

Date written: July 3, 1948

Theme: The Christian law of liberty.

Proposition: Christianity is the religion that provides the motivation for freedom under law.

Scripture: Matthew 22:35-40

Sources: Macartney's Illustrations, p. 206,
Ministers Manual, p. 126.
Reader's Digest, July 1948, p. 21.
Masterbook of Hum. Ill., p. 180

Places preached:

~~Huntington, Ark~~ 7/7/48

Conston, Wyo., P.M., July 3, 1949

Kummer, Wyo., A.M., July 3, 1949

Sheridan, Wyo., 11 a.m., ~~July 3, 1949~~ 1958

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Introduction:

1. A sick mother with a baby was told by the physician that she had tuberculosis and she must seek a higher altitude. Lacking means she applied to the government, and was told that there was not a dollar to save the mother or child from death. At the same time a farmer observed that one of his hogs had cholera symptoms. He sent a telegram collect to the government. An inspector came the next day, treated the hog with serum, and cured it.

This story, though perhaps far-fetched, illustrates the bungling and mismanagement which often brings criticism and disdain on government. Obviously, in this case something was wrong.

Such a story moves one to ask just what should be the functions of a government?

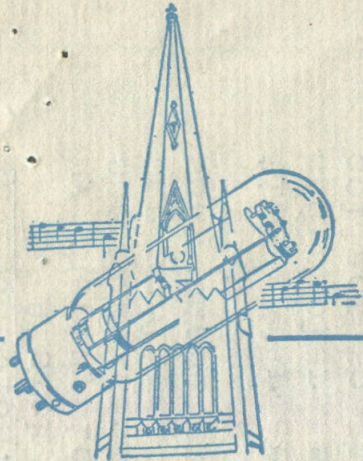
2. Functions of government:

a. To protect its people:

(1) From self. To this end asylums are provided for those who lose their minds and would commit suicide, or otherwise harm themselves. Gambling is restrained often by government because the government recognizes that many people would lose their all if allowed to gamble as they wished. Moral codes are enforced by government because of the realization that their observance is necessary to the welfare of the individual.

(2) From neighbors. Police protection is provided whereby one's neighbors are restrained from taking advantage through robbery, through deception, etc., of a person. Patents protect one's inventions, copyrights one's writings, etc., all aimed to protect the individual from injustices at the hand of his neighbors.

(3) From outside aggressors. Here we mean from other countries and governments that would take advantage or destroy.



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For this purpose armed forces are maintained.

b. To develop persons:

(1) Through literacy and other education by means of the compulsory schools in elementary education. By provision of higher schools and colleges.

(2) Through improved health safeguards and protection and development of health. Immunization programs, food inspection plans, water purification, sewage disposal, are all examples of this type of function of government.

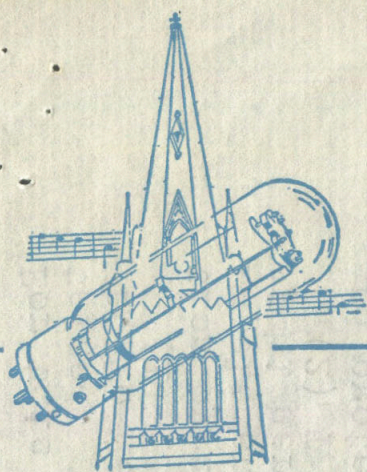
(3) Through preservation of moral agencies. Such agencies are churches and fraternal organizations. This does not mean tax support or government interference. It does mean the guaranteeing to the individual of the right to participate in these as he wishes. It does suggest government approval of the morals suggested by these agencies.

3. There are various types of governments and varying means by which they accomplish these functions. It is to consider something of this that we make our purpose here.

I. The types of governments or law.

1. Suppose a government presented in the strongest and most forcible possible form the propaganda that the people of its ~~government~~ country were superior to all other peoples, and as such deserved the best of everything. Suppose this idea were carried far enough to move these people to an attempt to establish themselves over most of their fellowmen as rulers. Suppose in doing this the people who were supposedly thinking of themselves as the supermen were ruthlessly ruled and used by their own government to bring about the avowed goals.

