

# Christian right establishment: big failure in leadership

In war, after a great battle ends, the wounded are attended to and the dead are counted. When the dust settles, analysis of the conflict becomes much clearer. From there, the historian can see where the battle was won and lost, which general excelled, and which failed.

By late spring of 2016, a similar time had arrived in the heated battle of the 2016 Republican primary. The Republican primary season of nine months was much more intense than typical primary elections. And it was a battle of the political ages; one that may go down as the beginning of a great political revolution in American history.

It started with 17 combatants and ended with one man standing by Tuesday, May 3rd, the evening of the Indiana primary.

The symbolism of war is appropriate for what transpired. The Establishment/Goldwater battle of '64 was nothing compared to what we have seen this election season.

One by one, the upstart Donald Trump picked off his opponents. The ones who left early—Paul, Christie, Carson, and more—left with fewer wounds. Those who continued—Jeb Bush, Rubio, and especially Cruz—may have suffered politically mortal wounds.

The primary war even inflicted damage on non-combatants such as the two former Bush presidents with their legacy which was hit hard by Trump's verbal artillery against brother Jeb and the Bush family.

The other non-combatant who suffered severe wounds was the candidate supply line known as the Republican Party

Establishment. Traditionally, in primary battles, the party establishment remains in the background, taking a neutral position, waiting for a winner to emerge.

Instead, in an unprecedented fashion, the Republican Party Establishment has entered the battlefield, seeking to take down the leading general. History may well show that they have suffered the greatest wounds of all, having lost the loyalty of their troops for a long time due to their duplicity. Who knows if they will ever get it back? When an organization's corruption is exposed and trust is lost, it is difficult for them to recover loyalty.

Another big loser in this historic primary battle is the Christian Right leadership. By the end of the battle, this leadership was seen in retreat behind Rubio and Cruz. Only a few of these leaders has sided with the winning general. Despite so many Christian Right leaders backing Establishment candidates, over half of their Evangelical supporters broke rank and placed their support behind Trump, many switching allegiances in the middle of the battle.

The louder the Evangelical officers yelled at their forces to hold the line for Cruz or Rubio, the worse things got, until, in South Carolina, a huge Evangelical backing of Trump shocked the Christian Right leadership. The rest of the southern troops soon followed. No amount of name calling by the Christian Right officers could hold the line against Trump. The greater the threats, the more their men went to the outsider from New York.

The primaries have shown that Evangelicals do not vote as a monolithic group and that the Christian Right leaders cannot control their own people anymore. This exposure and embarrassment of the Christian Right Establishment during this public primary battle has deeply wounded them. You can't be leading if nobody is following.

Of course, the primary setback for these Christian Right leaders did not come as a surprise. It is the culmination of four decades of failed leadership. They have failed to make the case for distinctively Christian positions on issues for decades, so a tipping point had to appear at some point as the beginning of the end of their influence.

## THE UNHOLY ALLIANCE: THE CHRISTIAN RIGHT AND THE REPUBLICAN PARTY

A glaring weakness in the leadership of the Christian Right is their unwavering allegiance and servitude to the national Republican Party. Their loyalty is based on some kind of supposed common ground: as if the Republican Party is synonymous with liberty, the Bill of Rights, conservatism, and the Christian faith.

This is the Republican Party that is state-ist, big government, pro-central banks, pro-Wall Street pillaging, pro-war and pro-NSA illegal spying—and has been for decades. Is there anything Christian about these positions? The Christian Right is to the Republican hierarchy what the black constituency is to the Democratic Party. The Party placates them on a few issues, and then uses them for political advantage while finding reasons to ignore those “social issue” positions.

These Christian leaders are tied too closely to the Republican Establishment so they can't confront them and call them to reform the Party. This has been made very clear in the 2016 Republican primary season. The Republican Establishment of insider politicians and donors has been railing against Donald Trump. They have enthusiastically conspired against their own electors' overwhelming choice for president. During the primary there was a period in which every week was filled with stories of secret meetings among Party Establishment donors and operatives desiring to destroy their own frontrunner.

