MINISTRY UPDATE
Clarifying the Continual Confusion About the Separation of Church and State

VERSE OF THE WEEK
Philippians 1:18

MINISTRY UPDATE
My Ways Are Not Your Ways

ABOUT Capitol Ministries

INSTRUCTIONS EVANGELICALS have sought to re-enter the political arena in response to a moral declining America. Their sincere desires were to stop the erosion and return to our Christian heritage. In this quest, perhaps inadvertently, well-meaning Evangelical leaders attempted to co-opt the Church into an organization of political activism.

This subtle attempt to change the primary, God-ordained purpose of the church from a soul-winning, disciple-making organism into a nation-saving, vote making organization met with mixed results.

When Capitol Ministries was born in 1996, one of our primary objectives was, and remains, to provide biblical clarity to this matter. Our ministry has always believed that it is much more efficient and effective for the sake of both the Church and

Weekly Bible Studies
CABINET: 7:00 AM Wednesdays Mornings. Location Undisclosed. Light Refreshments Served.
SENATE: 8:00 AM Tuesdays, Rotating Offices of Senators. Hot Breakfast Served.
HOUSE: Capitol H324: Monday or Tuesday Evenings after First Votes Back. Dinner Served.
THE BIBLE IS CLEAR REGARDING GOD’S DESIRE IN THE NEW COVENANT FOR THERE TO BE AN INSTITUTIONAL SEPARATION OF CHURCH FROM THE STATE BUT INSTITUTIONAL SEPARATION DOES NOT IMPLY INFLUENTIAL SEPARATION

Grown by the discipleship efforts of the Church, Public Servants are to serve the Institution of the State with no eye for co-optation. (I should add a personal note here for the sake of secularists who tend to assume that Christian Public Servants have a desire to make America into a Theocracy: In over 20 years of working with Christians in office, I have yet to meet one who harbors this motive.)

Ralph Drollinger

I. INTRODUCTION

THE BIBLE CLEARLY teaches that today, there is to be an institutional separation of Church and State. To think otherwise is to believe in a theocratic or sacerdotal form of Government. What the Bible does not teach — and what the secularist would like to say the U.S. Constitution supports — is an influential separation of Church and State. Clearly however such thinking is not supported in the Constitution or the Scriptures.

The State is dependent on godly
leaders, but the State is not in the business of manufacturing them: that is the role of the Church.

When the Church concentrates its efforts on evangelizing and discipling office holders, those officeholders who possess a Christian world view are in a position to affect much change!

It follows then, that the emphasis of the historic Religious Right movement — attempting to redefine God’s mandate for the Church — is fundamentally flawed and therefore will always remain largely ineffective. One cannot expect the Church to be an effective, well-oiled political machine. But one can expect the Church to be an effective, well-oiled disciple-maker of those who serve the State.

II. A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Evangelicals reentered the political arena incorrectly in the mid 1970s. But how is it that they ever left it in the first place — especially since their forefathers, the Puritans, were the very instruments, the foundation upon which the State was conceived and implemented?

The Evangelical pull-out occurred in the 1920s and 30s in response to the authority of God’s Word, the Bible, coming under critical attack. How are these matters related?

In the late 19th century America’s conservative Protestant Seminaries experienced the incursion of theological higher criticism propagated by a Seminary in Tubingen, Germany. Theologically speaking, German Higher Criticism seriously questioned the infallibility, inerrancy, and inspiration of the ancient manuscript evidences that comprise the basis of all Bible translations: Theirs was a criticism of the source documents that make up the ancient manuscript evidences that are used to translate the Bible into modern day existing languages. Before Tubingen, throughout all of Church history, the matter of the integrity of the source documents of the Scriptures had never been on the table for debate.

In fact, during the Reformation both Luther and Calvin in their debate with the Council of Trent — during this great debate as to if or not salvation was by faith alone in Christ alone via God’s grace alone — both sides deemed the Scriptures as accurate, reliable, and authoritative for all matters of faith and practice.

