

Christianity and American Politics

Of us Americans whose "citizenship is in heaven" it must be said also that we have citizenship in the most significant republic of all history. Duties in each of the half spheres indicated above are compatible and relevant. All conceptions that would break their identity, continuity, or universal control are badly born and really stupid. Citizenship in heaven correlates tenaciously with citizenship in the great republic. It is the expression of this heavenly citizenship alone that can guarantee American continuity in a worth while national life. Let us come to contact with these vital principles until it shall be possible for God to turn his power upon us.

The world was never as weary of the blight of statecraft without moral imperatives as it is just now. We are in the flux and flow of subtle evasions, selfish maneuverings, and ravenous excesses. The fact that the American citizenship conscience is getting more unprejudiced information, is rising to a better insight, and is increasingly powerful, is setting rays of radiant light to the overhanging skies. To the unscrupulous, to those lusting for selfish power, to autocrats and profiteers, this fact is increasingly troublesome and unwelcome. Herein is the moral tug of war that is now and forever on. Never mind the incidental confusion that grows out of the fact that conscience is ever more powerful and constructive. Do not become fidgety, complaining, pessimistic, or cowardly. This is the hour for deliberate estimates, carefully chartered liberties, dispassionate surveys, hearty and patient contacts, well grounded firmness, progressive policies, and expanding programs of constructive certainty.

Our partisan organizations are neither immaculate or infallible. They have often embodied the good and the good is always opportune. It is difficult for them to fully represent the average in the rank and file of our citizenship because conventions and other expressions of political action are exposed to the maneuvers of those who are below the average but who are unusually aggressive. Like many other organizations our partisan organizations are often unable to command their members with certainty. Recently both of our leading political parties have had the most unusual difficulty in controlling even their national conventions. The temper of insurgency is everywhere. The reasons for this situation are not always in mind even by otherwise astute politicians. To be sure, insurgency has varying degrees of merit but statesman should be careful in analysis and interpretation of the same.

Every economic and political question is at bottom a moral question, and there are multitudes of people in politics who have not discovered this decisive fact. Because they are clouded here they work endless confusion and disharmony. One of these fine days we shall have a political leadership well seasoned with the wisdom that promptly enthrones Christian morality in the control of political action and that will be a great day for the race. Far too much political conduct is based on the subtle illusion that mere divisive issues will answer in politics while moral principles are deliberately side stepped. All this arises from slovenly thinking. There are fixed equations in the pathway toward social advancement and this is a good time to locate the controlling equations.

An increasing number of American citizens are thinking through in the matter of allegiance to party organization. They reach the solid conviction that their allegiance to a party may not fitly or logically be as commanding as their allegiance to Christian morality and the progressive principles that arise therefrom. This brings political action to the acid test. This elevates moral principles above political expediency. This is really good politics in the deepest sense of the term. Insurgency is without significance and is even ridiculous unless buttressed in righteousness. When the insurgency is thus based it is fundamentally unchallengeable. It comes to pass that men locate themselves by their allegiances and especially by the one which they hold as supreme.

Under these fixed moral verities what was once essentially progressive in partisanship may become as conservative as the most reactionary could wish. Such insurgency as was embodied in Theodore Roosevelt in 1912 probably does

not exist in any political party at this time. At that time certain powerful special and selfish interests were in control of both political parties. The struggle to set within the hands of the people the instruments of political action has always been resisted by special privilege. Special privilege has always been largely in control of our American economic life. Such control here or elsewhere is not constructive. Just as the liquor interests are putting up a final fight against the verdict of the people, so the strangle hold of special privilege upon American economic life is now especially intense. Roosevelt has fallen and there is a strong effort by a certain grade of politicians to discredit his surviving counterpart, William Jennings Bryan. America is under obligation to both of these great men to a degree that will not be realized until the future shall have dealt with them justly.

It is difficult to secure as a candidate for the presidency, a man who is not of record as an obedient tool of the special interests. It is affirmed of one of the nominees brought forward that he was the enemy of Mr. Roosevelt and the friend of all or most of his prominent enemies. There has been a stupid reaction from Mr. Roosevelt's sturdy insurgency. It must be remembered that any insurgency to be effective must be of notable persistence and incorruptible integrity. Programs of reform need to be well matured and well foundationed. Here is where a statesmanship of insight will tie up to Christian morality as the unchanging source of safe and sane political administration. We must not only work out a program of adequate social justice and advance, but we must be keenly alive to surviving injustices. Our allegiance to Christ for their removal must be stronger than our allegiance to a recreant partisanship. It is more worthy to be right than to be blindly partisan.

American citizenship must rise above the inclination to surrender fixed progressive principles at every or any call of political expediency. This rising into higher moral attitudes shall go on until as citizens we are grounded in inviolate moral principles. This improved-to-standard, moral character in our citizenship, will sterilize our evils until they will fade as by-gones from human memory, and the hurt heart of human happiness will leap with new joy. We must never forget that a liberalism that lacks the high impulse of moral persistence evaporates into the cheapest sort of political opportunism. This is social degeneracy and from it may the good Lord deliver us.

