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3-10-2008

### March 11, 2008: The Democratic Party Turns to Religion

Bruce Ledewitz

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Title: The Democratic Party Turns to Religion

Date: 2008-03-11T06:25:00.001-04:00

3/11/2008--On Sunday, 3/9/2008, Ann Rodgers, religion reporter for the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, wrote a long front-page piece about the rise of "centrist evangelicals" in American life, specifically political life. Rodgers acknowledges that this right/left divide is a little misleading—in fact she quotes me to the effect that evangelicals over the past few years spearheaded American efforts to alleviate the AID's crisis and poverty in general in Africa. Rodgers notes that the Democratic Party had been hostile—some would say perceived as hostile, but I think hostile is the right word--to believers and that the Party now is taking steps to change its image. Furthermore, evangelical Christians are more likely to vote Democratic than they were four years ago. But, unlike most recent work in this area, Rodgers points out that this rapprochement cannot continue unless the Party either adopts different policy positions or is at least open to opposing perspectives. The main issue she mentions is abortion. Apparently, no matter how centrist believers become, they retain a strongly pro-life perspective. According to the story, believers do not see a pro-life position as inconsistent with care for the vulnerable, the poor, the environment and for peace. Rodgers is not suggesting that a Democratic Party Presidential nominee would have to be pro-life to gain substantial numbers of evangelical votes. But such a nominee could not expect to gain those votes without some type of "give" on the abortion issue, even if that means efforts to render abortion rare and unnecessary. What was most surprising about the article is that the issue of gay marriage received not a single mention. Rodgers is too good a reporter to have suppressed this concern on the part of her sources. I am left with the impression that gay marriage may not be the key issue for evangelical Christians that abortion is. If that is really the case, America may be closer to resolving its culture wars than I had dared to hope.