

Why Ralph?

Maybe it's because my Seventh-day Adventist Christian roots provide such a strong regard for human life. The practice of capital punishment is in direct conflict with my beliefs. Nader is against the death penalty. Also concerned with our quality of life, he is an outspoken proponent of a living wage (making sure people can provide for their family on the hourly wage they earn) and universal health care (scary "socialist" words for some, but basically assuring that everyone—every child, too—in the country has health insurance, including the 46 million Americans who don't have it now).

Nader even cares about people who live outside our nation. He is opposed to free trade agreements that don't take into account the human rights of workers. Instead of building a Defense Department primarily on the basis of preparing for war, Ralph is intent on steering our military toward peace as a priority.

The Bible informs us that we must choose between God and money. I'm voting against continuing corporate corruption of our political process and modern culture. Only Nader will truly work to reform

the de facto plutocracy our nation now suffers under.

In short, Ralph Nader has the needs of the neediest at the forefront of his campaign. His priorities are similar to my Master's. Christ enabled the poor and hurting, giving them hope and life. In the eleventh commandment he asks us to do the same: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Matt. 22:39, NRSV).

In Micah 6:8, God gives us pretty clear directions on how we should live: "do justice . . . love kindness, and . . . walk humbly with your God." God's instructions to take care of the poor and needy carry over to the ballot box. How could I vote for carbon copy gush-and-bore politicians who oppose justice and kindness? I will not leave my Christianity at the polling booth door.

What would Jesus do? Would Jesus vote for Ralph? Only if Jesus at his age could afford to be an idealist.

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What's God Got to Do with It?

by David A. Pendleton

I've been asked by fellow Adventists whether I'm "voting my faith" this fall. Because I'm an attorney, the answer is, as one might anticipate, "It depends on what one means by 'voting my faith.'"

If one means that our Adventist Christian faith somehow informs us whether the Democrat or the Republican nominee is more godly or whether the Bible tells us anything about the efficiency of free markets versus command and control economies, or if there is a biblical answer to solving the Medicare problem, then the answer is "no." I will not be voting what I think is the Adventist Christian (party) line. That's because there is no such thing. The Bible is God's word, not God's policy briefing.

It goes without saying that God is neither a Democrat nor a Republican. Nor does the Bible provide sufficient details to endorse a given public policy proposal.

Rather, the Bible provides broad principals to apply to real-world situations in a judicious, charitable, and reasoned fashion. The Bible also provides models of Godly leadership—Joseph, Esther, and Daniel, for example.

The Bible is first and foremost concerned with eternal matters—the salvation of our souls—and only secondarily with temporal matters. Yet it makes demands on how we live in the here and now—alas only, unfortunately, with broad principles rather than rule-like prescriptions.

On the other hand, if by “voting my faith” you mean voting consistent with my understanding of biblical principles, then the answer is “yes.” We are told in Micah that the Lord requires that we do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with our God. That means Adventist Christians must bring to bear in the larger public policy discussion our insights concerning, and appreciation for, righteousness and societal well-being.

No doubt Adventist Christian faith leads us to oppose domestic violence, to fight illiteracy, to provide an effective safety net for the disabled, disadvantaged, and forgotten, and to conserve our environment. The rightness of these ends is unquestionable, but how to pursue these ends is a matter for discussion.

Adventist Christians should be involved in the political process, not because we can benefit our denomination or do special favors for our members, but because we can contribute to the public good. We recognize that true leadership is servant leadership, that service to others rather than self is paramount, and that good intentions never make up for bad consequences.

We have an obligation as Adventist Christians to elevate the public discourse above caricatures and stereotypes, to eschew demonizing the opposition, and to evaluate carefully and evenhandedly all policy propositions on their merits rather than to judge them based on the party affiliation of their introducer.

For example, I personally believe Clinton and Gore have sincerely done what they can to lead the nation. There is no question about motives, so the issue boils down to effectiveness of policies.

I can disagree with their policies without engaging in personal attacks. I can make the case that they failed to avail the nation of the opportunity to address

pressing problems during this time of prosperity. Despite nearly a decade of uninterrupted economic growth, millions of Americans have been left behind under Clinton-Gore. The number of uninsured Americans has grown by eight million.

