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RELIGION IN POLITICS

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QUESTION

With the rise of the evangelical vote and the recent suggestion by a Catholic bishop that voters should not vote for pro-abortion candidates, many questions have arisen about the role of religion in politics. Can you tell us your position?

ANSWER

- o Religion plays an important role in every person's life, whether or not he or she is in politics. A personal faith is a strong, sturdy anchor in difficult times.
- o Moreover, should recognize that even though we maintain a separation between church and state -- a separation RR would maintain as President -- does not mean that those who are in politics should leave God out of their daily lives.

But we need to add two other observations:

- o Person who holds high office of Presidency should not impose his religious persuasion upon other people who happen to hold a different viewpoint. A person's religion is holy ground and should be treated with respect.
- o Secondly, should recognize that while religious faith can make one stronger personally, does not automatically make one more effective or competent in a job. All three of top candidates in this year's race are men of faith -- voters ought to make decision not on religious grounds, but who can do the best job.

Example: when choosing a doctor for open heart surgery, you might prefer to have someone from same church or synagogue. But in final analysis, you will choose the person best qualified as a surgeon. The same test applies to the Presidency.

Final observation: If elected, will follow the counsel of the pastor who said, "pray as if everything depends on God -- work as if everything depends on you".

BEN,

File Religion

In my opinion, the main area of preparation is for questions relating to the "Role of Religion in Government" and "Church-State Separation" whichever way it is worded those are really both the same question and therefore can be handled the same way.

In answering questions dealing with these issues, there are several points the Governor will want to make.

- 1) Reaffirm his support for the 1st Ad.
- 2) Reinforce the fact that the idea of a State Religion is repugnant to him.
- 3) Always say "Judeo-Christian" never "Christian"
- 4) ~~In place~~^{no} The republican platform says nothing about any religion but says a lot about morality.

5) You must make it clear that religion has nothing to do with government. But that morality does.

6) Religious Freedom is one of the ~~and~~ Civil liberties ~~are on~~ that are vital to our nation.

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WP 9/8/80

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The Gallup Poll

Evangelical Views on Issues Are Similar to Other Voters'

By George Gallup

PRINCETON, N.J.—A presidential candidate who seeks to win the support of evangelicals—who account for one-fifth of the electorate—will find that their opinions are similar to those of nonevangelicals on a number of key voter issues.

The latest Gallup survey shows, for example, that evangelicals and nonevangelicals have similar attitudes toward gun registration, building more nuclear power plants, the death penalty for murder, and government social programs.

Furthermore, the differences on other key issues are perhaps not so great as might be expected. For example, 66 percent of nonevangelicals favor the Equal Rights Amendment, but so do 53 percent of evangelicals. When it comes to increased defense spending, 68 percent of nonevangelicals and 78 percent of evangelicals are in favor of stepping up spending for the military.

On issues related to personal morality and religion, however, major differences are found.

For example, half the proportion of evangelicals as nonevangelicals favor allowing homosexuals to teach in the public schools.

On banning abortion, 29 percent of nonevangelicals express support for such action while 41 percent of evangelicals do so—a pronounced difference, but perhaps less than one might expect.

The sharpest difference in views is found in regard to prayer in schools. Even when this issue is posed in terms of requiring prayer, 81 percent of evangelicals vote in support while 54 percent of nonevangelicals do so.

Evangelicals, as defined in this survey, are likely to be women, living in the South, middle-aged, slightly downscale and more likely to live in rural areas.

In addition, evangelicals are slightly more Democratic in their political orientation than the rest of the nation and slightly more conservative.

Evangelicals are defined as those with three basic characteristics.

- They describe themselves as with three basic characteristics: "born-again" evangelical Christians, or say they have had a "born-again" experience.

- They have tried to encourage other people to believe in Jesus Christ.

- They believe in a literal interpretation of the Bible, or the absolute authority of the Bible.

Nineteen percent of persons surveyed met all three of these criteria, which projects to about 30 million U.S. adults. While President Carter and Ronald Reagan are in close contention nationally, Carter is the overwhelming choice of evangelicals.

Being identified as a "born-again" evangelical Christian is on balance more a political asset than a liability. Although a 78 percent majority of nonevangelicals indicate that it would make no difference in their preference whether a presidential candidate was a born-again Christian, the nation's evangelicals are highly partisan toward an evangelical candidate.

