

ADDRESS, IMMANUEL METHODIST CHURCH

CRISFIELD

December 2, 1962

I am most grateful to our Pastor Rev. Moore for inviting me to come here today to take part in these Layman's Day services, in my home church. Coming back to Crisfield is always a satisfying experience, and it is a particular delight to be here in this church which has contributed so much to my happiness, and to the happiness of my family, for so many years. In a long career in politics and government, I have had many occasions to ask myself the question: What is the role of religion in the State? Today, I should like to discuss this subject with you at some length.

It is written in the Psalms: "Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord." There is much discussion nowadays, as there has been throughout the history of the United States of America, of whether religion is, or ought to be, in government. The doctrine of the separation of church and state is firmly imbedded in our American philosophy. The principle is incorporated in the basic laws of our federal government and of the governments of all of the states of our union. This concept of the complete separation of the institutions of religion from the institution of government has been a source of vitality to both church and state. But while we cling to this principle of separation, no doctrine of American life ever has, or ever will eliminate or minimize the presence, the power and the influence of religion in our national affairs. Religion and national destiny are forever intertwined. The central tenet of our life is that ours is a "nation whose God is the Lord." This tenet was explicit in the Declaration of Independence. It is implicit in our instruments of government. It permeates our institutions.

The virtues of our people and the values of our culture are derived from the premise that this is "one nation under God." Our American society and our American way of life are products of the Judeo-Christian concept of the relationship of man to God. The Golden Rule, which is the very essence of our Christian doctrine, is inherent in everything we create and in everything we do as a people and a nation.

All of us know how careful our forebears who wrote our Constitution were to avoid the injection of religion into government. State-established religion, an inheritance from lands they had fled in search of religious freedom, meant tyranny to them, and they would have no part of it. And yet, the philosophy of idealism which guided the thinking