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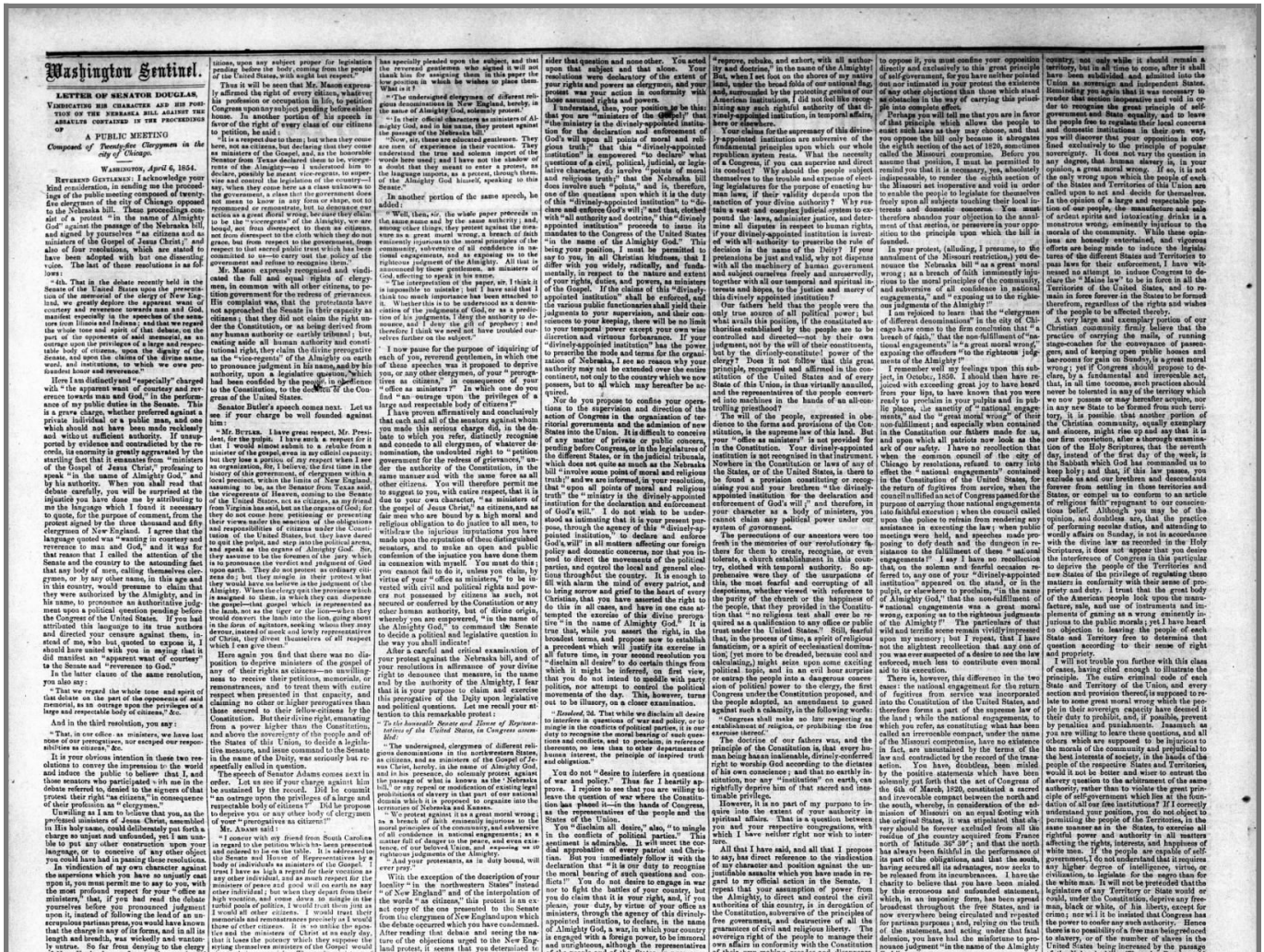

Washington Sentinel.

LETTER OF SENATOR DOUGLAS.

