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MORAL REFORM A TRUE OFFICE OF THE CHURCH.

The attempt has been made to divorce religion from morality, and to separate the Church of Christ from all specific movements for moral reform. Elaborate arguments have been framed to show that the Church has but one object, clearly definable; and that the ministry are called to preach and teach a simple and limited set of truths, the tendency of which, direct and indirect, is to produce all the good and to achieve all the reforms needed in the world. It is insisted that we are bound to trust to this tendency of what is called *the preaching of the simple Gospel of Christ;* and not to go aside to push, in our character as ministers or church members, any specific scheme for the removal of the great and crying evils of the day.

It may be that but a few persons can be found, at this day, to advocate a doctrine once heard quite frequently in the Church. Perhaps there are more who need to be aroused by insisting upon the very contrary of all this; namely: that the Church of Christ only does her whole duty, and only can be sure of a healthy spiritual condition, by putting herself by her ministry and her members in direct contact with as many phases of human sin and suffering as possible; and by putting forth her utmost energies for their immediate mitigation or removal. It seems to us the bare announcement of this proposition in regard to an institution claiming to be the most beneficent on earth, should carry its own justification with it. Any other view wrongs the broad and comprehensive scope of the Gospel, limits its power, and misrepresents and represses the spirit which it infuses into those who have truly accepted it. The preaching and the daily activity of Christ plainly show that he had no idea of any such limitations or restrictions in the efforts of his followers to bless and save a fallen world. Were the Gospel a system of redemption invented and energized by any thing less than a Divine agent, it might indeed be a question of economy, whether we had power to spare in checking the streams, while the fountain of evil itself in the unregenerate heart remained unsealed; but with a scheme of universal applicability, backed by infinite resources, such as the Gospel is, we fail to prove and to illustrate its glorious character when we timorously decline to bring it face to face with every practice, custom, or indulgence, which is contrary to its pure and benevolent spirit.

There are thousands upon thousands in Christian lands, whose understandings and hearts are too blind to appreciate the purely spiritual tendencies of the Gospel, and who can be convinced of its excellence only by beholding it in direct and successful conflict with prevailing evil. The quickest way to their hearts is to let them see the Church actively at work on the broad field of Christian charity. Whereas, if its members show their piety mainly by church going, by acts of devotion, by a too exclusive regard for spiritual self-culture; if they stand aloof from great and crying social evils, avoiding mention of them in the pulpit, looking on with sealed lips while the greatest wrongs are done, and while thousands sink in ruin, and whole communities and generations are ruled by error and prejudice of the most obstinate and dangerous sort, what astonishment, what doubt must seize the unconverted observer? He must either believe the Gospel a failure or Christians self-deceived or hypocrites.

It is very certain that no such prejudice could have existed against the Divine Founder of the Christian religion. He encouraged no extravagant, one-sided, cold-hearted spirituality. He won his way to the hearts of the multitude by befriending them in every practicable manner. He went about doing good. Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses. For their utter and notorious want of sympathy with those whom they assumed to guide in matters of religion, our Lord most severely rebuked those proud ecclesiastical bigots, the Pharisees. He expressly charged them with hypocrisy, when they made a pretence of religion the excuse for a violation of the plain principles of morality. For himself, he allowed no rigid construction of the law of the Sabbath to hinder him in an evident act of mercy. He never thought of confining the stream of his marvellous benefactions to those only who accepted him as the true Messiah, or required that these acts should bring immediate returns of piety. He recommended his religion by exhibiting its universal beneficence to the physical and moral, as well as spiritual, part of man.

Pitiful once again was the condition of the Churches, when in the middle ages, under the influence of a return of the Judaizing spirit, a similar divorce from human interests was inculcated and practised by the Romish hierarchy. It was then regarded as the highest form of religion to enter some order, apart from the secular pursuits of men; and the cultivation of devotional habits, exclusively, was held up as the only path to true excellence. The morals and characters of those who chose to remain in secular callings were not regarded as of serious importance; and what was worse, the characters of monks and priests themselves became so insupportably bad, as to furnish one of the chief grounds and facilities for bringing about the Reformation. The history of the Romish Church of that period shows us plainly, that the Church cannot safely withdraw to a position of exclusively spiritual functions, and refuse to grapple with evil in its actual manifestations in the world.