Despite this unprecedented behavior of corruption, compromise, and treacherous policy from the Party hierarchy, many in the Christian Right leadership remained silent, while others publicly joined in with the Republican elites to destroy the peoples' candidate. As the Republican Party was being exposed weekly, complaints came in from everywhere, but the Christian Right remained silent, revealing their compromised alliance with the GOPe.

## WHERE IS THE CHURCH'S PROPHETIC VOICE?

The modern Christian Right leader has little understanding of the leadership and influence the historic Church has had in its 2000-year history in relation to its high calling and authority in the world. Instead, today's Western Church has become a place of seclusion and comfort; an institution hidden away from the secular world that seeks to destroy it.

The true biblical picture of Christ's Church is of an institution that is on the offensive, storming the gates of hell, tearing down secular strongholds and philosophies that are alien to God and His Word. It is a picture of a huge force of redeemed saints of God, seeking daily to advance the cause of Christ, building His Kingdom. The modern Christian activist has replaced this vision for the humanist notion of political salvation whereby politics is the singular means to expand God's Kingdom. This heretical and false hope that has permeated the leadership of the Evangelical Establishment has muted its prophetic voice against the evils of our day, including the corruption within the Republican Party.

Outside of their three comfort issues—abortion, marriage and human sexuality—the Christian Right has not showed up for the battle over American culture. They have been AWOL in the great fight over human destiny. The enemies of Christianity—many of whom are members of the GOP—have romped to cultural victory after victory, unopposed by the Church.

## NEO-CONNED

The lack of the prophetic voice of the Church is ever so clear in the realm of US foreign policy, and the endless, unbiblical, unconstitutional wars of aggression.

The Bible is clear concerning the prohibition of the “shedding of innocent blood” and the terrific loss of innocent human life by unjust wars. But the Christian Right leadership would rather embrace the worldview of war-loving neo-cons with the illegal Bush Middle Eastern wars than take a biblical stand for life.

Christian Right leaders will mobilize and unite to save one life like Terri Schiavo, which is admirable, but if they see 1½ million innocent dead Iraqis and Afghans, they will not lift a finger. The neo-con warmongering worldview has captivated the Christian Right leadership, and they have greatly compromised their pro-life position. Being pro-life is more than being anti-abortion.

History will haunt the Church with the question, “Where was the Church in this great human slaughter in the Middle East and North Africa?”

## THE MYTH OF THE SOCIAL CONSERVATIVE LABEL

Over the last thirty years, the Christian Right leadership has embraced the “Social Conservative” label. The implication of this self-labeling is that there are other issues for which there are conservative positions, but those issues are of lesser import because they do not exist within the new synonym for “Christian.” That’s a politically expedient classification of issues, but it’s not a biblical distinction.

Social conservatism has generally limited itself to three areas of action: abortion, family, and human sexuality. This strategy of addressing only self-styled “social” issues has been a recipe for disaster in the manipulative hands of the national Republican Party. Establishment Republicans only have

to win over the vote of the Christian Right by giving lip service to three issues, while doing as they please on the multitude of other important issues of life. The modern American Church has handed to the enemies of God the right to set the agenda and ethics for all the other areas of interest to our political masters; this includes economics, sound money, taxation, war, foreign policy, civil jurisdiction and limitations, all realms of education, and the many other areas of culture.

Within the three social conservative issues, the Christian Right leaders have always taken the most compromised positions to appease the governing establishment. For a long time the Christian cause has lost tremendous ground in these three areas that the Christian Right leadership holds dear. They hold these issues as their own, but in political battles over them they often compromise in a moment. They never seem to be able to see the fight through to victory and in the end they appease the politicians and betray the Christian position.

#### POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY: WHAT IS THE SOURCE?

The problem is not simply one of ethics. The Christian Right leadership has sought to engage in the political sphere without a fully developed epistemology (source of knowledge), dealing with all the issues relevant to political theory. Their worldview has been an eclectic mixture of a little Bible, some general conservative thought, American traditions, talk radio, and Fox News. Their worldview is a syncretism from many sources.

