

CHURCH AND STATE

I. It may be necessary for me to explain the presence of a politician in the pulpit of this church.

a. Basic principal of our democracy and one on which our country was founded is that of complete separation of church and state.

b. We are a young country with the long memory of youth, and we have not forgotten the circumstances under which some of our valuable citizens made their way to the new world.

c. Our children still learn in school about the indignities and persecutions that drove the pilgrims from their native shores.

d. And we read of the persecutions that are endured by Protestants today at the hands of other governments.

e. We are justly proud of our Constitution that forbids the establishment of any state church, and we are determined to adhere to its letter and spirit in this matter.

II. Naturally, then, the suggestion by a politician that one can and should carry the teachings of his Christian faith into concrete political situations is met with a certain misgiving.

a. If men enter the political arena determined to apply their theology to the issues and problems that confront them there, are we not in danger of violating the

American tradition and losing all that it was meant to serve?

b. Quite the contrary, I am persuaded that the only hope of perpetuating that tradition lies in the participation in politics by responsible Christians.

c. To be sure, and this I should make clear, I do not believe that the church itself should be involved in partisan politics, nor do I think it should divide and weaken its congregation by taking dogmatic positions on political issues. It should, however, enjoin and encourage its members to search for the truth and endeavor to find Christian answers to the problems that confront them from day to day.

III. Let us look for a moment to see why I believe

responsible Christian participation in politics is the only hope of keeping church and state separate.

a. First of all, we must recall that the founding fathers were concerned to prevent the establishment of any specific church. They knew what could happen when a particular church was given an official sanction.

b. But we must remember that the founding fathers lived in a time when Christianity was not merely the faith of the churches, but was the principles by which most people governed their lives.

c. Therefore, when Jefferson and the drafters of the Constitution condemned the state church, it did not occur to them that they would be understood as forbidding the mixture of politics and religion.

d. One has only to read the basic documents of that historic period to find that it was Christian precepts that girded the foundation of this nation.

e. References in these documents to great values are almost always made in religious languages.

f. And the great national celebrations from Thanksgiving to the Inauguration of the President acknowledge that our very existence depends on God.

IV. Government does not exist for the mere purpose of regulating the lives of the people.

a. You and I know that the people will not be loyal to the government simply because it sets itself up as the administrator of the community.

b. We as individuals are not willing to pay

high taxes just because somebody in Washington says we have to.

c. In like manner, men are reluctant to put on uniforms and risk their lives simply because they are told that Congress demands it.

d. We do these things, we submit to such rules and regulations because we believe that the purpose of our government, the very reason for its existence, is its dedication to high human values that are important enough to justify the sacrifices they require.

e. No nation can long survive which has no solid foundation. Political leaders understand clearly that there must be a deep sense of commitment, some conviction about the "rightness of submitting to the rule of state."

V. For the average American, the Christian faith is the real basis of life's meaning as well as the basis of our government.

a. And our failure to relate our politics to its actual spiritual foundations can eventually lead us to a totalitarian state, where the state manufactures its own spiritual values. A study of history will show that the Christian communities in Russia, China, and other countries failed to provide for the people of these countries a genuine basis for dealing with the problems that beset them.

b. Consequently, those who sought to build support for demanding political progress found it necessary to manufacture their own values and standards.

c. Here, then, is the situation in which we

find ourselves--we cannot and we must not keep religion and politics separate. There is an urgent need for continuing to relate our Christian faith to the political processes of our country.

VI. The question then involves, how may we as Christians relate our faith to the political processes of our country.

✓ a. We must first know and accept the fact that the heart of Christ was full of compassion and His hands were busy in healing and His feet winged in service.

b. With great interest we read, "And Jesus, moved with compassion, put forth His hand and touched him..."

c. Physical disease, blindness, disturbed minds, guilt burdened souls, sorrowful hearts--all were healed

by the touch of the Master's Hand--because He cared.

d. Once a leper came and when Jesus saw him He "was moved with compassion."

e. At Capernaum, He healed the paralyzed man.

f. When the nobleman found Jesus at Cana and was told that back home there was a child boy too sick to be moved and at the point of death, Jesus responded to his plea.

g. In company with a multitude and bent on some mission, Christ heard, above the noise of the crowd, the cry of the blind beggar, Bartemeus. This man was not the ruler of a country, not some very prominent or influential person, he was a mere beggar. And as he came to Jesus he was healed.

VIII. Just as physical diseases, blindness, disturbed minds, guilt burdened souls, and sorrowful hearts were of major concern to Christ, so should they be with us as Christians and with our government, the foundation of which is the Christian faith.

When did you as a Christian and as a citizen visit a home for the aged or ~~talk with your legislator~~ to urge his support for better care and safeguards for these invalids who can look only to an informed citizenry for protection and care.

Have we ever inquired to find what more we can do for the blind and the deaf in our state. Are we sure that our government officials are informed on the needs of these people. And did we determine whether the officials

*today
we can
help.*

h. His compassion was not alone for those of His own king--the sick servant of the Roman officer was cured as quickly as those of His own.

i. When the man who called himself "Legion, for we are many," approached Jesus for help, he was clothed in his right mind."

j. Christ ascended the mountain of prayer and found a father who had come, bringing his little boy who was afflicted with epilepsy and the child was healed.

VII. One of the major activities of Christ was healing the sick.

a. In fact, 2/3rds of all his reported acts, were acts of healing. Christ cared.

really cared about these people before we cast our ballots.

✓ You know, Jesus had contempt for the priest and the Levite. They did not rob or beat the man who was wounded. They just passed him by!

C There was the servant who was cast into "outer darkness." He did not use in wrongful ways the talent entrusted to him--he simply buried it in the ground and did nothing about it.

Just as Christ condemned the sin of uselessness of those possessed with talents and able to do for themselves, He condemned those of us who are able to assist--either through our church or our governments, but who do as the priest and Levite and pass them by.

✠ In North Carolina today, we boast with pride

of our schools, colleges, hospitals and other institutions--

and we have every right to be proud for we have come a long way.

Yet, in our mental hospitals today, some are so understaffed and poorly equiped, that they failed to meet even the minimum standards for medicare. In one old building alone there are 87 mentally ill persons cared for by only one doctor who can devote only part time to their care.

I should point out that they are doing a tremendous job with what they have.

But, think what we could be doing if every Christian mixed the concern of Christ with his politics by visiting state institutions, informing legislators of

of their needs and encouraging their support.

You know Christ spoke many parables illustrating the judgment of God, and many were condemned to eternal death.

But in no parable was one flung out into darkness because of some positive wrong.

No real Christian can see an underprivileged child, a mentally disturbed mother, a father, a retarded child, an afflicted child in real need of assistance without a broken heart.

We Christians must make sure that our Christian faith remains a part of the foundation of our government.