

Letters To the Editor

PREACHERS IN POLITICS

Editor Watauga Democrat:
I am enclosing a clipping from the Biblical Recorder, written by Dr. E. Y. Mullins, which I would like you to publish in your paper.
Respectfully,
MRS. J. L. TATUM.
Todd, N. C.

(Enclosure)

(In the following, Doctor Mullins is not discussing the present political situation, except as it involves the duty and responsibility of preachers as citizens. As many have criticized preachers for the part they have taken in the present campaign we think they are entitled to a word of defense, and there is no man in the south better fitted to discuss this subject than Dr. Mullins. He is a great preacher himself and has been head of our fine "School of the Prophets" at Louisville, for more than a quarter of a century. For this reason we are publishing his article.—Editor Recorder.)

The politicians are invading the ministry and preaching to the preachers. Politics is invading religion and telling preachers and churches what their duty is. Now all that preachers ask or claim for themselves are the elementary and basic rights of other American citizens, and these rights belong to rabbin and priests, as well as other ministers.

The concern of the politicians for the ministry—the church is pathetic. Their conception of the function of the ministry is a curious creation of the political mind.

These preaching politicians, who are preaching the doctrine that preachers have no business with politics, have a number of tremendous changes to bring about, if they are to make good their contention.

First, a change in the Declaration of Independence and constitution of the United States. The Declaration should have read thus: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal—except preachers; that they are endowed by the Creator with certain inalienable rights—all except preachers; that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness—for all except preachers; that governments derive their just powers from the consent of the governed—except from preachers when they are among the governed." So much for the Declaration.

The fourth article of the Articles of Confederation should have read: "The free inhabitants of each of these states, paupers, vagabonds, fugitives from justice and preachers excepted, shall be entitled to all privileges and immunities of free citizens in the several states."

Several vital changes are necessary also in the constitution of 1787, thus: "We, the people of the United States, except preachers, do ordain

and establish this constitution." Article IV. should be made to read: "The citizens of each state, except preachers, shall be entitled to all privileges and immunities of citizens."

The first amendment should be changed at several points and read: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof, or abridging the freedom of speech, except the speech of preachers, or of the press, except when preachers write for the press; or the right of the people to assemble and petition the government for a redress of grievances, except assemblies called by religious leaders, say in Asheville, N. C., during a presidential campaign."

In addition to the politicians themselves, some preachers and religious people seem to have accepted the rebuke of the preaching politicians and are urging that the preachers keep silent on politics and confine themselves to the "simple gospel." They are in worse conflict with their Bibles than the politicians are with the constitution. For example, if faith and works go together, they must change their Bibles and pray that "Thy kingdom may come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven, except the sphere of politics and government." So, also, they must change Paul's prayer for them in Colossians, and make it read, "that ye may be fruitful in every good work, except in the good work of a free citizen." The "simple gospel" is very comprehensive, but it will have to be modified according to the current theory and preachers will have to preach in the interest of every kind of righteousness except civic and political righteousness.

The Apostle tells us the young preacher Timothy that he much preach and what the simple gospel is to do: It is to "equip a man for good work of every kind." But the new theory must add "except the kind that has to do with civic political conditions." (2 Tim. 3:17.)

1. Our great need is a better civic conscience, but only politicians are fitted to train that conscience—not preachers.

2. Another great need is that religion should make contact with life—but religious leaders must seal their lips about life and live in the clouds of mysticism.

3. Everybody should vote—but when a preacher votes, he should never tell how or why he votes except to his wife—and even this might get him in hot water.

4. Freedom of speech is an inalienable American right and privilege—for women, negroes, naturalized and unnaturalized foreigners, socialists, anarchists, bolsheviks, morons and idiots, but not for preachers.

5. Open and candid discussion of all public questions is an American necessity—all may participate except infants in arms and preachers.

6. Law enforcement is possible

only by sustaining public opinion—but preachers must not contribute any of their ideas to the formation of public opinion.

7. All class distinctions are contrary to the spirit and genius of our American institutions—except when preachers are put in the class of ineligible and incompetents in civic and political discussion.

8. Lawyers, doctors and other professional men carry along their civic and political rights, but when a preacher enters the ministry, he renounces those rights and becomes a civic and political nonentity.

Medical societies may work for law of sanitation; labor societies for a minimum wage law; automobile societies for good roads—without anybody being alarmed lest the government enter a "union" with any of these organizations. But if a group of church people favor a law for the general welfare, pious politicians begin to tremble in their boots and attempt to steady the ark of the Lord lest there be a "union" of church and state.

The absurdity of the whole business is manifest. The truth is the preacher is exactly like any other citizen in rights, immunities, duties and privileges. He should, of course, use common sense as to how, and when and where and to what degree he takes part in political discussions—but so should all others. A preacher, of course, can make mistakes and even play the fool in politics, as well as in religion, but when he enacts that role in politics, he will never be lonely, since there are so many others who are not preachers who do the same thing.

