

Should Church Keep Silent On Political Issues?

News commentators reported factually and favorably on Church criticism of Communist gains in Cuba.

President Fidel Castro and the Kremlin promptly blasted the island's bishops for voicing a "political" opinion.

The "religious issue" in American politics — the fact that presidential candidate Senator John Kennedy is a Catholic — continues to "simmer" as reported in the SCWC survey article elsewhere on this page.

The currently popular phrase "separation of Church and State" — widely but erroneously thought to be written in our national constitution — makes "Church interference in politics" a virtual crime.

The statement of the Cuba bishops received a favorable reaction, we suspect, because it agreed with "our side."

If any nation's bishops took a stand contrary to popular opinion, however, reaction, we are sure, would be sharply different — for example, the 1958 American hierarchy's statement against federal support of birth control programs which has been a target for critics of the Church ever since then.

Earlier this year a bitter controversy raged over a previously secret Air Force manual which charged many Protestant pulpits were ruminating for Communism. The manual was quickly withdrawn by government officials — and protests followed that the charges were true anyway.

A good share of the nation's citizens, whether they agreed with the charges or not, thought if clergymen "stayed out of politics" in the first place they wouldn't run the risk of political labels stuck on them.

This week, the New York Times published an article by Episcopal Bishop James A. Pike of California which states his attitude on this thorny subject. The prelate has frequently been a strong critic of Catholic positions in current American questions but in this article he voices a solidly Catholic attitude.

He cites the Apostles Creed which expresses our Christian faith that God is the Creator "of heaven and earth."

"We affirm that He is the Lord of all life," the California clergyman says, "and concerned for all aspects of it. The things He is concerned for, we must be concerned for. . . . If we are to eliminate our concern as to the institutions and people of our community life, then we are seeking to close God out of His own universe; in fact, we are seeking to lock Him in the Church building."

This, as a matter of fact, is what even Communist regimes are willing to tolerate. If the clergy will be content to conduct ceremonies, then churches are allowed to stay open. As soon as the clergy have comments on the practical applications of Christian principles to daily life — work, wages, education, entertainment — then the Communist leaders step in the order silence.

Timid souls even in free nations will plead for voluntary silence on such issues because a priest, minister or rabbi who talks on such subjects "sticks his neck out" and faces criticism.

Such a spokesman has rather prominent patrons — Amos the Prophet in Old Testament times, John the Baptist in the New Testament and, of course, our Lord Himself who speaks regardless of the penalty.

What about the possibility that the clergyman, speaking in defense of better housing for the poor or health services for the aged might make a mistake in endorsing the wrong political method of achieving his goal? In answer to that objection, it certainly seems far more important that the clergy be concerned with people's problems than in being personally infallible.

If we fail to act until we are certain we are right we will accomplish too little too late. St. Vincent Ferrer, four hundred years ago, said, "The timid man will never do any good."

Quite obviously, if a priest takes a stand on who's right in a labor dispute or whether a bill before Congress should be enacted or not he is actually not violating his sacred calling. He is legitimately concerned in the affairs of God's world which needs to hear the "word of the Lord" in the marketplace as well as from the pulpit.

Other citizens may disagree with his position and bite their opinion without thereby showing disrespect for the Church. It would be a travesty on democracy, however, if either accused the other of lacking the right to hold differing positions.

All of this in it emphatically does not mean religious affiliation in one denomination or another decides automatically the political side a person chooses. It does mean both clergy and laity have the right and duty to shape the life of the world according to the pattern set for it by the God who made it.

Pope Pius XII confirmed this in a talk at the Vatican in 1947 stating the Church's role in the present problems of our time: "To wish to draw an exact line of separation between religion and life, between the natural and the supernatural, between the Church and the world, as if they had nothing to do with each other, as if the rights of God were of no value in all the manifold realities of daily life, whether personal or public, is entirely foreign to Catholic thought and is positively anti-Christian."

The more, therefore, the powers of darkness bring their pressure to bear, the more they strive to banish the Church and religion from the world and from life, the more there is need on the part of the Church to act with steadfast perseverance to recognize and place all fields of human life under the most sweet empire of Christ, so that His spirit may breathe more abundantly. His law reigns with more sovereign sway, and his love triumphs more victoriously. This is what we must understand by the Kingdom of Christ!

"This task of the Church is indeed arduous, but they are simply unwelcome guests or dupes who, in deference to a momentary naturalism, would cause the Church to be the 'religiously religious' field, as they say, whereas by so doing they are but playing into the hands of their enemies."

'Religious Issue' Simmers on Eve of Campaign

(N.C.W.C. News Service)

The so-called "religious issue" continues to simmer on the surface of U.S. politics despite efforts to quash it.

The issue brought calls for television from several individuals including former President Herbert Hoover.

