

Dear Trump's Theologian:

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Dear Wayne (or, if you prefer, The Reverend Dr. Grudem):

We have never met in person, though I visit Phoenix once a year to preach for a vibrant, thriving ministry. I have never formally been invited to Phoenix Seminary, I have stopped by anonymously to visit a class or two and enjoyed the experience. I am known in some circles to be a preacher and teacher of ministers over several decades. While I am somewhat in awe of your bearing the burden of breaking the news of **Why Voting for Donald Trump is a Morally Good Choice** (see **Townhall**, July 28, 2016), it is very interesting. While we bear a similar interest in ethics and theology, I would welcome the opportunity to talk theo-ethical political shop with you. Given the seriousness of this forthcoming presidential election, it appears you've got your hands full after your published stance.

Wayne, you raised several valid points as to the value of voting for a flawed candidate if that person can do the most good for the nation. You state that you even spoke against Donald trump at a Pastors Conference but has gone full circle and has endorsed him as a good moral choice. You clearly reject the "*Boy Scout Approach*" to politics, i.e. a candidate should be morally pure in order to lead the nation. A purist may not necessarily make a good President. In the last six decades we had several presidents who were flawed morally but whose political accomplishment were profound and shaped the future of our nation. Then you come back and employ a hermeneutic of suspicion when you view Donald as the best candidate and view Hillary as evil. Are you doing this on the basis of your strong belief about gender issues? Does Donald's misogynistic views carry weighty implications for the presidency in a pluralistic nation? Wayne, remember, you must also overlook Hillary's flaws the same as you do Donald's if she is just as qualified for the task. Wayne I am a Black African-American theologian-ethicist who gets nervous when any proposed leader speaks loudly about walls to keep people out and further denigration of persons who are already here because of their religious beliefs. I have bad dreams of a 450 year sojourn in this nation of bondage and slavery where voter registration is still being tampered with. Yet Donald promises not to change because he is representative of scores of people who are stymied by the same old tactics that have been employed by Conservatives. In the last two Presidential elections it was Marriage and Abortion. This time Conservatives cannot trust a candidate who cannot keep her email server intact, Therefore! Therefore! Therefore!

In 1961, Theodore H. White wrote a time defying book titled, **The Making of the President**, (N.Y. Atheneum House, 1961, p.13] He admonished us that the American presidential election is “*the most awesome transfer of power in the world...the power to marshal and mobilize, the power to send men to kill or be killed, the power to be tax and destroy, the power to create and the responsibility to do so, the power to guide and the responsibility to heal...all committed in to the hands of one man.*” After observing two political conventions I have concluded as a public theologian that what is needed is a political agenda grounded in a moral vision that embraces the personhood of all. Anything less diminishes everyone. As a nation founded upon moral principles, the democratic experiment continues. Unarmed Blacks are still killed by those who are sworn to protect and serve. Police continue as an occupying force in cities like Baltimore and Chicago based on a recent Department of Justice Report. We are a potential powder keg even as we engage in this conversation. Ours is a pluralistic nation that includes many faiths. The goal of the Founding Fathers was to make one out of many – *e pluribus unum*. Wayne, Is Donald really equipped to pull this off?

My task is to challenge the values and world views of presidential candidates rather than endorse. Wayne, as a theological conservative, you skillfully use the Liberal/Conservative polemic in framing your argument. You argue that as a Liberal Clinton would impact negatively the Supreme Court by selecting Liberal Justices who would decide the outcome of cases for decades to come. That Abortion, Free Speech, Religious Liberty, Christian Business, Churches, Freedom of Speech, Criminalization of dissent would all prove problematic under a Clinton presidency. That Trump as President would do the opposite of Clinton if elected; that Conservative Justices would be appointed to the Supreme Court; that a Conservative Court would return such things as abortion laws to the states; that our First Amendment rights would be protected under a Trump Presidency and religious Liberty would be preserved; that poverty and the treatment of minorities would be improved under Trump.

You made a few valid points that we need to pay attention to in an attempt not to be one dimensional. However, I must ask whether you erred when you cite Trump as a good moral choice for the Presidency? Wayne, I wish you had stayed with a full assessment of the political values espoused by both candidates rather than rush to endorse a candidate based on your assessment through the lenses of an ultra-Conservative stance grounded in political fundamentalism.* You clearly follow a tendency among religious conservatives to wed and syncretize their religious beliefs with conservative political ideology. Yet as a Conservative I am surprised that you did not hold Trump to higher

personal moral standards as Fundamentalist usually do. The fallow ground of politics as usual must be broken up. We are compelled by moral rules to scrutinize issues rather than personalities in order to assure the best outcome. I am compelled to break up the fallow ground of the Religious Right. Your book **Politics According to the Bible: A Comprehensive Resource for Understanding Modern Political Issues**, appears resourceful, though slightly outdated, as you attempt to look at the relationship between religion and politics through biblical lenses. After focusing on more than fifty specific issues you focus more on the Evangelical left (Jim Wallis, et.al.) in some of your conclusions with the admonition to Christians to get involved in the political fray. You must be applauded for bringing energized chutzpah to the table, but fail miserably to make a principled Christian case for Trump on moral grounds as the best candidate for the presidency of these United States of America. Our world view is crucial in determining our moral actions in a given situation

Let me raise a few rhetorical questions. Is the building of a wall to keep migrants from Mexico a valid moral concern? Is the demonization of Muslim parents whose son sacrificed his life in Afghanistan to save the lives of American troops a valid moral concern? Is Affordable Healthcare a moral imperative since life-saving in a hierarchical scheme of values is to be given priority over truth-telling? Should persons die for lack of a physical exam? Should persons be handled and perceived as objects?. Should Women be consigned to an inferior status because of their gender? Should persons be denied opportunity because of their gender, sexual orientation, culture, color, creed or national origins? The presuppositions we embrace about God and social reality are informed by our doctrine of man. Dr. Grudem, can Donald handle these freighted concerns? To comprehend the Religious Right we must review a brief history of the Old Right spanning some seven generations of political activism dating back to William F. Buckley, Jr. during the early fifties. One other thing, the ancient script, says, *“He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God.”* 2 Samuel 23: 3v.(KJV)

“Political fundamentalism is a volatile movement, active in a volatile society going through volatile times. In sum we are dealing with a neo-fundamentalism within evangelicalism, largely wedded to a pretribulational premillennialism with imminent apocalyptic expectations, drawing political conclusions and tapping political energies.”* (see Gabriel Fackre, **Political Fundamentalism: Distinctions and Directions, in **Theology, Politics and Peace**, Ed. Theodore Runyon (Orbis, 1989, p. 122)

Follow me for Part 2 where I will conclude by discussing the roots of the Religious Right and an alternative to Donald Trump as the Best Moral Alternative for the Presidency

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