

Is Jesus a Republican?

Throughout the history of the Church Christians have gravitated towards political leaders who have either professed faith in Christ or offered the Church shelter from political oppression, or even outright persecution. The tendency is only natural. After all, what Christian finds appealing a political leader who has an antipathy to the Church? This state of affairs is certainly true with regard to our current president, George W. Bush. In fact, many see the re-election of our current president as an absolute must for the sake of the forward progress of the interests of the Church in the political arena. After all, Bush is opposed to abortion and gay marriage, and is in favor of faith-based initiatives, and the death penalty. Given these positions does this mean Bush is *the* biblical choice for President? In other words, were Jesus in the voting booth on election day, would he not pull the lever, or dare one say, ‘punch a chad,’ for the Republican presidential candidate? While we cannot be absolutely certain, there are many who believe that, yes, Jesus would vote for Bush and that Jesus would most definitely be a Republican. Is this statement true or even a safe assumption? The answer to this question is, absolutely not. Let us explore the idea that Jesus would vote for Bush with a bit more detail.

Many evangelicals come to politics with an assumption that the Republican party platform is more biblical than the Democratic party platform. Where this comes quite clearly to the forefront is on the issue of abortion. Yes, abortion is clearly immoral and goes against the teaching of Scripture. So, one can say that in that aspect, if one political party opposes abortion, then it is more biblical. On the other hand, can we determine fidelity to the Bible solely on the basis of one aspect of its teaching? There are a host of other issues that one must consider, issues on which the Bible has little if anything to say. For example, can we say that providing school vouchers is a biblical mandate that government is required to offer? Is a candidate’s thinking more biblical if he favors school vouchers? What about the Patriot Act? Where in the Bible do we find instructions regarding the limits and power of government regarding the privacy of individual citizens? What about gun control? While the second amendment might establish the right to bear arms, where in the Bible do we find instruction regarding this issue?

We must realize the political positions many people associate with conservative Christendom, and hence the Bible, are hardly at all based upon the Bible. What if a pro-life Democrat candidate were to run for office, but he favored higher taxes, was pro-gun control, and against school vouchers? Would people in the Church oppose him because he was against issues they thought were “Christian.” What all of this boils down to is, we should be very careful to what we attach the adjective, “Christian.” While we might have good intentions, we might only be baptizing a position as “Christian” when the Bible has nothing to say on the matter. But what about the pressing question, Is Jesus a Republican?

Many within the Church will base their vote for president upon one or two issues. In this election these might be abortion and opposition to gay marriage. They put these two issues forward as a Christian litmus test. And, based upon this test alone, they will vote

for George Bush. Again, yes, abortion and homosexuality are clearly against the teachings of Scripture. But, just because a political candidate opposes abortion and homosexuality does not necessarily make him the better political candidate. How so? Let us take our current president as an example. President Bush opposes abortion and gay marriage. Does this make him the clear choice for the Christian? No. Why not? While the President may side with Christians on these moral issues, he has made statements that are positively anti-Christian. Many either forget or perhaps even want to ignore the President's statements concerning Islam in the days following the 9/11 terrorist attacks. President Bush said,

“The face of terror is not the true faith of Islam. That's not what Islam is all about. Islam is peace. These terrorists don't represent peace. They represent evil and war. When we think of Islam we think of a faith that brings comfort to a billion people around the world. Billions of people find comfort and solace and peace. And that's made brothers and sisters out of every race—out of every race” (17 Sept 2001, remarks made by the President at the Islamic Center of Washington, D. C.).

Now, the President's statement is perfectly understandable given his position and responsibilities as the leader of the United States. As President, he governs many Muslims and must represent them as much as he represents the Christians under his authority. On the other hand, his statements are not only false but also un-biblical. His statement is tantamount to a public proclamation of the legitimacy of the Muslim faith. Why would a Muslim seek the peace of Christ if he possesses the peace of Allah? It is because of statements like this that Christians must never endorse a political candidate as *the* biblical choice. Just because a candidate may morally agree with us on some matters does not mean that he is a political friend of the Church.

What we in the Church must realize is that politicians of every stripe are compromised to one degree or another; the politician's degree of compromise seems to be connected to the level of office. The greater amount of power a politician wields is often directly proportional to the degree of compromise. What was undoubtedly behind the President's statement about Islam is not an actual belief that Islam is a religion of peace, but the desire not to want to offend the possible 5 to 8 million Muslims in the United States, some of whom might vote for him come election day. Christians should also recognize that some politicians are so compromised that they care not one whit for Christian principles or beliefs but simply hold their wet finger to the wind to determine its direction. If demographics show that the vast majority of a constituency is pro-life, then he will be pro-life even though he is indifferent to the matter. Again, politicians are compromised to one degree or another, and Christians must, therefore, never endorse a candidate as *the* Christian choice.

So, then, is Jesus as Republican? No, he is not. This means that we in the Church should not label the Republican party platform as “Christian.” So, then, what is the Church to do in this upcoming election if there is no clear-cut Christian choice? First, we must remember that we must not place our hope in the government to bring about change that only the gospel of Jesus Christ can bring. No amount of political lobbying, conservative

Christian political action committees, or even “Christian legislation” will ever change the heart of this country. We could have a Republican paradise and the heart of the nation could still be a million miles away from Jesus Christ. We must remember that the State has only been given the sword of steel, not the sword of the Spirit. Second, Christians must place their hope in their King, Jesus Christ, not in their political. It is only through the sword of the Spirit, the Bible, and the preaching of the Gospel that has the power to change the heart of a nation. We could have the farthest left-wing morally liberal political leaders in office who propagate abortion and gay rights with a vengeance and yet see the greatest reformation and revival occur through the propagation of the gospel. Third, and finally, when it comes time to vote we should make our decision based upon what the Bible says about the function of government—it exists by God’s ordination to preserve order and punish evil doers. Choose your candidate based upon whom you believe can best carryout these tasks.

In the end, this essay does not represent a desire to dash the hope of Christians by poking holes in our President. Rather, it is a call for Christians to place their hope, not in fallible men, but in Jesus Christ.