The Church which has the spirit of Christ in large measure, must feel the stirrings of infinite compassion and sympathy for man in all his ills and woes. Worldliness, formality, and ecclesiastical pride must be at the bottom, when, upon any pretext, she withdraws from immediate practical contact with them. The enormous evils of slavery, intemperance, war, licentiousness, under which the race every where groans, demand the direct and earnest intervention of every agency that can be brought to bear upon them. To say that the Church of Christ goes aside from her mission in grappling with them, is utterly to misconceive her divine nature and energy. It is to assign her the part of the Levite that went by on the other side; while the heretical Samaritan, to the eternal shame and disgrace of orthodoxy, is left to imperfectly fill the Church's neglected opportunity. Let the Church seriously and practically address herself to the giant evil of intemperance. Let her seek the restoration of the ensnared and the fallen. Let her pulpits utter faithful earnest testimony. Let her children and youth be early and effecttually guarded against its approach. Let her go about the work prayerfully, and the very depths of her spiritual life will be stirred, and a healthful glow and a promise of spiritual harvest will answer to the blessings of them that are ready to perish showered upon her head.

THE STATE LEGISLATURE ON SABBATH LAWS.

It is, indeed, remarkable how little impression has been made upon our Legislature by the enemies of the Fourth Commandment in our city. The weakness of human nature, especially when subjected to the political and personal influences that can be brought to bear upon a State Capital, seems always to favor the plots of those who would lower the standard of public morals. Good men fear it; bad men count upon it. Indeed, it has been almost a settled axiom with the agitators for vile and immoral objects in our State and national affairs, that the public, as represented in its executive and legislative officers, *has no conscience*, and no correct moral instincts. Politicians have supposed it necessary merely to keep up party drill; merely to get control of the chances for political preferment; merely to hold out the prospects of political success or defeat; merely to practice their little game of intrigue and of insolence; merely to prate of expediency. But the signal failures which of late have attended these calculations, ought to inspire good men with confidence, even if they do not open the eyes of the bad to the fact, that the American people have a conscience and that they have at last succeeded in getting it adequately represented in the places of power. We warn politicians that they have got a new and troublesome element to deal with, which will utterly disconcert calculations based upon their former simple methods; and we advise them, before they undertake to deal with it, to tarry at home and learn its nature by cultivating it in themselves—a business they have sadly neglected heretofore.

We rejoice to find the conscience of the people of Pennsylvania so largely represented in our State Legislature. We firmly believe that the conscience of the people is utterly against the desecration of the Sabbath. Even of those who have been induced to petition for the abrogation in part of the Sabbath laws of the State, the conscience probably of the majority is in antagonism to their own acts. And the members of our Legislature have, it seems, been so chosen as to represent, not the baser passions, nor yet the irreligious indifference of their constituents, but, by the blessing of God, their better natures; and they seem disposed to rule, as they should, in the fear of God and in the interest of these better natures. Though they have been plied with the usual enginery of the political schemer; though the lowest argument of the demagogue—the prejudices of the rabble against the rich—has been employed; though the old terror of the Irish Catholic vote and the new terror of the German infidel vote have been brought into play; and although one of the ablest and most powerful organs in this city of the Republican party to the great regret of almost every respectable man in it, used every effort, fair and foul, not sparing intimidation, misrepresentation, and downright falsehood, to associate the Legislature with its own crusade against the observance of the Lord's Day, that body remained unmoved, adhered to its righteous determination, and arrayed itself, as a wall of fire, around the Sabbath-laws of our State.

Now that the question is decided, perhaps for years, we have a word to say in regard to this last-named instrumentality, which is chiefly responsible for bringing on the agitation. Perhaps we should thank this editor for the opportunity, made entirely through his officiousness, for a fresh vindication of the Sabbath laws of our State, which the friends of the day themselves would have hesitated to invoke. If he has revealed himself thus more plainly than ever in the attitude of hostility to wholesome statutes, and has summoned against himself a fresh element of unpopularity, it is but the reward of his own reckless disregard of the Divine law, and his own clumsy miscalculation of the moral element of the political problem. Once the loyal and Christian sentiment of the community was largely with him. Now they are fain to turn their backs upon him and leave him in the hands of his very select new-found allies: the Unitarians upon his right hand, and the Swedenborgians on his left; in his front an infidel obscene lecturer claiming the title of M.D.; behind him a rabble of lager beer venders and unmitigated rowdies, with their precious representatives in both branches of the Legislature at Harrisburg.