But in Grand Prairie, Tex., a group of Protestant ministers — part of the Baptist — announced plans to oppose Sen. John F. Kennedy's election as religious grounds.

And in Montreux, Switzerland, evangelist Billy Graham predicted that religion will be a "major issue" in the presidential race. He added that he will stay out of politics himself.

In New York, the American-Catholic League stated that it would be "constituted formally to bar" anyone from public office in the U.S. for religious reasons.

But the ACLU added in a statement (Aug. 14): "It is not improper for voters to seek and consider information — including a particular candidate's own views — about the effect on governmental matters of organizational positions which his group may hold — for example, Quakers on the use of armed force, Catholics on the use of public funds for parochial schools."

The civil liberty group's statement was written by its executive director, Patrick Murphy Maher, and published in its monthly publication, Civil Liberties.

Former President Hoover said (Aug. 15) it would be "just a dreadful idea" to inject religion into the presidential campaign. Mr. Hoover made his comment during a press conference held on his 80th birthday.

In 1928 Mr. Hoover defeated Gov. Alfred E. Smith of New York, a Catholic, who was Democratic nominee for the presidency. He said that during the race he "denounced" religious bigotry, "half a dozen times."

He said there were other issues — but he added that "in the southern states, prohibition was an issue and they tended to identify Smith with Tammany Hall," he commented.

In Montreux, Switzerland, Billy Graham said that religion will not be discussed as much as an issue this year as it was in the 1928 presidential race.

"But it will go much deeper than in 1928," he added. "It will definitely be a major issue whether we like it or not."

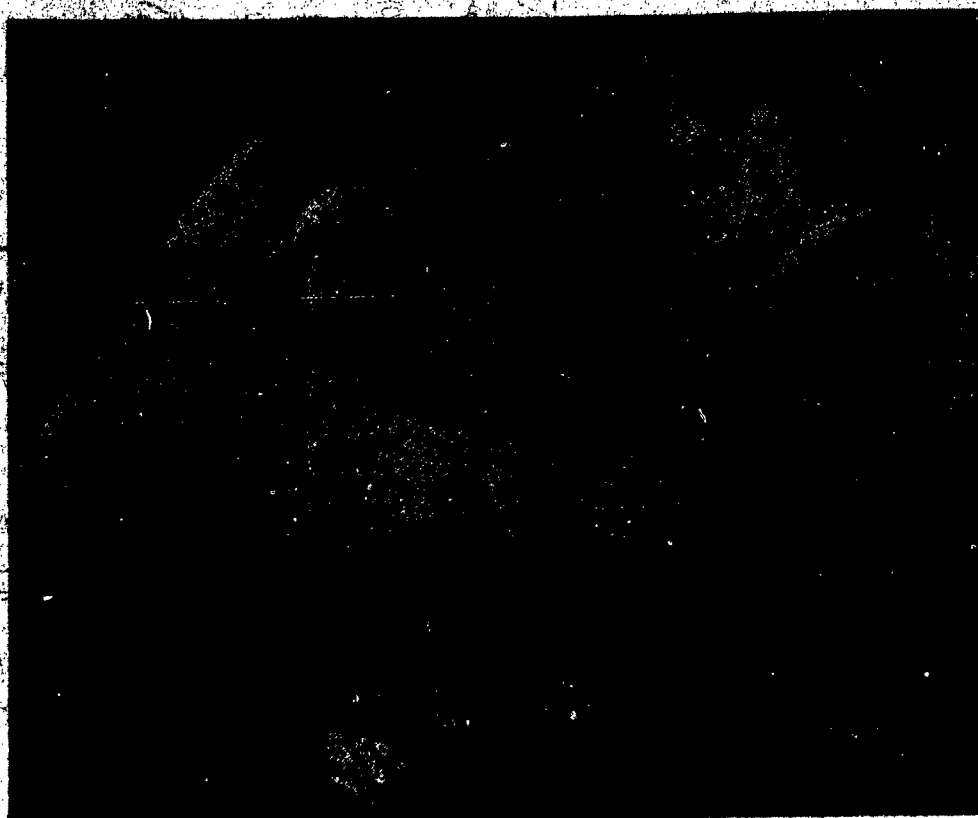
Mr. Graham, in Switzerland to plan a prayer crusade in that country and West Germany, said he is "opposed to all forms of religious bigotry and intolerance."

He said he has strong personal convictions about the presidential race, "but I will save these until election day and express them privately in the polling booth."

Mr. Graham declined to comment on a statement by an "anonymous" source that he had rejected a request by Sen. Kennedy that he sign a pledge not to make religion an issue during the West Virginia presidential primary campaign.

The statement was made (Aug. 7) by Grady Wilson, an associate evangelist of Mr. Graham, in a radio broadcast in Kings Mountain, N.C.

