Part 3

Social Issues

A main difference between the right and the left on social issues has to do with two related ideas: tradition and boundaries. Generally speaking, conservatives place a high value on traditional values and boundaries. Things like family, marriage, and religion for conservatives are stabilizing factors in a society, primarily because they provide *boundaries* to human behavior. These boundaries provide stability by guiding behavior and placing spoken and unspoken limits on acceptable behavior. Many liberals, on the other hand, suggest that some traditional values are sexist, racist, or homophobic, and the boundaries created by traditional values are limiting factors that prevent some people from living their life how they want to live it. For people on the social left, traditional values, and the boundaries created by them, have been harmful to some groups in society.

For conservatives: Traditional values and boundaries = good, stabilizing, healthy, necessary

For liberals: Traditional values and boundaries =limiting, controlling, closed minded, undesirable

(This is pretty deep stuff!)

**Abortion**

Conservative: The conservative view regarding abortion is referred to as the pro-life view. These people say that abortion is murder. Terminating a pregnancy, according to pro-lifers, is immoral and should be illegal. While some exceptions might be made in the case of rape or incest or to protect the health of the mother, abortion goes against many traditional values and takes away important boundaries. Partial birth, or late term, abortion is especially wrong in the eyes of most pro-lifers. Life is the most important issue for these people and for them it begins at conception. Also, pay attention to the word choice of pro-lifers.

Liberal: The liberal view on abortion is referred to as the pro-choice view. A liberal would say whether or not to have an abortion should be up to the mother, not the government. After all, say liberals, it is the woman’s body and she should be able to choose what is best for herself. Limits on abortion are an example of over burdensome boundaries for liberals. These people do not consider abortion to be murder. It is simply none of the government’s business. Most pro-choicers do not consider life to begin at conception, but rather at some later point. Again, pay attention to the word choice of pro-choicers.

Oftentimes (but not always) the argument about abortion seems to be about two different things. Pro-lifers mostly are arguing that abortion is morally wrong and is basically murder; therefore it should be illegal. Pro-choicers are mostly arguing that the woman should be able to decide for herself whether an abortion is her best choice, not the government. Both sides try to paint the other as extreme. And other issues are related to the abortion issue as well…

**Gay Marriage**

Conservative: Most social conservatives are opposed to gay marriage. In their opinion, marriage should be between a man and a woman period. Any other definition of marriage violates what marriage is really supposed to be. In this case, the boundaries put in place by a traditional definition of marriage are there because that definition offers the most complete benefits to society of marriage.

Liberal: Social liberals, on the other hand, are not opposed to gay marriage, and many times support it. They would say that the traditional definition of marriage has been limiting to some people over the years. Who a person wants to marry is none of the government’s business. In the opinion of many liberals, not letting gay people get married is discrimination.

Tradition, boundaries, and your view of them...