

Politics: Greek politikos, from politēs ‘citizen’, from polis ‘city.’ So politics is about people and how they live together. Most religions - especially Christianity - and politics seek the same thing: the way each citizen lives in relationship with one another - and God, of course.

Christianity is as good an example of politics as any; it has both right-wing and socialist teachings just within the New Testament. Go a bit further on (4th century) and Christianity swings from victim of the state to the religion of the state. Like here and now.

The Church of England is the established Church in its eponymous society. Which means, by definition, it can speak for many - other belief systems included - who are in one way or another disempowered, disenfranchised or simply disaffected from doing so themselves.

The Church can challenge the temporal powers in the land on policies of justice, egalitarianism (or not, as the case may be!), poverty and simple fair play - especially when an opposition government for one reason or another does not find it “politically” expedient to do so.

The Church is not an alternative political party, however, because (to quote Rowan Williams), “No human arrangement of affairs is simply going to embody the will and the work of God.” He continues, “Do [we] live by bearing one another’s costs and one another’s burdens? Or do [we] live at each other’s expense? Those are the two great human options. If you go for the first you are moving slowly in the direction of the City of God – the *polis*, the political reality that the Church represents. If you live by some other principle you’re not just opting for an alternative political system, you’re eventually opting for chaos and the best you can hope for is indifferently controlled selfishness.”

So the Church, in trying to witness to the teachings of Jesus, points to the opportunities Jesus’ sacrifice has given us to have the fullness of life we should each have as citizens of this world and the next.

I, for the Church, ask you therefore, when you cast your vote: are the promises of your chosen candidate leading to civic liberty, dignity and justice - or are you just really voting for yourself?