In Washington, D.C., U.S. Sen. Albert Gore of Tennessee said (Aug. 8) during a television program that re-



Washington — (AP) — Vice President Richard Nixon, the Republican Presidential candidate, talks with visiting Sisters of the Holy Family of Nazareth outside Senate chamber. They are from left: Sister Scholastica of Worcester, Mass.; Sister Theodora of Washington, D.C.; Sister Eustachia of Philadelphia; and Sister Bathasas of Derby, Conn.

ligion will be an important but not a determining factor in the November elections.

Sen. Gore said he believes Kennedy's Catholicism will both "hurt and help" his candidacy, in that it will cut him votes in North Carolina, Virginia, and the border states, but will win him votes in the northeast and in California.

He added that he does not believe either Sen. Kennedy or his Republican opponent, Vice President Richard M. Nixon, will raise the issue,

and that religion will not be the "major determining factor" in the election.

In Norfolk, Va., school superintendent Edward L. Lamberth canceled a permit allowing use of a public junior high school building for a meeting on the subject of a Roman Catholic as President.

Mr. Lamberth said "the meeting as advertised did not comply with school board regulations concerning the rental of school buildings."

A group of 48 Protestant ministers sponsored the meet-

ing, which was held instead (Aug. 8) in Good News Baptist church. It included the showing of a film called "Romanism vs. Freedom."

In Grand Prairie, Tex., 15 Protestant clergymen of Dallas and Tarrant counties, most of them Baptists, organized themselves into a committee known as "Christians United for a Free America," to oppose Sen. Kennedy's election. They chose Dr. George Norris, pastor of Gideon Baptist church, Fort Worth, as president.

Dr. Norris commented in a statement that the clergymen

were acting "in what we believe is a righteous cause, wherein our liberties in America are endangered."

Dr. Norris added: "The Roman Catholic Church is the only religion where an earthly head claims authority over temporal matters. Sen. Kennedy has said he will act only by conscience and the U.S. Constitution, but he cannot verbally eliminate the pressure of his church's hierarchy."

In Knoxville, Tenn., another Baptist minister apologized for printing in his newsletter a bogus "oath" alleged to be taken by the fourth degree Knights of Columbus.

The Rev. Dr. Clyde H. Freed, Jr., said he was unaware at the time he reprinted it of the fraudulent nature of the oath, "according to which Knights of Columbus purportedly swear to persecute Non-Catholics. The oath has been exposed as a fraud on many occasions."

Dr. Freed printed a retraction in his newsletter and apologized in a letter to the Knights of Columbus. He called the incident "unfortunate."

The bogus K. of C. oath popped up again in Fort Worth, Tex., when U.S. Rep. Jim Wright described it as being a "wicked document . . . as shown as a three dollar bill."

Rep. Wright referred to the oath in a talk to the state AFL-CIO convention, and said it is being circulated in Parker County, Tex.

He said it is "spurious, fraudulent and wicked," and asked: "How can this nation, which holds itself out as the champion of freedom and equality, automatically disqualify one-third of its people from the right to run for high office?"

Brighter Days Elsewhere

Is All Africa Like The Congo?

New York — The chaos that has erupted in the Congo this summer, in the wake of independence, will not be duplicated by the eastern neighbors, Tanganyika, which is due for limited self-government later this year.

This is the opinion of Father Richard J. Quinn, M.M., of Clifton, N.J., who returned to the U.S. recently on furlough, after six years in the missions of Tanganyika.

Father Quinn bases his prediction of "an intelligent, dignified march toward independence by Tanganyika" on the different methods the British and Belgians have used to prepare their colonies for self-government.

"The British" claims Father Quinn, "systematically train African leaders while the Belgians emphasize general education without grooming potential leaders. This will make the difference in Tanganyika where there are many well-trained, English-educated Africans already assuming social and political leadership."

The young New Jersey priest has been stationed in the Diocese of Mwanza, located along the eastern shore of Lake Victoria. The diocese

has come to be known as the "Land of Twelve Tribes" because of the dozen different tribes which inhabit the area.

This multi-tribe factor is one of the major problems facing missionaries here, because each tribe speaks a completely distinct language, only a handful of which have been committed to grammar books. To master tribal languages, a missionary must spend long, grueling hours of learning — by rote, with a tribesman as a tutor.

Covering an area slightly smaller than the State of New Jersey, the Mwanza Diocese has a population of 393,000. Father Quinn's Tanganyika mission has grown from 1,100 Catholics in 1954 to 1,500 today. Three tribes live within the mission boundaries — the Bangwende, Bakuria, and Lya.

During the past six years, Father Quinn became familiar with the languages spoken by the Bangwende and Bakuria, but depends upon an interpreter to speak with the Lya people.

