

Beulah Heights University

The Impact that Politics Have On the Effectiveness
Of the Church within the Community

A Project

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Master of Divinity

By

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Abstract

Recent and previous political shifts within the United States have impacted not on the development of the nation, but the Church community as a whole. The Church was once the most effective tool in the community, and politics has always played a role within the church. However, it has come into question with the recent shift in legislations and Supreme Court decisions if the Church is more effective in the community or is politics the leader. In order to understand the impact of politics in the Church and community there needs to be an understanding of the history of politic within the elements of the church. History is not the only teacher, but in the United States case law has set legislation in motion that effects the Church as a whole and its ability to be effective in the community. Understanding legal precedent will allow for a better understanding of the positive and negative impact of politics in the church. This leads to the discussion of the moral decay that is plaguing of society and affecting of Church leaders and ministries. The Church at one point was the driving political force, so the question this paper seeks to address is whether the Church is pulling the strings, or is the Political arena the guiding force in the community today. In simple term, will the church be most effective in the community or will politics lead the people.

Introduction

The impact of politics on the church has been a hot topic over the past several years. The First Amendment within the U.S. Constitution states "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or of the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances." Separation of church and state has been the statement spoke by men and women of clergy, corporate America CEOs, and/or individuals in leadership, anytime the topic of prayer or having a direct link with a Christian based organization.

Notwithstanding, as individuals look at the First Amendment of the United States Constitution and look at the United States Constitution as a whole, religion was and has always been intertwined within the workings of politics. Having a separation of church and state was not the intent of the founding fathers of the United States but to refrain the government from establishing a national religion and forcing every citizen to be a part of that established church. As with most things, there was and is a misinterpretation of that amendment. Based off the true intent and interpretation of this amendment, there is no intent of a

separation of church and state to the extent it has been presented.

In this academic paper, this learner seeks to explore the impact politics have on the church's effectiveness in the community. Specifically, explore the positive and negative impact that politics has on the church; and do politics have more of an impact on the church instead of the church having more of an impact on politics, which impacts the community? There have been several landmark cases that have impacted the church throughout the years: Reynolds v. United States in 1879, Minersville v. Gobitas in 1940, Torcaso v. Watkins in 1961, Sherbert v. Verner in 1963, Lemon v. Kurtzman in 1971, Stone v. Graham in 1980 and the most recent controversial case-Gay Marriage. Each case has had an impact on the community and how the church has responded within the community. With every Supreme Court case mentioned, it has altered how clergy members handle key issues from the pulpit. So much so, that during elections, clergy is extremely careful not to speak about any candidate or the platform that is evident within the election campaigns.

Paricia L. Dickson, in her article Politics and the Church, contended "Many pastors will not publically broach the subject of the different parties' platform from their pulpits due to fear and political correctness that has crept into the church. The

church is no place for political correctness. The entire bible is not politically correct¹." In conducting a small exploration of the Bible, learners can see that the church had a great impact on the community, took a stand and had a greater impact on politics versus politics having a greater impact on the church. This learner proposes that politics has a greater impact on the church's ability to be effective in the community and as a result the church has lost and is losing the pulse of the community as a whole.

There is a cause and effect to everything. Ecclesiastes 3:1 (NASB) "There is an appointed time for everything. And there is a time for every event under heaven." The church does not have to be involved in every political discussion or event. As stated in Ecclesiastes 3:1, there are times when the church has to and should stand up and speak out in the political arena. The precedent was already there when the found fathers, saw the need to have an invocation prior to the meetings; when there was a decision to place on currency "In God We Trust."

The question has been posed "where is the church in all of this moral decay and social injustice?" In examining this topic, it will provide some clarity to that secondary question posed and possibly allow members of the church to be free to deal with the

¹ Patricia L. Dickson, "Politics and The Christian Church," American Thinker, July 6, 2014, accessed September 23, 2017, http://www.americanthinker.com/articles/2014/07/politics_and_the_christian_church_.html.

things that are plaguing the community from the pulpit, and no longer restricted by a misunderstanding, misinterpretation and misguidance.

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