

# Election 2016

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Young people, for the first time some of you will be eligible to vote in the upcoming election. Some of you already are eligible. And surely your parents and grandparents are eligible (and we know that they read us too). This will pose some issues for all of us, especially concerning the presidential election, which is my focus in this article.

Before I go farther, I must issue a disclaimer. *Beacon Lights* is not a political magazine. It does not and will not become involved in the political process, nor will it endorse any candidates. Under the American system there is a separation between church and state, and I do not intend to blur the line between them. In addition, so that there can be no lack of clarity on this subject, it should be understood that I do not involve myself in politics. I am a member of no political party, and I do not necessarily support a particular candidate or do anything to advance the cause of a political party. Politics is a dirty business, as you young people will soon figure out if you do not already know this, which is likely. The political scene is thoroughly corrupt, with only a handful of decent and even Christian participants. Most politicians are concerned only with getting re-elected and with money. Consequently the business of the country does not get done, as recent history makes abundantly clear. My attitude in most instances is “a plague on all your houses.”

This does not mean, however, that I do not observe the candidates and the political process. I do, both as a private individual and in my capacity as *Beacon Lights* editor. I will not tell you how to vote. This is a personal and individual choice that each of us must make: each person must vote his or her conscience.

Nevertheless, I am constrained to comment particularly on the presidential election this coming November. This election affects our lives in a secular, general sense. What will be the policy of the new administration regarding many aspects of our lives? What will be the taxation (already a heavy burden) and fiscal outlook? But I am much more concerned with the implications of this election for the church. A simple but outstanding example is the selection of a new justice for the Supreme Court, which will affect the church. We need to think only of last year’s decision to legalize same sex marriage, thus contradicting the teaching of the church.

The choices in this presidential election are unattractive.

On the one hand is Hilary Clinton. She is liberal on virtually any topic that you can think of. She is in favor of big government to the extent that her views partake of socialism, a demonstrably failed system. She is an inveterate liar. She is untrustworthy. She is pro-abortion, or should I say pro-murder. She is personally unattractive: she does not talk, but screams and shouts, which is extremely annoying. She comes across as a witch. Is this who we want as president?

On the other hand is Donald Trump. He has been successful in business and is a very wealthy man, which does not necessarily qualify him to be president. He is a greedy money-grubber, and he wants America to be the same. He is narcissistic. He comes across as a buffoon and a bully. Some even think that he has the definite potential to try to become a dictator. From an ethical viewpoint, he is a serial philanderer and adulterer who is on his third marriage. Is this who we want as president?

The two candidates seem to be unable to distinguish between personalities and politics. Instead of arguing the policies that will best serve the country, the candidates call each other names. They both act like petulant little children who throw a tantrum when they don't get their way. Neither candidate is by any stretch of the imagination a Christian. Both have serious character flaws. This matters, because contrary to the views of some, character defines and determines actions.

In light of the above, what must we as Christians do? There are two main possibilities.

First, vote for the lesser of two evils. This often seems to be the preferred option. The theory is that neither candidate is acceptable, but that one is less distasteful than the other. The problem with the lesser of two evils theory is that both are nevertheless evils. If both are approximately equal evils, then what? This is clearly an option, which many practice, I suspect also among our Reformed people. There is room for disagreement on this subject, but also in this instance one must vote his conscience.

Second, don't vote, especially if you must vote against your conscience. This is also a viable option. We must remember here that voting in America is not a requirement, but a right, which means that one is not obligated to vote. The problem is that in this instance your vote does not count because you did not cast it. In this case it behooves you to keep your mouth shut when things don't go as you think they should.

So how must you as Reformed Christian young people (and the older generation) do?

The answer is that we must look at this election in the context of God's sovereignty. God's sovereignty definitely extends to the 2016 election. Nothing happens apart from his will. Scripture clearly teaches this. In Proverbs 21:1 we read, "The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will." Psalm 118: 8–9, 14 says, "It is better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in man. It is better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in princes. The LORD is my strength and song, and is become my salvation." And in Psalm 146:3 we read, "Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help."

These passages speak of kings, princes, and man. These Old Testament terms equate to the present day authorities, including the president, Congress, and the Supreme Court on a national basis, and all lesser officials on a local basis, that is, all those who are in authority over us. Our obligation to choose and then to obey them is mandated by the scripture passages quoted, which are so clear that they do not warrant further explanation.

But how do we practically apply the truths that scripture teaches? There is no easy answer. What if the choices we must make are approximately equal? What if the authorities that we must choose are about equally evil?

Scripture says that we must judge on the basis of the heart, not just on the basis of words and actions, which are the revelation of what lies in the heart, as Proverbs 4:23 teaches: "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of are the issues of life." Again, in Proverbs 16:6: "A man's heart deviseth his way: but the LORD directeth his steps." If one's heart is evil, it will manifest this in his actions. This is why I was so admittedly harsh in my characterization of the presidential candidates. Their actions and words are the revelation of what lies in their hearts, and what is in their hearts is evil.

The answer therefore lies in what Proverbs 1:1 says when it speaks of the hand of Jehovah, the sovereign God of heaven and earth and of all the affairs of men. His hand is a figurative expression that means his sovereign power and control. His turning the heart of rulers according to his will is for the sake of the church, as is everything that he always does. It is not always easy to discern that he is doing this, but he does. Just as a river runs to the sea, so he directs all things toward the accomplishment of calling his elect people unto their eternal salvation, even through the choices and actions of wicked headers. This, young people (and all of us) must clearly understand.

Based on the teaching of scripture, I have a suggestion: don't sit out the election, but vote for the candidate who does the least damage to the church of Christ, but is most favorable to the cause of the continuation of the preaching of the gospel. Who that will be you will have to determine for yourselves. We cannot know the future, but be aware of what is happening politically, know the current situation, and act accordingly.

But remember: God is always sovereign. This is our comfort and assurance that all things happen according to his will.

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