

## Christianity and Politics Today in the U.S.

Guys: An ad with the following text (titled "God is not a Republican. Or a Democrat") appeared in a number of newspapers throughout the country on the eve of the 2004 U.S. presidential elections. It was signed by many prominent people and it summarizes the basic position of Christians (on both sides of the political divide) on what it means to be a Christian today with regard to political and social issues. The ad begins with quotes from two well-known Christian rightists and it is followed by a response to them from mainstream Christians, supported by relevant quotes from the Bible. If you are a Christian where do **you** stand on today's central issues of poverty, racism, sexism, foreign policy, etc.? (A copy of the ad as it appeared in print was available [here](#).)

---

### God is Not a Republican. Or a Democrat.

"It is the responsibility of every political conservative, every evangelical Christian, every pro-life Catholic, every traditional Jew...to get serious about re-electing President Bush."  
- Jerry Falwell, *The New York Times*, July 16, 2004

"I think George Bush is going to win in a walk. I really believe I'm hearing from the Lord it's going to be like a blowout election in 2004. The Lord has just blessed him.... It doesn't make any difference what he does, good or bad."  
- Pat Robertson, *AP/Fox News*, January 2, 2004

These leaders of the Religious Right mistakenly claim that God has taken a side in this election, and that Christians should only vote for George W. Bush.

We believe that claims of divine appointment for the President, uncritical affirmation of his policies, and assertions that all Christians must vote for his re-election constitute bad theology and dangerous religion.

We believe that sincere Christians and other people of faith can choose to vote for President Bush or Senator Kerry - for reasons deeply rooted in their faith.

Sign our petition and send a message that the Religious Right does not speak for you. Remind America that Jesus taught us to be peacemakers, advocates for the poor, and defenders of justice. Rather than endorsing any party, we must examine each candidate in light of the complete range of Christian ethics and values.

We believe that claims of divine appointment for the President, uncritical affirmation of his policies, and assertions that all Christians must vote for his re-election constitute bad theology and dangerous religion.

We believe that sincere Christians and other people of faith can choose to vote for President Bush or Senator Kerry - for reasons deeply rooted in their faith.

We believe all candidates should be examined by measuring their policies against the complete range of Christian ethics and values.

We will measure the candidates by whether they enhance human life, human dignity, and human rights; whether they strengthen family life and protect children; whether they promote racial reconciliation and support gender equality; whether they serve peace and social justice; and whether they advance the common good rather than only individual, national, and special interests.

#### **We are not single-issue voters.**

We believe that poverty - caring for the poor and vulnerable - is a religious issue. Do the candidates' budget and tax policies reward the rich or show compassion for poor families? Do their foreign policies include fair trade and debt cancellation for the poorest countries? (Matthew 25:35-40, Isaiah 10:1-2)

We believe that the environment - caring for God's earth - is a religious issue. Do the candidates' policies protect the creation or serve corporate interests that damage it? (Genesis 2:15, Psalm 24:1)

We believe that war - and our call to be peacemakers - is a religious issue. Do the candidates' policies pursue "wars of choice" or respect international law and cooperation in responding to real global threats? (Matthew 5:9)

We believe that truth-telling is a religious issue. Do the candidates tell the truth in justifying war and in other foreign and domestic policies? (John 8:32)

We believe that human rights - respecting the image of God in every person - is a religious issue. How do the candidates propose to change the attitudes and policies that led to the abuse and torture of Iraqi prisoners? (Genesis 1:27)

We believe that our response to terrorism is a religious issue. Do the candidates adopt the dangerous language of righteous empire in the war on terrorism and confuse the roles of God, church, and nation? Do the candidates see evil only in our enemies but never in our own policies? (Matthew 6:33, Proverbs 8:12-13)

We believe that a consistent ethic of human life is a religious issue. Do the candidates' positions on abortion, capital punishment, euthanasia, weapons of mass destruction, HIV/AIDS and other pandemics and genocide around the world obey the biblical injunction to choose life? (Deuteronomy 30:19)  
We also admonish both parties and candidates to avoid the exploitation of religion or our congregations for partisan political purposes.

By signing this statement, we call Christians and other people of faith to a more thoughtful involvement in this election, rather than claiming God's endorsement of any candidate.

This is the meaning of responsible Christian citizenship.

### [Quotes from the Bible]

*Nehemiah 2:17-18*

Then I said to them, "You see the trouble we are in, how Jerusalem lies in ruins with its gates burned. Come, let us rebuild the wall of Jerusalem, so that we may no longer suffer disgrace." I told them that the hand of my God had been gracious upon me, and also the words that the king had spoken to me. Then they said, "Let us start building!" So they committed themselves to the common good.

*Matthew 25:35-40*

For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me. Then the righteous will answer him, "Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?" And the king will answer them, "Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me."

*Isaiah 10:1-2*

Woe to you who make iniquitous decrees, who write oppressive statutes, to turn aside the needy from justice and to rob the poor of my people of their right, that widows may be your spoil, and that you may make the orphans your prey!

*Genesis 2:15*

The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it.

*Psalms 24:1*

The earth is the Lord's and all that is in it, the world, and those who live in it.

*Matthew 5:9*

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

*John 8:32*

You will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.

*Genesis 1:27*

So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

*Matthew 6:33*

But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

*Proverbs 8:12-13*

I, wisdom, live with prudence, and I attain knowledge and discretion. The fear of the Lord is hatred of evil. Pride and arrogance and the way of evil and perverted speech I hate.

*Deuteronomy 30:19*

I call heaven and earth to witness against you today that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Choose life so that you and your descendants may live.