

POLITICS

by Ken Bondy

I have always considered myself a “political” person; one with an interest in politics, politicians, and how people decide to govern themselves. When I was younger my political thoughts involved serious stuff; real theories and real concepts, the role of government, and what political philosophies were best for society. My early political leanings were toward the right – I generally felt that less government was better. I read all of Ayn Rand’s books and admit to being influenced by them. I described myself as a political conservative and, of the two major political parties, the Republican Party seemed to represent my interests and philosophies better than did the Democratic Party. So for a long time I described myself as a Republican.

Back in those days, religion seemed to play no part in politics. The first time I can recall religion being a political issue was when John F. Kennedy ran for President, but that had more to do with his particular religion rather than any specific religious issues like abortion or same-sex marriage. But now everything has changed. Religious loonies and bronze-age biblical ideas now dominate the Republican Party, which has become more like a church than a political party. Now “conservative” has a new meaning and it is largely supernatural. Astonishingly, religion and unverifiable supernatural religious fables now seem to play a bigger part in politics than real issues like health care, taxes, entitlements, budgets, stuff like that.

Contemporary political issues and philosophies have now all taken a back seat to religious mythology. “Faith” (belief without evidence) is now considered to be a political asset. Politicians are more credible if they believe in imaginary things than if they are guided by things that actually exist. I think that is incredibly dangerous. Religion is and always has been the most dangerous thing in the world. It has been at the heart of most major atrocities for millennia, long before the organized religious killings of the Crusades and the Inquisition. In the past, religious people have killed each other on a relatively finite basis, with the weapons at hand, spears, hangings, torture, burning at stakes, and more recently, flying airplanes into buildings. Religion has always been violent and immoral, but now, with nuclear weapons available to true believers, religious people can kill on a scale heretofore unimaginable. Religion now threatens the very existence of life on earth.

In this highly charged political atmosphere of competing theocracies (my god can beat up your god), it is unfortunate that nobody can get elected to any significant political office in America without either being religious or pretending to be religious. Non-religious political candidates must lie about their religiosity to even be considered for election. Almost **anyone** could get elected in the USA before an atheist, even an atheist living an exemplary life. So now, when I evaluate political candidates, my most important yardstick, the one that sadly comes before all others – is religiosity. Or more specifically, lack of religiosity. Everything else pales in importance. I simply do not want the leaders of my country thinking that they are guided by imaginary sky-fairies. I want my politicians to base their decisions on verifiable facts, not supernatural fairy

tales or bronze-age stories written by men who thought the sun revolved around the earth. Never again do I want a U.S. President who believes that a sky-fairy told him to start an unjustified war, and then started one.

This all means, when evaluating candidates for political office, I am forced to **guess** who is bullshitting the most about their religiosity. The candidate I deem the least religious, regardless of his/her other positions, immediately becomes my favorite. Based upon my lifetime of observing politicians, I emphatically believe that the least religious candidate will do the least damage to this country. I can live within a wide range of most political issues, but above anything else, more important than any idea or philosophy, I don't want the leaders of my country talking to sky fairies.

Of course, for all practical purposes, this criterion eliminates the entire Republican Party. There may be a few closet free-thinkers in the Republican Party but they are buried by the religious loonies and are virtually impossible to find among the bible-beaters. Republicans are such hypocrites. They preach loudly and endlessly that they want government out of our lives, and in the same breath they tell us who we can marry, that we can't use birth control, and that abortions are forbidden. Republicans are very selective about what parts of our lives they want government out of. Republicans have more concern for an embryo with no nervous system than they do for a fully developed functional human being. They just want to make sure you get born; once you're born, you're on your own.

In general, I perceive Democrats to be less religious than Republicans, but that must be carefully evaluated on a case-by case basis. Democratic candidates must still pander to the American populace by (at least) ***claiming*** to believe in imaginary sky-fairies. From things he has said in his books and his speeches, I am convinced that President Obama is in fact a closet atheist. He still says “...*god bless you and god bless the United States of America...*” at the end of his speeches (is that actually required by the Constitution?), but at least he openly acknowledges the significant percentage of the American population (about 20% and growing) who claim no belief in sky fairies. While I don’t agree with everything he has done (he should have been a better salesman for his policies and he should have pushed harder for a single-payer health care system), he will get my vote until an openly avowed atheist comes along.