WM. M. BELL, Bishop.
Bishop's Residence, 1509 State St., Harrisburg,
Penna.

TWO VIEWS OF THE SAN FRANCISCO CONVENTION

There is much to be said in favor of the action of the San Francisco convention and much that is unfavorable. That Governor Cox has many excellent qualities fitting him for the presidency, and will prove a strong candidate, seems to be generally admitted. He has a strong and pleasing personality and wins men to him in public and private life. He is amiable in manner, plausible in speech and Democratic in his ways; and a shrewd, sharp, far-seeing politician. He knows how to play the game of politics and play it well. He has long been an outstanding figure in the Democratic party. His distinction is that of a man who has been three times elected governor of his state, and as Mark Sullivan says, he comes to the end of the career with a record that makes him both popular with the Ohio voter and esteemed by a large circle of political friends. His administration of the affairs of state have been good in the sense of getting things done in a satisfactory way to the business interests. He is also described as a man who has ever been forward looking and sympathetic to safe progress. But—and this but is not to be overlooked—

"My heart is in the grave with our cause and I must pause until it comes back to me," said William Jennings Bryan, according to the Associated Press, giving as a reason for not making a statement on the work of the Democratic national convention.

It is barely possible that Mr. Bryan finds himself in such an embarrassing position as to

make it impossible support of the nominee if not the platform upon which he stands. That the defeat of his dry plank made possible, if not certain, the nomination of a wet candidate, goes without saying. It is generally admitted, and had been charged before and during the agitation of this subject that a dry plank, if adopted would eliminate all wet candidates. The convention did not act blindly. The wets knew what they were doing—as delegates from dry states knew what they were doing—when they voted against a dry plank.

The dries deliberately and with knowledge aforethought, paved the way for the wets to dominate the convention and name the candidates. The wets recognized it as a great victory for Cox, and encouraged them in their fight, notwithstanding the dries joined them in the fight against a dry plank, and the result is just what had been predicted, and what Mr. Bryan knew, hence his refusal to take further interest in the proceedings.

"My theory is that the people are much more interested in the platform upon which a man stands than in the section in which he lives. I don't object to telling the good points, whether fourteen or less, of any candidate," said Mr. Bryan, "but I refuse to share the responsibility for a man whom I consider unavailable. When a delegate rushed to me with a warning that if I did not help nominate Mr. So-and-So, Mr. Blank would be nominated, I said, 'I do not think it wise to do wrong simply because somebody else may do so. I am not responsible for anything except my vote or influence, and that will be used for no one who, in my judgment, would be less than the most available man I know among those who are candidates.'"

It will be thus seen that he early washed his hands of any responsibility in naming the candidate of the party and this, too, after being urged by his friends to point the way. He had evidently been threatened with Cox if he did not go to one or the other leading candidates. But he refused to choose between what he regarded as two evils. "I do not think it wise to do wrong simply because somebody else may do so," he said. Whatever may be Mr. Bryan's final conclusion—whether he can consistently support a man who would, he believes, be instrumental in bringing back the open saloon, first through the medium of light wines and beer, after years of struggle on the part of prohibitionists to bring about a realization of their hopes, it is certain he will not oppose him but content himself with silence during the campaign, except in congressional districts where the issue is being made by the wets to capture the next house, and thus make not only possible but certain the accomplishment of their purpose to nullify the Eighteenth amendment.

All the money and brains of the wets will now be used to capture both branches of congress, the senate and house. Naturally the wets are elated over their prospects both in the presidential contest and in the districts in the various states where they have a candidate, selecting wet Democrats to oppose dry Republicans and wet Republicans to oppose dry Democrats, taking no chances, believing the candidate elected, whether he be Cox or Harding, will carry the districts with him.

But they no doubt feel that they would derive more certain benefit from the success of Cox than Harding, as for instance, in states like Indiana, where practically all the representatives in congress are Republicans, they have in each district, where there is a dry Republican candidate, a wet Democrat in the field. Such contests are raging already in ten of the thirteen districts of that state. The issue is clean-cut and lines sharply drawn, and promises, according to the National Inquirer, to be the deciding factor in that state. From the same authority we learn that Henry S. Priest, of St. Louis, candidate for the Democratic nomination for United States senator, is conducting a campaign which gives additional evidence of "a widespread, centrally directed and well financed movement now well under way throughout the country for the repeal of the Volstead act and the nullification of the Eighteenth amendment."

After all, it would appear on the surface, that the Republicans in Chicago showed more tact and shrewdness and judgment in the selection of a candidate who could possibly unite all elements of the party than the Democrats in San Francisco. The Journal is sorry to have to make this admission, because the party had