

A moral minority?

An open letter to conservatives from Paul Weyrich

February 16, 1999

Dear Friend:

Late last year, I had the opportunity of speaking to the Conservative Leadership Conference on the state of the conservative movement. I've given similar talks in the past, and usually they have focused on the most recent election or our situation in Congress or something similar. This time, the thoughts I offered were very different, and frankly rather radical. The strong, positive response they brought forth – which came as something of a surprise to me – has led me to think that I should share them more widely. That is the purpose of this letter.

What many of us have been trying to do for many years has been based upon a couple of premises. First of all, we have assumed that a majority of Americans basically agrees with our point of view. That has been the premise upon which we have tried to build any number of institutions, and indeed our whole strategy. It is I who suggested to Jerry Falwell that he call his organization the "Moral Majority." The second premise has been that if we could just elect enough conservatives, we could get our people in as Congressional leaders and they would fight to implement our agenda.

In looking at the long history of conservative politics, from the defeat of Robert Taft in 1952, to the nomination of Barry Goldwater, to the takeover of the Republican Party in 1994, I think it is fair to say that conservatives have learned to succeed in politics. That is, we got our people elected.

But that did not result in the adoption of our agenda. The reason, I think, is that politics itself has failed. And politics has failed because of the collapse of the culture. The culture we are living in becomes an ever-wider sewer. In truth, I think we are caught up in a cultural collapse of historic proportions, a collapse so great that it simply overwhelms politics.

That's why I am in the process of rethinking what it is that we, who still believe in our traditional, Western, Judeo-Christian culture, can and should do under the circumstances. Please understand that I am not quarreling with anybody who pursues politics, because it is important to pursue politics, to be involved in government. It is also important to try, as many people have, to re-take the cultural institutions that have been captured by the other side.

But it is impossible to ignore the fact that the United States is becoming an ideological state. The ideology of Political Correctness, which openly calls for the destruction of our traditional culture, has so gripped the body politic, has so gripped our institutions, that it is even affecting the Church. It has completely taken over the academic community. It is now pervasive in the entertainment industry, and it threatens to control literally every aspect of our lives.

Those who came up with Political Correctness, which we more accurately call "Cultural Marxism," did so in a deliberate fashion. I'm not going to go into the whole history of the Frankfurt School and Herbert Marcuse and the other people responsible for this. Suffice it to say that the United States is very close to becoming a state totally dominated by an alien ideology, an ideology bitterly hostile to Western culture. Even now, for the first time in their lives, people have to be afraid of what they say. This has never been true in the history of our country. Yet today, if you say the "wrong thing," you suddenly have legal problems, political problems, you might even lose your job or be expelled from college. Certain topics are forbidden. You can't approach the truth about a lot of different subjects. If you do, you are immediately branded as "racist", "sexist", "homophobic", "insensitive", or "judgmental."

Cultural Marxism is succeeding in its war against our culture. The question becomes, if we are unable to escape the cultural disintegration that is gripping society, then what hope can we have? Let me be perfectly frank about it. If there really were a moral majority out there, Bill Clinton would have been driven out of office months ago. It is not only the lack of political will on the part of Republicans, although that is part of the problem. More powerful is the fact that what Americans would have found absolutely intolerable only a few years ago, a majority now not only tolerates but celebrates. Americans have adopted, in large measure, the MTV culture that we so valiantly opposed just a few years ago, and it has permeated the thinking of all but those who have separated themselves from the contemporary culture.

If in Washington State and Colorado, after we have spent years talking about partial birth abortion, we can't by referendum pass a ban on it, we have to face some unpleasant facts. I no longer believe that there is a moral majority. I do not believe that a majority of Americans actually shares our values.

So, I have contemplated the question of what we should do. If you saw my predictions on the elections, you know that my views are far from infallible. Therefore, I do not represent this as any sort of final truth. It is merely my deduction based on a number of observations and a good deal of soul-searching.

I believe that we probably have lost the culture war. That doesn't mean the war is not going to continue, and that it isn't going to be fought on other fronts. But in terms of society in general, we have lost. This is why, even when we win in politics, our victories fail to translate into the kind of policies we believe are important.

