

Christianity and Politics: The Recent Past

Chronology

- 1942 Founding of National Association of Evangelicals (NAE)
- 1948 President Truman integrates the American military
- 1950 Television begins to spread rapidly
- 1953 First National Prayer Breakfast
- 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* reverses *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896, separate but equal)
- 1955 Montgomery Bus Boycott brings Martin Luther King, Jr. to prominence
- 1957 USSR's *Sputnik* (thereafter federal funds for education)
- 1962 *Engel v. Vitale* (prayer in public schools)
- 1963 *Abington v. Schempp* (devotional Bible reading in public schools); MLK, Jr., *Letter from Birmingham Jail*; March on Washington ("I have a dream today"); Assassination of President Kennedy
- 1964 Civil Rights Act; 24th Amendment (no poll taxes); Vietnam War (and draft) create increasing controversy
- 1965 Voting Rights Act; Immigration Reform Act; Medicare and Medicaid; Watts riot (Los Angeles)
- 1968 Assassination of MLK, Jr., followed by many urban riots
- 1972 Equal Rights Amendment passes Congress
- 1973 *Roe v. Wade*
- 1976 Francis Schaeffer, *How Shall We Then Live?* Jimmy Carter wins, then loses, white evangelical support
- 1977 Anita Bryant opposes gay-rights ordinance in Dade Co., FL
- 1979 Beverly LaHaye founds Concerned Women of America; Jerry Falwell founds *Moral Majority*
- 1980 Ronald Reagan at Religious Roundtable ("You can't endorse me, but I want you to know that I endorse you")

The Civil Rights Movement

- Made sharply focused Christianity politically relevant again
- Leaders: black preaching tradition, Bible, Gandhi, a little socialism, WWI and WWII
- Followers: daily experience, Bible, local churches, WWI and WWII

- Legislation of 1960s ended legal segregation but did little for racial consciousness, racial distrust, and racial sentiments
- White denominations mostly support *Brown v. Board* and the end of segregation, though not always white congregations
- Other causes used the movement's insistence on "Rights" for themselves (women, homosexuals, the New Christian Right)

The Path from Civil Rights to the 81% White Evangelical Vote for Donald Trump (simplified)

- The Civil Rights legislation of the 1960s for the first time made white evangelicals into a cohesive political force. (Southern white evangelicals had defended segregation and were Democrats. Northern white evangelicals accepted some measure of integration and were Republicans.)
- When Democrat Lyndon Johnson passed Civil Rights legislation, southern white evangelicals became Republicans (after briefly supporting Jimmy Carter in 1976).
- Many white evangelicals, North and South, worried about the expansion of federal power that was required to overcome segregation, even as white southern evangelicals eventually accepted integration.
- Expanded government authority and Supreme Court decisions affecting faith questions (abortion, prayer and Bible reading in the public schools) confirmed white evangelicals in their fear of Big Government.
- By contrast, African American evangelicals almost all voted Democratic thereafter.

Republican Percentage of Two-Party Vote for President
(Percentage Points Higher (+) or Lower (-) than National Republican Percentage)

	1936	1956	1972	1976	1984	2004
National Republican Vote	36%	60%	64%	49%	58%	51%
W. evan. P.	+0	+0	+20	+2	+16	+27
W. main P.	+12	+11	+11	+15	+14	-1
W. RC	-1	-5	+0	-5	-3	+2
Bl. Prot.	-18	-24	-48	-42	-47	-34
secular	+0	-7	-11	-5	-1	-23

1936 (Landon vs. FDR), 1956 (Ike vs. Stevenson), 1972 (Nixon vs. McGovern),
1976 (Ford vs. Carter), 1984 (Reagan vs. Mondale) 2004 (George W. Bush vs. Kerry)

(- means more Democratic, + means more Republican)