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REMARKS

OF

HUBERT H. HUMPHREY

MOUNT OLIVE LUTHERAN CHURCH FORUM

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TALKING POINTS:

"Role of the
Church in
the Life of
the Nation"

- I. Democratic society is not so much the result of a constitutional form of law as it is the result of a certain set of values and faith - a very particular kind of faith that is firmly grounded in theology and philosophy. The central principle of democracy - the belief in the dignity of man - springs most fundamentally from the Scriptural belief that man was created in the image of God. Our Christian faith and other faiths, as well, place emphasis on the importance of man because of his relationship to something greater, something beyond himself.
[We call that supernatural power God, and it is because of man's closeness to Him that no man has the authority to dominate or subjugate another.

II. The belief in the necessity of "consent of the governed" as the foundation of any legitimate government is therefore of spiritual origin. In addition, we in a democratic society acknowledge a certain preciousness of human life that is not to be attacked or destroyed by manmade institutions.

III. Reinhold Niebuhr observed that it is man's capacity for justice that makes democracy possible, while man's inclination for injustice makes democracy necessary. Man's capacity for justice is the Divine in him. For a democracy to remain strong and loyal to its principles, the spirit of man must be continually nourished.

IV. So often when troubles beset a nation we turn to the political arenas to find solutions. We attack the institutions, the processes. But we must go deeper. We must look into ourselves, look into our spirit and reform that essence of life.

1960's Debate, Descent, Disorder -

~~Time~~

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- V. It is true that a malaise afflicts our nation. A malaise which strikes at the very heart of America's faith in the future. A cruel war, where the rhetoric of victory has grown shallow; an economic crisis, where people have been tried beyond their endurance; an intolerance of men and ideas which has spawned violence - all these have undermined our confidence.

Time of
Trouble -

Time of
Doubt

- VI. Prophets of despair have pointed to the nation's doubts, fears, and divisions as evidence of these crises. There are those who say that the nation has lost its sense of direction, that violence of the young and the old, the black and the white, the left and the right is the inevitable expression of frustration and anger - a sense that something fundamental, but intangible, has gone wrong.

Time of
Creativity

- VII. We are - in truth - immersed in a crisis of the spirit. To heal our divisions and restore our hope we need men of democratic principles and deep convictions. We need to

Call on
the best
in us,

turn our attention to our own spirit and build a new vibrant confidence and determination to realize the best that is in us, the best that is in our concept of government.

VIII. George Bernard Shaw drew a distinction that applies today:

"You see things that are and ask 'Why?'. But I dream things that never were and ask 'Why not?'"

The political realm is structured around and survives because of its ability to question 'why?' and, indeed, to supply the answers to that important inquiry. But we need now the courage to look ahead, to plan creatively for the future, to summon our energy and restore our hope. We need to ask 'why not?' in our best visionary style.

'Why not?' In the most powerful and affluent nation on earth -

Why not

- a society without hunger and poverty?
- a society with the equal opportunity for education available to all of its citizens?

- a society in which the streets are free from crime, where all people can walk peacefully without fear of harm?
- a society where all citizens can be assured of adequate health protection and care?
- a society where all may earn a respectable income in a job suited to one's skills?
- a society where civil rights are denied to no sector of our population, black or white, male or female?
- a society which preserves our vigorous tradition of peaceful dissent and discourages violence from all flanks?
- a society which heeds the idealism of youth but does not neglect the cares and needs of its aged?

why not

IX. The impetus for this search does not necessarily lie within the political realm. Instead, the political realm must be infused with this energy from an external force.

The way you treat people is the
way you treat God.
Social Action — young — disabled — old
Racism —

- X. The Church has historically been that institutional means by which we have refurbished the spirit. Now more than ever the Church must resume its leadership in the restoration of the spiritual values which have formerly sustained our nation's life which we now must rediscover and redefine. The Lutheran Church was founded in the wake of a structural reformation. Now all aspects of the religious community must become involved in the spiritual reformation of our values.
- XI. A myth which popularly abounds is that the young are becoming increasingly alienated from the religious realm. But, in fact, the questions they are asking, the challenges they are posing are profoundly spiritual. They are demanding a change in our priorities as a nation - and that, at root, is asking for a fundamental reanalysis of our values.

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XII. The vitality of any institution - certainly the life of the Church - is its ability to restructure itself. The Protestant Ethic, of which the Church has long been the guardian, has provided Americans - individually or collectively - with the will to work for the high quality of material life we have attained. It has been the backbone of the American dream. It has enabled us to ~~become the wealthiest nation on earth~~ stimulating our rate of industrialization and, hence, expanding our productive capacity. But ironically we are now caught in a "spiritual lag". The Protestant Ethic and its attendant values have brought America and Americans great wealth, but it is failing now to provide us with a spiritual perspective.

XIII. The Protestant Ethic emerged in ^{the 16th century,} a time of great material ^{Famine and pestilence dominated the lives of men.} poverty. The drive for productivity, the keen desire to achieve, the stoic individualism were tantamount to survival. And the Protestant Ethic offered a system of values which reinforced these necessary qualities.

- XIV. Now, however, we live in a time of ^{incredible} material affluence. So abundant is our wealth that we find it necessary to limit our productivity and find outlets beyond our boundaries to absorb our surplus.
- XV. If we are to bring together the disparate social, economic and political elements of our society, if we are going to extend the promise of opportunity equally to all mankind we must now emphasize interdependence without forsaking our tradition of individualism. We must reshape our values so that we turn the desire to achieve into a sentiment which is productive for all of society.

when Pope John XXIII taught us an important lesson when he observed that "at the present day no political community is able to pursue its own interests and develop itself in isolation, because the degree of its prosperity and development is a reflection and a component part of the degree of prosperity and development of all other communities... It is not possible to preserve lasting peace if glaring economic and social inequality among (the people of the earth) persist... We are all equally responsible

for the undernourished peoples. Therefore, it is necessary to educate one's conscience to the sense of responsibility that weighs upon each one of us, especially upon those who are more blessed with this world's goods."

XVI. We must restructure our sense of ethics so that we can find spiritual peace amidst our material plenty. We must create a new sense of community which allows us to use our material wealth for the benefit of all men.

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