He should, of course, stick to the "simple gospel." But the simple gospel includes every form of righteousness, personal and individual; family life, business and industrial, social and economic, civic and political. The preacher who draws a circle about himself, excluding any form of righteousness, has broken with his Bible and lost his vision of the kingdom of God, and departed from the simple gospel.

The preacher's active interest in politics is usually aroused only when some crucial and vital moral issue is at stake, some issue civic but non-partisan, something involving what he believes to be a step in human progress, a phase of God's kingdom on earth. Some of these are inevitably political as well as moral questions, for example, the Declaration of Independence, the American constitution; the franchise; freedom of speech and of the press; the right of petition, protest, remonstrance and appeal; slavery; freedom of worship and separation of church and state; the right of women to vote; world peace; narcotics laws; and laws to outlaw the saloon.

I think that the moral judgment of man in enlightened countries would condemn any preacher who was without ideals or convictions on such questions. The Bible teems with examples of "preachers in politics" in their capacity of proclaimers of

righteousness. Nathan rebuked King David; Elijah castigated King Ahab and Jezebel; Azariah rebuked King Uzziah; Joab the Baptist rebuked King Herod, and paid for it with his life; Paul and Peter, the New Testament models for preachers, in their epistles both define civic duties to their followers repeatedly.

Note, however, that usually preachers do not make these issues partisan—they should all be regarded as non-partisan for the general welfare. Mere partyism is, of course, out of place in the pulpit. Great principles stand on their own merits. Political parties make them partisan issues. Quintine is regarded by doctors who prescribe it as a non-partisan medicine, good for Democrats and Republicans alike.

But if one of these parties should adopt an anti-quintine plank in its political platform it would force the doctors at once into politics, very partisan and, I suspect, very vehement. So also preachers become active in politics only when some basic, moral principles, something necessary to human welfare is attacked by a political party. If a preacher

cannot expound and proclaim such principles without being charged with partyism, then there is something wrong with him, or with the people, or with the relations between him and the people.

I do not doubt that some of the tears that are being shed over the alleged delinquency of preachers in politics are genuine. But I am fully convinced that most of these tears are of the crocodile variety. They remind one of the story of the late Senator Vance of North Carolina. He was asked if he did not think it very bad for preachers to meddle in politics. With a twinkle in his eye he replied: "Well, it all depends on which side they meddle in."

CLUB WOMEN TO VOTE EACH ONE'S CHOICE

In an effort to make clear to the general public the status of business and professional women throughout the country in the coming political campaign, the National Federation of Business and Professional Women's clubs has issued a letter to all

federated clubs, urging members to identify themselves actively with the political party of their choice.

The letter further attempts to make clear the fact that, contrary to the impressions of some members of the executive board of the national organization, this body, in its constitution, is bound to a non-partisan position in all political matters and all members are by no means deprived of their individual rights to participate as individuals in campaign work. All leaders in the state and national federations are asked to use their influence in urging all club members to exercise this great privilege of citizenship by voting in the coming national election for the man of each member's choice.

The most effective oratory in Chicago, it would seem, is bombastic.—Arkansas Gazette.

As we recall it, complaint about the high cost of living began about the time patches went out of style.—Bakersfield Californian.

REPUBLICAN CONVENTION

The Republicans of Watauga County are called to meet in convention at the courthouse in Boone on

SEPTEMBER 29th

AT 12 O'CLOCK M.

to nominate a ticket for county officers and transact such other business as may come before the convention.

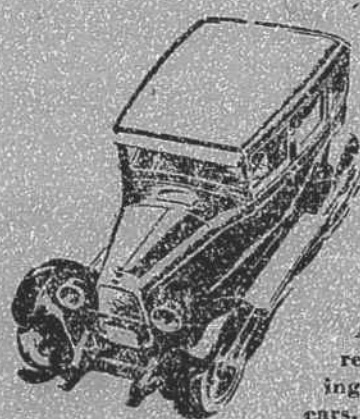
The chairmen of the different Townships are requested to call their Township Primaries to meet at their respective voting places on FRIDAY SEPTEMBER 28th, at 1 o'clock p. m., and elect one delegate for every 25 votes cast in the last election, and reorganize their Executive Committees.

This September 5, 1928.

W. H. GRAGG, Chairman.

J. C. RAY, Secretary

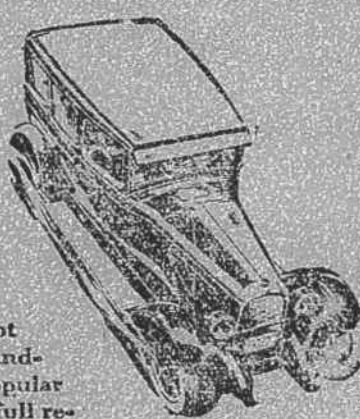
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