

An Open Letter to Senator Bernie Sanders

Dear Senator Sanders,

I write this letter to you with respect and concern. Respect because of your years of service to our country and your terrific campaign last year. Concern because of your grilling of Russell Vought, President Trump's nominee for deputy director of the White House Office of Management and Budget, earlier this week.

Frankly, sir, I found your exchange with Mr. Vought to be quite alarming, not to mention downright un-American.

May I have your ear for a moment, Mr. Senator?

Although I am registered as an Independent rather than a Republican, I am strongly conservative, and so, in fundamental disagreement with much of your ideology. Yet when you rose to such national prominence last year, I found much to like about you.

You were unafraid to put your beliefs on the table. You were plainspoken rather than rhetorical. You had a great following among the younger generation. You had no history of ugly scandals in your past. And you had great passion and vision, in particular for a man in his 70s.

All this was impressive to me, and, in candor, I felt that the election was stacked against you and in favor of Mrs. Clinton.

So, I bear no ill will toward you, and I believe that you want what is best for America, as do I.

What concerns me is that you voted against Mr. Vought because of his mainstream, historic, Christian beliefs. You even stated that someone who holds to these values "is really not

someone who this country is supposed to be about.”

With all respect, Mr. Senator, are you aware that Mr. Vought’s beliefs are far closer to those of many of our Founding Fathers than yours would be? And didn’t our Founders put in our Constitution that “no religious test shall ever be required as a qualification to any office or public trust under the United States”?

Yet you applied a religious test to Mr. Vought. On what basis?

Are you aware, sir, that his beliefs mirror those of some of our past presidents and Supreme Court justices, along with the beliefs of some of your esteemed colleagues in Congress? Most importantly, are you aware that Mr. Vought’s beliefs are taken straight from the New Testament?

You took exception to his quite orthodox statement that “Muslims do not simply have a deficient theology. They do not know God because they have rejected Jesus Christ, His Son, and they stand condemned.”

Is it possible you misunderstood the meaning of these words? Could it be that you took them to mean something that Mr. Vought never intended?

After asking him if he felt his statement was “Islamophobic,” which, of course, he did not, you asked him, “Do you believe people in the Muslim religion stand condemned?” This was followed by, “What about Jews? Do they stand condemned too? ... Do you think that people who are not Christians are going to be condemned?”

The answer for any Bible-believing Christian is simple. Yes, every human being stands condemned before God and in need of a Savior. That’s why God sent Jesus to die for our sins, and that’s why we send missionaries around the world to declare this message of salvation. May I give you the biblical context for this belief?

I imagine that, somewhere in your lifetime, you've heard the most famous verse in the New Testament: "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life" (John 3:16).

Does that sound familiar? These are the verses that comes next: "For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. 18 He who believes in Him is not condemned. But *he who does not believe is condemned already*, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. 19 This is the verdict, that light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil" (John 3:17-19, emphasis mine).

Did you note those words, Mr. Senator? The New Testament is stating clearly that all human beings stand condemned in God's sight because we have chosen our ways rather than His. For that reason, He sent Jesus into the world, not to condemn us but to save us.

That means that you, too, stand condemned before God, no matter how much good you have done. But you are not alone. Billions of others find themselves in the same predicament. The good news is that the same solution applies to all: trusting the Savior to forgive our sins and change our hearts.

Are you saying, then, that anyone who subscribes to these historic Christian beliefs is not fit to serve our country, even as deputy director of the White House Office of Management and Budget? Does that not strike you as standing in fundamental violation of the very principles on which our nation was founded? Isn't this a classic example of advocating for freedom *from* religion rather than freedom *of* religion?

By your logic, not only would Mr. Vought (and as mentioned,

quite a few of your colleagues) not be fit to serve, but a devout Muslim could not serve either, since Muslims believe that Jews, Christians, Hindus and others must become Muslims to be saved. And what about an Orthodox Jew who believes that you, a non-observant Jew, are guilty of violating Torah and thereby sinning against God? Should that Orthodox Jew not be allowed to serve?

What if Mr. Vought had answered your questions by quoting the words of Jesus? What if he said, "Sir, I believe in Jesus Christ, who said, 'I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me'" (John 14:6). Would you have replied, "Well, if you believe what Jesus said, you can't serve our country." Really?

As a Christian, Mr. Vought would be duty bound to treat everyone with kindness, respect, and fairness, regardless of their religious beliefs. And as someone who loves God, he would be expected to love his neighbor as himself. This too is part of his faith.

Yet you voted against him solely based on his standard, orthodox beliefs in the exclusivity of salvation through Jesus, stating, to repeat, he "is really not someone who this country is supposed to be about."

To the contrary, sir, he is what this country has been about since the days of our first settlers. And it is people like him—people of robust faith who genuinely care about others—who this country needs today.

Perhaps, by now, one of your staff members has suggested to you that you misunderstood Mr. Vought's statement and that, perhaps, you treated him unfairly.

If not, I do hope you will take to heart what I've written here, humble yourself and apologize, and then evaluate this candidate based on his overall qualifications.

If, however, you fully understood what Mr. Vought believed and for that very reason found him unfit to serve, then my concern is greatly intensified. You would then be advocating for an American that would become tyrannical and oppressive. And you would be declaring war on some of our most precious and fundamental freedoms.

Is that really the America that you want, Mr. Senator?