

Christians in the American Public Square: Stories of Faith in Congress

This talk will be a brief history of Christians in American politics, from the Second Great Awakening to the present. It will bring the example of William Wilberforce into the American experience, highlighting figures such as Theodore Dwight Weld (the evangelical abolitionist who did the research that led to *Uncle Tom's Cabin*) and Samuel Worcester (the missionary who defended the Cherokee Indians). The main focus of the talk, though, will be on several practical modern politicians who are also Evangelical Protestants and were both members of the U.S. House of Representatives: Albert Quie (in Congress 1958-79) and Frank Wolf (in Congress 1981-2015). A great advocate of human rights worldwide, Frank Wolf was one of the primary authors of the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998.

Fred W. Beuttler is an academic administrator at the Graham School of Continuing Liberal and Professional Studies at the University of Chicago. He received his PhD in history from the University of Chicago in 1995 and an MA in the History of Christianity from Trinity International University. Prior to coming to Graham in June 2015, he was director of general education and taught history at Carroll University in Wisconsin. From 2005 to 2010, he was the deputy historian of the U.S. House of Representatives in Washington, D.C., and from 1998 to 2005 he was the associate university historian of the University of Illinois at Chicago.

I. The Qualities of a Christian Statesman

A. Biblical Models of the Public Servant

1. Old Testament Models

- a. Joseph as Public Administrator
- b. Moses as Liberator and Law Giver
- c. Joshua as Commander and Judge
- d. Samuel as Prophet and Judge
 - i. Warning against Kingship – I Sam. 8
- e. David as King
 - i. (Nathan as Counselor, Prophet, and Sacred Historian)
- f. Jeremiah as “Dissenter” in “loyal opposition”
- g. Daniel as Public Administrator

2. New Testament

- a. Models:
 - i. Jesus at trial
 - ii. Peter before Sanhedrin: “We must obey God rather than men!” Acts 5:29
 - iii. Paul as Roman Citizen and the “appeal to Caesar”
- b. Teachings:
 - i. “I am sending you out like a sheep among wolves, therefore be wise as serpents and innocent as doves,” Matthew 10:16

- ii. Parable of the Persistent Widow, Luke 18:1-8
- iii. Submission to Governing Authorities, Romans 13

II. Medieval Precedents

- A. The Two Kingdom View: Church and State as Dual Sovereignties

- B. Charlemagne and Europe, Christmas 800
 - 1. Frankish king crowned Emperor of Romans by Christian Pope

III. Traditions of Self-Government: Parliamentarianism

- A. “Right” of Revolution
 - 1. Biblical Stream: Doctrine of Secondary Magistrates
 - 2. English Puritanism and Republicanism
 - 3. Enlightenment Tradition
 - 4. Parliament and the English Constitution

- B. The American Experience
 - 1. Roger Sherman, Evangelical and drafter of Declaration of Independence
 - 2. Sam Adams, Christian revolutionary, with vision of a “Christian Sparta”
 - 3. John Jay, first Supreme Court Justice, founder American Bible Society

IV. Models of Christian Public Service

A. English Context

- 1. William Wilberforce (1759-1833; MP from 1780-1825; activist 1826-1833)
 - a. First election to Parliament
 - b. Conversion to Evangelical Christianity, 1785; continue in public life?
 - c. “God Almighty has set before me two great objects, the suppression of the Slave Trade and the Reformation of Manners.” (1787)
 - d. Investigation and political organizing: Clapham Sect
 - e. Introduction of bill for Abolition of Slave Trade, 1789, 1791
 - f. Co-founder of Sierra Leone Company, for freed slaves
 - g. Continued introduction of bills to abolish slave trade; continued failure
 - h. Parliamentary maneuvers and compromises
 - i. Slave Trade Act of 1807

- j. Author, texts on the slave trade and *Real Christianity*, 1797
- k. Push to allow Christian evangelism in India
- l. From Abolition of Slave Trade to Abolition of Slavery
- m. Resignation from Parliament due to ill health in 1825
- n. Bill for the Abolition of Slavery of 1833

B. American Context, 1800 – 1860s

1. Tocqueville’s observations: “the spirit of religion and the spirit of freedom” are “intimately united” in America; and “Religion in America takes no direct part in the government of society, but it must be regarded as the first of their political institutions; for if it does not impart a taste for freedom, it facilitates the use of it.” *Democracy in America*, 1835

2. Second Great Awakening 1800s – 1840s
 - a. Rev. Charles Finney (1792-1875) Revivalist and Reformer

 - b. Samuel Worcester (1798-1859)
 - i. Missionary to Indians even though violated law
 - ii. Won in US Supreme Court, *Worcester v. Georgia*, 1832
 - iii. Continued work as missionary after Trail of Tears

 - c. Theodore Dwight Weld (1803-1895)
 - i. Studied at seminary, but dropped out to be political activist
 - ii. Wrote *The Bible Against Slavery; American Slavery As It Is*
 - iii. Directed national campaign of anti-slavery petitions to Congress
 - iv. Political activism *as* religion

C. American Context, 1930s – 2015

1. Walter Judd (1898-1994; in Congress, 1943-1963, R-Minn)
 - a. MD and missionary to China, 1925-1931; 1934-38
 - b. Christian voice in American foreign policy in Asia
 - c. Strong principled anti-communist

2. Albert Quie (b 1923; in Congress 1958-1979, R-Minn; Governor 1979-1983)
 - a. Christian brother of Charles Colson; Prison Fellowship, 1983-1988; executive VP, 1987-1988

3. Frank Wolf (b 1939; in Congress, R-VA, 1981-2015)
 - a. Advocate against human rights abuses in Sudan, Iran, China
 - b. Co-author of International Religious Freedom Act of 1998

V. Principles of Christian Political Leadership

Suggested Readings:

E. Metaxas, *Amazing Grace: William Wilberforce and the Heroic Campaign to End Slavery*, 2007

C. Colson, *God and Government*, 2007

F. Wolf, *Prisoner of Conscience: One Man's Crusade for Global Human and Religious Rights*, 2011