to private schools was permissible.

5. Life and death. A variety of cases have gone to the Court dealing with life and death questions from birth control to capital punishment. Abortion is perhaps the most significant case the Court had to deliberate on and to take a position on. It was finally decided in the case of Roe versus Wade. This decision in 1973 has resulted in continuous controversies among religions groups and others and will certainly be with us for some time in the future. The Court decided that in the first trimester of pregnancy the woman has the right, with her physician, to an abortion. In the second trimester an abortion is permissible depending on maternal health, and in the third trimester there is no permissibility unless the mother's health is in serious risk. The abortion issue obviously is still with us today and evokes violent as well as nonviolent actions and discussions.

6. Native Americans and religious freedom. At the end of the century one of the key issues concerning the Court was the right of native Americans the use of a substance called peyote, a part of a cactus plant in their religious rituals. This was opposed by religious leaders and missionaries who were not native Americans, it was seen as a harmful substance. In 1964 the Court considered this case and ruled that since the drug was essential to religious exercise it would be permitted. The controversy over peyote use in religious exercises has continued on at the state level. Even though Congress passed a law in 1978 permitting the use of peyote, the Supreme Court overruled Congress saying that Congress had no authority to pass this piece of legislation. The controversy therefore continues on into the

21st century.

This review of Court decisions reveals the frequency and diversity of religious issues in the country. It reveals also that the Court was not always unanimous in its opinions and even change their opinions over time. It is clear that the role of religion is today still significant and the Court will continue to confront religious challenges to our constitutional system.

Finally in reviewing these cases it is clear that the Church has often engaged in a variety of activities some of which have been vetoed, others have been supported by the Court. In addition, this survey reveals that the Court has played a major role in determining the conditions which the churches have to observe if they are to be acting within the Constitution.

Chapter 3

The decline in the public's affiliation with religion: Some possible explanations

Before we proceed with our analysis and our proposal it is necessary that we take a look at the state of the public's participation in religion in America and how that has changed over time. There have been many studies examining this question and presenting data on this question. We present here the results of two of these studies, one which is very detailed in the presentation of the United States in comparison with other countries. The second is a detailed analysis of the record of the churches in America by denomination from 1990 to 2008, to reveal the level of the public's participation in the church over the last almost 20 years (see Norris and Inglehart [19] and Gaustad and Schmidt [10].)

Table 1 on page 19 presents the results from the Norris and Inglehart study of values and religion in many countries

of the world and shows the change over time of a selection of these countries. Perhaps the major finding from this study for our purposes is the comparison with the United States and the democracies of West Europe in the public's identification with the churches. There is a striking contrast between the United States and most of the West European countries. According to this study the United States percentage of people who are affiliated with the church has ranged from 43% to 46% between 1981-2001. In West European countries the percentage of church affiliation is much lower than in the United States, even below the 20% level in some of these countries. In Great Britain, for example, 14% as in the Netherlands. One must remember, however, that in some of these West European countries there have been, and still are, religious political parties and in some of these countries they still exist today. For example in the Netherlands they have three religious parties and in the past when these religious parties were in the government they were responsible for adopting legislation providing aid to all the poor in the country. They were assisted of course by other groups such as the Labor Party. In Germany today there is also a major political party which is a Christian party and the same is true in Belgium. So one must be careful in describing the differences between these West European democracies and the United States.

Table 2 on page 20 deals with the churches and denominations only in the United States. We present these data again over time. We find that in all the mainline Protestant churches there has been a decline in the public's affiliation with the church. For example, the Episcopal Church of America has lost over a million members in the period of the study and in the recent assembly of the Episcopal Church in California they reported that the Church only had 2 million members a greater reduction than our table shows. Other churches such as the Lutherans, the Presbyterians, the Methodists and the Congregationalists have all lost members during this period. Even the Catholics have

lost a little as well as some of the other smaller denominations. There has been a major shift in the United States from the earlier days when as much as 70% of the American public claimed to be members and reported to be a regular participant at Sunday service (see Gaustad and Schmidt [10].)

Table 1. Church attendance in the United States and other countries.

<i>Nation</i>	<i>Percentage of Participation</i>			
	1981	1990	2001	<i>Change</i>
Ireland	82	81	65	-17
Spain	40	29	26	-15
Belgium	31	27	19	-12
Netherlands	26	20	14	-12
Argentina	31	32	25	-6
N.Ireland	52	50	46	-6
Canada	31	27	27	-4
France	11	10	8	-3
S.Korea	19	21	15	-4
W.Germany	19	18	16	-3
Britain	14	14	14	0
Denmark	3	3	3	0
Hungary	11	21	11	0
Norway	5	5	5	0
Finland	4	4	5	+1
Iceland	2	2	3	+1
Japan	3	3	4	+1
Mexico	54	43	55	+1
Sweden	6	4	7	+1
United States	43	44	46	+3
Italy	32	38	40	+8
South Africa	43	56	57	+14

Source: Norris and Iglehart, pg. 74.

These data pose therefore a real challenge for our project and to the American public. We want to raise three major questions which emerge from these data. The first of these questions is, what has caused this tremendous decline? The second question is why have so many Americans not been willing to identify with any church? The third question is how can one explain the mobility of the Americans because of their shift from one church to another?

One of the first reasons we think is relevant to this decline is

the behavior of the leaders of the churches, the priests, the ministers, directors etc. Obviously the best example of this is what happened to the Catholic Church after it was revealed that the priests were violating the little boys in the church. This hurt the church considerably as well as costing it a great deal of money. Another very recent example is that of the “sting” operation in New York City by the authorities during which it was found that some local religious leaders had violated the law in order to illegally increase their purses. On a different level we would argue that many ministers in these churches are not intellectually stimulating their parishioners with the sermons which they deliver. They often only provide discussions of religious doctrine or comment on stories from their scriptures. They do not address social problems.

Table 2. The decline of participation in churches in the US.

<i>Religious Traditions</i>	<i>1990 % estimate</i>	<i>2001 % estimate</i>	<i>2008 % estimate</i>	<i>% change 1990–2008</i>
<i>Catholic</i>	26.2% 46,004,000	24.5 50,873,000	25.1 57,199,000	-1.1
<i>Episcopalians</i>	1.7% 3,043,000	1.7 3,451,000	1.1 2,405,000	-1.6
<i>Lutherans</i>	5.2% 9,110,000	4.6 9,580,000	3.8 8,647,000	-1.4
<i>Presbyterians</i>	2.8% 4,985,000	2.7 5,596,000	2.1 4,723,000	-0.7
<i>Baptists</i>	19.3% 33,964,000	16.3 33,820,000	15.8 36,148,000	-3.5
<i>Methodists</i>	8.0% 14,174,000	6.8 14,039,000	5.0 11,366,000	-3.0
<i>Mormons & LDS</i>	1.4% 2,487,000	1.3 2,697,000	1.4 3,158,000	0.0
<i>Jewish</i>	1.8% 3,137,000	1.4 2,837,000	1.2 2,680,000	-0.6
<i>Muslim</i>	0.3% 527,000	0.5 1,104,000	0.6 1,349,000	+0.3
<i>No religion</i>	8.2% 14,331,000	14.1 29,481,000	15.0 34,169,000	+6.8

Source: Kosmin, B.A., Keyser, A. (ARIS 2008), [15].)

