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POLITICAL PREACHING.

LETTER FROM JUDGE BLACK IN REPLY TO REV. ALFRED NEVIN, D. D.

To the Rev. Alfred Nevin, D. D.:

My DEAR SIR: Your letter addressed to me through the Philadelphia Evening Bulletin, disappoints me; because I did not expect it to come in that way, and because it does not cover the subject in issue between us. But if I am silent you, friends will say with some show of reason, that you have vindicated political preaching so triumphantly that all opposition is confounded. I must therefore speak freely in reply.

I fully concede the right you claim for clergymen to select their own themes and handle them as they please. You say truly that neither lawyers nor physicians nor any other order of men have the least authority to control you in these particulars. But you will not deny that this is a privilege which may be abused; you expressly admit that some clergymen have abused it, "and by doing so did more than any other class of men to commence and continue the late rebellion." While, therefore, we can assert no power to dictate your conduct, much less to force you, we are surely not wrong when we entreat you to impose upon yourselves those restrictions which reason and revelation have shown to be necessary for the good of the church and the safety of civil society.

I acknowledge that your commission is a very broad one. You must "declare the sinners may be convinced and converts built up in the holy faith. Truth, justice, temperance, humility, mercy, peace, brotherly kindness, charity—the whole circle of the Christian virtues, must be arduously taught to your hearers; and if any of them be inclined to the opposite vices you are to denounce them without fear, by private admonition, by open rebuke, or by a general delivery of the law which condemns them.

You are not bound to pause in the performance of this duty because it may offend a powerful ruler or a strong political party. But the political preacher directs the attention of his hearers away from their own sins, to the sins, real or imaginary, of other people. By teaching "us" the latter effects no religious purpose whatever; but the chances are ninety-nine in a hundred that he excites the bad passions of those who are present, while he standers the absent and undefended. Both classes of preachers frequently speak upon the same or similar subjects, but they do so with different objects and aims.

I will make my meaning more clear by taking your own illustrations. You believe in the first day of the week as a Sabbath, and so believing your duty undoubtedly is to exhort all persons under your charge to observe it strictly; but you have no right to preach a crusade against the Jews and Seventh-day Baptists, to get intolerant laws enacted against them for keeping Saturday as a day of rest.

If drunkenness be a sin which easily besets your congregation, you may warn them against it, and inasmuch as abstinence is always easier than moderation, you may advise them to touch not, taste not, and handle not; but your position gives you no authority to provoke violent hostilities against tavern keepers, liquor dealers or distillers.

If any of your hearers be ignorant or coarse enough to desire more wives than one, you should certainly teach them that polygamy is the worst feature of Asiatic manners, inconsistent with Christianity, and dangerous to domestic happiness; but you cannot lawfully urge them to carry fire and sword into the territory of the Mormons merely because some of the Mormons are in this respect less holy than you. If the holding of slaves or bond servants be a practical question among the members of your church, I know of nothing which forbids you to teach whatever you conscientiously believe to be true on that subject. But in a community where slavery is not only unknown but impossible, why should any preacher make it the subject of his weekly vituperation? You do not improve the religion of the slaveholder by traducing his character, nor mend the spiritual condition of your own people by making them thirst for the blood of their fellow men.

If any one to whom the service of another by the laws of the State in which he lives, shall need your instructions to regulate his personal conduct toward the slave, you are bound in the first place to tell him, that so long as that relation exists, he should behave with the utmost humanity and kindness; for this you have the clear warrant of the Apostolic example and precept.

In dealing with such a person you may go as much farther as your own conscientious interpretation of the Bible will carry you. If you are sure that the divine law does, under all circumstances, make the mere existence of such a relation sinful on the part of the master, you should induce him to dissolve it by the immediate emancipation of his slaves; for that is truth to you which you believe to be true.

he was greater than Scipio, more virtuous than Cato, and more eloquent than Cicero. Political preachers would have done this, but Paul and Peter did not do this.

There is nothing in the Scriptures to justify the Church in applying its discipline to any member for offenses purely political, much less for his mere opinions or feelings on public affairs. The clergy are without authority, as they are often without fitness, to decide for their congregations what is right or what is wrong in the legislation of the country.