IN 1930s AMERICA THAT ALL CHANGED

Theologically speaking, German...
Higher Criticism entered the American Church and many of the mainline Protestant denomination seminaries fell prey to the rationalistic thinking of the movement. In essence, the purveyors of what would later become known as Theological Liberalism held to a belief that God inspired not all of Scripture. Additionally, reinterpreted from the literal text of Scripture were one’s understanding of Jesus Christ and the Gospel: No longer was the kernel of the Gospel that man was sinful and in need of a Savior, but in its place, Jesus had been reduced to being a good, humble role model — someone who portrayed a good lifestyle — one we should emulate, but nothing more. Jesus was no longer salvific in their way of thinking. An accurate depiction, the retail name of Theological Liberalism was The Social Gospel movement. It gutted the revealed Gospel of Scripture which says, But God demonstrates His own love toward us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us (Romans 5:8). The Gospel of the Scripture prior to the incursion of Theological Liberalism is intensely personal, driving the sinner toward repentance and in desperate need of a Savior and Lord. Conversely, the Social Gospel became political, searching for sweeping answers for the betterment of mankind, often through politically based means. In theological circles, this chasm became known as the Modernist-Fundamentalist controversy. It would divide the Protestant Church in America and eventually throughout the world.

III. THE MANIFESTATION IN THE POLITICAL ARENA

The Fundamentalist, later known more so as Evangelicals (a good way to discern the difference today is this: Fundamentalists have at their heart the primarily task of defending the faith, whereas Evangelicals, to proclaim the good news of Christ) took great offense to the Modernist, Social Gospel movement because then as now, it redefines the biblically-explicit person and work of Jesus Christ.

Responding to the defection of many mainline denominations, the Fundamentalists separated their fellowship from the theological liberals. They left their churches, their seminaries, their colleges, and their publishing houses. Later they would build new ones in order to recreate the vast infrastructure that Conservative American Protestantism enjoyed: the very engine that to this point had driven American culture.

In the meantime, the Social Gospel movement, in carrying out its
interpretation of Christ’s mission became out of necessity increasingly political. It became heavily involved in the political process in order to achieve its perception of mission. Accordingly, as one could imagine and to the point under discussion in this Bible study:

AS FUNDAMENTALISTS PARTED COMPANY WITH THEOLOGICAL LIBERALISM, THEY PARTED COMPANY WITH AMERICAN POLITICS

This is a tragic result, a result that ended the historic, foundational involvement of Bible-teaching pastors often being the very men who held public office in the formative years of American history. The godly influence in American government soon evaporated and was replaced by a Social Gospel narrative.

IV. COMPARING THE METHODOLOGY OF THE SOCIAL GOSPEL MOVEMENT TO THE RELIGIOUS RIGHT

Fast-forward forty years. Theologically speaking, the decade of 1970 would be titled The Evangelical Resurgence. Rather than cite examples of this, more important to the point is to enjoin the huge, numeric groundswell in the Evangelical camp with the rapid moral decline in the nation. These parallel contrasting factors provide an acute realization as to why (what would later be titled) the Religious Right movement arose and moved post haste back into the American political arena.

Back in the 20s and 30s, out of sincere motives for reasons of separating for the sake of the purity of the gospel message, Fundamentalists/Evangelicals had abandoned the arena of political involvement and civil influence. They were not about to co-mingle with a new, ill-informed “Christianity,” that had invaded their space. The Social Gospellers invaded the political arena for reasons of missional necessity. As theological liberals gained ground, theological conservatives lost ground.

Now forty years later, Fundamentalist/Evangelicals were fighting mad that the America they knew was in moral decline and dominated by theological and political liberalism. The Evangelical Resurgence was now underway: And it followed that reengaging and affecting the political arena “for Christ” would hopefully preserve a nation from its rapid moral disintegration.

As Evangelicals moved back into the political arena, they did so with a right understanding of biblical doctrine, especially concern-
ing Christ and personal salvation. Their doctrine was biblical in comparison to the encroachment of Theological Liberalism some 50 years earlier. The unadulterated gospel, encapsulated in the book of Romans was at the heart of the Evangelical Resurgence: we are dead in our transgressions... but God... made us alive together with Christ, (Ephesians 2:5). This is the message which the purveyors of the Social Gospel had long ago abandoned.

Outstanding, however, in the zeal of the reentry of The Religious Right (which one might say, was the political arm of the Evangelical Resurgence) was the absence of a major biblical ingredient to any ministry endeavor that is desirous of God’s blessing. Whereas Fundamentalists and Evangelicals have long held to the Gospel as defined and revealed by the Scriptures, their methodology for ministry — especially as it relates to their methodology in the political arena — was not informed by the Bible. In truth, the Bible is instructive regarding both.