The result of this limited and faulty theological worldview not based solely on Holy Scripture is the ineffectiveness of the Christian Right to advance the true foundational Christian position in the political sphere.

Issues of interest in the political arena are many, and can be very complex. For the Christian to speak into all these areas

he must be equipped with a conviction of the sufficiency of Scripture alone, and the proper intellectual tools of an unpolluted comprehensive biblical worldview that flow from this conviction to battle those who oppose the Christian faith.

Christian Right political leadership has also been largely reactionary instead of proactive—because they have not developed a comprehensive worldview to apply God's truth to every area of life; to the world in which their people live.

#### NEWS-SPEAK FOR THE SAINTS

America's Christian Right leadership has also compromised itself when it comes to the sources of news it has supported, advocated, and uses. The daily gathering of truthful worldwide news is of critical importance to be able to effectively determine policy and to speak into the issues of our national life and culture. Christian Right leadership, for too long, has been dependent on the news feeds from the various corporate venues of the Establishment media.

Christians should be the most interested of all people in truth, searching diligently for it, instead of naively accepting whatever is handed to them. Yet the Christian Right would rather be spoon fed propaganda from neo-con networks like Fox and talk radio than making the effort to find truthful sources of news.

The national and geo-political world is complicated, but one that could be understood with some effort. The modern world of publishing and the internet has given everyone in political leadership a wealth of resources to sort out all of the Establishment media's disinformation. Yet the Christian Right never seems to venture past their easy sources of news information.

#### LOW-INFORMATION LEADERS

For several decades, influential Christians have taken on the role of drafting political policies, leading political causes, promoting political parties, and endorsing candidates. With their vast resources and organizations, they have not developed influential think tanks and theological centers to do this work, so they suffer without sufficient biblical training in the vast realm of Christian political theory. These men are grossly unqualified for this important public task, yet these are the leaders of the Christian Right.

These men often raise vast sums of money for political activity, but do not have the biblical epistemology, worldview, and wisdom to effectively represent Christian positions. Instead, their activism has often supported non-Christian views. Evangelical witness has suffered greatly from these “low-information leaders.”

A new group of Christian Right leaders must start to develop a host of schools, organizations, and think tanks to train a new generation of leaders who will have the courage and intellectual capabilities to press the total claims of Jesus Christ and His Word into a hostile political world and culture.

The Church’s enemies have done the painstaking work to create such institutions of their own to train their leaders. This is what thoughtful people of vision do. The Church historically has advanced with such vision, but the modern American Church has walked away from this legacy.

## NAÏVE CENTRAL

The definition of “naïve” so accurately describes the Christian Right leadership: to be trusting, simple, gullible, innocent, and immature. Another definition: lacking worldly experience, knowledge, and understanding, thus not having critical judgment and a developed ability of analysis and reasoning.



Denny Burk writes, "...among Evangelicals, there is a naïve belief that if only we were winsome enough, kind enough, and compassionate enough, the culture would welcome us with open arms." Evangelical leaders operate in their own moral idealism that often hinders their judgment in the battle over politics and culture.

Evangelical leaders think the CIA is there to protect them and American interests, and that the Republican Party is their friend. They are unaware of how the world works and think elected politicians run the federal government. They always seem to exalt Israel's interests above the Church. Evangelical leaders couldn't give a simple paragraph on who is Prescott Bush, or provide a 30-second definition of the history of central banking.

I can't think of an American political constituency as unaware and naïve as the Christian Right. Why? Is it Christ's own words in Luke 16:8: "...the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light"?

Yet in Church history when the people of God were faithful you did not see such a naïve understanding of the world as you do in our modern era. No matter the reason, this present naivety does a huge disservice to the testimony of Christian faith in the world of politics and culture.

## SALVATION BY POLITICS

The lure of power politics so captivates the minds of many who pay it homage. 21st-century American culture is dominated by politics. Political rhetoric and promises dictate the conversations and lives of so many people. Its pull is at times inescapable.

