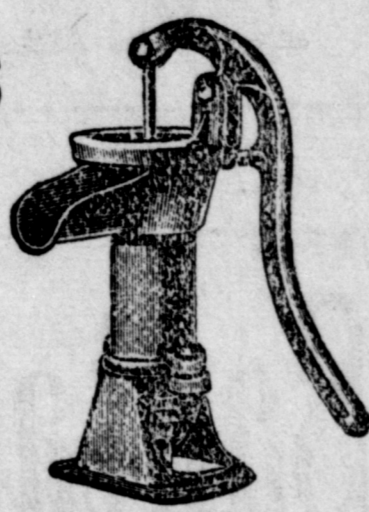


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THE DUTY OF THE PULPIT AGAINST THE LIQUOR TRAFFIC.

By C. H. Payne, LL. D. (Continued from last issue.)

And since the liquor men demand and obtain protection for their business, what is more natural or more reasonable than that good men should demand that the defence and protection of the law should cease? And as the liquor forces are united in their demands, what is more natural or reasonable or necessary than that patriotic men of every name, and especially Christian men, irrespective of party, should unite in demanding the legal overthrow of this destroyer of their homes and enemy of the public good?

Yes, the liquor question is in politics, and can never be gotten out of politics until the ministry and the Church unite to put it out. And they will never put it out by pious talk nor fervent prayers; in this issue, forced upon us by the enemy, votes and votes only give the ultimate decision. The liquor question will never be out of politics till forced out by the ballots of free men emancipated from party domination.

In order to do this the pulpit has a delicate and difficult but necessary duty to perform. Difficult, but not more difficult than some other duties from which it must not shrink. Men occupying the pews and calling themselves Christians must be made to see that there is no evil of society greater than the saloon and no duty greater than the destruction of the saloon. That the saloon must be outlawed, that it cannot be outlawed until a majority of voters demand it, and that this necessary majority can never be secured while men slavishly follow the dictum of the party managers who want the saloon vote.

The pulpit must preach the duty of loyalty to God as supreme above loyalty to party. This is the solemn and imperative duty of the pulpit of to-day.

But we are told again that the pulpit must not meddle with politics. By whose authority and in whose interest is this saying so flippantly bandied about? Who authorizes the pulpit to leave whatever has to do with politics outside the sphere of its discussions. Surely the Bible is not sponsor for this very convenient doctrine of unprincipled politicians who do not like to face the pulpit's opposition.

But since the gravest moral questions are involved in the politics of a country like our own, it is treason to truth and to God to demand the silence of the pulpit in relation to these questions. The pulpit must discharge this duty with truth and with love, and it must be in this as in all its ministrations neither an advocate nor an apologist of any political party as such. As a minister, the pastor should be non-partisan, but not a non-Christian. As a man, he should ally himself as conscience and the Word of God bid him.

But non-partisanship by no means requires the pulpit to be silent on all political questions. On the contrary, the silence of a public man like the minister is rightly construed as decidedly partisan, and is often, indeed, the most effective form of carrying party measures. The pulpit should be non-partisan in fact and not in mere profession, and should not lend itself to mere party service any more by its silence than by its utterances.

But are we not in danger of falling into error concerning the relations and duty of the pulpit to political organizations and measures? Whence comes the widely prevalent sentiment that the pulpit must be dumb concerning political parties and their issues?

What law of God, what principle of Christianity, what reasonable requirement of man demands the silence of the pulpit concerning any man or body of men, any society or corporation or organization whose avowed principles and open conduct vitally affect the interest of society? And what command of Christ or what principle of ethics exempts the organization called a political party from the honest consideration, or, if need be, the denunciation of the Christian pulpit?

Indeed the political party, because it makes its appeal for popular support, is more than other organizations the legitimate subject of pulpit discussion. The contrary position is dangerous in the extreme. If a body of men organized in any other capacity promulgates theories perilous to the community and solicits public support, the pulpit would be accounted cowardly and guilty to maintain silence. Why then when a political organization adopts a platform that embodies dangerous principles, proposes "to frame iniquity into a law" and asks the support of the Church, should so many men demand that the pulpit be dumb concerning this matter? Shall the pulpit yield to this unrighteous and perilous demand because a large number of party-blinded men unite to make it?

What will happen if the pulpit does heed this clamour? Suppose a political party advocates the legalizing of lotteries, the licensing of prostitution, the protecting of gambling-houses, the pulpit, in obedience to this imperious behest, must keep silent and allow these abominations

to blight the homes and ruin the youth that it is the pulpits office to protect and save.

Shame on the man who makes such a senseless and dangerous demand on the pulpit. Shame on the pulpit that yields to the demand. And greater shame on partisans and pulpits that silently surrender to the greater evil of the liquor traffic and to the party organizations that seek to protect and to fortify this iniquity by law.

One other link and our chain is complete.

A united pulpit will soon bring a united Church; the Christian forces will be massed, and the legalized traffic in intoxicating drink will be overthrown. Scarcely a moment remains to let in the light upon the glowing hope. But light there is, and hope lures us on, and courage summons us on manly endeavor.

A hundred Christian pulpits united in this holy cause will bring in this millennial morn. Defections in the pew and dismissals from the pulpit may here and there occur; but when the new incumbent of the pulpit gives the same "certain sound" to the trumpet as did his dismissed predecessor the contest will quickly cease, the forces will be united, and the long-looked-for victory will have been won.

Our chain is complete. Its links binding the hundred thousand pulpits and the many-millioned membership of Christ's Church, in this goodly land, into a blessed unity of purpose and endeavor to destroy this ravager of human hearts and happy homes, also will bind the gloomy present to a golden future throwing a bridge of hope across the dark chasm and bidding the emancipated millions of a land redeemed from the curse of a strong drink pass over to a "Paradise regained."

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