

## Introduction

Once again, it's a presidential election year and we're reminded daily of the two party political system under which we live. Most democracies have more than two major parties. Israel, for instance, has twelve and Japan has six. But we have two – the Republican and the Democratic. Those parties are a "**duopoly**," which means they share almost all the political power in our country.

There's an old piece of advice that people have given and received at least since 1840, "**Don't talk about religion or politics.**" But I'm going to ignore it today by talking about both. As I've said many times before, our discipleship to Jesus encompasses the entirety of our lives. That includes our political affiliation, which raises a vital question. What should we be, Republicans or Democrats? 1 Corinthians 2:14-16 tells us.

## Republicans and Democrats

I begin with a generalization about the two parties. The Republican Party is conservative and the Democratic liberal. That's a generalization because some Republicans are liberal and some Democrats are conservative. But the platforms of the parties do accurately represent conservatism and liberalism respectively.

Let's examine just a sampling of those platforms and I think you'll agree. **Economy:** Republican – Wages set by free market forces and less government regulation of business. Democratic – Minimum wage and more regulation of business. **Social ideas:** Republican – Based on individual rights and justice. Democratic – Based on community and social responsibility. **Gay marriage:** Republican – Opposes. Democratic – Supports. **Abortion:** Republican – Should be illegal. Democratic – Should be legal. **Taxes:** Republican – Flat tax (same regardless of income). Democratic – Progressive tax (the higher the income the higher the tax). **Environment:** Republican – Opposes greenhouse regulations. Democratic – Supports greenhouse regulations.

That's just a sampling of their platforms, but it's enough to generalize. Republicans tend to be conservative when it comes to political issues. Democrats tend to be liberal.

That difference of theirs is directed toward three broad issues.

One is the role of government in creating a good social and economic life. Republicans favor a limited role for government and an active role for the private sector in creating the good life. By private sector I mean companies, small businesses, and civic organizations and groups. Democrats favor a more active role for government and a less active role for the private sector in creating it.

Another broad issue about which the two parties differ is the role of the individual.

Republicans are what Democrats call "**mean-spirited.**" Democrats call them that because of what they emphasize. First, they emphasize individual initiative. People who can make it on their own should. Government shouldn't help those who are competent enough to help themselves but don't because they lack character and/or commitment. Second, Republicans emphasize personal responsibility. There are standards of right and wrong and of wisdom and of foolishness. People who violate those standards won't be rewarded. They will be allowed to suffer the consequence of their immorality or foolishness, and will even be punished if it's appropriate. Republicans are "**mean-spirited.**"

In contrast, Democrats are what Republicans call "**bleeding hearts.**" Republicans call them that because of what they emphasize. It's that corrupt social structures have limited the ability of millions to take care of themselves. So, government should take care of them, or at least assist them in taking care of themselves. Democrats stress equality of opportunity for all and insist government is responsible for securing that. They're "**bleeding hearts.**"

The third broad issue about which Republicans and Democrats disagree is "**social issues.**" As one social observer puts it, Republicans tend to be "**religious**" and Democrats "**secular**" in that regard. Their

platforms on marriage, life, and abstinence, for instance, illustrate what I mean. Take life. The Republican platform says **“the unborn child has a fundamental right to life.”** In contrast, the Democratic platform says that it **“strongly and unequivocally supports Roe v. Wade.”**

### **Christocrats**

We now know, generally, what it means to be a Republican or a Democrat. With that in mind, I ask you a highly charged question. Should followers of Jesus be Republicans or Democrats? I'll tell you the right answer. Here it is. It's **“Neither.”** Practically, we may have to register as a Republican, Democrat, or Independent. But philosophically, we don't have to be any of the three and in fact shouldn't be.

What should we be then? Benjamin Rush, one of our nation's founding fathers, wrote a letter to David Ramsay, a friend of his, in 1789. Listen to an excerpt from it: **“I have been alternately called an aristocrat and a democrat. I am now neither. I am a Christocrat. I believe all power whether hereditary or elective will always fail of producing order and happiness in the hands of man. He alone who created and redeemed man is qualified to govern him.”** I'd say a resounding **“amen”** to that. I agree. Philosophically, we shouldn't be Republicans, Democrats, or even Independents. We should be Christocrats.

In 1863, a pious minister said to Abraham Lincoln, **“I hope the Lord is on our side (the Union).”** Lincoln quickly replied: **“I am not at all concerned about that . . . . But it is my constant anxiety and prayer that I and this nation should be on the Lord's side.”** That was an astute observation on Lincoln's part and the posture we should have. I don't know about you, but I'm not concerned at all about being on the side of the Republicans or Democrats. I'm not concerned at all about being on the side of the conservatives or liberals. I'm concerned about being on the side of Jesus. That's the fundamental posture inherent in being Christocrats. We firmly choose being on the side of

Jesus when it comes to the political issues before us.