Therefore, what seems to me a legitimate strategy for us to follow is to look at ways to separate ourselves from the institutions that have been captured by the ideology of Political Correctness, or by other enemies of our traditional culture. I would point out to you that the word "holy" means "set apart", and that it is not against our tradition to be, in fact, "set apart". You can look in the Old Testament, you can look at Christian history. You will see that there were times when those who had our beliefs were definitely in the minority and it was a band of hardy monks who preserved the culture while the surrounding society disintegrated.

What I mean by separation is, for example, what the homeschoolers have done. Faced with public school systems that no longer educate but instead "condition" students with the attitudes demanded by Political Correctness, they have seceded. They have separated themselves from public schools and have created new institutions, new schools, in their homes.

The same thing is happening in other areas. Some people are getting rid of their televisions. Others are setting up private courts, where they can hope to find justice instead of ideology and greed.

I think that we have to look at a whole series of possibilities for bypassing the institutions that are controlled by the enemy. If we expend our energies on fighting on the "turf" they already control, we will probably not accomplish what we hope, and we may spend ourselves to the point of exhaustion. The promising thing about a strategy of separation is that it has more to do with who we are, and what we become, than it does with what the other side is doing

and what we are going to do about it.

For example, the Southern Baptists, Dr. Dobson and some other people started a boycott of Disney. We may regard this boycott in two ways. We might say, "Well, look at how much higher Disney stock is than before. The company made record profits, therefore the boycott has failed." But the strategy I'm suggesting would see it differently. Because of that boycott, lots of people who otherwise would have been poisoned by the kind of viciously anti-religious, and specifically anti-Christian, entertainment that Disney is spewing out these days have been spared contact with it. They separated themselves from some of the cultural rot, and to that extent we succeeded.

I am very concerned, as I go around the country and speak and talk to young people, when I find how much of the decadent culture they have absorbed without even understanding that they are a part of it. And while I'm not suggesting that we all become Amish or move to Idaho, I do think that we have to look at what we can do to separate ourselves from this hostile culture. What steps can we take to make sure that we and our children are not infected? We need some sort of quarantine.

It is not only political conservatives who are troubled by the disintegration of the culture. I gave a speech not long ago in which I was very critical of what was on television. Several people who described themselves as liberals came up to me and said "Well, I know I don't agree with your politics, but you are absolutely correct on this and we don't allow our children to watch television any more."

Don't be mislead by politicians who say that everything is great, that we are on the verge of this wonderful, new era thanks to technology or the stock market or whatever. These are lies. We are not in the dawn of a new civilization, but the twilight of an old one. We will be lucky if we escape with any remnants of the great Judeo-Christian civilization that we have known down through the ages.

The radicals of the 1960s had three slogans: turn on, tune in, drop out. I suggest that we adopt a modified version. First, turn off. Turn off the television and video games and some of the garbage that's on the computers. Turn off the means by which you and your family are being infected with cultural decadence.

Tune out. Create a little stillness. I was very struck by the fact that when I traveled in the former Soviet Union, I couldn't go to a restaurant or any place else without hearing this incessant Western rock music pounding away. There was no escape from it. No wonder some Russians are anti-American. When they think of the United States, they think of the culture that we exported to them.

Finally, we need to drop out of this culture, and find places, even if it is where we physically are right now, where we can live godly, righteous and sober lives.

Again, I don't have all the answers or even all the questions. But I know that what we have been doing for thirty years hasn't worked, that while we have been fighting and winning in politics, our culture has decayed into something approaching barbarism. We need to take another tack, find a different strategy. If you agree, and are willing to help wrestle with what that strategy should be, let me know. If enough people are willing to do something different, we will call a roundtable meeting here at Free Congress this year to discuss it. I hope I will see you there.

Sincerely,

Paul M. Weyrich

Read Paul Weyrich's follow-up article on this letter as published in the May 15, 1999 issue of *World*. [Click here.](#)

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