

What Drives a Risky Mission?

Is it Complete Confidence in a Role in the Primary Mission ?????

by Walter B. Bull, Jr.

One of the controversies that is gripping the nation is the relationship between Church and State. It is hard and it is an emotional discussion among people who are very serious about their belief systems. More people care than don't care and logic often escapes the dialogue. What drives the discussion? How do those involved in the conversation view themselves and their mission?

The goal of this article is an attempt to try and understand what might drive an organized religious group to venture into an arena that they should probably avoid. A political mission is secondary for those dedicated to promoting Christian principals, in many people's view, but the mission would appear to be one undertaken by some prominent members of the Calvary Memorial Church. Most church folks who undertake this mission come armed with batteries of lawyers to keep themselves out of trouble.

Some time ago, Pilot editor Steve Bouser penned an editorial entitled "Church and State: Let's Not Play With Fire" that questioned the operations of the Christian Book Store in Southern Pines. Calvary, we have been told, operates the store.

Bouser wrote in part, "Yet right there in that same display window (of the bookstore) are copies of three books currently on sale inside. One is called "So Help Me God: The Ten Commandments, Judicial Tyranny and the Battle for Religious Freedom." It is written by Roy Moore, former chief justice of the Alabama Supreme Court, who is still mad about losing a dispute over a massive stone Commandments monument that he had placed inside the court building."

"The other two books currently being promoted in the window are "Men in Black: How the Supreme Court Is Destroying America," by Mark Levin (intro by Rush Limbaugh), and "Courting Disaster: How the Supreme Court Is Usurping the Role of Congress and the President," by Pat Robertson."

"Those are not religion books. Those are government books," the Bouser editorial concluded.

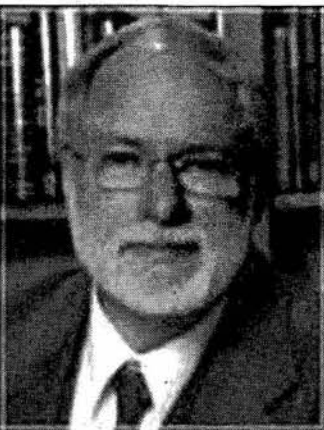
(Bouser's entire editorial is available in the archives of the Pilot newspaper)

The response from people associated with the Calvary church was swift and blunt. "You have grossly misstated the purpose and

goals Christians have regarding government, politics, the law, and the courts. We simply want to defend the Constitution as written and prevent rewriting of it without the two-thirds majority required. Attempts to disenfranchise any law-abiding American citizen, including Christians, from involvement in American politics should be what worries you half to death," according to a posting by Pamela Francis who is the manager of the Christian Book Store in Southern Pines.



Above: Pastor Garrison
Below: Mr. Creech



Dwight M. Creech principal of Calvary Christian School wrote, "The founders of this nation understood this. The First Amendment of the Constitution chained the government out of the church, but not the church out of government. They understood that law must not have its origin in secular government; law has its origin in nature's God — the Creator. The Church is the guardian of his oracles."

And a final barrage was aimed at Bouser by Charles Garrison who is the interim pastor at Calvary Memorial Church. He wrote, "The reason that we have freedom of religion in this country is because of America's biblical heritage. The Bible teaches that God will never coerce anyone to become a Christian — which is why we find the words "whosoever will" so often in the New Testament. Right-wing fundamentalist Christians do not ram their religion down people's throats; it is the left that rams its religion, secular humanism (declared to be a religion by the Supreme Court in *Torcaso v. Watkins*, 1961), down everyone's throats — especially children in public schools."

Sort of reminds you of the old New Hampshire state motto, "Don't Tread on Me!"

The good church folks are entitled to shout their beliefs from every rooftop in Southern Pines and they are entitled to respond strongly to a perceived critic such as the Pilot editor. That is protected free speech. They have every right to operate the store, sell the books and to defend certain Constitutional principals that they firmly believe apply to their activities.

But when you cross the line into political activity the ice becomes very thin. Ignorance of the law is no excuse, we have been told, and the ice under the good church folks is thin indeed. Perhaps they should have heeded Bouser's warning that they were playing with fire.

The following article was originally published in The Pilot on October 14, 2005. It was one of several responses to an [editorial by Steve Bouser](#) published on October 5, 2005. Mr. Walter Bull referred to and agreed with Bouser's assault on Christian involvement in politics in his own Christian bashing publications which he mailed to many of you just prior to our party's 2007 county convention.

'Separation' Not Intended

BY PAMELA FRANCIS

Special to The Pilot

To Editor Steve Bouser:

I am the manager of the Christian Book Store, and I put together the window you criticized in your column of Oct. 5. I was pleased to see you quote God's word in your article. Even if your intention was to ridicule it, thank you.

You mentioned three books in the window and state: "Those are not religion books. Those are government books." What is a "government book," and when did it become wrong for Christians to sell or promote a "government book"?

We sell books containing the truth and books on issues Christians are concerned about. Just because you don't agree with them doesn't make it wrong for Christians to promote or sell them.

The First Amendment reads: "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 the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances."

There are some very significant semicolons in the text. You should also know that a semicolon indicates that the clauses following it are closely related to the main clauses where they are not joined with a coordinating conjunction, as is the case in this text.

Our freedoms of speech, the press, to peaceably assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances are inseparable from our premier freedom to exercise our religious liberty without any prohibitions from Congress. You must agree that you have even less authority than Congress here.

Our founding fathers were very clear. By their First Amendment, they protected religious speech, religious press, religious assembly, and religious petitions to the government for a redress of grievances, which were not protected under the king of England.

You do not enjoy these freedoms because our founding fathers recognized a great need to protect obscenities, perversions, and the godless masses from

Christianity, as one might think from your article and all that passes as protected speech today; you enjoy these freedoms only because our founding fathers valued their religious liberty more than any other right they possessed.

I don't mind sharing my First Amendment religious freedoms with secular institutions; however, it concerns me greatly that you would be so afraid of my exercise of them that you are compelled to exercise your own secular attachment to them to make a public argument against my good, peaceful, and lawful exercise of them as some sort of public danger.

How dare you? You have the audacity to take this freedom which has been secured for you by good, decent, and courageous Christian men who pledged their lives, fortunes, and honor to protect and defend; and who, true to their word, took up arms, fought and died to defend; and whose children and grandchildren and theirs also have fought and died to defend; and you attack Christians' use of it with it! You ought to be ashamed.

As for the "wall of separation" between church and state, the only wall intended by our founding fathers was to keep government out of our churches. They could not possibly have wanted to keep churches out of government, or they would not have included "and to petition the government for redress of grievances" as an exercise of religious freedom which they so clearly intended to protect under the First Amendment.

We have a government of the people, for the people, and by the people and according to the First Amendment, people, whether they are Christian or not, have the right to the peaceful, free exercise of their religion as they actively participate in this great government of, for, and by the people.

There is no "choreographed campaign to discredit our supposedly independent courts." However, there is a common ground of beliefs and values held by Christians regardless of their church affiliation. We do not conspire with one another; we all read the same book. This is a Christian nation, and because it is a Christian nation it preserves and defends the right of people to worship their God as they see fit.

You have grossly misstated the purpose and goals Christians have regarding government, politics, the law, and the courts. We simply want to defend the Constitution as written and prevent rewriting of it without the two-thirds majority required. Attempts to disenfranchise any law-abiding American citizen, including Christians, from involvement in American politics should be what worries you half to death.

About not playing with fire; The Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end said, "But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in

the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death."
Revelation 21:8.

Let's not play with fire

Pamela Francis is manager of the Christian Book Store in Southern Pines