These findings are based on two in-person surveys, each with over 1,500 adults, 18 and older, conducted in more than 800 scientifically selected localities across the nation during Aug. 1 through 4 and 15 through 18.

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WP 9/2/80



By Frank Johnston—The Washington Post
Ronald Reagan appeared on stage at Dallas meeting.

RICHARD COHEN

New Time Religion: Forgetting Civil Rights

BROTHERS AND SISTERS, this column is about the New Time Religion. It is about the religion of the television preachers and the new fundamentalists and all the people who gathered in Dallas recently to denounce, in no particular order, homosexuals, the school prayer ban, abortion, divorce, evolution and, for good measure, the 20th century. I am having a hard time distinguishing between the New Time Religion and the Old Oppression.

There always has been a high quotient of intolerance associated with most religions. Religion, in fact, doesn't have a very good record when it comes to tolerating dissent or minority rights. Almost by definition, religions think they have The Truth. They like things done their way or not at all. I cite, by way of evidence, the Inquisition, the Reformation, the Counter-Reformation and, for good measure and to keep my mail to a minimum, the way Orthodox Jewish groups have a stranglehold over some aspects of life in Israel.

It seems it is not enough for someone to believe,

He has to make sure that you believe also or, barring that, that you at least act as if you believe. It is not necessary, for instance, to believe in closing stores on Sunday. What counts is to have a law insisting on it. In that way, you have no choice but to be observant.

Similarly, it seems it is not enough to have a constitutional neutrality when it comes to religion. That means, when it comes to school prayer, that a religious person can pray whenever he or she wants. You can pray in the morning or at lunch or on some sort of break or silently to yourself.

That is not enough for the new fundamentalists. What apparently is required is a law that would force everyone to pray, whether they want to or not. This, we are told, is God's will.

Much of the New Religion falls into this category. Prohibiting abortion for religious reasons might sound like the morally wonderful thing to do. But to those who disagree, it means simply denying women the right to have some control over their own bodies.

As for homosexuality, it is more of the same. The new religionists talk about the matter as if they were not referring to the civil rights of their fellow man. Just who gets hurt by homosexuality (who's the victim of this "crime?") is not at all clear. What is clear is that the fundamentalist preachers who would like to deny homosexuals jobs, housing and

See COHEN, C6, Col. 3

COHEN, From C1

other rights have gone from religion to civil liberties without so much as pausing for a second thought.

The fundamentalists would be ominous enough on their own, but they are demonstrably not on their own. It is, instead, the religious arm of the Republican Party, which now comes to us complete with candidate, platform and theology. Ronald Reagan lends his support and his presence to preachers who exorcise homosexuals for being, of all things and through no fault of their own, homosexuals.

Reagan's got his role all wrong. The obligation of a political leader, especially one who wants to be president, is to remind these preachers that they have to be mindful of the civil rights of others. They owe others the same respect they themselves

New Time Religion: Forgetting Civil Rights

seek. They are entitled to their beliefs, but they are not entitled to take away someone's right to a livelihood or his right to live where he pleases.

But from Reagan and the Republican Party we get no such criticism. We get no reminder that there is in America a place for religion and a place where religion does not belong—government, for instance. Instead, we get the smiling face of Reagan on the stage at Dallas, his applause being upstaged only by his silly and intellectually vacuous statements about the reservations he has about the theory of evolution.

It may not be entirely fair to single out Reagan. Other politicians have come and paid court to the

spokesmen for the New Religion, and it is still not clear whether Jimmy Carter stayed away from Dallas because he was troubled by its message or simply because he was not particularly wanted. Whatever his reason, he has been a lot better than Reagan at understanding that there is a distinction between his personal beliefs and policy—that his literal truth may not be everyone's.

What is the literal truth; though, is that in this country we have made room for lots of literal truths—for the truths of Catholics and Mormons and Christian Scientists and Moslems and Protestants and Jews and any group you can name. We have been good about not imposing one version of the truth on everyone else—in respecting the difference between permitting religion and enforcing religion.

The spokesmen for the New Religion would like to cross that line. This would be worse than a mistake. It would be a sin.

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