A second reason for the decline of membership in the traditional churches may be the rise of a new type of church, the

“mega-church.” These are churches where thousands of people get together which presents a different approach to religion. These churches often emphasize happiness, joy, music and togetherness. They really are not religious in the traditional sense of the word,. People leave their traditional churches because they find entertainment at the mega-church.

A third possible reason is that the programs in the traditional mainline churches are the same every Sunday. People do the same things, sing the same songs, and engage in the same rituals, and this may antagonize particularly young people who are looking for variation in church services.

A fourth reason on the other hand is that the parishioners in the pews are basically conservative ideologically and they oppose new developments in the church. An example is that of the Episcopal Church when the decision was made to allow women to become priests. Certain people left the church. Also, when the Episcopal Church decided to admit gays and lesbians to the Ministry, this again led some people to leave the church. In fact, this already has caused the Episcopal Church to loose four major churches.

This brings us to the next reason: a considerable amount of religious sectionalism and schisms in many denominations. For example, the Lutherans are divided into three sub denominations, one more conservative than the other. This has also been true for the Baptists who have been arguing over the rights of women in the church. In fact many denominations periodically have these kinds of internal battles and this must certainly be a disturbing pattern of behavior for parishioners. Another major reason in the latter part of last century was the appearance of major intellectual scholars who ridiculed religion. Among these was John Dewey who in his writings paid little attention to religion, and also Walter Lippman who ridiculed Christianity and refused to consider it as a major source of behavior and belief in American society.

And now we come to what is the major theme of this book which is that the decline of religion in America is partly a result of the failure of the church to address social and moral problems in our society. This explanation may be also relevant for why some people never joined the church and as a reason for young people leaving the church when they become older. We will develop this theme further in subsequent chapters.

It is quite clear from the analysis we present here that we have a formidable challenge facing us in moving ahead with involving the church in addressing social welfare problems. But we know that churches want to engage in outreach to society and we are going to present a plan by which that can be best achieved. We've got to remember that the church is part of our American society and has to face up to the development on problems of that society. Even one of the recent Popes has said we have to address the key social ills facing us.

People who have religious beliefs must remember that, whether you are a Christian, or a believer in the Jewish faith or an Islamist, all of these believers are urged if not commanded to go out into the world to take care of the poor, the needy and to work for the betterment of our society. Our fundamental position in this book is that the church is a moral institution and has a responsibility therefore to work for the solution of these moral problems particularly in contact with the government. If the church would work towards solutions of these moral problems this might inspire the young people in this country who today have no interest of being involved. The extent of public attendance at church every week has declined considerably over the years. According to Norris and Inglehart [19] , that percentage was below 50%. An earlier study reported that 70% attended church in the period after the second world war. We are fully aware of the fact that a large number of Americans do not attend church or are not affiliated with any church at all. Our hope is that our proposal presented in the following chap-

ters will lead at least some of these people to see the relevance of the church and the need for them to join and participate in our program of action.

Chapter 4

A critique of the American congressional system

In 2006 two scholars in political science wrote a book which was very critical of Congress (see Mann and Ornstein [17].) They described the U.S. Congress as dysfunctional, polarized, less supported electorally, and gradually in the past 40 years unable to perform its legislative duties as it should. They called Congress “the broken branch” of government. Today in 2009 not much has changed. We describe here in this chapter in detail the recent past and the situation today.

A large proportion of Americans have developed a growing sense of our American national elite’s failure to cope with or to recognize and address our basic national problems. The President and the parties in both houses of Congress seem so unable and unwilling to agree on how to solve the basic problems confronting the American people today—the war, poverty, health insurance, global warming, immigration, the economic crisis, etc. Public opinion polls underscore this lack in national leadership; close to 75% gave the Congress a rating of “failure”, while the

President's approval rating was less than 30% during the last days of President George W. Bush. We reached a real low point when Congress could not agree to provide health insurance for mothers of children living in poverty. The President said it was too expensive. Since this was written Congress under pressure of President Barack Obama has passed legislation to provide for these young people.

This failure by our national government leadership stands in striking contrast to the actions of Parliamentary elites in the West European democratic systems. In Sweden, the Netherlands, Belgium, France, Germany, Great Britain, and Denmark, they have done a much better job than the United States in dealing with the problems of poverty, health insurance, and other welfare programs. We have 37 million people living in poverty and 47 million with little or no health insurance. In West Europe the figures are significantly much lower. Why is there such a big difference in comparison of political elite performance in other systems?

This is a big comparative question—why have we in the United States continued to elect a Congress which has over the years refused to resolve these moral issues. They have neglected and refused to serve the interests and needs of the lower classes in our society, in sharp contrast to what other democracies have done. What is wrong with the American system which produces an elite in Washington which is so unsympathetic to the needs of the lower class? As John Kenneth Galbraith noted in his famous 1958 book, *The Affluent Society*, this failure of the “affluent” is a real disgrace (see Galbraith [9].)

In my recent book on poverty in the United States and West Europe (see Eldersveld [8]), I described the comparative status of welfare regulations in those countries. It is amazing to note the contrast between the United States and West European countries. In the Netherlands, the Dutch Parliament, in 1965, adopted a law guaranteeing all citizens a decent standard of

living. In Britain, the Beveridge Report released in 1945, at the end of World War II, provided the basic plan for social welfare in that country. In Sweden, by 1936 the Parliament took the first step toward a comprehensive social welfare system. Denmark and Norway soon followed with similar programs. Germany after the war under their first chancellor, Konrad Adenauer, began the development of their welfare system. France and Belgium moved in that direction soon afterwards. The result was and is that everyone has health insurance and the poor are protected in the case of unforeseen social calamities. Their systems are not perfect, but the lower classes are much better off than in the United States and polls show that the great majority of their citizens are happy with their systems. They see the benefits of their systems, and thus, vote in support of their system at election time. In recent Dutch elections 81% of the eligible voters exercised their right to vote; in France 84%. In the United States we can get only 35 to 40% to vote in congressional elections and barely 50 to 55% in presidential elections. Less than 30% of the American public approve of the performance of the United States Congress.

The big question for us in the United States, thus, becomes: why are our legislators so lacking in humane qualities while European legislators have demonstrated to be liberal, generous and humane in their behavior towards the poor and the needy? It is as if many Congress members come into office educated and trained to keep the poor and the needy at "arms length". They refuse to provide support for the lower class while at the same time vote for large tax decreases for the wealthy (Warren Buffet, second wealthiest men in the United States said this was ridiculous). We must not forget that the US is considered a very wealthy nation and a great military power but on the basis of the extent it deals with the needs of the lower classes of the society it does not rank high as a humane society.