Such connections are not more painful to contemplate, than they are antagonistic to the personal and political interests cherished by the *Press*. We do not think we venture anything in declaring that the real strength of the Republican party is in the general adhesion of the religious community of the North to its principles. We think this is emphatically true of the Protestant and evangelical population of our own loyal city. There could scarcely be a greater political error than for a Republican newspaper to array itself against one of the most cherished institutions of the Christian religion; to commence and carry on a gratuitous assault upon the most ancient and wholesome laws of the Commonwealth designed to protect those institutions, or to assail with vituperation and slander the entire evangelical clergy of the city, many of whom took the most active part in suppressing the rebellion, and are enrolled as members of the Union League; and, on the other hand, to make common cause with the vilest political tools and bullies of the Copperhead faction, and with the Irish Catholic rabble, in efforts to carry through such anti-Sabbath plots. Perhaps the astute editor has seen his error, and inclines to retrace his steps. Let him show his sencerity by abandoning his own venture in Sabbath-breaking, the *Sunday Press*. Let him and his friends cease to misrepresent the position of the evangelical churches, by inserting their advertisements, without color of authority, in his columns. Let him resume the position, which any editor might have been content to hold, of leading the newspaper press of this city in the estimate of its purest, best, most patriotic, and most intelligent citizens. Once he held this place. Many would rejoice to see so fearless, so able, and so faithful an advocate for the rights of man, in this hour of unexpected peril, occupying it again. It may take a long probation to get back to it; the work had better be commenced without delay. For ourselves, if ever we are able to announce its accomplishment, we shall do it with no common pleasure.

East Tennessee.—Those who would learn the tendency of public sentiment on the great issues of the day, especially among the religious and loyal portion of the people of East Tennessee should consult the letter of our Correspondent on an inside page. A division of the State, like that accomplished in Virginia, is proposed by some. A Switzerland in the heart of America might be formed of portions of Virginia, Tennessee, North Carolina, and Georgia. But give the Freedmen the ballot, and Switzerland will be everywhere.

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CALLS UPON THE LIBERAL.

Men able and disposed to give, have no difficulty in finding objects for their beneficence. Not only are they besieged by unworthy applicants and perplexed by doubtful ones, but the multitude and the needs of causes of the most undoubted character are absolutely overwhelming. Our wealthiest and most liberal men sometimes feel the burden too great to be borne. The demands made upon one within our acquaintance amount to $1000 per day. And yet, in one view, these calls are matters of congratulation to all true friends of the Redeemer's kingdom. Their number betokens unwonted activity in the religious departments of Christian labor. Should they quite cease or fall to a very low figure, the inference would be unavoidable that disaster or coldness had befallen the zealous workers for Christ, and that the Church was growing oblivious to the condition of a dying world. Her ceaseless calls for aid to-day, instead of producing vexation in the minds of the stewards of the Lord's money, should fill them with praise and joy. They should see in the widening missionary schemes of the Church at home and abroad, in her educational efforts, in her attempts to control some part of the literature of the world, in her building of churches, in her concern for the due maintenance of the ministry, in her efforts at moral reform, and in all the attempts, direct and indirect, she is making to evangelize the world, necessarily attended with expense, the most cheering proofs of a high degree of Christian enterprise, an evidence that the Church is not to be outstripped by the world in the energetic pursuit of her objects.

No, friends! It may be annoying to have so many appeals as to task and even exceed the largest measure of true Christian beneficence. But let us maintain patience by reflecting upon the encouraging state of things which they reveal, and upon the sad inference to which a considerable diminution of them would lead.

THE ELDERS IN COUNCIL, ON MINISTERIAL SUPPORT.

Our readers are generally aware of the fact that, for several years past, the meetings of the General Assembly have been made the occasion for delightful reunions of the eldership connected with the Assembly and with Churches of the neighborhood. A practical aim has guided these informal conventions, and we are happy to believe some good results are likely to flow from them. Of all subjects proper to be assigned to the consideration of such a body of men, none could take precedence of that of Ministerial Support. And this they have in hand, and are agitating in a quiet way at present. They are sending circulars of inquiry to their brother elders all over the Church, calculated both to stir up the churches to their duty in this matter, and to gather facts upon ministerial support, which hitherto have not been in possession of the Church. Such questions as the following are asked:—Have you lately increased your pastor's salary? How much? And coming closer still, *Is he comfortable?*

Well done, Messrs: Elders! Well done, thus to stir up the pure minds of your brethren! We like that last question amazingly, only we think the minister's wife should be taken into counsel in deciding it. Often, very often, if he *is* comfortable, it is because she is quite the other thing. But push your laudable inquiries and gather such a stock of facts as will enable you to present some *data* for action to the coming General Assembly.

