

Donald Trump: Cyrus or Caesar?

Nobody was certain what we would hear, and I had a feeling we may be in for a surprise.

When Donald Trump, the billionaire businessman, television celebrity and presidential candidate showed up in New York City to meet over 1,000 of the top evangelical leaders in America, there was somewhat of an expectation of the unexpected in the atmosphere.

Even after Ben Carson's welcoming remarks, nobody could have predicted the direction of the discourse as The Donald fielded questions presented by moderator Mike Huckabee from top evangelical leaders like James Dobson, David Jeremiah, Sammy Rodriguez and many others. Major denominations, high-profile televangelists and influential Christian leaders were all present, including Franklin Graham and Jerry Falwell Jr. to join what organizer Bill Dallas called "A Conversation About America's Future With Donald Trump and Ben Carson."

United in Purpose, who planned the event, requested that attendees submit questions in advance by email that would be sorted through and possibly presented during the dialogue. Subjects like building the wall to protect borders, creating new jobs to address the economy, repealing Obamacare, vigorously supporting Israel, protecting the right to bear arms, and appointing conservative federal and Supreme Court judges were all a part of the conversation. These were the familiar and expected topics but there was a surprise that Mr. Trump announced to the group on Tuesday morning that may prove to carry the most significant impact on the church in America should he become president next year.

While pointing out that religious freedom was foundational to

American liberty and society, Dr. Dobson asked what Mr. Trump would do as president to address eroding freedoms.

"I will overturn and do away with the so-called Johnson Amendment. ... This may be my greatest contribution to Christianity and religion." Donald Trump was referring to the 1954 amendment introduced into the U.S. Tax code that the IRS uses to silence the pulpit when it comes to supporting or endorsing political candidates under the threat of losing tax exempt status as a 501(C)3 organization.

Mr. Trump discussed the diminishing influence of the church on society as being directly tied to this amendment that ultimately allows government intrusion into the pulpit. He stated that "the guy out on the corner" in Times Square had more freedom of speech than the church when it comes to politics.

Furthermore, he decried restrictions in the business sector on religious speech as deplorable and announced that if he is president, "You will be able to say Merry Christmas in Macy's again and in all these department stores!" Mr. Trump went on to say, "And have you heard about this coach not allowed to pray and then he gets fired? You mean he can't pray before his team goes into battle? That is a disgrace! If I'm elected president, those days will be over!"

The entire room erupted into applause! Wow! I couldn't believe my ears! I found myself wanting to jump up and cheer because it had been far too long since someone stood up for the faith community like that. Then I thought, how does Donald Trump know about the Johnson Amendment (many pastors and Christian leaders do not)? Whoever the informant was, I realized I was witnessing a potential modern-day Cyrus being birthed right before our eyes.

I realized the gravity of such a strategic move for the church's benefit should not be underestimated. Although it

isn't restoring prayer in schools or *Roe v. Wade* being overturned, imagine in the next presidential election, if your local church pastor gets up and freely says, "I really like this candidate because of their stance on these issues and this is what the word of God says."

That is a game changer in America!

Donald Trump, if elected president, could remove a muzzle imposed on God's shepherds and restore a political freedom of speech to the church that will alter the future of our great nation. Now, that was a surprise. {eoa}

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