Perhaps one should modify this sweeping condemnation of

United States senators and representatives in two respects. Under certain Democratic presidents, some mercy has been exhibited. Under President Franklin Delano Roosevelt the 1935 Social Security Act was passed at the time of the Great Depression. Under President Lyndon Johnson a concern for the lower classes was evident in his “War on Poverty”. Three main acts were passed: Medicare, Medicaid and food stamps. But Congress was at that time controlled by an overwhelming Democratic majority. The only Republican president among whom some compassion was exhibited and aid was provided was President Gerald R. Ford during whose presidency the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) was adopted. Presidents Truman and Kennedy proposed new health insurance legislation, but the Republican party refused to support it. Under President Clinton the “Work Not Welfare” bill was passed in 1996, but it did little to alleviate poverty. What is amazing is that many presidents since World War II have done little to enact legislation to provide adequately for the underclass of American society. In the past 50 years few Democrats really controlled legislation to deal with these social welfare needs. In the run-up to the last presidential election how many candidates proposed the adoption of legislation for the poor? Only some Democrats.

Let us explore some of the reasons for this lack of compassion by our political elites for the social welfare needs of the mass public. First, is the conception of democracy which emerged in the 19th century in America. In a recent book one author has stated that the major function and objective of our democracy is the “maximization of wealth” (see Witham [30].) Following the theory of Adam Smith’s *The Wealth of Nations* [27], the elites in the United States have certainly “maximized” their wealth. We have more millionaires and billionaires than any other country in the world. Their greed has become so embarrassing that Warren Buffett recently in testimony before Congress admitted the intolerable greed of the upper class and said Congress should

tax them at a higher rate. Indeed this follows Adam Smith's exhortation in 1758 that the wealthy should be concerned for the welfare of the poor (see Eldersveld [8], p. 4.) The great gap between the rich and the poor testifies to the injustice of the 1776 theory of Adam Smith. American businessmen are much less willing to pay higher taxes than businessmen in other countries. A major study by scholars at Harvard University on the attitudes of businessmen in the United States and other countries such as Sweden and Japan (see Verba *et al* [29]) demonstrates that the American businessmen are much less liberal in their beliefs than the businessman of other countries in that study.

It is obvious that democracy, as practiced in the United States, should be organized differently. As we all know, the American Declaration of Independence states that every man, woman and child has a right to health insurance and a decent standard of living. And in these respects our government has failed us thus far.

The hope of Lincoln was that his concept of democracy would not "perish from the earth". But the prospect of the 21st century does not depict our democracy in these idyllic terms. We have developed a free-market system which permits the wealthy to maximize their wealth to ever new heights and forget the poor and destitute. Is this really the democracy we value? This conception of democracy as a free-market for the amassing of fortunes, has not been as completely endorsed by Democrats as by Republicans. And yet, the Democrats too, were aware of the power of money and many of them in Congress are millionaires. To run for a seat in Congress requires millions of dollars which the candidate either has in the bank or from his friends who "purchase" a seat for him or her. Research reveals that it takes at least 1 million dollars or more to run for the House of Representatives and 5 to 10 million dollars (or even more in the big states) to run for the United States Senate. Research also reveals that few people from the working class or with low social class

origin sit in the United States Congress. In contrast, in Europe, this is not true (see Aberbach *et al* [2].) Naturally then, there is an upper middle class and upper class bias in the background of members of the United States Congress, much greater than in Europe. However, despite the bias in the Congress towards wealth, it is really only at times when there is an overwhelming Democratic majority that social welfare legislation is really successful. As a result of inaction and failure to adopt anti-poverty legislation, poverty actually has increased in the United States.

Where did this grotesque doctrine of democracy come from? Several cultural developments seem to have converged. On the one hand, the independence of each person and his or her responsibility for his or her own success was a major characteristic of frontier society in the 18th and 19th centuries. “Every man for himself” was the creed of the time as the colonies prospered or failed, and as people sought a new life in “the West”. At the same time, the success of the industrial revolution and Adam Smith’s theory prompted the acceptance of the doctrine of “laissez-faire” with business success given first priority, and “the less government the better” (unless the new businesses needed assistance from government). In this new cultural climate, we were not justified, as it was argued, to divert public funds to support the poor, those who unfortunately could not make it as one business leader put it “the poor had to go to the wall” (see Eldersveld [8].) Above all, the argument was that business had to prosper and that would take care of those who did work. We cannot afford, it was argued, to be distracted or subverted by the needs of the destitute. The responsibility of elites in government and out of government was to make the United States a wealthy nation.

These years of advancing the interests of big business and limited responses of labor unions continued until after World War I. It took a major economic upheaval, the depression of 1929, with millions of Americans losing jobs and homes before we finally became interested in the conditions of the poor. It took a

Franklin Roosevelt to provide for the poor—first, with a dole. The government provided jobs plus control over big business to shake Americans into the awareness that business had to be regulated and governments had the responsibility to care for the poor. FDR’s 1935 Social Security Act was passed by overwhelming majorities of Republicans and Democrats in Congress.

But the nation soon reverted to its old cultural conception of democracy. The conservatives and the American leadership in Congress swore eternal opposition to Roosevelt’s policies. Then came World War II, full employment, then the postwar refusal to deal with the problems of the poor and Eisenhower’s warning to America just before he left the presidency to beware of the “military-industrial complex”. We had again returned to the 19-century version of democracy as the “playground” of big business, minimally controlled by government whose aim was the amassing of huge fortunes, the affluent society, unconcerned about the plight of the underclass.

It is interesting and significant that the only real break in this conception of democracy for the maximization of wealth by the wealthy, came in the 1960s under President Lyndon Johnson. With the demise of the Republicans after Eisenhower and the ascendancy of Johnson in the 1960s America’s masses finally got some attention. Despite the failure in the Vietnam War Johnson fought for the civil rights of the African Americans, securing both the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and 1965. In the 1970s we sought his “War on Poverty” securing with his dominant leadership and strong Democratic majority, the passage of the Medicare bill for the elderly and Medicaid for the poor, plus the federal foodstamp legislation for the needy. Unfortunately, the United States’ failure in Vietnam forced his retirement. It also brought on 40 years of lack of concern for the health problems of the American Society and no real concern for the poor. About 12 to 13% of the public was living in poverty in 1970 and 12%, 37 million, are living in poverty today. We have returned to the

democracy where the rich get richer and the poor get poorer.

The consequences of our American political system of this “corrupt” system of democracy are serious. One result is that many eligible voters are discouraged about participation in elections. They do not see their vote in the election as relevant.

The consequences of our system should be obvious. Operating under a two party controlled Congress where financial resources for winning seats is necessary, our representatives are operating in this “millionaire culture”—their eyes on protecting, promoting, and representing business interests, arguing falsely that if business is successful there will be a “trickle down” of benefit to the lower classes. In reality, there is no such thing as “trickle down”. This is indeed phony economics. Above all, it is a flawed misunderstanding of what representative government should be in America.

For many citizens the system is a loser. Why should they take the trouble to vote, to participate, if they see no benefits for themselves in this system? As stated before we must remind ourselves that only 35% of American eligible citizens vote in congressional elections and barely 50 to 55% in presidential elections. This compares to over 80% in recent elections in France and in the Netherlands. Thus, one half or more of Americans stay home on election day. They see no point in exercising their citizen responsibilities and opportunities to vote. One news reporter reported that when he asked a citizen whether she would vote, her answer was: “I voted last time and they did not pass any legislation that dealt with my problems so why should I vote this time.”