They are not called or sent to propagate any kind of political doctrine. The Church and the State are entirely separate and distinct in their origin, their objects, and the sphere of their action; inasmuch that the organism of one can never be used for any purpose of the other without injury to both.

Do I therefore say that the Christian religion is to have no influence on the political destiny of man? Far from it. Notwithstanding the unfaithfulness of many professors, it has already changed the face of human society; and it will yet accomplish its mission by spreading peace, independence, truth, justice and liberty, regulated by law, "from the sea to the uttermost ends of the earth." But this will be accomplished only by reforming and elevating the individuals of whom society is composed; not by exasperating communities against each other; not by any alliance with the governments of the world; not by any vulgar partnership with politicians to kill and plunder their enemies.

Every time a man is reformed and his character brought up to the standard of Christian morality, an addition is made, greater or less, to that righteousness which exalteth a nation, and an equal sum subtracted from the sin which is a reproach to any people. Sometimes a single conversion is extremely important in its immediate effect upon the public interest of a whole nation. No doubt the acceptance of the truth by Dionysius the Areopagite had much to do in moulding the subsequent laws and customs of Athens.

A gospel preacher addresses the consciences of his hearers for the honest purpose of converting them from the error of their ways; a political preacher speaks to one community, one party or one sect, and his object is the vindication of a wrong. The latter effects no religious purpose whatever; but the chances are ninety-nine in a hundred that he excites the bad passions of those who are present, while he standers the absent and undefended. Both classes of preachers frequently speak upon the same or similar subjects, but they do so with different objects and aims.

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But where is the authority for preaching hatred of those who understand the scripture differently? What precept can you show for inciting servile insurrection? Who gave you the right to say that John Brown was better than any other thief and murderer, meritorious because his crimes were committed against pro-slavery men?

I think the minister, in his pulpit discourses, is forbidden to touch at all upon that class of subjects which are purely political; such, for instance, as the banking law, tariff, railroad charters, State rights, the naturalization laws and negro suffrage. These are questions of mere political expediency; religion takes no cognizance of them; they come within the sole jurisdiction of the statesman; and the church has no more right to take sides upon them than the civil government has to use its legislative, judicial or executive power for the purpose of enforcing principles wholly religious.

In short, if I am not entirely mistaken, a Christian minister has no authority to preach upon any subjects except those in which divine revelation has given him an infallible rule of faith and practice; and, even upon them, he must speak always for the edification of his own hearers, "rightly dividing the word of truth" so as to lead them in the way of all righteousness. When he does more than this, he goes beyond his commission, he becomes a scurrilous politician and his influence is altogether pernicious.

The use of the clerical office for the purpose of promulgating political tenets, under any circumstances, or with any excuse, is in my judgment not only without any authority, but is the highest crime that can be committed against the government of God, or man. Perhaps I ought not to make this broad assertion without giving some additional reasons for it.

In the first place it is grossly dishonest. I employ you as a minister, pay your salary, and build you a church because I have confidence in your theological doctrines. But you may be at the same time wholly unfit for my political leader. Now you are guilty of a base fraud upon me if, instead of preaching religion, you take advantage of the position I have given you to ventilate your crude and ignorant notions on State affairs. I have asked for bread and you give me a stone; instead of the fish I bargain for, you give me a scorpion.

It destroys the unity of the church.—There is no room for rational dispute about the great truths of Christianity; but men will never agree upon political subjects, for human government is at best but a compromise of selfish interests and conflicting passions. When you mix the two together you break the church into fragments, and instead of "one Lord, one faith, and one baptism," you create a thousand warring sects, and substitute the proverbial bitterness of the *odium theologorum* for the "charity which thinketh no evil."

No one will deny that a union of the church and state is always the cause of bad government, perverted religion, and corrupt morals. I do not mean merely that legal union which exists in European countries. That is bad enough; but you have less common sense than I give you credit for if you do not see that this adulterous connection assumes its most polluting form when the church is voluntarily prostituted by her own ministers to the political party in a popular government.

The civil influence of such connections upon Church and State is easily accounted for.

