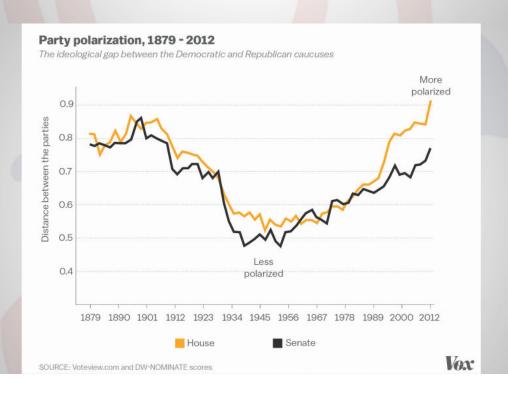


Culture: a broadly bound, deeply held shared perspective

Political Culture: a perspective that tends to view the world in political or partisan terms



"Americans are defining themselves more saliently by their politics. This is important, because the formation of a group identity tends to change individual behavior in powerful ways.

"Through the phenomenon of 'group polarization,' people who begin with vague, weakly-held opinions tend to become more radical and dogmatic when put into likeminded groups.

"They also quickly develop hostile feelings towards outgroup members. "Rational, evidence-based dissent tends to lose effectiveness within the groups, and in fact makes group members even more invested in their original opinion." Rogers and Jones "Partisan, cultural, and regional identities tend to shape religious identities . . . In so many instances, cultural identity is completely dominant over faith; it is the prism through which faith is interpreted."

Peter Wehner

1. Appealing to members or changing members?

If the Church allows a political party to set its agenda, it will leave the Body immature; it will not grow, but wither. "And he gave ... the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ,

"until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ,

"so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes."

Ephesians 4:11-13

2. Power or Service?

If the Church lets a political party set its agenda, it will be tempted to power. It may seek, for example, to regain the cultural hegemony it thinks it has lost. This contradicts Christ's command and mars the gospel message.

"And Jesus called them to him and said to them, 'You know that those who are considered rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them.'

"But it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

Mark 10:42-45

One pastor, who requested anonymity in order to speak openly, put it to me this way:

"You still fundamentally get people who are in love with power and will take any means necessary to beat you down so they have power and you are subservient to them, not the Gospel."

Quoted by Peter Wehner

3. Policy or Personal Action?

If the Church lets a political party set its agenda, it will focus only on policy solutions and miss the value of "small" efforts that help "the least of these, my brethren."

"Then the righteous will answer him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?'

"And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me."

Matthew 25:37-40

Micro-Christianity: not Christianity that is small, but everywhere, in the smallest actions and words, that seeps down and fills every crack in our life, that spreads everywhere often without notice.

Parable of the Mustard Seed

"He put another parable before them, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is like a grain of mustard seed that a man took and sowed in his field.'

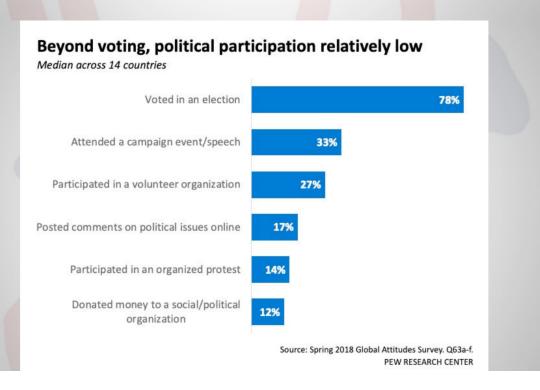
"It is the smallest of all seeds, but when it has grown it is larger than all the garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches."

Matthew 13:31-32

Parable of the Leaven

"The kingdom of heaven is like leaven that a woman took and hid in three measures of flour, till it was all leavened."

Matthew 13:33



Put up a yard sign, wear a button, use a bumper sticker Put up a yard sign, wear a button, use a bumper sticker Write, email, or call an elected official

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Participate in a boycott

Put up a yard sign, wear a button, use a bumper sticker

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Attend a council, assembly, or commission meeting Sign a petition

Participate in a boycott

Raise funds for a political campaign or organization

Put up a yard sign, wear a button, use a bumper sticker

Write, email, or call an elected official

Write an editorial

Attend a council, assembly, or commission meeting Sign a petition

Participate in a boycott

Raise funds for a political campaign or organization Run for public office

Fight:

"The only way is through'—that is to say, to fight the culture war with the aim of defeating the enemy and enjoying the spoils in the form of a public square re-ordered to the common good and ultimately the Highest Good."

Soreb Ahmari

Flee:

Could it be that the best way to fight the flood is to . . . stop fighting the flood? That is, to quit piling up sandbags and to build an ark in which to shelter until the water recedes and we can put our feet on dry land again?

Flee:

"Rather than wasting energy and resources fighting unwinnable political battles, we should instead work on building communities, institutions, and networks of resistance that can outwit, outlast, and eventually overcome the occupation."

Rod Dreyer

Jesus' response to fight

"And behold, one of those who were with Jesus stretched out his hand and drew his sword and struck the servant of the high priest and cut off his ear. "Then Jesus said to him, 'Put your sword back into its place. For all who take the sword will perish by the sword. Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels?"

Matthew 26:50-54

Jesus' response to flee

"You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet."

Matthew 5:13

Jesus' response to flee

"You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house.

Jesus' response to flee

"In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven."

Matthew 5:14

What did we expect?

"If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you."

John 15:18-19

4. Common Interest or Common Calling?

If the Church allows a political party to set its agenda, it can easily confuse membership in a political party with membership in the Church, forgetting that its members are "those who are called according to his purpose" (Romans 8:28).

"Not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth.

"But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world."

1 Corinthians 1:26-29

5. Flesh and Blood or Principalities and Powers?

If the Church lets a political party set its agenda, we'll pick the wrong opponent. We'll set ourselves against political enemies, whom we're commanded to love, and ignore the real enemies whose attacks creep into our homes and hearts.

"For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places."

Ephesians 6:12