Many of the poor particularly take a defeatist position. Their voting record is very low. And many are too busy trying to care for their family to take the time or trouble to vote. And the political parties do not go out of their way to mobilize the vote in poor neighborhoods. Consequently, the same representatives survive the election after election. Voter apathy resulted in the

easy return of members of Congress in each election. How are we ever to reverse this conception of democracy as one which sustains and maximizes the wealthy while ignoring the poor, the homeless, and the destitute members of our society? History reveals that it takes a monumental social, economic, and moral crisis in our system to achieve some change in that system. It happened in the 1930's and the 1960's and because of the current economic and military crises. We notice that Wall Street firms are giving million-dollar bonuses again and President Obama is raising serious questions about the propriety of this. Recently, the public's evaluation of the Congress has reached an all-time low—only 20% felt the 2007 Congress was effective in dealing with our problems. The final public opinion polls for President Bush showed positive ratings below 30%.

The heart of the matter is that the wealth of the rich has continued to increase while the wages of the working class has declined in relative terms. The public has not really benefited from the increasing wealth of the wealthy. Over the years we have seen few public improvements. Many of the key problems are still with us as they were 40 years ago. These problems are: 47 million citizens have no health insurance, 37 million citizens are living in poverty, great increase of housing foreclosures, slum conditions in the big cities continue, educational progress limited, government is not devoted to genuine opportunities for the poor, inequality in the status of women, environmental degradation continues, limited concern and action on the problems of climate control, decrease and outsourcing of jobs to foreign countries, and high infant mortality rates as compared to other nations. The health-insurance question is before Congress as I write this analysis. The *World Health Statistics–2009* [5], shows the national rates of many health measures. For example, in 2009, the United States ranked only 40th in under age-5 infant mortality, behind countries such as Cuba, France, Canada and Korea.

If the billions of dollars, usually unearned, had been put to work to solve some of these problems, this nation could have dealt with these problems. But the wealthy have become wealthier without bothering to deal with these problems. The previous government's strategy is to give the wealthy more wealth by decreasing their taxes and their tax rates. The greedy wealthy have it made in this democracy. What we have today as one scholar argues is "super capitalism", actually "greedy super activism" (see Reich [21]). The new president Obama and the new Congress promised some possible change in dealing with these problems but we cannot be certain of such changes at this time.

So we return to the basic question "Why"? Why has the richest country, some say the most powerful country, produced a government and a financial elite that is so inhumane, so uninterested and unwilling to deal with the basic needs of the lower classes, those at the base of our society, unless they are confronted with a Congress which is overwhelmingly Democratic. Early scholars of the elites such as Geatano Mosca and Vilfredo Pareto (see Meisel [18]), predicted that such unwillingness of the elites in any country would not occur if elites sought to remain in power even though they disregarded the complaints of the masses on the policies of the elites. We may have seen the appearance of new Democrats, such as John Kennedy in 1960 or Jimmy Carter in 1976 or Bill Clinton in 1990 but their terms in office have not improved the welfare of the American masses.

This assumes that the American public accepts these conditions. But, this is not so. In poll after poll a majority of the public gives responses to such poll questions indicating strong support for government action. Already in 1935 at the time of the social welfare bill of FDR, 89% of the American public gave basic support to this measure. In their book *The Rational Public*, Page and Shapiro [20], pointed out that the public consistently gave high polling support for social welfare issues. Recently, over 75% reported support for the proposal that "Congress should pass a

law providing support for the poor, the needy, and the destitute” and the public has consistently been supportive in their willingness to pay higher taxes for this purpose. But the elected representatives do not share these positions and certainly do not give any indication of listening to public opinion. Perhaps the recent development under the new Obama administration will reverse this disregard for popular opinion. Indeed, what we do in the United States has resulted in a much greater concern for the problems of the underclass. What are some of these cultural differences between the US and European democracies?

1. The values of governing elites are different. For example, their political leaders are much more responsive to the problems of the poor and underprivileged.
2. They play much less emphasis on amassing of huge fortunes. There are relatively fewer millionaires in the Netherlands and Sweden, etc.
3. One does not have to spend a lot of money to be elected to the Parliament of most of these countries—nothing like in the United States.
4. Labor unions play a major role in the politics of the society. This results in many more lower class and working class people being elected to Parliament.
5. In the Netherlands, for example, labor leaders and business leaders work together to propose legislation to be recommended to the government for adoption.
6. Voting in elections is more meaningful than in the United States because it is considered the prerogative and a meaningful mark of good citizenship.
7. Citizens, including the most well-to-do, are proud that they are in a society that does not have the great slums and ghettos that we have in the United States.

8. The media play quite a different role in European elections. There is very limited television during the campaign, no vast sums of money spent on television advertising and newspapers play a very major role.
9. In some of these countries the Netherlands, Germany, and Belgium particularly there are religious parties which citizens support and for which they vote (more on this subject later).
10. The party or parties in the Cabinet are presumably representative of the majority of the Parliament. If the Cabinet loses its support in the Parliament there is usually a new election leading to the formation of a new government . Parties in power thus have to be continually responsive to the legislative majority and therefore to the public.

We can assess the differences in the political culture of the United States and West Europe in several ways. First, differences in political values are quite clear. American elites place much greater emphasis on the maximization of wealth, particularly the wealth of the well-to-do and “captains of industry” than Europeans do. Not all American leaders are this way but the majority are. Either they are wealth maximizers or trying to be such. There are fewer of this type of businessmen in West Europe. Second, American political leaders have a lower sense of responsibility for the poor, homeless, and destitute. This is a major concern. Although in colonial days, interestingly, the local elites in cities like Boston, New York, and Philadelphia, and city councils that included business leaders in the community went to elaborate lengths to care for the poor. But this humane effort disappeared, however. The free-market economy of Adam Smith resulted in less interest in caring for the poor, who were often seen as interfering with wealth maximization. Galbraith, in *The Affluent Society* [9], points out that the American wealthy need to pay much more attention to the needs of the poor whom

they today disregard. In contrast, in Europe, the wealthy agreed that they must assume some responsibility for the welfare of the entire society. See also Sweden, the United Kingdom, France, Belgium and Germany, who took similar early positions. The Parliaments of these West European democracies after World War II were particularly concerned about the development of the social welfare system. This was not true in the United States of America.

The “robber barons” and “captains of industry” in the USA were very interested in influencing government policy with a laissez-faire conception of government. The wealthy took over American society after 1900. Teddy Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson sought to regulate corporations but their efforts were minimal and not effective. Those with wealth soon realized the need to dominate the American governmental system for their own private benefit. The crash of the market on Wall Street in 1929 revealed how short-sighted the Wall Street financial elites were. We see very little evidence that they learned their lesson. Fortunately President Roosevelt took initial actions to lead us out of the depression. He became the most hated president of the wealthy elites. In the opinion of Wall Street and the business leaders, FDR was viewed as being an enemy of industry and the rich. Yet, he pushed through his regulatory policies, his New Deal, and the Social Security Act of 1935. Since FDR’s death in 1945 in the interlude of World War II when everyone who wanted had a job we had President Truman and Kennedy who were interested in social welfare but it was not until Lyndon Johnson’s presidency that action was taken to help the needy in American society, black and white. Since then we have reverted to the concept of democracy in the earlier days—the maximizing of wealth. We are in a period of low interest in social welfare of the underclass in American society. Our representatives in Congress and presidents, with the probable exception of Clinton, have run a country where the wealthy are getting richer and the poor are

getting poorer. Our government is not very humane. Our representatives have not until recently introduced legislation such as occurred long ago in West Europe. But President Obama's government (2009) seem to reveal different values and a different philosophy to provide for social welfare reforms. Why has it taken so long for the legislators to be concerned about the needs of the poor and the underclass? Because the values of our elites are self-centered and the poor and destitute have been ignored. How many representatives and senators in the past 25 years have introduced a bill in Congress to deal with poverty? Only one in 1996. This bill did not reduce poverty.