"The Africans are receptive to Christianity and many thousands are converted each year," says Father Quinn. The 33-year-old priest is optimistic about the future of the Church in Africa, in justifying his optimism, he points to:

• The rising number of native clergy. Already Africa boasts of 30 Negro bishops, 2,000 Negro priests and 1,000 Negro Sisters to serve the continent's 24 million Catholics — including Africa's first Primate of the Church, Laurentinus Cardinal Rugambwa, of Tanganyika.

• The mission education program which, at times, has provided the only education available to African. Maryknoll has a primary school in each of its 30 missions in Tanganyika.

Reapings At Random.

Justice, Charity - Equal Virtues With Piety

The following is the last of a series of three Reapings on the place of the parish in the community.

Pious mouthing of clichés about the brotherhood of man under the fatherhood of God must be replaced by virile efforts to make this truth a living reality. Brotherhood weeks or interfaith games should be only signs pointing to all other weeks and 1,000 other affairs. They should not remain a ritualistic sign of religious ritual.

A truth unified is a truth denied. And, unless we really live this truth of the unity of the human family, we are denying it and we should logically look to a Hitler-type of escape from our hypocrisy.

Two moral virtues must be made the backbone of our efforts to create a truly American ideal. They are social justice and fraternal charity. We must be as conscientiously concerned with securing justice for everybody else as we are in claiming it for ourselves.

Our charity must be as broad as our family in the human family. And the fire of its love and the warmth of its love must extend beyond our own hearts to the whole neighborhood, the whole city, just as it must ultimately extend to the whole world.

It seems to me the primary consideration that we must have in mind in the service of the community is the work of improvement of environment and neighborhood because it is they who are the most

most. It is the people then who must be first mobilized to participate in the program and work for its successful conclusion. How to carry out this mobilization is the real question. It can and should be done on a local basis through Community Improvement and Civic Associations. Not enough is done in this regard.

Indeed, many such associations have become nothing more than neighborhood social clubs. They place emphasis on entertainment and the like. They fight reasoning where it will affect their property but are not interested when it affects others.

In new developments in the suburban area membership is pretty strong at the beginning — while a new neighborhood is coalescing itself. However, once a solid neighborhood is in and the business has run out, very few residents stay interested.

There is also the question of leadership and coordination of community activities. There are few permanent leaders in these associations and some center of stability is required if these citizens, bright, educated and neighborhood conservation is to be accomplished.

Where do we find such centers of stability — of permanence? I am convinced that only the Churches of a community fit the bill. They are permanent structures, they are all social activities, they are the only place where the community can find a center of stability and where the community can find a center of stability.

in such areas — they are normally devoid of politics.

In both the city and the suburbs, Catholic clergy and Catholic laity must show a willingness to strengthen the physical assets of the community through spiritual as well as educational formation. In this time of transition to have a unique opportunity to live our faith — that we are all one in Christ.

The Puerto Rican, the Negro, the Hillbilly offer us the chance to practice the spiritual and corporal works of mercy. Did we just learn them by rote in our childhood or can we take up the challenge of our belief that faith without good works is dead.

When the people of a community band together through mutual sympathy and understanding, great things can be accomplished. However, it is my contention that too many of us are immature, spiritually and socially. We have an immaturity that blinds us to the immediate and the perceptible. We must therefore resolve to grow up with and in the Church.

We must raise our sights to those properly human goals which pertain to the realm of spirit and by this fact are attained only with great effort and the passage of much time. We must not become cynical from day to day, we must not become disillusioned from the moment we see the world as it is, we must not become cynical from the moment we see the world as it is, we must not become cynical from the moment we see the world as it is.

By an act of the will, consciously, coldly, calculatingly, we must decide to face up to complexity, to large areas of gray, to problems that have no solution, to matters that stubbornly refuse to be pigeonholed.

We must turn away from the adolescent quest for immediate victory, or even of jobs that can be completed. We must turn towards that adult world in which we have the obligation to attempt the impossible, while haunted by the certainty of failure.

Finally, we must encourage a sense of dedication. We must constantly radiate that spirit of service and self sacrifice which is the essence of the true Christian. Let us not be bogged down or diverted from our purpose by political slogans or super-market patriotism.

While we join our anti-communist or patriotic organizations, let us always remember that the only way to eradicate communism, secularism or any other evilism is to live the Christian life to the full.

Too many of us, it seems to me, spend our time shouting from the housetops about this and that, but very seldom doing anything about it. Let us not pin an impossible label on every social innovation. Let us avoid the negative whenever possible. Evil is a fact of life, but so is good. And the good we can do in life, in our community, can be measured only in the terms of the good and the service we can do for our neighbors.

—GEOFFREY H. GARDNER