Both of them in combination will do what either would recoil from if standing alone. A politician, backed by the promise of the clergy to sustain him, can safely defy honesty and trample upon law, for, do what he may, he is assured of clerical support here, and of heaven hereafter.

The clergy on the other hand, and those who are under their influence, easily acquire the habit of praising indiscriminately whatever is done by their party men. Acting and reacting upon one another, they go down together in the direction of the pit that is bottomless; and both are found to have "a strange alacrity at sinking."

No man can serve two masters faithfully; for he must hate one if he loves the other. A minister who admires and follows such men as those who have already ruled and ruined this country, must necessarily despise the character of Christ. If he glorifies the cruelty, rapacity and falsehood of his party leaders, he is compelled by an inflexible law of human nature to "deny the Lord who bought him."

The experience of fifteen centuries proves that political preachers are the great curse of the world. More than half the bloody wars which at different times have desolated Christendom, were produced by their direct instigation; and wherever they have thrust themselves into a contest commenced by others, they always envenomed the strife and made it more cruel, savage and uncompromising. The religious wars, so called, had nothing religious about them except that they were lashed up by the clergy. Look back and see if this be not true.

The Arian controversy (the first great schism) was followed by wars in which millions of lives were lost. Do you suppose the real quarrel was for the insertion or omission of *filioque* in that part of the creed which describes the procession of the Holy Ghost? Did a homoousian slaughter his brother because he was a homoousian? No, it was not the difference of a diphthong, but the plunder of an empire that they fought for. It was the politics of the church, not her religion, that infuriated the parties, and converted men into demons.

The thirty years war in Germany is often supposed to have been a fair stand up fight between the two leading forms of Christianity. It was not so. The religious difference was a false pretense of the political preachers for the promotion of their own schemes.

There was not a sane man on all that continent who would have felt himself impelled by motives merely religious to murder his neighbor for believing or disbelieving in transubstantiation. If proof of this were wanting, it might be found in the fact that, long before the war ended, the sectarian cries were abandoned, and Catholics as well as Protestants, were fighting on both sides.

It is utterly impossible to believe that the clergy of England and Scotland, if they had not been politicians, would have thought of waging bloody wars to settle questions of election and reprobation, fate, fore-knowledge, free will and other points of metaphysical theology. Nor would they, apart from their politics, have encouraged and committed horrid crimes of which they were guilty in the name of religion.

Can you think that the Irish were invaded, and conquered, and oppressed, and murdered and robbed, for centuries, merely because the English loved and believed in the Protestant religion? I suppose you know that those brutal atrocities were carried on for the purpose of giving political preachers in England possession of the churches, cathedrals, glebe lands and tithes which belonged to the Irish Catholics. The soldier was also rewarded by confiscations and plunder. The Church and the State hunted in couples, and Ireland was the prey which they ran down together.

Coming to our country, you find Massachusetts and Connecticut in Colonial times, and their treacherous wars against the Indians for purposes wholly mercenary; their enslaving of white persons and red ones, and selling them abroad or "swapping them for blackamoors;" their whipping, imprisoning and killing Quakers and Baptists, for their conscientious opinions; and their base treatment of men like Roger Williams and his friends, will mark their Government thro' all time as one of the cruelest and meanest that ever existed.

Political preachers have not behaved any better since the revolution than before. About the commencement of the present century they were busy in their vile vocation all over New England and deliberate slanders habitually uttered from the pulpit against Jefferson, Madison, and the friends who supported them were a disgrace to human nature. The immediate effect of this was the Yankee plot to secede from the Union, followed by corrupt combinations with a foreign enemy to betray the liberties of the country. Its remoter consequences are seen in the shameful rapacity and bitter malignity which, even at this moment, are howling for the property and blood of an unarmed and defenceless people.

You and I both remember the political preaching, which ushered in and supported the reign of the Know Nothings, Blood Tubs and Plug Uglies, when Maria Monk was a saint, and Joe Barker was Mayor of Pittsburgh; when pulpits resounded every Sunday with the most injurious falsehoods against Catholics; when the public mind was debauched by the inculcation of hypocrisy and deception; when ministers met their political allies in sworn secrecy to plot against the rights of their fellow citizens. You cannot forget what came of this—riot, murder, church-burning, lawless violence all over the land, and the subjugation of several great States to the political rule of a party destitute alike of principle and capacity.