Thus the political values of the American elites are a critical factor in distinguishing the Americans as contrasted to the European leaders. In addition, the difference is the conceptualization of representative democracy which have been articulated recently and we can only hope that this can lead to the reforms we need. The type of political system linked to and a radically different approach in European democracies to the selection of the legislative elites and their linkage to masses constitutes the basic differences in the political cultures of the elites in the United States compared to West Europe. The greed of the American elites orientations plus their limited sense of responsibility for the welfare of the underclass is at the heart of the contrast between our political leaders and the leaders in West Europe. There are other factors such as the rule of labor unions in the United States and roles of other institutions such as the Church which may also be relevant. These would be discussed in the following chapter.

The reader may ask why we have presented such a detailed critique of the American congressional system, what is the point? The point is that we are in this chapter laying the foundation for the presentation in the next chapter of our proposal by which the Church can play a role in dealing with our basic problems. With all the evidence we have presented here that the Ameri-

can system does not have the groups, the trade unions, nor the Congress which is willing or able to deal with our social welfare and other moral problems. We think it is necessary and possible for the church to assume a significant role along with other citizens who may not necessarily be affiliated with the church. We think the church is a moral institution with a moral responsibility to take a position and to press for that position for the solution to our problems and thus to achieve a social transformation.

As we reflect on the status of the poor in American society, it is perhaps proper to conclude the chapter with a quotation from Rousseau who was responsible in a sense for the preamble of the Declaration of Independence, 1776 (“we hold these truths to be self evident, that all men are created equal...”): “It is manifestly against the Law of Nature...that a handful of men wallow in luxury, while the famished multitudes lack the necessities of life”, from the last sentence of his book on Inequality [25].

Chapter 5

Our conceptual model: proposal for increasing church influence over congressional decisions on moral issues

In the preceding chapters we have presented our analysis and observations which provide the context for the proposal which we present here. In the light of this introduction therefore we repeat that this is not a brand-new model. Rev. Jerry Falwell at the time of the Martin Luther King leadership of the civil rights movement in the South said “preachers should not be involved in politics”. He was completely wrong of course because as our historical treatment has demonstrated preachers were often involved in politics in this country. We remember when the Pilgrims came in 1620 the ministers were very dominant in learning their colonies. Furthermore we remember also the role of the preachers at the time of the slavery controversy. In the North

they argued in front of their congregation that the Bible was opposed to slavery. But in the South the preachers were arguing in their congregations that slavery was permitted in the Bible. A group of clergy came to President Lincoln and urged him to adopt the Emancipation Proclamation. After the Civil War in the next half century the clergy again were involved. For example, they opposed the accumulation of wealth by Wall Street, they promoted prohibition and later on as we noted they became very active in the civil rights controversy. Ministers like Billy Graham had very close contacts with the presidents during this period. And finally the evangelicals themselves have acted in promoting particular policies. Therefore we must keep in mind that what is being proposed here is not completely new. It may be presented more systematically than it was before, but the evidence is that the church's involvement in American politics has been considerable. In presenting our proposal for involvement of the church in policy matters we want to start with certain major observations.

1. The local (or regional or national) Church has to affirm its interest and willingness to be involved in taking positions on social issues. This is already true in the case of the Quakers and the Unitarians. Other mainline churches such as the Episcopalians, Presbyterians, and Lutherans have developed outreach programs but these do not lead to taking positions on critical moral policy issues, local, state, or national. The minister in charge (rabbi, priest or rector etc.) of each church (congregation, synagogue, etc.) should take a position on many of the issues confronting Congress, hopefully with support of his or her congregation or the district, state or national organization. We recognize that this first step may be the most difficult to start the process of the church's involvement.
2. It is necessary for the church congregation to develop its

position on the key moral issues facing the government as outlined in the previous chapter. If a congregation cannot do this then it should create an “outreach committee” which will take the responsibility of adopting a position on any given policy relevant to church interests. Often there are city committees of the priests and rectors of the various churches in the community who do discuss these matters and may be asked to take a particular position on a particular issue. Furthermore there are district, state and national Councils of the clergy which can and should take positions from time to time on specific issues. But the need to go beyond the mere taking of positions and the need for specific pressure on governmental representatives is lacking or falls short of actual contact to the US Congress.

3. Once a church or committee has taken a position on an issue it is necessary for them to communicate this position to the relevant government officials. (Note: it is not necessary to get 100% of the congregation to agree on this). If 50% or more of a church congregation agrees, and are in support of an issue position, then the church should go ahead with its action program.
4. It is necessary that the church, after discussion with others, should openly declare its position and above all should communicate its position to the relevant representatives from the district to the Congress, the state legislators, or to the city Council. In addition the church should submit to the local media its position on the issue before the Congress. We know too well that representatives can ignore their constituents. The experience of Rev. Jim Wallis at the time of the declaration of war against Iraq illustrates this. He and his committee had developed a plan to avoid a declaration of war by submitting proposals for dealing with the situation in Iraq. He was not even able to

get an audience with President Bush and was turned away by Prime Minister Blair.

5. It is necessary above all that the church committee contacts and puts pressure on their representatives. They have to have “their feet kept to the fire,” we call this the “legislative pressure” strategy. They have to be informed constantly that their support in the next election may be affected by the vote of the religious community.

The natural reaction to these proposals may be one of skepticism and negativism. But there are many reasons why people should take these proposals seriously. There will be people interested in action on current social justice problems. As we pointed out in the earlier chapters, church attendance and membership is declining and one reason may be that the church is not involved in dealing with the moral problems facing our society. See the data on the decline in church affiliation presented in Chapter 3.

If people are skeptical about this approach they must remember that there are current examples of this. For example, the BBC reported (see [23] for November 2, 2009) that the Jews had mounted a campaign in favor of action by governments to deal with the problem of global warming. They have been marching in New York and London indicating interest in governmental action. Another example is the campaign by the Rev. Jim Wallis in Washington, DC this year to get ministers of different churches to deal with social welfare problems in the United States. Other examples could be cited of such public interest.

In our project proposal we want to go beyond this level of involvement and move towards a legislative pressure strategy as we indicated above.

Criticism of our plan and our response.