Then suppose there is another government



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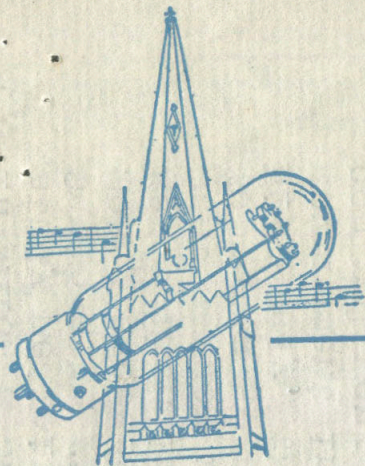
4 in which a person decides he wants to study medicine and sets about doing that. Suppose he finds the going tough and the money necessary to continue study hard to get. Then imagine that he finds a government agency ready to help him, if he asks. Suppose he asks, receives help, and does his study, then in gratitude serves the government in its armed forces, in disease control work, or in some other area. He has chosen of his own free will to do that which he wishes, and the government has helped him. In the first case, he would have studied as or worked where the government wanted, and not complained.

These are illustrations, first of dictatorships or hierarchies, and secondly of democracies.

2. Dictatorships and hierarchies are governments which reserve the right to themselves to determine what methods are best by which to accomplish the ends that the government will bring about. They often abuse their powers by using them primarily for the privilege of those in the offices of government.

3. Democracies are governments which derive their powers to govern from the majority of the people under them, and by whose consent and direction .. either delegated or through actual mass meeting voting .. the government ~~performs~~ pursues certain policies with which to accomplish the purposes of governments.

4. The differences, thus, in dictatorships and democracies is that in the former one is under law or rule against his will, or certainly not by his own choosing, while in the latter he is under law and rule by the choice of himself and his fellows. In the one he can only accept that which is given him to do; that which he is told. In the other he must accept the present law and obey it, yet is free to work constantly to



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5. Change it, and very possibly may bring about such change.

In the dictatorship he is only under law. In the democracy he is under law while yet still free.

II. The great problem of government all through the ages has been how to unite law and liberty.

1. William Cowper wrote:

'Tis liberty alone that gives the
flower
Of fleeting life its luster and perfume,
And we are weeds without it. All
constraint,
Except what wisdom lays on evil men,
Is evil.

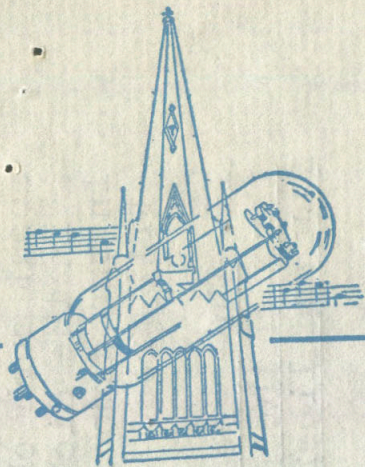
2. Those governments which lay the least restraints on men are best. Those which allow freedom of thought and expression, which derive their power from the freedom and will of their people, are ones wherein the people have a "law of liberty."

III. The Christian law of liberty.

1. When a certain college president, holding up a copy of the New Testament, said, "This book teaches me how to run a college," he did not mean that it contains a system of rules on college management, but that it contains guiding principles which can be applied to every department of college life.

Children may be left at home alone and given by their parents a piece of paper containing specific directions for each hour, or they may be left on their honor.

The principal in both cases here is that the best results are obtained from a good but broad law which allows plenty of liberty.



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2. The chief law, or principal, of Christianity is that of love: of God and of neighbor. Such love constrains one to help bring about for his neighbors all that we have said government should do:

Protection from self, neighbors, and outside aggressors.

Development of persons through literacy and education, improved health, and preservation of moral agencies.