I could easily prove that those clerical politicians who have tied their churches to the tail of the abolition party, are criminal on a grander scale than any of their predecessors. But I forbear, partly because I have no time, and partly because it may, for aught I know, be a sore subject with you. I would not excite your wrath, but rather "provoke you to good works."

Apart from the general subject there are two or three special ideas expressed in your letter from which I venture to dissent. You think that though a minister may speak from the pulpit on politics he ought not to indicate what party he belongs to. It strikes me that if he has a party, and wants to give ecclesiastical aid or comfort, he should boldly avow himself to be what he is, so that all men may know him. Sincerity is the first of virtues. (See Fourth Page.)

RESTORATION.

NATIONAL UNION CONVENTION.

The National Union Convention met in Philadelphia on the 14th inst. At about noon the delegates began to arrive at the wigwag, and the galleries filled up with the spectators. A band over the entrance door beguiled the time with music. The first impulse given to the proceedings was the announcement, by Postmaster-Gen'l Randall, that the delegations from Massachusetts and South Carolina would enter, arm in arm. This caused the whole assembly to rise and cheer lustily; and, as the representatives of those two States headed by Mr. Orr of South Carolina and General Couch of Massachusetts, walked up one of the aisles in this fraternal manner, the highest degree of excitement and enthusiasm was manifested—the band playing successively, "Rally around the Flag," "Away down South in Dixie," "The Star Spangled Banner," and "Yankee Doodle." Men waved their hats and cheered vociferously, and the ladies waved their handkerchiefs. Mr. Hogan, Member of Congress from Missouri, then called for like honors for President Johnson, to the Union, the Red, White and Blue, &c. Altogether, the convention seemed to open under very promising auspices as to harmony and general good feeling.

Hon. A. W. Randall, at half-past 12 o'clock, called the convention to order, and said: For the purpose of the temporary organization of this Convention, I propose that General John A. Dix, of New York, act as temporary Chairman. The proposition was unanimously agreed to.

Gen. Dix, who, on advancing to the desk of the presiding officer, was greeted with cordial and prolonged cheering said:

SPEECH OF GENERAL DIX.

Gentlemen of the Convention, and Fellow citizens of the whole Union, [cheers.] I return you my sincere thanks for the honor you have done me in choosing me to preside temporarily over your deliberations. I regard it as a distinction of no ordinary character, not only on account of the high personal and political standing of the gentlemen who compose this convention, but because it is a convention of the people of all the States of this Union, and a harmonious and good judgment, it will lead to the most important results. It may be truly said that no body of men has met on this continent under circumstances so momentous and so delicate since the year 1787—the year when our ancestors assembled in this city to frame a better government for the States which were parties to the old Confederation—a government which has been confirmed and made more enduring, as we trust, by the fearful trials and perils which it has encountered and overcome. (Applause.) The Constitution which they came here to frame, we are here to vindicate and restore. (Cheers.) We are here to assert the supremacy of representative government over all who are within the confines of the Union; a government which cannot, without the violation of its fundamental principles, be extended over any but those who are represented in it, (loud applause) over those who, by virtue of that representation, are entitled to a voice in the administration of the public affairs. (Renewed applause.) It was such a government our fathers framed and put in operation. It is the government which we are bound by every consideration of fidelity, justice and good faith to defend and to maintain. (Cheers.) Gentlemen, we are not living under such a government. (Applause and cries of "That's true.") Thirty-six States have for months been governed by twenty-five; eleven States have been wholly without representation in the legislative body of the nation; the numerical proportion of the represented States to the unrepresented has just been changed by the admission of the delegation from Tennessee—a unit taken from the smaller and added to the larger number; ten States are still denied the representation in Congress to which they are entitled under the Constitution. It is this wrong which we have come here to protest against, and as far as in us lies, to redress. (Applause.)

