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Revisiting the All Saints Case

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The New York Times editorializes on the Internal Revenue Service's investigation of All Saints Episcopal Church in Pasadena, California, concluding that "it would seem to be hard to justify picking on a church that has a long record of opposition to wars waged by leaders from both parties."

The church was targeted for investigation after its former rector preached a sermon just prior to the 2004 election, castigating President Bush for the war in Iraq. The sermon was highly political, but the preacher did not endorse a candidate. On the November 11 edition of *The Albert Mohler Program*, I defended the church's freedom to speak to issues from its pulpit and I interviewed its current rector. Even as this church represents the religious left, I argue that evangelicals must understand that the investigation of this church could be experienced by virtually any congregation in America. We cannot claim religious liberty for ourselves without defending the liberty of others.

Here is the troubling part of the *Time's* editorial: *With the feverish courting of religious voters these days, the I.R.S. does have the daunting task of separating politics from church policy.* The I.R.S. is assigned this "daunting task of separating politics from church policy." With all due respect, that would appear to be outside the competence of the nation's tax agency. In effect, this assignment puts the I.R.S. in the position of making what amounts to theological judgments. Does anyone really think this is a good idea?

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