

## POLITICAL SERMONS IN AMERICAN HISTORY

American pastors have historically addressed politics from the pulpit, offering Biblical context to the controversial political issues of the day. In fact, churches often served as a catalyst for change in America – playing a dominant role in the abolition of slavery, for example. It was also not uncommon for pastors to publicly oppose candidates they saw unfit for political office, including presidential candidates such as Thomas Jefferson, William Howard Taft, and Al Smith.

Pastors' sermons, speeches, and writings on political subjects – such as the following – can be found throughout American history:

### On Christians' Role in Politics

[L]ook well to the characters and qualifications of those you elect and raise to office and places of trust... [L]et the wise counsel of Jethro... be your guide. Choose ye out from among you able men, such as fear God, men of truth and hating covetousness' [Exodus 18:21] and set them to rule over you.<sup>1</sup> – Rev. Matthias Burnett, 1803

The church must take right ground in regard to politics... Politics are a part of a religion is such a country as this, and Christians must do their duty to the country as part of their duty to God... [God] will bless or curse this nation according to the course [Christians] take [in politics].<sup>2</sup> – Rev. Charles G. Finney, 1835

“[T]he time has come that Christians must vote for honest men and take consistent ground in politics... Christians have been exceedingly guilty in this matter. But the time has come when they must act differently... God cannot sustain this free and blessed country which we love and pray for unless the Church will take right ground... It seems sometimes as if the foundations of the nation are becoming rotten, and Christians seem to act as if they think God does not see what they do in politics. But I tell you He does see it, and He will bless or curse this nation according to the course [Christians] take.<sup>3</sup> – Rev. Charles G. Finney, 1868

### On Women's Rights

Having assembled to consult upon the interests of religion within the Commonwealth, we would now, as pastors and teachers, in accordance with the custom of this Association, address you on some of the subjects which at the present time appear to us to have an important bearing upon the cause of Christ... We invite your attention to the dangers which at present seem to threaten the female character, with wide spread and permanent injury.<sup>4</sup> – Pastoral Letter from the General Association of Massachusetts, June 28, 1837

### On The Civil War

Having protested against the evil of martial strife, and accepted it only as inevitable compromise with the pressures and frictions of selfish ambition for keeping the rightful framework of the Government in legitimate action, the second word needing to be said, when we look at our civil war

