

## The Pastor's Page.

### The Preacher in Politics.

Recently there was a little flurry in the municipal politics of Cincinnati because of a report circulated that a number of the ministers in prominent pulpits had determined to ally themselves with a confederation of fusionists to bring in a "reform administration." As we happen to know, the project had never been formally discussed, and no practical plan, even, had been seriously put forward; so that the matter received unmerited publicity. Nevertheless, the papers seemed quite agitated, and there were not wanting "practical" citizens who let it be plainly understood that they regarded a preacher in politics quite as much out of place as a politician in the pulpit.

But we are not convinced by the sagacity of their remarks. We admit immediately that, to discuss partisan politics in the pulpit, on the Sabbath-day, is an outrageous breach of the proprieties. But to denounce flagrant evils in the city or the nation, to hold up the higher law of civic righteousness, to exhort people to cease, as citizens, from doing evil, and to learn to do well—this is to use legitimately the prophetic function, as did Isaiah, Savanarola, John Knox, and Henry Ward Beecher. Jesus himself gave high example of such application of truth to public affairs and national morals.

It is possible for preachers to blunder by being too precipitate and hot-headed. Not every minister is called to be a Parkhurst, and before any assumes the role he must be very certain of his facts. He must be ready to back up, with specific proof, every charge he makes. He must reflect that he invites a long and stubborn fight with men who will not be overtender with him, and who are used to handling rough weapons. He ought not to undertake his crusade unless he feels absolutely "pressed" to do so, and unless he believes that he can really effect some good by his agitation. But there are times when the prophet of the Lord must speak out; when he must unite action to speech; and when to refrain would be inexcusable cowardice. A preacher must never discuss these themes simply to furnish a sensation, draw a crowd and get newspaper notoriety. It must be undertaken only when it is felt as a solemn, an inescapable duty.

And we repel with an instinctive feeling of indignation the insinuation that the minister has unsexed himself politically; that he is an "ecclesiastic"—in a separate category by himself—neither fish, flesh, nor fowl—neither man nor woman, but that nondescript thing "a parson." He is a man, and has the rights of a man. He is a citizen, and has the rights of a citizen. He is an intelligent patriot, and his views and actions would seem to be quite as necessary and beneficial for the country as the views of the "professionals" of the saloon type. It is quite considerate in the men who "run with the masheen" to be so alarmed about ministers losing their piety and smirching their purity in the "dirty pool." Do they mean to imply that they are already so bedaubed themselves that more or less mud in addition on their persons will not much matter? They express themselves as perfectly willing to run the political end of the city and State, and hint loudly to the preachers that they look after the religious end, run prayer-meetings during the week, and preach "the simple gospel"—save the mark!—on Sunday. But we have not so learned Christ. He took a hand, both generally and specifically, in the affairs of Jerusalem and Palestine.

The Rev. Dr. B. R. Wilburn, of Portsmouth, Ohio, has well stated the whole case in these stirring words contained in a letter to the press:

"The preacher in politics.' Well, what of it? He is a man and an American citizen. The one hundred and eleven thousand American preachers are intelligent, cultured, physically and mentally the peers of any other profession, and loyal to our institutions. They know as much about the origin, development, and history of our social and political institutions as the average practical politician knows. But few men can tell more than they about our civil institutions, our foreign relations, trade conditions, Monroe doctrine, free trade, gold standard, sociological problems, political economy, and National and municipal polity. They are loyal and patriotic, as the roll of the Grand Army and roster of the army during the Spanish-American War will show. 'If any one present can show just why this class of loyal, intelligent American citizens may not be Republicans, Democrats, Prohibitionists, or Populists, 'let him now speak, or forever afterwards hold his peace.'"—Western Christian Advocate.

### The Pastor and Responsibility.

And so to the pastors now and to come, to those who are already in the thick of the fight, and to those who are preparing to enter when God shall permit them to do so, I have this to say of our responsibility in arousing God's people to the importance of the subject that lies before us. If our modern missionary movement proves a failure, Jesus Christ will hold us ministers accountable; for He has given to us a place of leadership and power, and He called us into that position, not to be scholars, not to be eloquent, not to find rich places for life, but to spend all our energies in working for that which lies closest to His bleeding heart, the saving of the souls of the millions who are lost. No man in all this world assumes a position of such great responsibility as that of the pastor when he enters upon his work of the ministry. As the executive of the local church he stands at the head of the individual congregation as a leader. As the executive of the great commission he stands next to his Lord. Thus as the bishop of souls the pastor is the missionary middleman, entrusted by Jesus Christ with the spread of the commerce of the Gospel. Now, the layman is entrusted with the stewardship of facts and forces. And if the world is not brought to the knowledge of Jesus Christ in this generation, it will be because the ministers of God have been derelict in their duty, and have failed in dispensing to their churches, and through them to the world, the facts and forces that have been committed to them by the great Head of the Church.—Rev. J. Millard, D. D., at Toronto Students' Convention.

### Original Anecdote of Rev. John Wesley.

[ABSTRACT FROM THE ITINERANT OF 1831.]

At an annual conference over which Mr. Wesley presided, he opened the session by asking the usual questions, as to whether there were any objections to the moral and religious character of the preachers or any charge against any of them for neglect of duty or want of adaptation to their circuit work.

In calling the names he omitted his own and his brother Charles, when Rev. John Allen, a highly respected preacher, rose and said "he objected to the course pursued by the President in not calling his own name and that of his brother Charles." This was the first time Mr. Wesley's conduct had been called in question in the conference, and his high church principles instantly took fire and he replied with great warmth that "he would not submit to be examined by his preachers." Mr. Allen said: "Then, sir, I have done," and sat down.

The greatest stillness and astonishment now pervaded the conference.

Mr. Wesley recollecting himself, said:

"Brother Allen, have you any charge against me?" Mr. Allen said: "I have." "Then," said Mr. Wesley, "I will begin at the beginning," and proceeded to call his own name. All eyes were now turned toward Mr. Allen, who arose and said: "I have something in the form of a charge to prefer against you, sir, namely, you have promised a number of times to visit my circuit and have failed to do so, to the great grief of many of my people, who would greatly love to see you." Mr. Allen had hardly spoken these words when the clock, which was to regulate the hour for meals, announced the breakfast hour, and after a few moments of prayer, the conference adjourned to a later hour. During the time of breakfast Mr. Wesley withdrew, and when he re-entered the room he appeared to be lost in a forest of thought, from which it seemed difficult to arouse him; his wonted fires did not seem to glow with their usual fervor. Returning to the conference room, after singing and prayer, he requested Mr. Allen to stand up, and said: "Brother Allen, I beg your pardon, God's pardon, and the pardon of my brethren for the improper warmth into which I have been betrayed." He then said he was accountable to his brethren like all the rest, stating, in conclusion, that the difficulty in question arose from circumstances over which he had no control, and asked the brethren to unite with him in prayer. The whole conference was affected even to tears.—Baltimore Methodist.

Did you ever organize a church? Did you ever establish a new preaching point? Did you ever erect a church building? Did you ever increase the membership of any church of which you were pastor, except according to its natural social growth?—If not, why are you so severe in your condemnation of brethren who do not agree with your missionary didactics? Prove your doctrines by your own missionary success.—Herald of Gospel Liberty.

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