

Conservative Votes, Conservative Victory?

Millions of Christians demand democracy.

By John Zmirak

I HAVE SPENT the past year and a half, along with many of this magazine's writers, in increasingly sharp opposition to the foreign and budgetary policies of the Bush administration. I thought all along that would make any victory by the Republicans a bittersweet one. The war in Iraq has done much to nurture the growth of a thoughtful critical movement among conservatives, one that set itself against the policies of an administration with a moral compass but little prudence. The reasons for all this opposition remain valid. But they're beginning to seem beside the point. The election did not swing on Iraq. As every survey showed, Bush's victory was delivered not by chickenhawks, but Christians. Exit polling revealed that 22 percent of voters cited moral values as the "most important issue." The economy motivated 20 percent, terrorism came third at 19 percent, and Iraq was the top concern of just 15 percent of voters.

Eleven states voted to preserve traditional marriage—not launch 11 more Fallujahs, and that is what really bothers the Left. Atrocities and foreign-policy disasters they can accept, even snigger at. It's their fellow citizens they really cannot stomach.

Reading the post-election press is enough to convince an honest reader that the radical cultural elite in the U.S. is not merely wrongheaded but contemptuous and fiercely intolerant of the ethical concerns of the American majority. Indeed, a single edition of the *New York Times* op-ed page made this abundantly clear.

The often judicious Thomas Friedman proclaimed himself deeply depressed by the election, which he said had been swung by "by people who don't just favor different policies than I do—they favor a whole different kind of America. We don't just disagree on what America should be doing; we disagree on what America is." Not quite true, Mr. Friedman. In fact, we differ on how America should be governed—by majority votes in legislatures or the diktats of unelected, unaccountable judges.

Maureen Dowd poured out her patented petulance on the "devoted flock of evangelicals, or 'values voters,'" who favor "opposing abortion, suffocating stem cell research and supporting a constitutional amendment against gay marriage." Bush won the election "by dividing the country along fault lines of fear, intolerance, ignorance and religious rule."

Just down the page, Garry Wills—a man who has read enough St. Augustine that he ought to know better—bemoaned the apparent ignorance of his countrymen, sniffing that "many more Americans believe in the Virgin Birth than in Darwin's theory of evolution." Wills, author of *Why I Am a Catholic ... Why I Am Also the Queen of Spain*, compared the voting majority of Americans to terrorists, opining, "Where else do we find fundamentalist zeal, a rage at secularity, religious intolerance, fear of and hatred for modernity? Not in France or Britain or Germany or Italy or Spain. We find it in the Muslim world, in Al Qaeda, in Saddam Hussein's Sunni loyalists."

Well, I guess that makes things clear,

doesn't it? These people have really convinced themselves that they live in enemy-occupied territory, surrounded by dangerous fanatics. And what convinced them? The fact that Americans rebelled against the decision of a panel of appointed judges in Massachusetts to rewrite by fiat the very institution of marriage, just as in 1973, when another bunch of lawyers decided to rewrite the definition of human life.

Republican, representative government is the only system America has ever had—and the Left has become disgusted with it. Having used judicial decisions over the past 60 years to impose its preferences upon a disgruntled majority, leftists are now enraged that an effective rebellion has finally been mounted. And they are going to fight it tooth and nail.

Let's be clear: this election was not about gay marriage and abortion—it was about who rules whom. Do Americans rule themselves, within a broad range of constitutional principles, or do judges and lawyers rule us behind a democratic façade? Pay no attention to the judge behind the curtain.

Candidates who declare they support *Roe v. Wade* are saying nothing more than that they will protect voters from themselves—defend people whom they claim are "pro-choice" from the results of ... their own votes. These people really do see Americans as a band of dangerous children who have somehow gotten hold of firearms (figuratively in the form of the vote and literally in form of, well, firearms), who must be coaxed into putting down the pistol and handing it to

the nice judge over there, who will keep it safe.

Here is what I wish George W. Bush had said in his debate with Senator Kerry—and what I hope any judge he appoints will tell his congressional examiners:

“I believe in democracy around the world but especially here in the U.S. I trust the American people. I trust their wisdom over that of nine unelected judges who serve for life. I trust the average voter over the average lawyer. I’m in

court appointees, a slow acceptance of social and moral revolution. There should never again be another David Souter or Anthony Kennedy appointed by a Republican. Better a court with empty seats. Better endless filibusters and attendant hand wringing. Better another Bork nomination—which this time should be followed by the nomination of someone farther to the Right, with the promise that every successive appointee will be still more conservative. Filibuster Bork, we’ll give you another

schools or its voters? If Americans decided by majority vote in various states—or federally—to legalize abortion, gay “marriage,” the cannibalistic cloning of unborn children ... well, that’s one thing. Should that happen, then we would indeed be revealed as an isolated minority, a remnant whose only hope was to serve as a prophetic witness to the truth amidst the general decline. That is the position of Christians in much of Europe. It would be tragic but tolerable. To have these policies foisted upon us by force and fraud—that is something else entirely. It is a cause for rage that we saw, thankfully, take form in the voting this month.

