

Wright Is Wrong

I can't jump on the Obama bandwagon with a clear conscience.

Democratic presidential candidate Barack Obama enjoys the support of many Christians. So far he has already won endorsements from gospel singer Donnie McClurkin, celebrity preacher Juanita Bynum and respected pastors, including Kirbyjon Caldwell—who prayed at both of President Bush's inauguration ceremonies. Some black church leaders are thrilled because the first African-American to have a real shot at winning the White House is also a man of faith.

I wish I shared their excitement. As much as I would love to see our first black president take office, I can't jump on the Obama bandwagon with a clear conscience. His sermons about "audacious hope" are stirring, especially in this era of outrageous fuel prices and a shrinking dollar. But I cannot dismiss his 20-year connection to the Rev. Jeremiah Wright, the Chicago preacher who helped shape Obama's worldview.

When CNN released clips of Wright's inflammatory rhetoric back in March, Obama said he didn't agree with his pastor on many points, and he denounced Wright's support of Louis Farrakhan, leader of the Nation of Islam. Defenders of Obama said it's unfair to link their candidate with his pastor's views. And Wright himself claimed that the sound bites aired by the media—including the one in which he said our national anthem should say "God Damn America"—were taken out of context.

But I still have nagging questions: If Obama doesn't agree with Wright, why did he sit in that pew all those years? Was he asleep?

I realize that America has a terrible history of racism, and that white Christians sat for too long and ignored the injustice. Wright and other black church leaders are right to point that out. But Wright is wrong to suggest that the Bible

must change to accommodate our culture. Consider these uncomfortable facts about Wright and his church:

» Trinity is the largest congregation in the ultraliberal United Church of Christ (UCC). The church is also leading the UCC's aggressive efforts to sanctify gay marriage. (That might explain why Obama is so strident in his defense of homosexual unions.)

» Wright proudly touts himself as a disciple of liberal theologian James Cone, author of the 1970 book *A Black Theology of Liberation*. Cone once wrote: "Black theology refuses to accept a God who is not identified totally with the goals of the black community. If God is not for us and against white people, then he is a murderer, and we had better kill him. The task of black theology is to kill Gods who do not belong to the black community." (Note: This is called idolatry-fashioning a god in your own image.)

» In 1995, Wright attended Louis Farrakhan's Million Man March in Washington, D.C., and then he denounced black pastors who refused to support it. In Wright's view, it's more important for African-American men to stand in solidarity with a false prophet than it is to unite with other races in the name of Jesus.

» An article in *The New Yorker* quoted Wright from a lecture he gave students at the University of Chicago. He told them: "I have a different perspective on Islam than the average preacher. Islam and Christianity are a whole lot closer than you may realize. Islam comes out of Christianity." (Maybe that is why Obama himself has said that belief in Jesus Christ is not required to get to heaven.)

When I questioned Wright's bizarre theology in an online column in March, some readers called me a bigot. But I am not going to stay quiet on this one. I am not a racist, and my opposition to Obama has nothing to do with race. Many black

readers of Charisma also have written us to say that they would never support Obama because his views do not reflect biblical values (especially his militant defense of third-trimester abortions).

Martin Luther King Jr. taught us in the 1960s that the path to racial healing begins with forgiveness. Wright has rejected that path. He preaches a gospel of hate, bitterness and alienation.

Wright is certainly not empowering the black community with a counterfeit religion that idolizes race, ignores biblical holiness and denies Christ as the only source of salvation. How then can we trust the politician Wright has anointed to lead America?

J. Lee Grady is the editor of Charisma. Go to [this link](#) to read his previous columns.