

Was Jim Carrey Right About the Christian Right?

According to actor Jim Carrey, America will soon “find out once and for all that the Christian right has never been about morality, it’s been about holding on to power and using morality to do so.” Was he right?

Let’s say Carrey was talking about conservative, primarily white, evangelicals. Is it true that they (or, we) have been more interested in holding on to power than standing for morality? And is it true that they (or, we) simply use morality as a means to an end?

The answer is absolutely, categorically not—and I can say this as someone who would be classified as part of the Christian right and who knows many of the leaders in the so-called Christian right. I can also say this as someone who raised a question very similar to Carrey’s in my recent book on Trump and evangelicals. (In other words, I am not tone deaf to the accusation.)

Speaking of evangelicals who supported Trump, I asked, “Did these evangelicals (especially the leaders) sell their souls for Donald Trump? Did they compromise their convictions to gain a seat at the table?”

While I can’t speak for all of them, I can speak for those I know personally. In each case, the answer is no. They were voting to preserve American liberties, not to gain a seat at the table.

I recently wrote about Billy Graham’s warnings from 1962 as he raised his strong concerns about organized public prayer being removed from the schools.

His warning had nothing whatsoever to do with “holding on to

power” and everything to do with preserving a moral God-consciousness in the nation. As he said, “American democracy rests on the belief in the reality of God and His respect for the individual. Ours is a freedom under law. But it is also a freedom that will evaporate if the religious foundations upon which it has been built are taken away.”

His goal was to preserve freedom, not to establish a theocracy.

Back in October, I cited warnings from the philosopher and theologian Francis Schaeffer in which he also raised serious concerns about the moral deterioration of our society.

As early as 1968, with prophetic precision and with a specific focus on sexual issues and the importance of gender distinctions, he could already point to a serious decline in our standards. Yet in this case too, his warnings had nothing to do with holding on to power, nor was morality being used as a tool to maintain governmental control.

In his words, “It is imperative that Christians realize the conclusions which are being drawn as a result of the death of absolutes.”

Failure to realize this would result in societal collapse. And so, Schaeffer was pointing to a moral and spiritual crisis, urging believers to wake up and see the handwriting on the wall. It was not a call for political action in order to maintain control.

It is very true that the Moral Majority, founded in 1979 by Rev. Jerry Falwell, included a strong call to political involvement, urging Christian conservatives to get out and vote.

But here too, Carrey’s understanding of things is backwards.

In other words, it was not Christians using morality as a

means to hold on to power. Rather, it was Christians burdened about the loss of morality in our country who were encouraged to vote for candidates that would push back against the downward slide.

Did the lines sometimes get blurred, to the point that the Moral Majority became an appendage of the Republican Party? Yes, to some extent, those lines did get blurred.

And is it possible that, to this moment, lines are blurred when believers identify primarily with one party, thereby looking to that party to help see their agenda realized? Certainly, this does happen, both with liberals ("progressives") and conservatives.

But the fact is that the reason the Christian right votes primarily Republican is because: 1) the Republican Party platform largely mirrors their conservative values when it comes to life, family, Israel, freedom, the economy and the function of government; 2) the Democratic Party platform is diametrically opposed to most of our most important spiritual and moral values; 3) we oppose judicial activism and want to see Constitutional justices appointed to our courts and 4) we believe the radical left is fighting against our most fundamental freedoms, including the freedoms of speech, conscience and religion.

So, we're not trying to maintain a seat at the table because we want to stay in power. And we would vote the Republican Party out in a heartbeat if their platform changed and we found others who would represent our values.

I suggest, then, that Jim Carrey (and others who share his convictions) would do well to ask themselves a series of simple questions.

First, Mr. Carrey, when you express your outrage against Donald Trump, is it because you find him morally offensive and a threat to our nation?

Second, if your answer is yes, then do you vote for Democratic candidates because you believe they will do a better job of fighting against the dangerous, conservative right?

Third, are you therefore using your moral outrage in order to gain political power, or are you voting for candidates who share your moral outrage?

Fourth, assuming that you are not using your moral outrage as a tool but are sincere in your convictions, why is it so hard to understand that those of us on the right feel the same way, just from the opposite side of the spectrum?

Or, to reduce this whole article to one simple question: Mr. Carrey, if you and your ilk can be sincerely motivated, why can't you recognize that those of us on the right are likewise sincere?

Or, perhaps, there's a more fundamental problem? Perhaps, Mr. Carrey, it's that you don't believe Christian conservatives can ever be sincere?

If that's the case, I suggest you get to know some of them up close and personal. It might just change your perspective and even your life.