

SESSION 02 – GOD AT WORK – A TWO KINGDOM EXERCISE IN THE AMERICAN CONTEXT: *CONCERNS, TRENDS, VICTORIES, ENGAGEMENT*

This presentation will discuss what it means to be a “public” Christian from a Two-Kingdom standpoint. We’ll look at the uniqueness of the American context, it’s opportunities and challenges to be the Church for others in this country. It will also look at the growing threats and challenges that are increasing in the growing secularization of the American context. We’ll especially review various Supreme Court cases that have happened in American in the last decades which have challenged the Christian Church’s voice in the public square. And, we’ll discuss the unique way that Two-Kingdom Christians engage these issues for the sake of the culture (for those who agree and disagree with us) and for the sake of the mission of the Church.

1. The Main role of the Government – American Polity for a Civil society

- a. Protect the **God-given rights** (given by God via creation) of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness **of citizens** (individuals, equal before the law)
- b. Declaration of Independence – *We hold these **truths** to be **self-evident** that all men are created **equal** that they are **endowed by their Creator** with certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness; that to **secure these rights** governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the **consent of the governed**; that whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of the people to already or abolish it.*
- c. Constitutional Polity in America
 - i. *Limits governmental power by delegating to it only “enumerated” powers for it to carry out that clearly focus its activity in service to the people*
 - ii. *Separates those powers into 3 branches, “thwarting” the coalescing and concentration of power in any governmental entity, also in service to the freedom and liberty of the America CITIZEN (not SUBJECT)*

2. REVIEW BIBLICAL BASICS.....

- a. **The Directional authority of the 4th Commandment....** Father/Mother—Family --Community—State—Government; Marriage as institution not just relationship.
- b. The Biblical Differentiation of the roles of Church and State in public service to people.
 - i. Clear differences between the basic **methodological engagement and motivational power of the Church and the State active in society.**
 - ii. **Church: Service oriented, Gospel motivated** (ultimate issues/salvations) vs. **STATE: Force oriented/morally directed and limited** (temporal justice and peace).
- c. **See paper** – “What would Jesus do? What would the Father do?”

- d. **Underlying biblical presuppositions –**
 - i. God exists, God is active in the world HIS WAY, there is a moral foundation to being human, those moral foundations are “self-evident,”
 - ii. **Man** is created in God’s Image (**inherent dignity**) YET fallen (**Total depravity**).
 - iii. Government is one of His institutions to preserve that moral foundation in the world. (**Church—Family—Government – these are HIS GIFTS**)
 - iv. **Without SIN**, there would be **NO NEED FOR GOVERNMENT**, but because of SIN, it matters FOR LIBERTY how Government is formed and Operates.
3. **FOUNDING TO PRESENT DAY** - The Usurpation of that role and its consequences in modern Church/State relations
- a. **Original Intent – Limitation of Federal Government**, see Federalist 45, where Madison notes that Federal powers would be FEW and CLEARLY DEFINED (protection and foreign relations oriented) while State powers NUMEROUS and UNDEFINED.
 - b. **Constitutional vs unconstitutional** isn’t “Good law vs. Bad Law,” it’s law that thwarts personal freedom vs Laws that fail to protect liberty, even promote governmental tyranny.
 - c. **Federal government unleashed through legal fiat (abuse?) – The Supreme Court’s transformation** (From governmental limitations, clear demarcations, to virtually limitless involvement in citizen’s lives. (Taxation, education, health care, social security, interstate commerce.... etc. – constitutional?)
 - d. **Hamilton said, (Federalist 78) – “Liberty can have nothing to fear from the judiciary alone but would have everything to fear from its union with either of the other branches.”**
 - e. **THE FEARS ILLUSTRATED** - See **Griswold v. Connecticut** – the courts define ‘right of privacy’ and the federal government’s power to enforce it over state and personal objection; **Roe v. Wade** – the Government’s usurpation of state and local limitations of the practice. **ACA** – Federal government can charge “fees” and demand purchase of health Insurance on a federal level. **Obergefell** – Federal Government can define and regulate relationships as a civil rights issue.
 - f. The Old Attitude.... individual freedom/state government the rule, Federal Government the exception; Today, in the words of Justice Hugo Black, 1965, “*I like my privacy as well as the next man, but I am nevertheless compelled to admit that government has a right to invade it unless prohibited by some constitutional provision.*”¹ Thus the politicization of our basic rights and freedoms today....

¹ <http://www.angelfire.com/az/sthurston/howtyrannycame.html>

4. Religious Liberty and the New Usurpation –

- a. “Live and Let Live” vs. “the weaponization of politics to annul moral difference”
- b. Usurpation of representative government through judicial fiat –
 - Ex. - “The 9th circuit court disenfranchisement of Black Americans concerning the PROP 8 law in California, 2008.”²

5. Challenges and Opportunities for being a PUBLIC Christian.....the Legal Cases for our corporate Concern....

- a. *Meyer v. the State of Nebraska* – 1920, to speak German or not to speak German in education and worship.³

Some Good Ones....

- b. Walter Maier, the Lutheran Hour, and Free Religious Speech – Repeal of Prohibition and the saving of religious programming!
- c. *Hosanna Tabor Lutheran School v. EEOC* – Can we hire confessional believers?
- d. *Trinity Lutheran Church v. Comer* - in Columbia, MO⁴
- e. *Masterpiece Cakeshop* – Jack Philips (Is this justice?)
- f. *NIFLA* – Compelled Speech is NOT free speech
- g. *HHS mandate* - LCMS, the Little Sisters of the Poor – If this is not government overreach, what is?

More Concerns on the Horizon

- h. *SOGI LAWS* – Chaplaincy, schools, Universities.... Churches?
- i. *SOGI LAWS* – adoption agencies, transgender bathrooms, decertification of any who don’t hold specific LGBT views.
- j. Christian Faith in Jesus ALONE – disqualifies Christians from public service?⁵

What’s the point of public engagement???

6. The Christian-citizens proper exercise of constitutional rights and freedoms in service to the Church and in service to the civility of society, TWO-KINGDOM STYLE

- a. The rights of Conscience FOR ALL
- b. The right to liberty, Life FOR ALL (marriage is a liberty issue, as is education)
- c. The preservation of civility, justice, and peace (The Caesar Responsibility for Christians in service to the Gospel).

² <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/11/06/AR2008110603880.html?noredirect=on>

³ https://www.omaha.com/history/during-world-war-i-nebraska-and-iowa-nearly-lost-sight/article_f7f928b0-173f-11e7-a6d7-33e287933285.html

⁴ Groups including the Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty called it a blow to the separation of church and state, while the head of the Southern Baptist Convention Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission viewed it as a win for religious liberty.

⁵ <http://thefederalist.com/2017/06/09/bernie-sanders-doesnt-think-christians-fit-public-office/>