

Iowa Was Only the First to Vote, We All Need to Do Our Duty

John Jay was a Founding Fathers' Founding Father. He was president of the Continental Congress in 1778-79, and was a negotiator of the Treaty of Paris, which formally ended the Revolutionary War in 1783. He wrote five of the Federalist Papers and served as the first chief justice of the U.S. Supreme Court, from 1789-95.

He subsequently served as governor of New York, where he led a successful effort to abolish slavery in the Empire State. He had the privilege of seeing every slave in New York emancipated before his death in 1829.

Jay was also a devoted follower of Christ and served for more than a decade as either vice president or president of the American Bible Society. In an 1816 letter he wrote to John Murray, a member of the Pennsylvania House of Representatives, he said:

*"Real (emphasis in original) Christians will abstain from violating the rights of others, and therefore will not provoke war. Almost all nations have peace or war at the will and pleasure of rulers whom they do not elect, and who are not always wise or virtuous. Providence has given to our people the choice of their rulers, and **it is the duty, as well as the privilege and interest, of our Christian nation to select and prefer Christians for their rulers.**"* (Emphasis mine.)

Jay noted that one of the most precious gifts God has given to the citizens of America is the opportunity to choose our own rulers and shape the destiny and future of our country. The vast majority of people around the world do not have that privilege. They have the political leadership they are stuck

with and have no say in the matter.

You will note in passing that Jay had no hesitation in referring to the United States as “our Christian nation,” which should lay the question of whether we were founded as a Christian nation to rest. If anybody would know, it would be him.

Jay observed that it is the “duty” of the Christian citizens of America to “select and prefer Christians for their rulers.” For Jay, it was incumbent upon American citizens to evaluate the spirituality of candidates in a good-faith effort to gauge the sincerity and authenticity of their Christian faith. Even in Jay’s day, there were politicians who made a show and a pretense of their Christian faith, but were not what Jay called “real” Christians. It’s perhaps even more likely that politicians today will try to pander to evangelicals by claiming a street cred on religion that they do not actually possess. Discernment is the order of the day.

Jay was clear and direct about why choosing only authentic followers of Christ was critical for America’s political health and it’s future: “No human society has ever been able to maintain both order and freedom, both cohesiveness and liberty apart from the moral precepts of the Christian religion. ... Should our Republic ever forget this fundamental precept of governance ... this great experiment will then surely be doomed.”

Some will surely protest that the Constitution forbids the use of a “religious test” for public office in Article VI. That restriction is a restriction on the federal government, not the American voter. While the federal government is prohibited from using a religious test to qualify people to hold an office of trust in the federal government, the American people are under no such restraint. While the federal government cannot use a religious test, voters are free to use any religious test they according to John Jay, we must. It is a

duty, a moral obligation, to our nation, to ourselves and to our children and grandchildren.

Now just because a man is a Christian does not automatically make him a good ruler any more than it makes him a good auto mechanic. So we must also ask questions about character and political principle.

Given the dismal state of the family in America, it is incumbent upon us to select candidates for public office whose lives model what marriage and family are supposed to look like. We must not expect them to be perfect, of course, but we need statesmen whose personal lives are exemplary and who demonstrate that marriage is the lifelong union of one man and one woman.

We must also ask questions about a candidate's governing philosophy. How familiar is he with the Constitution? Does he even understand it? How determined is he to be guided and restrained by its precepts?

Iowa is only the first state in the Union to cast votes for a presidential nominee. All of us in turn will have our opportunity in the weeks and months ahead. We must, as best we can, choose a man of Christian faith, personal character and political maturity. We, of course, may come to a different answer about who that man is than our neighbors do. That's to be expected. The only sin would be to not ask the right questions in the first place. Let us choose wisely. {eoa}

Bryan Fischer *writes for the American Family Association's website, , and hosts the two-hour weekday radio program "Focal Point" on American Family Radio.*