3. In bringing about these things for one's neighbor one will necessarily be willing to ~~delegate~~ delegate his authority, to support rules and regulations on his time and means which will help bring them about.

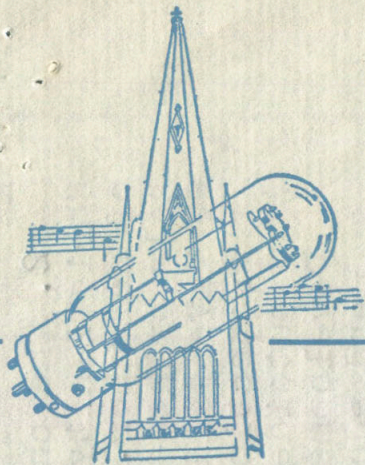
4. He will also respect the opinions and wants and judgments of his neighbors as much as he wishes his own to be respected, even though he may differ with them. He will be willing to submit himself to their combined will, if it be in the majority, on most matters, until he can convince enough to have a majority to see it and to vote his way.

5. Yet, having said this, the same law under which the christian labors will make him resist with all his might where he is convinced men are being done wrongly. Thus he will fight as best he can:

- a. injustices to oppressed races,
- b. the distribution of narcotics which are actually harmful to people such as alcoholic beverages,
- c. the giving to government power which can prove hard to wrest from it and which might be used to oppress and wrong people.

IV. The American adaptation of the Christian principles of love of neighbor.

1. In a little room close under the eaves of a house in Philadelphia a young man sat



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7. writing. His penmanship, small but strong, kept true to the line, like every word he put down. The young man's red hair was damp. The June day was hot. But his heart was hotter. He wrote:

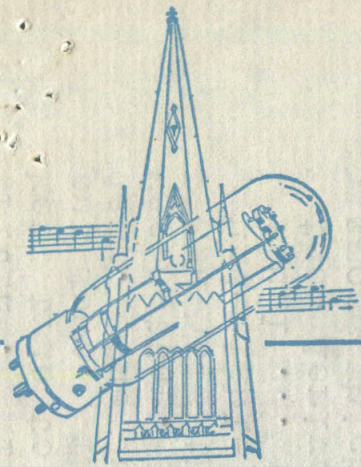
"We hold these truths to be sacred and undeniable, that all men are created equal ... that from that equal creation they derive Rights inherent and inalienable, among which are ... life, and liberty and the pursuit of happiness That to secure these ends governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed."

The young man, of course, was Thomas Jefferson and what we have read is part of the Declaration of Independence which we celebrate on July 4. The year was 1776. A few days after he wrote it, with only minor changes it was signed by the representatives of the colonies in America, and The United States of America came into being, based on the principles mentioned in this Declaration.

2. These conceptions which Jefferson wrote that day are conceptions which an humble carpenter in Palestine over 1700 years before Jefferson planted in his teaching. He said that all men are children of a heavenly father who loves them all, and thus are equal.

a. The conceptions embodied in the Declaration of Independence are Christian conceptions, taught years ago by Christ; Christian conceptions carried into the realm of government.

b. To Christians they are law, yet law derived of their own choosing and liberty, out of a spirit of love and respect for their neighbors; of wanting to do as they wished to be done by.



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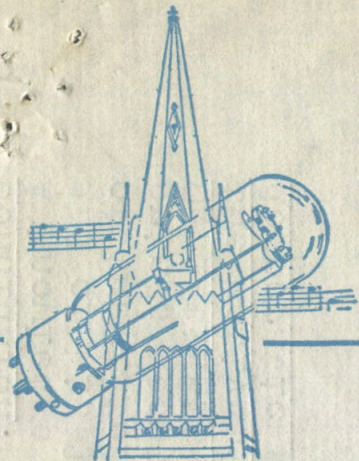
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Conclusion:

A knowledge of Christ's spirit and teachings and of his life, followed by a reading of the later Declaration of Independence, brings about a striking realization that Christianity is the religion that provided the motivation for freedom under law, for democratic government.



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