### Have the Mind of Jesus

That's where our text, 1 Corinthians 2:14-16, comes in. It reveals, as a practical matter, how we do that.

Notice two terms in verse 16 that are identical in meaning. They are "**the mind of the Lord**" and "**the mind of Christ.**" The word "**mind**" conveys that Jesus has cognitive processes just as we do. Actually, ours are a reflection of His, with this difference. His are perfect in nature and limitless in scope. His cognitive processes include but aren't limited to knowing and believing. He knows everything there is to know about everything, including the political issues before us. And He believes everything He knows. That means He receives it as reality, with a readiness to speak and act as if it's so.

That then is what Jesus does. He knows and believes. Those two cognitive processes and others comprise "**the mind of Christ.**"

And, as the last line in verse 16 makes clear, we need to have it. We need to have the mind of Jesus and the good news is that we can.

Paul mentions the "**natural man**" in verse 14. That term connotes people whose condition is the one into which they were "**born.**" Only natural forces (biological, psychological, and social) condition and direct their cognitive processes. Verse 14 states the result. They can't "**understand**" the "**things of the Spirit.**" The Greek word translated "**understand**" suggests they can share the knowledge of Jesus that He reveals. But they can't share His beliefs. They, generally, can't believe as He believes.

In contrast to the natural man, Paul mentions "**he who is spiritual**" in verse 15. That term connotes people whose condition is one into which they were "**born again.**" In addition to natural forces, a supernatural force, the Holy Spirit in them, conditions and directs their cognitive processes. Verse 15 states the result. They "**appraise all things.**" Like the natural man, they can share the knowledge of Jesus

that He reveals. But unlike the natural man, they can also share His beliefs. They can believe as He believes.

Now, most of us are **“born again.”** We are the spiritual people of verse 15 not the natural people of verse 14. Grasp what that means. We can have the mind of Jesus. We can share His knowledge and His beliefs. We can know and believe as He does.

### **How to Become Christocrats**

And we must. That’s how we become Christocrats. We know and believe as Jesus does about the political issues before us.

Verse 14 uses a word that explains how we do that. It’s **“accept.”** The Greek word translated that has an air of welcoming about it. It was the usual word used for receiving an anticipated guest. We become Christocrats by eagerly welcoming the knowledge and beliefs of Jesus. We welcome His knowledge and His beliefs by doing two things.

First, learn what He knows and believes. We must be as informed as we can be about the political issues themselves. We must also be as informed as we can be about what Jesus knows and believes about them. He reveals some of what He knows and believes in the Bible. Some of its principles, precepts, and propositions speak to many of the political issues before us. They shed great light on those issues or even give specific direction concerning them. Genesis 1 and Romans 8:18-22, for instance, shed great light on the environmental debate. Or Psalm 139:14-16 sheds great light on the abortion debate. Or Romans 13:1-5 sheds great light on the role of government. Or Romans 13:7 gives specific direction about taxes. Our first priority is to learn what Jesus knows and believes about the political issues before us.

We must do a second thing to be Christocrats. Take what Jesus knows and believes primarily into account in developing our political views. We do that practically by making the Bible’s principles, precepts, and propositions the foundation of our political views.

Those then are the two things we must do to be Christocrats.

Learn what Jesus knows and believes about the political issues before us. Then take what we learn primarily into account in developing our political views. Asking and answering two questions assist us in doing that. First, what does Jesus say in the Bible, if anything, that's relevant to the political issue before me? Second, how does what He says apply to it?

Take the issue of welfare as an example of what I mean. By welfare, I mean distributing tax payer money to people who need financial help. Our federal government, in that regard, has a host of welfare programs. Being Christocrats, we ask and answer two questions.

What does Jesus say if anything that's relevant to welfare? It's several things, only one of which I have the time to share. It's Proverbs 10:5, which teaches a basic proposition. Poverty is no disgrace but slackness (a major theme in Proverbs) is.

That's one thing Jesus says, but how does it apply to the issue of welfare. He Himself reveals one way it does in 2 Thessalonians 3:10, "**If anyone is not willing to work, then he is not to eat, either.**" It's moral and wise to help those financially who can't help themselves. It's immoral and foolish to help those who can.

Should we have welfare? If so, how should it be administered? Our views about that must take the proposition and application I just explained into account. Being a Christocrat requires it.

## **Conclusion**

I close with a thought. Good citizenship requires that we learn what our United States Constitution says about the political issues before us – and that we take that secondarily into account in developing our political views. In a similar vein, good discipleship requires that we learn what Jesus says about the political issues before us – and that we take that primarily into account in developing our political views. We're first and foremost Christocrats, not Republicans or Democrats, if we do!