A December 14, 2015, article in National Review revealed a closed, secret meeting of some 50 Evangelical leaders led by Family Research Council president Tony Perkins. The meeting's purpose was to achieve a consensus where the group could

publically endorse a candidate for president. After 5 ballots and discussions until dawn, Ted Cruz held the majority vote, and soon after, some of its members started publically endorsing Cruz.

The 50 assembled Christian Establishment leaders were mostly members of the Council of National Policy and of the more secretive Arlington Group. They were hoping that unity among them would be adequate to bring their Evangelical support base with them in support of their endorsed candidate. In the end, with all their efforts at king-making, their Evangelical constituency didn't heed their endorsements.

Underlying most Evangelical political activism is the same salvific hope embraced by today's heathen world—that their redemption will come from their political saviors. Among activists, it includes the hope that if they can get the right bill passed, a particular politician elected, a majority on the Supreme Court, or Republican congressional majorities, then they can turn around this culture and have a Christian country. They seek a political revolution by power politics instead of an ethical reformation accomplished by applying the Word of God to all realms of life.

Civil government is but one of many spheres of life God has given Christians to redeem for His glory, but it can only accomplish so much. Its biblical jurisdiction is limited; Christian civilization cannot be accomplished by political activism alone. Cultural transformation of a society is a painstakingly long-term grind where plans and strategies must be developed over time—generationally—to redeem every area of life.

## CRISIS CHASERS

In a January 8, 2016, article by Matthew Sheffield, titled "Mike Huckabee: The Religious Right is a Giant Scam," he touched on the abusive fundraising practices of the Religious

Right:

Former Arkansas governor Mike Huckabee lashed out against religious conservative leaders Wednesday, accusing them of trying to bilk gullible donors out of money while actually having no desire to pursue goals like outlawing same-sex marriage and banning abortion.

"A lot of them, quite frankly, I think they're scared to death that if a guy like me got elected, I would actually do what I said I would do. We would abolish abortion based on the 5th and 14th Amendment. We would ignore the Supreme Court's same-sex marriage decision."

Because he would take such actions as president, Huckabee said that he presents a problem for many Religious Right organizations since they would no longer be able to raise money to promote such causes.

"A lot of these organizations wouldn't have the ability to do urgent fundraising because if we slay the dragon, what dragon do they continue to fight? And so, for many of them, it could be a real detriment to their organization's abilities to gin up their supporters and raise contributions..."

Many of these Christian Right groups have turned fundraising into an art form under the appropriate motto "we've never seen a crisis we couldn't exploit." Huckabee's complaint hit two key areas of much of the Christian Right's fundraising.

First is the constant reactionary chasing of every national moral and political crisis with donor pleas for money. Second is the acceptance—unconsciously or otherwise—of the political status quo with never any hope or goal of political victory. Year after year, these Christian Right organizations settle for losing, and accept being the controlled opposition. Political losses are embraced as long as their organizational funding, salaries, status, and power are maintained.

These organizations put their constituency in constant panic mode, living off of crisis after crisis with no real plan for any advancement of the Kingdom of God or of Christ's Church being the dominating influence in American culture.

Their bilking of the base will not change until Evangelical donors wise up and realize they have been conned by religious profiteers, and start shifting their giving to Christian organizations with sacrificial, long-term, victory-centered plans for true cultural reform.

### APOLOGETICS IN THE WRONG SAND BOX

Whenever the Christian Right leaders engage in public debates over their social positions, it is never with an apologetic using the standard of God's Word/Law. They always default to humanist natural law reasoning as their strategy of defense. They appeal to cause and effect, statistics, demographics, and various studies. There is no appeal to transcendence or a higher order so it becomes a polemic of their logic over their opponent's logic.

The Christian Right has made it their strategy to engage on their opponent's turf of human reasoning thus they never have any kind of home court advantage. As a result, they keep losing. This is not a matter of spouting endless Bible verses in debate; it's about the use of the transcendent claims of God over his creation and of the clear principles in His Word in the face of empty and weak humanistic speculation.

The Christian Right should take a page out of George Washington's playbook. In a speech to the delegates at the Constitutional Convention of 1787, he said: "If to please the people, we offer what we ourselves disapprove, how can we afterwards defend our work? Let us raise a standard to which the wise and honest can repair [rally]; the event is in the hand of God."