And why may not the elders of the separate Presbyteries, who have not yet met or acted, take up the subject in earnest and aid in gathering the facts? Why may we not know what the Church does, what she needs to do, and what as a whole, or in part, she can do, to make her ministry *comfortable?* We may be sure that every step she takes of approximation to this result, will bring a far greater proportionable addition to her strength, stability and general prosperity. Some of our Presbyteries have already acted, and one reported its ministers *one thousand dollars out of pocket*, as the financial result of the preceding year. Whether, even with the missing thousand dollars, their condition would have been called *comfortable*, was not a subject of inquiry that we know.

Let the inquiry be kept up. Its starting is a very good sign. Alas! alas! before it it is half concluded, or a single practical result has been effected, how many gentle hearts will be broken, how many heads will be laid low, worn-out with over work, exhausted by gnawing cares of inadequate support. There is a fearful whisper of inquiry whistling round our churches, more searching than any convention of elders can propound. *Who is* RESPONSIBLE *for these untimely deaths?* Yes, it is high time the conscience of the whole Church was awake; for the responsibility belongs to the whole.

HON. WILLIAM E. DODGE.

It gives us uncommon pleasure to announce the admission to the lower house of Congress of a citizen so eminently fitted to bear the responsibilities and perform the duties of a legislator as Mr. William E. Dodge, of New York. It is one of the most cheering results of the great and bloody revolution through which we have passed, that the people have, to so great an extent, become convinced of the vital necessity of sending a better class of men than formerly to represent them in Congress, and at their State capitals; and *that men of this class have been found willing to go.* The high character of the Thirty-ninth Congress has been a matter of frequent remark. If but a tithe of the manly and Christian principle, of the sincere patriotism, and of the sacred regard for human rights which distinguish the course of Congress, were possessed by the Chief Executive, the safety, stability, and true prosperity of the nation would be provided for as it never has been since we first had an independent existence.

We believe that even among his noble-minded associates of the House of Representatives, Mr. Dodge's piety, probity, business capacity, largeness of views and liberality in action will make him eminent. In the vain but brutal assaults made upon him during the debate preceding his admission, he was already recognized as in some sense representing the religious sentiment of the community. We do not ask a safer, truer standard-bearer. And we congratulate New York City, whose needs in this respect are indeed immeasurable, that she has, in the person of Mr. Dodge, secured one of the best men, every way, the country over, as a representative.

IMPARTIAL SUFFRAGE.

These are times when we are driven to look at the roots and beginnings of things, especially in matters pertaining to civil government. We must go back and reset tle some political principles and methods of action opened by the war. The question now coming up as to the folly and wickedness of proscribing a man solely because of the color of his skin, we are also met by the equally important question, whether it is not equally foolish and more perilous to good government to allow every man to vote whom nature has made white? Both questions deserve to be weighed together. Could both be settled on sound moral and political principles, the blessing to our country would be equal to that of universal emancipation. Nay; are not the blessings of emancipation itself in peril, because no hope of political enfranchisement and of power to protect himself is held out to the freedman, on the one hand; and, on the other, because his old oppressors in the South, and the vile foreign rabble of the North who sympathise with them, are likely to enjoy the uninterrupted exercise of the power they are as ready as ever to exercise against the freedman?

Some would deter us from the task of restricting "white suffrage," by representing the extreme difficulty of finding the just limit. They would throw dust, by bringing in the question of female suffrage; they talk about Indians and even Chinamen. One at a time, gentlemen! We will enter first upon so much of the course as is immediately before us, and as is undoubtedly right and expedient. We will not split hairs, or endeavor to dissipate fogs which are in the distance. We will cleave to the great general principle, about which there can be no more doubt than of the sun shining in the heavens. We ask for such a restriction of the right of suffrage among whites, and such an extension of it among the freedmen, *as shall be plainly for the public weal.* Let active participation in rebellion be declared a life-long disqualification for an active participation in the government rebelled against; public safety demands that; let no whiteness of skin or loftiness of pretensions or intelligence save their possessor from so just and needful a privation as that. And again, let unqualified ignorance of the language in which our Constitution is written be an equally imperative disqualification, North and South, to black and white, to loyal no less than disloyal, while the possession of the rudiments of an English education is declared to open the door for the exercise of the elective franchise, utterly irrespective of race and color. These are simple tests easily applied and manfestly expedient.