**THE RELIGIOUS RIGHT’S MESSAGE WAS RIGHT, BUT THEIR METHODOLOGY WAS WRONG**

One example of this among many is found in Philippians chapter 1, Paul is writing near the end of his ministry. Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the reader gains wonderful insights into biblically-revealed ministry methodolo-

“...CHANGING NATIONS — MUST BE THE FIRST ORDER IN THE CHURCH AND IN THE LIFE OF EVERY BELIEVER

That was Paul’s clear priority and it should be ours too:

WINNING AND BUILDING PEOPLE IN CHRIST — NOT CHANGING NATIONS — MUST BE THE FIRST ORDER IN THE CHURCH AND IN THE LIFE OF EVERY BELIEVER
“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:19).

This is The Great Commission! Like Paul then, the believer, the Church, now, is mandated to be about making disciples!

Seek first His kingdom states Jesus in Matthew 6:33. After all . . . . if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold new things have come (2Cor. 5:17). If it is true that people’s lives change for the better when they come to Christ, then should not that be the first priority of the Institution of the Church and the individuals in the Church? Such was not the priority of the Church during the Evangelical Resurgence/Religious Right movement of the 1970s. Rather the priority and methodology of Evangelicals was to attempt to transform the Church into a political activist organization and change the laws of America. But God calls His Church and His followers to change hearts — knowing that “good laws come from good hearts” (a loose translation of a quote from William Penn).

V. THE CLARIFYING POINT

By employing worldly methodologies for political influence, the Church reduced itself to nothing more than a political pressure group — whereas biblically ordained by God, the Church is to proclaim freedom from trespasses and sin and proclaim new life in Christ! Bad politicians, political corruption, and ill-based laws all change when people come to know the living Christ. Therein lies the primary methodology of God’s people. It is this biblically based priority that then leads to evangelizing and discipling state leaders.

SEND A MATURE BELIEVER INTO THE PUBLIC ARENA AND AS AN INSIDER HE OR SHE WILL AFFECT CHANGE TO A MUCH GREATER DEGREE THAN WILL AN OUTSIDER

Unfortunately, because of a faulty methodology since the 1970s the Church has been less than effective in its attempts to change the direction of America. It has spent its seed on the sidewalk. It should be no wonder; in its ill-fated attempt to morph its purpose, the Church has increasingly missed its calling and mission. And in becoming a political action group it has vastly discounted its credibility in the process.

GOD SAYS THAT HE HONORS HIS WORD (cf. Psalm 19 and 119). He also says that His Word does not return void (Isaiah 55:11). He also says that it is living and active (Hebrews 4:12). He also says that He uses it via His Bible teachers to mature His called-out ones (cf. Romans 10:15; Hebrews 12:2; Ephesians 4:12-13).

Combining all these Bible truths, is it not far-fetched for the Church — as its foremost priority and responsibility — to send Bible teachers into the seats of Civil Government in order to change Civil Government? Will not God draw His called out ones into the seats of Civil Government in order to be matured in Christ through the Bible teacher?

Such is counter-intuitive to and transcendent of secular political science. But is this not the biblical-revealed formula for changing a nation?

For past studies or additional copies go to www.capmin.org
VI. SUMMARY

The Church needs to be biblical in both its message and methodology. To muddle one is tragic (the Religious Right) to muddle both is catastrophic (historic Theological Liberalism). Christians involved in the wrong message and or methodology on earth render themselves useless and ineffective in God’s eyes.

1 Timothy 2:1-4 is an apt summary of this study. When believers prioritize praying evangelistically for and evangelizing Kings and those who are in authority, God promises the following: so that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity.

Wise is the believer and the believing officeholder who commits himself to these biblically revealed purposes and priorities.

**MATURING PUBLIC SERVANTS IN CHRIST IS THE MOST EFFICIENT WAY FOR THE CHURCH TO CHANGE THE DIRECTION OF A NATION**

The Church is at its best when it equips the insiders to do the changing. Mature believers in office are in a more powerful position to effect change than are believers on the outside. Disciple public servants today! God blesses men and women with clear, biblically-based priorities. cm