

## Kennedy States His Faith And Position Before Protestant Ministers

**Editor's Note:** The following article is the unedited text of the speech recently delivered by Senator John F. Kennedy before the Houston Texas Ministerial Association on September 12. We are running the full text because of the expressed in the speech by local citizens. We hope all of our readers will read this statement through in order that they might have a clear vision of the religious issue and its effects upon Kennedy when elected President of the United States in November. Paul Barwick, Editor.

There has been a great deal of discussion of the so-called "religious issue" in the Presidential campaign. Senator Kennedy, in his contribution toward closing the discussion and focusing the public attention on the important issues of the campaign, made the following statement to the Greater Houston (Texas) Ministerial Association on Sept. 12. I believe that editors everywhere recognize that the widest possible circulation of this statement serves the cause of public enlightenment and the national interest. We therefore hope you will print the full text of Senator Kennedy's remarks.

I am grateful for your generous invitation to state my views. While the so-called religious issue is necessarily and properly the chief issue here tonight, I want to emphasize from the outset that we have here critical issues in fact in the 1960 election: the spread of Communist influence, until it now festers 30 miles off the coast of Florida—smuggling treatment of our President and Vice President by those no longer respect our power—the hungry children I saw in West Africa, the old people who cannot pay their doctor bills, the families led to give up their farms—an America with too many slums, with too few schools, and too late to the moon and outer space.

These are the real issues which should decide this campaign. And they are not religious issues—for war and hunger and ignorance and pain know no religious barriers. But because I am a Catholic, and no Catholic has ever been elected President, the real issues in this campaign have been obscured perhaps, in some quarters less responsible than this. So it is apparent necessary for me to state once again—not what kind of church I be-

lieve in, but that should be important only to me—but what kind of America I believe in. I believe in an America where the separation of church and state is absolute—where no Catholic prelate would tell the President (should he be Catholic) how to act, and no Protestant minister would tell his parishioners for whom to vote—where no church or church school is granted any public funds or political preference—and where no man is denied public office merely because his religion differs from the President who might appoint him or the people who might elect him. I believe in an America that is officially neither Catholic, Protestant nor Jewish—where no public official either requests or accepts instructions on public policy from the Pope, the National Council of Churches or any other ecclesiastical source—where no religious body seeks to impose its will directly or indirectly upon the general populace or the public acts of its officials—and where religious liberty is so indivisible that an act against one church is treated as an act against all.

For, while this year it may be a Catholic against whom the finger of suspicion is pointed, in other years it has been and may some day be again, a Jew—or a Quaker—or a Unitarian—or a Baptist. It was Virginia's harassment of Baptist preachers, for example, that helped lead to Jefferson's statute for religious freedom. Today, I may be the victim—but tomorrow it may be you—until the whole fabric of our harmonious society is ripped at a time of great national peril.

Finally, I believe in an America where religious intolerance will someday end—where all men and all churches are treated as equal—where every man has the same right to attend or not attend or not attend the church of his choice—where there is no Catholic vote, no anti-Catholic vote, no bloc voting of any kind—and where Catholics, Protestants and Jews, at both the lay and pastoral level, will refrain from those attitudes of disdain and division which have so often marred their works in the past, and promote instead the American idea of brotherhood.

That is the kind of America in which I believe. And it represents the kind of Presidency in which I believe—a great office that must neither be humbled by making it the instrument of any one religious group, nor tarnished by arbitrarily withholding its occupancy from the members of any religious group. I believe in a President whose religious views are his own private affair, neither imposed by him upon the nation, nor imposed by the nation upon him as a condition to holding that office.

I would not look with favor upon a President working to subvert the First Amendment's guarantee of religious liberty (nor would our system of checks and balances permit him to do so)—and neither do I look with

favor upon those who would work to subvert Article VI of the Constitution by requiring a religious test—even by indirection—for if they disagree with that safeguard, they should be out openly working to repeal it.

I want a Chief Executive whose public acts are responsible to all groups and obligated to none—who can attend any ceremony, service or dinner his office may appropriately require of him—and whose fulfillment of his Presidential oath is not limited or conditioned by any religious oath, ritual or obligations.

This is the kind of America I believe in—and this is the kind I fought for in the South Pacific, and the kind my brother died for in Europe. No one suggested then that we might have a "divided loyalty," that we might "not believe in liberty" or that we belonged to a disloyal group that threatened the "freedoms for which our forefathers died."

And in fact this is the kind of America for which our forefathers died—when they fled here to escape religious test oaths that denied office to members of less favored churches—when they founded the Constitution, the Bill of Rights, and the Virginia Statute of Religious Freedom—and when they fought at the Shrine in Virginia today, the Alamo. For side by side with Bowie and Crockett died McCafferty and Baily and Carey—but no one knows whether they were Catholics or not. For there was no religious test at the Alamo.

I ask you tonight to follow in that tradition—to judge me on the basis of 14 years in Congress—or my declared stands against an Ambassador to the Vatican, against unconstitutional aid to parochial schools, and against any boycott of the public schools (which I have attended myself)—instead of judging me on the basis of these pamphlets and publications we all have seen that carefully select quotations out of context from the statements of Catholic church leaders, usually in other countries, frequently in other centuries, and rarely relevant to any situation here—and always omitting, of course, the statement of the American Bishops in 1948 which strongly endorsed Church-State separation, and which more nearly reflects the views of almost every American Catholic. I do not consider these other quotations binding upon my public acts—why should you? But let me say, with respect to other countries, that I am wholly opposed to the State being used by any religious group, Catholic or Protestant, to compel, prohibit or persecute the free exercise of any other religion. And I hope that you and I condemn with equal fervor those nations which deny their Presidency to Protestants and those which deny it to Catholics. And rather than cite the misdeeds of those who differ, I would cite the record of the Catholic Church in such nations as Ireland and France—and the independence of such statesmen as Adenauer and DeGaulle.

But let me stress again that these are my views—for, contrary to common newspaper usage, I am not the Catholic candidate for President. I am the Democratic Party's candidate for President who happens also to be a Catholic. I do not speak for my church on public matters—and the church does not speak for me.

Whatever issue may come before me as President—on birth control, divorce, censorship, gambling or any other subject—I will make my decision in accordance with these views, in accordance with what my conscience tells me to be the national interest, and without regard

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## Amos Brinson And Bill Shiffeld Presented Citation

Amos Brinson of Kenansville Drug Company; and Bill Shiffeld, of Warsaw Drug Company, owners of the Kenansville and Warsaw Rexall Drug Stores, respectively, today were awarded a Citation by President Eisenhower from the Small Business Administration of the United States praising their efforts in promoting registration and voting.

Brinson and Shiffeld have displayed registration and voting information in their stores and have urged all eligible citizens to take advantage of their voting privilege.

The campaign conducted here was part of a nationwide "Let's All Register, Let's All Vote" campaign. "We are most grateful to President Eisenhower and the Small Business Administration. More than ever before we must all participate in elections and work to get more Americans to the polls," they said. The Citation, the first ever made by the Small Business Administration, was jointly signed by Phillip McCallum, SBA administrator, and reads:

"Demonstrating the community service of this and other Rexall Drug Stores and of United States retail pharmacists and the pharmacy industry in general by their active leadership of the non-partisan, nation-wide 'let's All Register, Let's All Vote' campaign has made a major and highly important contribution to the welfare of this country. By encouraging fellow Americans to vote, and making it easier for them to do so, the members of the Rexall Family have set an example for all businesses, and have done their utmost to insure the permanence of the American way of life."

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