The criticism and objections to our proposal are obvious. First, people will say they are against the church being involved with political questions. But they are wrong—the church has been deeply involved, as we have proven in our study. Second, others will say the Southern Evangelical Movement is a good example of how wrong the church can be and how it failed. There are two answers to this: (1) we do not want to propose our plan as an evangelical movement similar to Falwell’s; and (2) we think that that movement has been too narrow minded. It did not face the critical social justice questions we argue should be our focus. We do not propose a (second or social) evangelical movement type of program. Third, people will argue that a large proportion (perhaps 50%) of those who attend mainline churches do not support the so-called “liberal” issues on which we may want to secure action. Of course, there may be conservative issues also which the church may want to endorse. And this is a reality we have to face. Our desire and goal is to get the voters to press hard on their governmental representatives for action—either for or against these issues. The point is to get better, more representative, government. We happen to believe that the liberal vision for America is the one which today is very badly/poorly represented. Our aim is about representation in Congress and state and local governments. A fourth objection to our proposal may be that this is not the proper role for the church, that its role is to “save souls”, to educate, to inspire, and, by constant repetition to improve the parishioners’ knowledge and acceptance of the doctrines of the church. This is all true, but if one reads the Bible carefully (or the Koran) and other church books, one gets a different message. Christ tells us “follow me”, not just to the church, but with your life. We are told to care for the poor, to help the needy, to be good Samaritans and above all, to “love your neighbor as yourself”. Even the Koran instructs its follow-

ers to give a sizeable percentage of their income to the poor. A fifth point we would argue, one we have made before, is that the church must be seen as an institution which is embedded in society and should seek to influence that society, because it is affected by what goes on in that society.

We recognize that there are agnostics and atheists who would have no use for religion at all and therefore do not, come under our plan. But our proposal that citizens contact their representatives directly applies to all citizens whether they belong to a church or not. We just emphasize the special moral role of the church in society. Poverty exists and influences the society greatly. The church nobly seeks to heal society, but can only do a partial job. There still remain 37 million living in poverty after the church tries to help. And in the past the church was interested in dealing with poverty, at the local level particularly. In big cities such as Boston, Philadelphia and New York the churches used to work with the city councils to deal with the problem of poverty (see Eldersveld [8].) This is no longer true. The churches should pressure the government to take care of the poor. Today, government responsibility is missing/lacking. It is a scandal that we should be ashamed of in the United States.

We repeat here what we have advocated earlier. What this country needs is many “legislative pressure committees” to make our governmental representatives aware of citizen concerns about public policy and the possible action by these citizens to get the policies we need.

We should add here recognition that already there have been instances of “legislative pressure” by individuals or small groups of citizens. Our new president, Barack Obama, has encouraged voters/citizens to contact their representatives over legislative matters. There also have been numerous instances where citizens in certain states have pressured their representatives individually, not just collectively, over their support for state legislation. We need to institutionalize citizens’ contacts with their legisla-

tors at all levels of the system.

We are well aware that many people continue to say that religion is a private and personal matter. They say that we should not get involved with “worldly” problems. But they are wrong. If one is really committed to a religious faith, he or she should realize that every major religion challenges us to “go out into the world” and help to reform it, and help the destitute in our society to a better life.

Chapter 6

The role of charity and its inadequacies to deal with our long-range problems

Having explained how and in what respect the American church may be ready to accept a more significant role in governmental action, social justice, and welfare, we want to explore here what conditions suggest this is possible, and in what manner the church may be involved. One encouraging aspect of American society is that Americans are usually very charitable if they have the resources they are willing to help the needy. In 2008, it was stated that \$307.65 billion [1] had been contributed to charity.

Most of us have always been aware that there is much charity going on in our communities. In a community like Ann Arbor, for example, we have a food gatherers group, several distributors of used clothing (such as Kiwanis), a group trying to collect 2 million dollars to find permanent rental homes for the poor, a

breakfast program at the Episcopal church which feeds breakfast to 150 people every morning (and has done this for over twenty-five years). There has been a church group (Unitarians) whose parishioners send contributions of \$50 per year to provide food and education for 120 Indian children. These and many more charitable activities take place in many cities in our country. Kalamazoo, Michigan is another example where a civic-minded group has proposed to pay the costs of college education for every child who successfully completes the 12th grade curriculum and earns their diploma.

In Detroit the need for charity has been great and there are a variety of groups who are providing charity to people every day. Readers of this manuscript will certainly be able to say the same thing for their own community.

This type of charitable giving takes place in many American cities. We must recognize that the problem is that these charitable ways and helpings are not inclusive, not adequate, and not sustained. This is why we need a governmentally based system providing for continuous welfare. Despite all these community-based charities to focus on the continuous need for assistance for the poor is seldom articulated: 37 million Americans are in poverty, 47 million have no health insurance. These numbers are growing. It is the middle class which is primarily responsible for these activities to care for the poor. The wealthy elites seldom take this responsibility. They are more likely to endow colleges, hospitals, and special programs which they can forever claim as their heritage. But they may not endorse expensive programs for the poor and the desolate over a long period of time. It even might be said that most people on Wall Street do not feel any continuous responsibility for the poor.

One of the most profound mysteries of modern democracies is exposed when West European democracies are compared to that of the United States. The United States government exhibits an almost complete negligence toward the poverty-stricken (poor)

citizens/populace while European democracies have historically cared for the lower levels of their socio-economic strata. It is hard to explain. Today, at a time of national crisis, the most wealthy, in the United States, are getting million dollar bonuses while there are millions of their fellow citizens who are without jobs and/or homes. We wish that these on Wall Street with large incomes would try to contribute to the national needs and not only focus on amassing greater wealth. The European system has taken care of their destitute and needy for many decades. The upper level of the income tax in Europe is at least 55 percent of income, while the American business community is complaining that the new Democratic proposal would increase the income tax from 35% to 38%. Long ago, the rich/affluent/well-to-do in Europe agreed to contribute at that high level in order to take care of their fellow mankind in the lower socio-economic tier of society.

In one country in particular, the Netherlands, the national legislature in 1965 adopted a law which required the government to see that every citizen had a decent standard of living. How was this possible? It just so happened that the religious political parties were dominant in the Dutch Parliament at the time this was adopted (see Andeweg *et al* [4].) But it was also supported by the labor unions and the labor party who also voted for this policy. Sweden, Germany, France, England, Belgium, Denmark, and Norway, shortly thereafter, all followed suit.

In 1776, Adam Smith, the Scottish economist, commonly referred to as the “father of modern economics” published his two volume discourse entitled “The Wealth of Nations”. In it, he laid out the argument for the basic aims of the capitalistic free-market system. American businessmen thought this was a system legitimizing them to exploit the American democracy for all they could, which they did and still do today. Their theory of democracy was then, as today, that the objective of democracy is for permitting a wealthy elite to amass as much wealth as

they could. As one scholar has put it, the one Christian doctrine that the American Businessman does not believe in is “love your neighbor as yourself”. What the American businessman does not remember is that Adam Smith also wrote a very special essay in which he gave advice to the wealthy “The wise and virtuous man is at all times willing that his own private interest should be sacrificed to the public interest of his own particular order of society. He is at all times willing, too, that the interest of this order of society should be sacrificed to the greater interest of the state.” (see also [8], chapter 6.)

John Kenneth Galbraith, in his 1958 book, *The Affluent Society*, in his final chapter remarks that:

“An affluent society, that is also compassionate and rational, would, no doubt, secure to all who needed it the minimum income essential for decency and comfort (see Galbraith [9], p. 256)...The myopic preoccupation with production and material investment has diverted our attention from the greater need and opportunity for investing in persons ([9], p. 258.) In the United States the survival of poverty is remarkable. We ignore it because we share with all societies at all times the capacity for not seeing what we do not wish to see...In the contemporary United States (poverty)...is a disgrace.” ([9], p. 259.)