If the Christian Right used this approach, then, win or lose,

God is honored and truly represented in the public sphere. That in itself will lead to future victories in the culture war—because a holy standard of biblical truth has been raised.

## LEADERS WITHOUT VISION

Joel Skousen, in his June 3, 2016 version of his World Affairs Brief, stated the following concerning Al Mohler:

In an interview with National Public Radio, Albert Mohler, president of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, said that culturally and theologically conservative Christians “are on the losing side of a massive change that’s not going to be reversed,” regarding the definition of marriage and other moral issues. From his perspective, “Christians must adapt to the changed cultural circumstances by finding a way to ‘live faithfully in a world in which we’re going to be a moral exception.’”

I was shocked at this key Christian Right leader’s statements admitting and accepting the defeat of Christianity in the United States. But, then again, Dr. Mohler’s comments are typical of today’s Christian Right and Protestant church leaders. They have raised the white flag and have declared to the enemies of Christ: “You have won; your god is greater than our God. The giants of your anti-Christian culture are too great for the Church to overcome.”

Why do these Christian Right leaders not encourage their people, no matter the current circumstances, of the great promises in God’s Word of Christ’s victory in time and history? Do they think the Great Commission of the future – the great Christian renewal, where the nations are discipled and bow before Christ – is simply a suggestion and not a promise?

As popular culture is destroying itself with sexual immorality, humanistic education, and low marriage and birth rates, it provides a tremendous opportunity for the Church to

prevail in this unique time in history.

We have the numbers and resources, but not the will – the “want to” – or leaders who have courage and a biblical vision of victory for superior Christian culture and civilization. In the midst of all the cultural decay, the Christian has a world that is theirs for the taking if they will show up for the fight.

To demonstrate Christianity’s capacity for victory, Christian leadership has to demonstrate biblical leadership in only two areas of life: education and children. Develop a nationwide Evangelical movement to get every Christian child out of our enemy’s (government) schools and teach from the pulpit the biblical command and blessing of large families.

Think of a future generation of Christian children sent out into the world that far outnumber their enemies, all with a sound Christian worldview. Is there anything the Church could not accomplish?

But, this advice will never be taken by the present leadership of the Christian Right, for such a strategy would involve long-term planning, work, sweat, and courage. Republican politics is much easier and gives the appearance of influence.

## CONCLUSION

This unprecedented day of American political change and upheaval has given way to a new American nationalism with the rejection of the old established order. The failures of the old order are being exposed more broadly and deeply with revelations of the corruption in both political parties and the ruling oligarchy in Washington, including a good deal of light being shed on the banking and corporate ruling Establishment.

Also facing more examination and criticism is the leadership of the Christian Right, and its unholy alliance with the

Republican Party and their neoconservative worldview. They will have to give an account for the way they have sold out the prophetic voice of the Church and the Kingdom mandate from God.

Christians are seeing their Evangelical leadership as politically impotent; they have been unable to achieve any victories or accomplish the smallest goals in politics or culture. They can't even get Planned Parenthood defunded at the federal level and in most states. They now view their leaders as part of the status quo or "controlled opposition."

We are in the midst of a historic political movement, a sea change in the political landscape for many years to come, and most of the Evangelical Establishment leadership has no idea what is happening politically right before their eyes. Instead of embracing this historic national rebellion and pushback against the Establishment, admitting their four decades of mistakes and compromise, rethinking their positions and strategies, they remain stuck in the thinking the past, endorsing Establishment Republicans with the hope of maintaining their status quo positions and living off the political crumbs that fall from the GOPe table.

The Establishment Christian Right leadership has again promoted and endorsed Establishment candidates in the Republican primary. What's interesting this time around is that the Evangelical rank and file is no longer respecting and listening to their misguided leadership. In increasing numbers they are voting and promoting the candidacy of the American nationalist Donald Trump.

When followers see their leadership compromised and ineffective they begin to reject their guidance and start the process of looking for new leaders.