When the President of the United States declared that armed resistance to the authority of the Union was over, all the States had a right to be represented in the National Legislature. (Loud cheering.) They had the right under the Constitution. They had the right under the resolutions passed by both houses of Congress in 1801. Those resolutions were not concurrent, but they were substantially identical. Moreover, the States were entitled to be so represented on other grounds of fairness and good faith. The President, not in pursuance of any constitutional power, had called on the confederated States to accept conditions for their admission to the exercise of their legitimate functions as members of the Union, those conditions being the ratification of amendments to the Constitution abolishing slavery, and the repudiation of the debts contracted in the effort to overthrow the government. These conditions were

met and accepted. The exaction of new conditions is unjust; a violation of the faith of the government, subversive of the principles of our political system, and dangerous to the public prosperity and peace. (Applause.)

Each house of Congress may, as the judge of the qualifications of its own members, reject individuals for just cause, but the two bodies, acting jointly, cannot exclude entire delegations without an unwarrantable assumption of power. (Applause.) Congress has not only done this, it has gone farther. It has incorporated new conditions into amendments to the Constitution, and submitted them for the ratification of the States. There is no probability that these amendments will be ratified by three fourths of the States: To insist on the conditions they contain is to prolong indefinitely the exclusion of more than one-fourth of the States from representation in Congress. Is this the government our fathers fought to establish? (Cries of "No! No!") Is this the Union we have been fighting to preserve? ("No! No!") The President has done all in his power to correct this wrong (applause), and to restore the legislative body to its full proportions, by giving to all the members of the Union their proper share in the public councils. (Cheers.) Legislation without representation is an anomaly in our political system. Under any other form of government it would be but another name for usurpation and misrule.

Gentlemen, I trust that in our deliberations here we shall confine ourselves to one main purpose—that of redressing the wrong to which I have referred. There is much in the administration of the government which needs amendment—some things to be done and others to be undone. There are commercial and financial reforms which are indispensable to the public welfare. But we shall have the power to carry out these until we change the political complexion of Congress. (Enthusiastic and long-continued applause.) This should be our first, our immediate aim. It is in the Congressional districts that the vital contest is to take place. The control of one branch of Congress will enable us to prevent partial, unjust, and pernicious legislation. The control of both houses, with the power to introduce and carry out salutary reforms, will come later. (Cheers.)

With wise, harmonious and judicious action on our part, and on the part of those we represent, this need not be long delayed. (Applause.) I believe that public opinion is right, and that it is only necessary to present to the people more clearly the issues between us and the political organization which controls the action of Congress. And, gentlemen, is not the object for which we are contending, a consummation worthy of our highest and most devoted efforts, to bring back the republic (purified, strengthened by the fiery ordeal through which it has passed) to its ancient prosperity and power (applause) to present to the world an example worthy of imitation, not a mere Utopian vision of a good government, but the grand old reality of the better times (applause) with which the memory of our fathers, the recollections of the past, and all our hopes of the future, are inseparably entwined (cheers)—ONE COUNTRY, ONE FLAG, ONE UNION OF EQUAL STATES. (Long continued applause.)

The convention was opened with prayer after which the call for the convention was read. Appropriate rules of order were adopted, and committees appointed on credentials and organization. Next the circular inviting Democrats to participate in the convention, was read, also the address of Democratic Congressmen approving the convention.

The convention adjourned to meet at 12 o'clock to-morrow.

Wednesday's Proceedings.

The weather being now pleasant, the attendance was immense. Proceedings were opened with prayer. The committee on organization reported the name of Hon. J. R. Doolittle of Wisconsin for the Presidency of the convention, and a Vice President and Secretary from each State. Senator D., who was received with intense enthusiasm, said:

SPEECH OF SENATOR DOOLITTLE.

Gentlemen of the Convention and Fellow Citizens of the United States, (applause.) For the distinguished honor of being called upon to preside over the deliberations of this Convention, I sincerely thank you. I could have wished that its responsibility had fallen upon another, but relying upon that courtesy and generous confidence which have called me to the chair, I will enter upon its duties with an earnest desire for the success of that great cause in which we are now engaged. Among the great events of our day, this convention, in my opinion, will prove to be one of the greatest, for it will secure both her victories.

No less renowned than war. (Applause.)

And this convention is one of her victories—may I not say, a crowning victory? For the first time in six years, a