The education gap between disadvantaged inner-city students and their peers has grown wider since 1993. (The only state where this is not the case is Texas.) Thousands of American soldiers are on food stamps. When Congress sought to give relief by eliminating the marriage tax penalty, it was vetoed (despite the president having advocated such tax relief in a prior State of the Union Address).

Social Security and Medicare are in crisis, and the only solution forthcoming from the present administration is to pour more money into the program. Does not prudence suggest structural reforms first? Otherwise we are bailing water out of the ship without attempting to patch the hole.

The foregoing are my opinions—but only that. They are not God's. They are not the Bible's.

A critique can be made on other issues concerning the Republicans. No party is perfect, for truly only God is perfect. Some will point to big tobacco or the National Rifle Association as nefarious forces in the GOP—well, I'm one Republican elected official who has never taken money from either of them. (A review of campaign contribution records of Al Gore and the Democratic Party will show that Gore over the course of his career and other Democrats have taken money from both big tobacco and the National Rifle Association, even as recently as this year's Democratic Convention in Los Angeles, where the National Rifle Association underwrote at least one event.)

What, then, has God got to do with politics? Everything. Politics is how society shapes and metes out justice in the here and now. The private sector can do and must do much. But it cannot do everything. There is, therefore, a place for public intervention when markets break down. The Adventist Disaster Relief Agency and Adventist Community Services can do it alone without partnerships with government.

Unfortunately, the Bible doesn't tell Adventist Christians where and when to support government intervention and what form such intervention should take. This is messy business, but surely abandoning politics to the powerful cannot be God's will.

Therefore, involvement and engagement is the only appropriate response. It will take careful reflection and skillful implementation. It will take wisdom. It will take prayer.

It will also require that we focus on honest solutions rather than attacks. The Bible has no record of attack ads being coordinated by Joseph, Esther, and Daniel, though they were in fact the targets of vicious attacks.

We don't know whether these leaders would be Republicans or Democrats today. But we do know that they would strive to raise the level of public policy

discussion and that they would conduct themselves in a manner testifying that politics is and ought to be a vocation—a holy calling.

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Why I Shall Vote for George W. Bush

by Donald R. McAdams

I shall vote this November 7 for George W. Bush to be president of the United States. Does this have anything to do with the fact that I was raised an Adventist? I think not, but perhaps it does.

My father was a Democrat. My mother was a Republican. I was a Democrat from a young age. During my college years my hero was Hubert Humphrey. I voted for LBJ, Hubert Humphrey, George McGovern, and twice for Jimmy Carter. The only reluctant vote was for McGovern. I thought he was too liberal. I just couldn't make myself vote for Nixon.

During Ronald Reagan's first term I became a Republican. I had never voted a straight Democratic ticket before, and I have not voted a straight Republican ticket since. In fact, I have and will again this year hold receptions in my home for Democratic candidates.

But today I am a solid Republican. Why? Primarily because the Democratic Party changed. At least in my view, the Democratic Party turned away from vigorous opposition to Communism. America became as much responsible for the Cold War as the Soviet Union. Whatever went wrong in international affairs, Democrats wanted to blame America. Garbage, I thought. Meanwhile, Reagan set out to win the Cold War and did.

Also, it seemed to me that Democrats were increasingly intent on dividing the country into victims and victimizers. The Democrats of my early years championed the interests of working class Americans. Today's Democrats defend victims: racial victims, gender victims, sexual orientation victims, economic victims, pollution victims, victims of oil companies, pharmaceutical companies, and on and on. In this, the richest, freest, and most nondiscriminatory society since the world began, does victimology and class warfare make sense?

Lastly, today's Democrats seem to believe that Washington has the solution for every problem that faces every community, even every individual. State and local elected officials apparently are not smart enough or compassionate enough to solve local problems. And new entitlements are out there waiting to be discovered so that Washington can provide. What looks like civic compassion to many looks to me like pandering for votes with other people's money.

I know I have painted Democrats with broad strokes and harsh colors. I could do the same for Republicans—too many far right fanatics, too white, too fearful of international organizations, too often tolerant of discrimination, too often lacking in compassion, and much more. Both parties have their extremists. Both parties demagogue. Both parties have their share of rascals and saints.

But on balance, Republicans are more committed to the public policies that I believe are best for America: a foreign policy built around America's strategic interests, a strong national defense, free trade, limited government