American businessmen should take to heart the observations of Galbraith. If they would openly admit to their responsibility for the deplorable record of concern for the extensive/numerous underclass in American society and work with the government to assume responsibility, we might make some progress. We argue, in this book, that the church not only could, but emphatically should and must play a major role in bringing this to fruition. In summary, there seems to be a variety of factors which explain the difference in humanitarian efforts between the United States and West Europe—these are:

1. The role of labor unions—greater in Europe.
2. The effects of World War II on Western economies. In revising their economies these democracies got the major groups in the country, including businessmen, to allocate funds to take care of the needy.
3. Lack of interest by European business in Adam Smith's principles in "Wealth of Nations". It appears to us that the European businessmen did not adhere completely to the advice of Adam Smith. They took seriously Adam Smith's advice and of Galbraith to be concerned about those in poverty in their societies.
4. The collaboration of business united with the governments in West Europe (such as the Dutch with the Socio-Economic Council (SEC) to which Dutch business has membership.)
5. A general desire for the business elite to contribute to the resolution of their societal problems.
6. Lack of knowledge of *The Affluent Society*, by Galbraith ([9]).
7. The role of the church in pressing for governmental progress to help the poor and destitute.
8. The publication of the Beveridge Report by the British government after the war, detailing what the government program for social change after the war should be adopted.

Here is the contrast between the United States and western democracies in the willingness of the European wealthy to contribute to social justice programs while the American elites do not. In the author's visits to the Netherlands he was always impressed with the attitude of Dutch businessmen on this problem. Most of them were willing to pay higher taxes and most of them

expressed satisfaction that this meant the reduction of poverty (no slums, no ghettos) in their country. At the time of the writing of this study, late 2009, the economic conditions in the American Society illustrate the inadequacies of charity and the need for governmental action. The economic downturn has, as you all know, resulted in poverty conditions which cannot be resolved by charity alone. Millions of people are out of work, have lost their homes for foreclosures, have inadequate savings and are out on the street. We are told that thousands of Americans are dying each year because they do not have health insurance. Even though unemployment benefits have extended and food lines have lengthened, thousands of Americans are sleeping on the street and living without adequate food and shelter for their families. The people are charitable but this is not enough as we all well know. Our present government under President Obama has been working hard to rescue the American system and to help people and even that will not be enough for some time to come. And the sad point is that the very conservative right in American politics still do not want to alleviate our problems. Government action therefore is necessary and charity by itself cannot solve the problem. It would be wonderful if the American churches could participate now to pressure their government to take care of the needy.

Chapter 7

The importance of the church in society today

In presenting our proposal we do not want to demean the importance of the church today in our society. Even though the church has greatly decreased in importance in some West European countries, as we noted in Chapter 3, it is still an important institution for nearly 50% of the population in the USA. We present here therefore the ways in which the church can be functional for America.

What should be the role, or roles, of the church in American society? This is a question which confronts many of us today, as we see the declining status, internal conflicts, and limited relevance for American Protestantism and Catholicism in the United States. While we note these internal denominational schisms, we are more particularly concerned with the limited, and often confused, meaning of religion and the church as an institution in American society. While leaders and citizens as individuals may be religious, they and their churches are basically irrelevant for the solution of our social problems. And so we ask: What can and should be the role or roles of the church in the solution of our social problems? In a presumably religious

nation such as ours, why can we not apply our beliefs to the solution of our deeply troubling social problems? We don't know that there are cases of churches attempting to be involved in a solution of these social problems, but this is not generally the rule.

The answer to this question why most churches are not involved this way, lies partly in what we conceive of as the proper role of the church in the United States within the limits of its constitution, and perhaps to some extent within the limits of its historical precedents and practices. For those active in church life, we are aware of what we might call the intra-institutional roles, which can be compared to its societal roles. We may differentiate these roles, first by identifying the institutional roles, as follows:

1. The evangelical role—preaching the gospel and “saving souls”
2. The educational role—teaching children (and adults) the sacred tenants and doctrines of the church
3. The social role—providing opportunity for socializing and social networking through meetings, worship, committee work, support groups, etc.
4. The recruitment role—recruiting individuals for laity positions, or for the ministry itself
5. The aesthetic cultural role—providing beautiful religious music, the church building, and special meetings to effectuate the inner senses
6. The charity role—giving money and material goods to the needy, assisting with shelter for the homeless, providing counseling for the troubled, etc.
7. The stewardship role—caring for the physical properties and extended environment under the stewardship of the

membership, including building maintenance and improvement, grounds protection, and climatic circumstances impacting humanity and the earth

Now it is true that in working on these roles, the church can be conceptualized as improving the society. Believers are “sent out into the world” to convert, educate, and by example, “redeem” the world. In a sense, the church realizes that by “saving souls” one must be cognizant that the social conditions under which people live has a significant impact on their lives and on the extent to which they can be successful institutions in the society. The church may well be proud of the number of souls which are “saved”, but then forgets about the social, economic, and political environment in which these souls have to survive. This leads us then to the societal roles which the church can, and must, attempt if it is to be a significant force in any system. Subsequently, the following are suggestions as to the nature of that societal role:

1. The clergy and other leaders in the church community must be committed to the strategy of mobilizing support in the community for direct political action. If there is a strong belief in the separation of church and state, or of the futility of such actions, or of the refusal of the church leaders to act because of the clear division of opinion in the congregation on this matter, and unwillingness of the clergy to act independent of such congregational opposition, then the church cannot proceed with any plans for political action.
2. If there is a desire to move ahead with political action, careful planning is necessary in cooperation with other community religious leaders. This shall begin with a clear identification and evaluation of a social problem, or problems, on which the church desires to act. Speakers should be invited to address the problems and to review potential

strategies. A commitment should emerge into a strategy and type of involvement, including a clear plan of action.

3. Communication with other community groups interested in this same objective should be undertaken. This could include other congregations and their clergy, business groups, labor unions, service clubs, legal specialists, educators, non-governmental social agencies, etc. A joint committee for political action should be established.
4. Contact should be developed with the relevant political leaders in the community most interested in working on this problem. It should be obvious that contacts with the political party leadership which is most interested in this role and most likely to take a leadership action is absolutely essential. This includes identification of, and communication with, those political leaders most likely to be mobilized on such actions, both in primary and general elections, at the local, state, and national levels.
5. During this entire process, the local media should be informed and hopefully, supportive of the commitment and effort.

Our basic assumptions here should be clear. The action needed is direct governmental legislative pressure that leads to governmental legislative action. Occasional sermons or invited speakers are not enough. This means also that such action is permissible under our constitutional system and is protected under our system of federalism. We also assume that this type of social reform action by the church is desirable if the church is to be influential in society. It is also not only desirable but, necessary if the church in America is to play a meaningful role for its citizens and believers in the development of social welfare in our country. Above all, if the church in American society could seek to play a central role in social welfare, it would not only enhance the

welfare of those who sit in the pews, but change the moral tone and climate of politics in America.

Our fundamental position is that the church as an institution is embedded in society and therefore should be concerned to work for the solution and not only saving souls but also saving society.

