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TRAINING FOR GUYS



Maggie: Hag or Hagios?

I've long been intrigued by the fact that Christians often have strongly held political views, and that these can be seemingly diametrically opposed to those held by other Christians. Surely, if we all are seeking to be closer to Jesus and are 'one in heart and mind' (Acts 4:32) we should all support the same political dogmas, shouldn't we?

The two main parties in British (English) politics were both founded on Christian principles, by God fearing men who wanted to see the country's Christian heritage preserved and people benefit from it.

The Labour Party takes up Biblical themes in its outlook. For instance, Leviticus 25 which includes:

"³⁵ If any of your fellow Israelites become poor and are unable to support themselves among you, help them as you would a foreigner and stranger, so that they can continue to live among you. ³⁶ Do not take interest or any profit from them, but fear your God, so that they may continue to live among you. ³⁷ You must not lend them money at interest or sell them food at a profit. ³⁸ I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt to give you the land of Canaan and to be your God.

³⁹ "If any of your fellow Israelites become poor and sell themselves to you, do not make them work as slaves. ⁴⁰ They are to be treated as hired workers or temporary residents among you; they are to work for you until the Year of Jubilee. ⁴¹ Then they and their children are to be released, and they will go back to their own clans and to the property of their ancestors."

In the New Testament we read in Acts 4:32 that *all the believers were one in heart and mind. No-one claimed that any of their possessions was their own, but they shared everything they had.*

These are foundational truths for socialism. Common (state) ownership, sharing and not 'possessing' goods, looking out for others. They are central to the character of God and Jesus, who did not cling to equality with God but emptied Himself (Philippians 2)

However, the Conservative Party too takes up Biblical themes in its outlook.

The idea of ownership and inheritance is mentioned over 200 times in the Bible, especially in the rules governing the establishment of the people in the Promised Land. *A good person leaves an inheritance for their children's children, but a sinner's wealth is stored up for the righteous.* (Prov 13:22). The Bible roundly condemns those who love the wealth they have, yet promises good things, often including wealth, to those who love God and their neighbour. Conservative philosophy is that the poor are best served in a country where wealth is being created by individuals, for the good of all.

Note one thing, the Bible gives both of those viewpoints validity, because with God it is BOTH-AND. If we are blessed with wealth then that is a gift to us and our families, but we are to use it to bless those around us too. The one who is generous shall receive more (Luke 6:38).

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To be fair, most politicians in this country do embrace the Both-And philosophy. The difference is their starting point. Our history is full of wealthy people who use their riches for the good of others (the Rowntree and Cadbury families spring to mind, or Titus Salt), but also full of struggles as the poorer people fought for rights denied them by selfish employers.

Politicians of all parties get involved because they want to make a positive difference to society. They probably start out because of some particular



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injustice or wastefulness - but they are all in it to 'make things better'. No politician is totally evil (with the obvious exception of Senator Palpatine of Naboo, pictured right) - they are not hags. But neither are any to be venerated as saints or holy (Gk: *Hagios*). They are just people trying to make a positive difference with greater or lesser degrees of success.

Jesus calls us to be Kingdom people, putting Him first. If you are thinking of being a politician then remember to be a Christian Socialist or a Christian Conservative (or whatever) and not a Socialist Christian or a Conservative Christian. Jesus first, always, and that will mean being able to listen to the views of

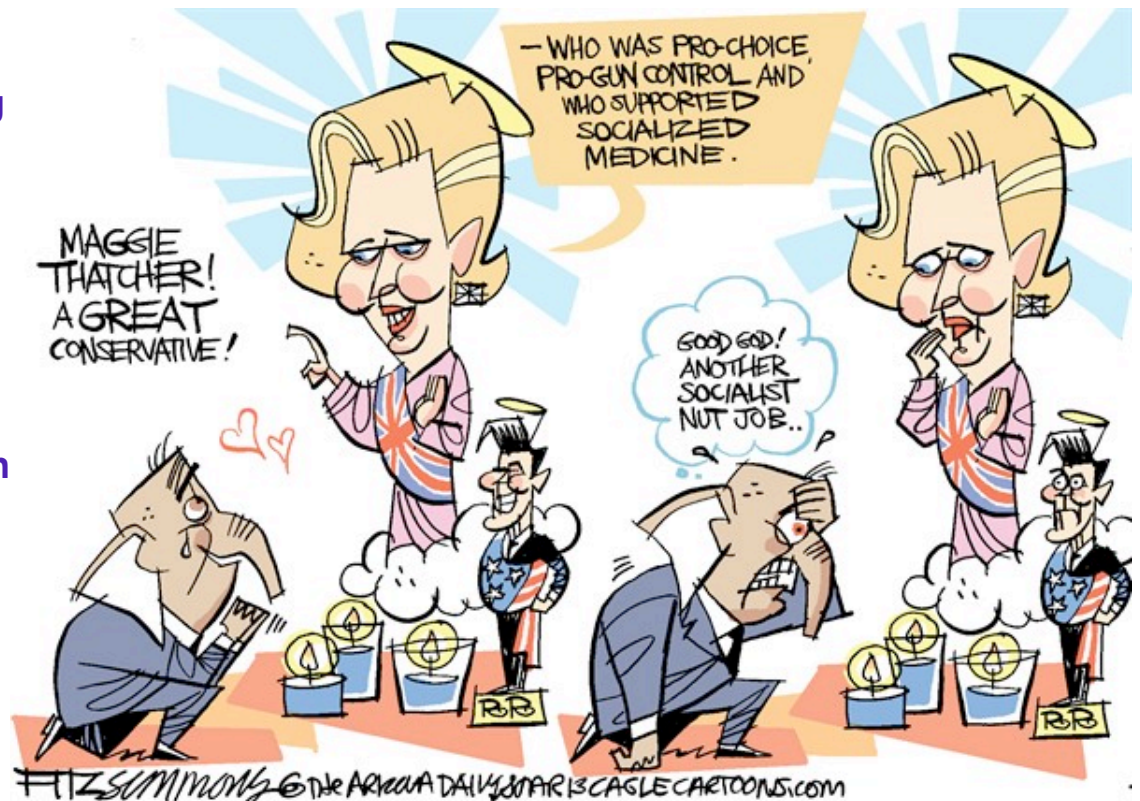


the 'opposing' side and even agree with them on occasions.

One of the traits listed as being opposed to the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:20 is *factions*, or in the Revised Standard Version *party spirit*. It's hard for a politician not to fall to this temptation, if you are one get non-political brothers and sisters you can be accountable to, and if you know one pray for them regularly.

We need God's solutions to problems, the Way of Jesus is Both-And.

Your starting point may well determine your viewpoint.... this is an American cartoon from past week.



And if you're not a political animal....

Well, you are about some things. It might be sport. Can you tolerate the viewpoint of someone who supports your main rival team? Can you love them?

We all have things which 'get us going'. To what extent do they come from our relationship with Jesus and to what extent do they come from something else?

Are we prepared to give up those cherished viewpoints and ideas - would we do it if Jesus told us to? How do we know what He thinks about them?

Being prepared, and able, to step out of the 'party line' (Gal 5:20) and to embrace others of opposing views - especially if they are also Christian - is a sign of growing Christian maturity.