Cutting off Southern rebels, and the ignorant North and South, and granting to the Freedmen, so fast as they shall attain the needful elements of knowledge, the right to vote, we shall purge our politics of some of their murkiest and most dangerous elements, and ensure, as never before, the health and steadiness of our national life. There would even be a hope for New York city, if such discrimination could be exercised at her ballot-boxes. Our decided preference is for such a settlement of the suffrage question.

But if we cannot banish or muzzle thus the rebellious elements of the South, if they are not merely to be tolerated and pardoned but welcomed back to all their political privileges, if we are to have universal amnesty, then we lift up our voice for UNIVERSAL SUFFRAGE. Then, without waiting for the education of the Freedmen, we shall be in favor of trusting at once to *their loyal instincts*, which, in all the dark struggles of the war, never went wrong, but ever pointed as true as the needle to the pole. Their late masters do not want them to vote. *Their* instincts assure them on which side those votes would be given when great principles were at stake. They know that half a million votes of black men would be at the command of the Union party, and that South Carolina would cast her vote for CHARLES SUMNER for President to-day, if her masses had the chance to do it. We wish them to have the chance If disloyalty is no disqualification, then let a dark skin, covering a loyal heart, be none. The only impartial suffrage under these circumstances would be universal suffrage.

PASSAGE OF THE CIVIL RIGHTS BILL.

The final proceedings of the House of Representatives on Monday, April 9th, the anniversary of the surrender of Gen. Lee, were thus announced by Speaker Colfax:—

Two-thirds of the House having, on reconsideration, agreed to the passage of this bill, and it being certified officially that the Senate, by a similar majority, have also agreed to its passage, I do therefore, by the authority of the Constitution of the United States, declare that an act to protect all persons in the United States in their civil rights and furnish the means of their own vindication has become a law.

The vote by which this important decision was reached was 122 to 41, or forty more than the requisite two-thirds. Mr. Raymond of the *New York Times*, who has been constantly predicting the reduction of the Republican or radical majority in the House, was *the only Republican* (?) who voted with the President. The bill which has under these peculiar circumstances, become a law, is printed in full on the last page.

We hail this complete triumph of right, and this powerful rebuke of a wicked and treacherous attempt at reaction towards the discarded policy of oppression. We most heartily rejoice at the calm, steady, resolute attitude of Congress. In the face of gross defection in the President, of shameful compliance in the Cabinet, and of grievous unfaithfulness on the part of Senators; when great and trusted names went under a cloud, and when the imperious will, the low prejudices, the personal ambition, and the vast official patronage of an accidental leader, seemed about to crush the party, which, for five years, has been the faithful guardian of the patriotism, the honor, and the life of the nation, and the guarantee of its future progress;—amid all these discouragements the Congress of the United States has proved faithful to its august responsibility, and has saved the nation, as truly as Gen. Grant did, when one year ago, he compelled the surrender of the rebel army of Virginia.

To-day, we hail the Ship of State, righted and recovered from the effects of the sudden and violent blow which threw her upon her beam ends and seemed to imperil her existence, while just riding forth in the pride of victory. To-day, we hail our brethren, natives of our soil, whose very freedom achieved at such a cost, seemed likely to be a mere mockery, as *fellow-citizens*, with rights which every white man is bound to respect in every part of the national territory. To-day, we rejoice with devout thanks that another inhuman, unchristian, and anti-republican feature is swept from our national policy, and that in spite of the most unexpected and insidious obstacles, the nation moves triumphantly forward in the path of justice and of honor.

The Natal Bishopric.—The *Church and State Review* says:—"We are able to state that the successor to Dr. Colenso (who was excommunicated on January 7th) in the Bishopric of Natal has been selected, and will speedily be consecrated. All the English prelates, we are further told, have agreed to recognize the new Bishop as occupant of the see. We hope this is true, but we confess that such churchmanship will surprise us in some members of the Episcopal Bench."