We will soon know how seriously the Bush administration takes the source of its mandate—whether it intends to reward its base or betray it. A band of brave activists is leading the fight to deny the aging pro-abortion activist Arlen Specter the chair of the Judiciary Committee, which he recently boasted he would use to keep off judges who threatened *Roe v. Wade*—that is, who threatened America with democracy. We must make it clear, now that our influence is at its strongest, that we will not accept Specter. Several of the senators who will decide Specter’s fate have quietly told Christian leaders that they are troubled by his extremist, elitist position. Several others on this committee treasure presidential ambitions—I’m thinking of Bill Frist, Chuck Hagel, George Allen, Rick Santorum, and John McCain. They must learn, and learn quickly, that if they betray us now, we will remember in two years when they come to milk us for money, volunteers, and votes. The millions of Christians who turned out for President Bush demand democracy—not dictatorship with a different face. ■

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favor of letting the people of the 50 states vote on their abortion laws. I trust them to make these laws like all the other laws. My opponents don’t. They claim to believe that Americans want abortion to be legal for any reason at all, up through the ninth month—but they aren’t smart enough to vote that way. These elitists think that the voter is stupid enough to pass laws he doesn’t support. So they intend to protect Americans from themselves by making sure that they never have the chance to vote on this issue—or on so-called gay marriage. These liberal elitists are so afraid of the common man that they’ll twist the Constitution into a pretzel to make sure that the voter can’t make important decisions. I have a different view. I think it’s the view on which this country was founded.”

This election, which even elite media are now forced to admit was about social issues and little else—people having lost most of their faith in our Iraq policy—should serve as a wake-up call among Christian conservatives. We are the wedge, the only real constituency in the Republican Party. We should not allow ourselves to be fobbed off with meaningless concessions, ambiguous

Scalia. Reject him, you’ll get John Ashcroft. Bork him, we’ll propose Alan Keyes. And so on. We’re happy to have empty seats on the court. In the best-case scenario, there might be no one there at all.

We have to be clear: this election was not about homosexuality or tolerance or the secret (putative) desire of red-necks to beat up choreographers. It was about judicial tyranny, about the final rejection of democracy by a self-appointed cultural and legal elite that despises the rest of us, feels a loyalty not to America but to an international social and opinion class, dreams of transforming the U.S. into the image of the EU—minus the fine architecture. Not that they’re even a genuine elite; every law professor will admit that *Roe v. Wade* was a ludicrous decision, a parody of constitutional reasoning like the recent Massachusetts decision on gay “marriage.” Real philosophers take these disputes seriously. But the dilettantes with power don’t have to think very hard—since they hardly ever encounter anyone who disagrees with them.

We should cast the issue clearly: are you for judges making the rules—or citizens? Should America be run by its law

Bush 2, Conservatives 0

The president's re-election is a win for war and welfare.

By Doug Bandow

AFTER NOV. 2, the Republican Party seems to have it all: it maintained possession of the presidency and expanded control of Congress. Ironically, however, President George W. Bush's victory may represent the death of the conservatism. In gaining untrammelled power, the Republican Party and conservative movement have lost their souls.

American conservatism grew out of the classical liberal tradition that birthed the United States. Despite manifold policy differences over the years, Republicans routinely emphasized their commitment to individual liberty and limited constitutional government. They believed Washington to possess only specific enumerated powers. The most important domestic issues were matters for the states. Internationally, America needed to be strong but responsible: war was a tool to protect U.S. security, not remake the world.

Most important was conservative recognition of the limitations of political action. In his book *Conflict of Visions*, economist Thomas Sowell observed that the Right had a "constrained" view of mankind: no amount of social engineering could transcend humanity's inherent imperfections. In contrast, modern liberals held an "unconstrained" view, that is, they believed in the perfectibility of human beings and institutions. Thus, the Left advanced government policies to perfect society.

No surprise, Republican Party operatives and their conservative supporters often placed political expediency before philosophical purity. Nevertheless, most

of them formally stood for individual liberty in the face of expanding government power and were embarrassed when forced to compromise. Occasionally—during Ronald Reagan's presidency, for instance—they actually rolled back one government program or another.

In 2000, candidate George W. Bush seemed to represent this conservative tradition. He offered a clear break from the Clinton presidency, advocating tax cuts, speaking of individual responsibility, and promoting humility in foreign affairs. But his presidency failed on almost every count. Rather than acting as a classical liberal, President Bush delivered the Republican Party into the hands of modern liberalism. Today there is little practical difference between Democrats and Republicans.

Spending by the national government has raced ahead at levels more often associated with the Democratic Party. The Bush administration has pushed to nationalize local issues, expanding federal controls over schools, for instance. Republicans, like Democrats, cite increased spending as evidence of their commitment to education.

In fact, this supposedly conservative president engineered the largest expansion of America's welfare state in decades, a poorly designed but hugely expensive drug benefit under the Medicare program. And Bush's officials shamelessly lied about the program's cost to ram it through a skeptical Congress.

The administration has tried to disguise its expansion of government in virtually every area of American life by

applying the fig leaf of "empowerment." But that is true only for Social Security private accounts, which the president largely ignored when seeking a second term. Otherwise, Bushite empowerment is just another name for nanny-state regulation. Al Gore famously compared government to a grandparent. White House Chief of Staff Andrew Card declared that President Bush "sees America as we think about a 10-year-old child," requiring Washington's benevolent guidance.

Under Bush, the GOP distinguished itself by cutting taxes, but its spending excesses threaten to undo that achievement. Indeed, rather than devoting themselves to making income-tax rate cuts permanent, in October the president and Congress turned the legislative process into a caricature of special-interest policymaking by approving a corporate tax cut larded with benefits for owners of NASCAR tracks and producers of fishing-tackle boxes, among other moneyed interests employing high-priced lobbyists. The rest of us will pay for the GOP's fiscal irresponsibility.

President Bush may be a better representative of "conservative values," but most of those lie beyond the reach of government—and especially Washington. Moreover, he has turned even the best-intentioned measures into political vehicles. He sold his faith-based initiative as a mechanism to allow religious social services to compete with secular organizations for federal grants; he then treated it as a campaign tool with which administration officials lobbied grant recipients for their backing. Using Uncle