In conclusion it is obvious that the church has attempted many different ways to challenge or propose political or governmental action in specific cases. These are not necessarily examples of how the church should go about. In fact, the Supreme Court has rejected them. Better examples would be the civil rights campaign of the 1960s led by Rev. Martin Luther King. This campaign led the adoption of two civil rights laws in President Johnson's administration. There are other examples of church involvement, for example the marches against the development of the nuclear bomb. There are some other illustrations to keep in mind about the involvement of the church and political action, in the past, which often were denied by the Supreme Court.

1. Campaigning for prayer in the schools
2. Recognizing church symbols such as the 10 Commandments in public buildings
3. Teaching creationism in the schools
4. In campaigning for candidates pastors encouraged the congregation to vote in elections but not to vote for a particular candidate
5. The recent controversy over the placement of the cross on a public building
6. Influencing the curricula in the schools
7. Encouraging certain religious leaders such as Pat Robertson of the evangelical movement to run for public office

8. Get governmental funds for the so-called faith-based churches by the George W. Bush administration

If one thinks about these types of church-related actions either challenging or proposing governmental action in favor of the church it should become quite clear that the separation of church and state is not true. The church has often an interest in specific projects. But in our presentation in this book we are focused on getting the church involved in long-term moral problems which confront our society.

Chapter 8

Conclusion: What is the message?

Have you ever heard a priest, rabbi or minister from his or her pulpit discussing war and expressing an opinion about it? Some few ministers we know have done this but not many. In my 92 years I have only heard it once.

Have you ever heard your minister discussing global warming in the world?

Have you ever heard your minister informing you that 47 million Americans do not have adequate health insurance? Also have you ever heard that 45,000 uninsured people die annually in the United States as a consequence of not having a health insurance (see [16])?

Have you ever heard a priest reminding his/her congregation that women in the United States are not equal to men in what they are paid for in doing the same job as a man? Have you ever heard your priest reminding the congregation that more than 54 million individuals with disabilities live in America and that we should help them? Have you

ever heard your priest mentioned that 37 million Americans are living in poverty and that today that figure may be much larger?

We have to ask how can this be? How can the church leaders fail to recognize these moral problems facing the American Society? Where is your courage ministers? The answer to that is not very simple. It could be that the Minister is uninformed, oblivious to these conditions in America because he or she does not follow the news or does not read the newspaper. This is hard to believe. Or it may be because your rabbi or minister is afraid to present these issues to his or her church. Or it may be because the clergy person does not believe that these are important questions. Or it may be because he or she wants to spare the congregation from the terrible evils that exists "out there" in the world. And finally perhaps he or she sees the mission of the Church to be one of segregation from the sins of the world and be preoccupied with saving souls rather than saving society. If that is the case of course this minister has not read his own biblical books which tells the believer to go into the world to minister to the needy.

In this small book we have been trying to wrestle with these concerns and the failure of the church in our opinion to fulfill its proper mission on earth. We have outlined a whole series of moral problems. We have looked at the history of religion in the United States and discovered that in the past the churches have often been concerned about such problems and have tried to influence the government in making decisions of a certain type. The slavery controversy in the United States from the 1800's on is a good case of the involvement of the church. In an earlier chapter we've found that there has been a decline in the involvement of the public with the church in America. Not even 50% of our population are today churchgoers. We feel that one possible reason for this decline is growing irrelevance of the church in the mind of the American public. Finally we had a chapter in which

we examine how the American governmental system works and concluded that the United States Congress is not held in high regard by the public, in fact it has fallen to as low as 20 to 30% in approval by the public in public opinion polls. This may be partly due to the failure of Congress to face up to the moral problem which all us citizens face in the U.S.

These findings presented us with a deep dilemma. How are we to reform the American system so that it is a more effective system in securing high approval from the American public and participation by the American public? In the very successful European democracies one finds the following: a humane business leadership group, religious parties in some European countries, very active and liberal labor union movements, and Parliaments which work effectively with these groups to adopt the necessary policies. We find that the West-European democracies have been much better at dealing with the health needs of all citizens and the poverty question has been better resolved than in the U.S. And the public opinion polls in Europe show that these countries have citizens who are strongly supportive and happy with their government and its decisions. This is not so in the United States. We do not have a humane business group in this country which regularly provides funds to solve our social welfare problems. We do not have a labor union which is an effective activist in national politics. We do not have a legislature which is highly regarded. We do not have a public which is satisfied with the work of our Congress. But we do have new and great moral leadership in the presidency in the United States, with the election of President Barack Obama. As a result, Congress is now facing the need for a national health system as well as doing something about global warming. We will soon see what Congress is doing in these two areas.

Today, in 2009, our America is facing a deep crisis—political, military, economic, and ideological. We have major moral problems to solve. But at the same time we are experiencing a new

awakening. We are beginning to realize that we can solve our problems if we develop a work program that can lead to success. And that is where our proposal (see Chapter 5) for the church to play a significant role in acknowledging that these problems exist, and that the church also should work to resolve them. As a New York minister said recently we need “compassion” in America. He also said that our challenge is to “civilize capitalism”.¹ That is essential at all levels of the system—more compassion (and less greed) at Wall Street, and more sympathy for the poor and the needy by Congress and Main Street.

Finally we close this chapter with a quotation of a French scholar Alexis de Tocqueville after he visited churches in America in 1831 (see de Toqueville [6].) He wrote in his book *Democracy in America*: “America is a great nation because it is a good nation. If America ceases to be a good nation, it will not be a great nation”.

Our democracy has been well conceived by our forefathers to be dedicated to the “common good”. Is this still true in America?

De Tocqueville was correct. We can be a great nation again. And the church should help. That is our hope. That is our message.

¹Quotations from Rev. Galen Guengerich “Democracy on Purpose” and “Standard of Living”, see [12] and [13].

Chapter 9

A brief epilogue

We reproduce here the “second Bill of Rights” which was given to us by President Roosevelt in 1944 (see [24]) as follows:

We have come to a clear realization of the fact that true individual freedom cannot exist without economic security and independence. ‘Necessitous men are not freemen.’ People who are hungry and out of a job are the stuff of which dictatorships are made.

In our day these economic truths have become accepted as self evident. We have accepted, so to speak, a second Bill of Rights under which a new basis of security and prosperity can be established for all regardless of station, race, or creed. Among these are:

- *The right to a useful and remunerative job in the industries or shops or farms or mines of the Nation;*
- *The right to earn enough to provide adequate food and clothing and recreation;*
- *The right of every farmer to raise and sell his products at a return which will give him and his family a decent living;*

- *The right of every businessman, large and small, to trade in an atmosphere of freedom from unfair competition and domination by monopolies at home or abroad;*
- *The right of every family to a decent home;*
- *The right to adequate medical care and the opportunity to achieve and enjoy good health;*
- *The right to adequate protection from the economic fears of old age, sickness, accident, and unemployment;*
- *The right to a good education.*

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- Michigan Politics in Transition, 1942
- Political Parties: A Behavioral Analysis, 1964. This book won the Woodrow Wilson award for the best book in political science in the United States in that year
- Elite Perceptions of the Political Process in the Netherlands, 1975
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