



# A Bloody Crossroads: Where Religion and Politics Meet

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To the horror of some and the satisfaction of others, the true state of a nation's soul is to be found at the intersection of religion and politics—a subject that is not always for the faint of heart. Years ago as a divinity school student, I told my advisor that this subject was a central interest of mine, and he replied gravely shaking his head—as if a scene of carnage lay before us—while declaring, “Indeed, what a bloody crossroads that is.” While news commentaries about this fateful intersection are often telling, they are also frequently lacking.

One line of approach assesses which bloc of faith voters is voting for which political party. This analysis says almost as much about race as it says about religion. According to [a report released this past June from the Pew Research Center](#), 78% of White evangelical protestants and 57% of White Catholics lean or identify with the Republicans, while 84% of Black protestants and 68% of Hispanic Catholics are similarly disposed to the Democrats. Of predominantly white Christian denominations, the United Church of Christ sways left the most with only 58% leaning toward or identifying with Democrats, [according to a 2014 study from the Pew Research Center](#).

Political pundits have argued that the “Religious Right” is of far greater consequence than the “Religious Left.” The [Religious Left is smaller](#), and it is [more diverse in terms of religion and race](#). The head of one research organization [concluded](#) that those who might be associated with the Religious Left “may not have all that much in common, other than the fact that they identify as religious.”

For some of the faithful, the political labels of left versus right miss the mark when it comes to how they identify themselves. [The Rev. Traci Blackmon declares](#), “I am not ‘Religious Left,’ I’m not ‘Religious Right’—I’m a disciple of Jesus Christ.”

Such perspectives beg the question of what happens when we change the starting point of the conversation. Instead of starting with political identifications, what if the starting point is the central orientation of the faith itself? For certain, this may

mean that the starting point for some is going to be a “pro-life” ethos related to hot button issues like abortion. At the same time, it also means that for many the conversation starts with core values of justice in relationship to racism, poverty, and the environment.

Notably, there is real potential for Christians of a variety of stripes to find common cause with non-Christian voters who care about the environment—[an increasingly important and sizable voting bloc](#). Biblically, our first calling as Christians is to care for God’s creation. As a result, it is not enough to know whether a candidate belongs to one political party or another. What matters is how ambitious they are in addressing the climate crisis, and today that means where do they stand on the Green New Deal.

Ultimately, the intersection of religion and politics need not be a bloody affair. Indeed, it can be a crossroads where one chooses to head in a far more hopeful and promising direction.

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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