VINDICATION HIS CHARACTER AND HIS POSITION OF THE NEBRASKA BILL AGAINST THE ASSAULTS CONTAINED IN THE PROCEEDINGS OF

A PUBLIC MEETING

Composed of Twenty-five Clergymen in the city of Chicago.

WASHINGTON, *April 6, 1854.*

REVEREND GENTLEMEN: I acknowledge your kind consideration, in sending me the proceedings of the public meeting composed of twenty-five clergymen of the city of Chicago opposed to the Nebraska bill. These proceedings consist of a protest "in the name of Almighty God" against the passage of the Nebraska bill, and signed by yourselves "as citizens and ministers of the Gospel of Jesus Christ;" and also of four resolutions, which are stated to have been adopted "with but one dissenting voice. The last of these resolutions is as follows:

"4th. That in the debate recently held in the Senate of the United States upon the presentation of the memorial of the clergy of New England, we greatly deplore the apparent want of courtesy and reverence toward men and God, manifest especially in the speeches of the senators from Illinois and Indiana; and that we regard the whole tone and spirit of that debate, on the part of the opponents of said memorial, as an outrage upon the privileges of a large and respectable body of citizens, upon the dignity of the Senate, and upon the claims of the divine word, and institutions, to which we owe profoundest honor and reverence."

Here I am distinctly and "especially" charged with "the apparent want of courtesy and reverence towards man and God," in the performance of my public duties in the Senate. This is a grave charge, whether preferred against a private individual or a public man, and one which should not have been made recklessly and without sufficient authority. It ought to be reported by evidence and contradicted by the records, in enormity is greatly aggravated by the startling fact that it emanates from "ministers of the Gospel of Jesus Christ," professing to speak "in the name of Almighty God," and by his authority. When you shall read that debate carefully, you will be surprised at the injustice you have done me by attributing to me the language which I found it necessary to quote, for the purpose of comment, from the protest signed by the three thousand and fifty clergymen of New England. I agree that the language quoted was "wanting in courtesy and reverence to man and God," and it was for that reason that I called the attention of the Senate and the country to the astounding fact that any body of men, calling themselves clergymen, or by any other name, in this age and in this country, would presume to claim that they were authorized by the Almighty, and in his name, to pronounce an authoritative judgment upon a political question pending before the Congress of the United States. If you had attributed this language to its true authors and directed your censure against them, instead of me, who but, quoted to expose it, I should have united with you in saying that it did manifest an "apparent want of courtesy" to the Senate and "reverence to God."

In the latter clause of the same resolution, you also say:

"That we regard the whole tone and spirit of that debate on the part of the opponents of said memorial, as an outrage upon the privileges of a large and respectable body of citizens," &c.

And in the third resolution, you say:

"That, in our office as ministers, we have lost none of our prerogatives, nor escaped our responsibilities as citizens," &c.

It is your obvious intention in these two resolutions to convey the impression to the world and indicate the public to believe that I, and those senators who participated with me in the debate referred to, denied to the signers of that protest their right, as citizens, "in consequence of their profession as" clergymen.

Unwilling as I am to believe that you, as the professed ministers of Jesus Christ, assembled in His holy name, could deliberately put forth a charge so unjust and unfounded, yet I am unable to put any other construction upon your language, or to conceive of any other object you could have had in passing these resolutions.

In vindication of my own character against the aspersion which you have so unjustly cast upon it, you must permit me to say to you, with the most profound respect for your office as ministers, that, if you had read the debate yourselves before you pronounced judgment upon it, instead of following the lead of an unscrupulous partisan press, you would have known that the charge in any of its forms, and in all its length and breadth, was wickedly and wantonly untrue. So far from denying to the clergy of New England, or of any other portion of this country, any of their rights "as citizens," and so far from questioning their undoubted right to petition, memorialize, or remonstrate, in respect, to any measure coming or pending before Congress in the same manner as any other civil authority as other citizens under the Constitution, the debate shows that each and every senator against whom I have preferred this grave charge distinctly and expressly recognized and affirmed such right. In order to render my vindication complete, and to disclose you of the error into which you have fallen—for, in your case, it must be error merely—I proceed to establish this position by extracts from the debate, as it appears in the Congressional *Globe*, and republished in pamphlet form at the abolition establishment in this city. At page 11 of that pamphlet, you will find that Mr. DOUGLAS said:

"The senator from TEXAS says the people have a right to petition. *I do not question it. I do not wish to deprive ministers of the Gospel of that right.* I do not acknowledge that there is any member of this body who has a higher respect and reverence, either for a minister of the Gospel or for his holy calling than I have; but my respect is for him *as his calling*. I will not controvert what the senator from Massachusetts has said, as to there being persons, or body of men in this country, threatened in number, who combine more respectable ability than these clergymen."

Permit me to inquire of you, reverend gentlemen, whether you had read my speech, and particularly the portion of it where you charged me with committing, in that debate, "an outrage upon the privileges of a large and respectable body of citizens," referring to the clergymen who had signed that protest,) and when, in another resolution, you charged me and others, by implication, with the design of "depriving you of your "prerogatives as citizens, on account of your "office as ministers?"

I now call on you, "as ministers of the Gospel of Jesus Christ," "as citizens," and as honest men, who are under a high moral and religious obligation to speak the truth and to do justice to all men, whether they charge me with it or not, to make an open and public confession of the injustice you have done me!

Again, in your resolutions, you do not confine your censure to myself, but you extend it to Senators Mason, Butler, Adams, and Badger, including all who participated in that debate in opposition to the propriety of the protest. Your language is, that you regard "the whole tone and spirit of that debate, on the part of the opponents of said memorial, as an outrage upon the privileges of a large and respectable body of citizens," &c.

Now, let us see whether your charge against MR. MASON, that he committed an "outrage" on the rights of the memorialists "as citizens," be sustained by the record:

"MR. MASON. That it is the right of the citizens of the United States to petition Congress, or either House of it, upon any subject that may be presented to them, is never denied, never should be denied; and such petition, upon any subject of public interest should be received and treated with the respect which is due to citizens. I trust I shall never see the day when the Senate of the United States will treat the authors of such petitions, upon any subject proper for legislation pending before the body, coming from the people of the United States, with aught but respect."

Thus it will be seen that Mr. Mason expressly affirmed the right of every citizen, whatever his profession or occupation in life, to petition Congress upon any subject pending before either house. In another portion of his speech in favor of the right of every class of our citizens to petition, he said:

"It is a respect due to them; but when they come here, not as citizens, but declaring that they come as ministers of the Gospel, and, as the honorable Senator from Texas declared them to be, viceregents of the Almighty—as I understood him to declare, possibly he meant vice-regents, to supervise and control the legislation of the country!—I say, when they come here as a class unknown to the government, as a class that the government does not mean to know in any form or shape, not to recommend or remonstrate, but to denounce our action as a great moral wrong, because they claim to be the "vice-regents" of the Almighty, we are bound, not from disrespect to them as citizens, not from disrespect to the cloth which they do not grace, but from respect to the government, from respect to that sacred public trust which has been committed to us—to carry out the policy of the government and refuse to recognize them."

MR. MASON expressly recognized and vindicated the full and equal rights of clergymen, in common with all other citizens, to petition government for the redress of grievances. His complaint was, that the protestants have not appreciated the rights of their capacity as citizens; that they did not claim the right under the Constitution, or as being derived from their human and constitutional freedom, in memorializing aside all human authority and constitutional privilege, claim the divine prerogative as the "vice-regents" of the Almighty on earth to pronounce judgment in his name, and by his authority, upon a legislative question, which had been confided by the people, in obedience to the Constitution, to the decision of the Congress of the United States.

Senator Butler's speech comes next. Let us see if your charge be well founded against him:

"MR. BUTLER. I have great respect, Mr. President, for the pulpit. I have such a respect for it that I would almost submit to a rebuke from a minister of the gospel, speaking in his official capacity, but they lose a portion of my respect when I see an organization, like that of the clergy, who, from the history of this government, of clergymen within a local precinct, within the limits of New England-and I suppose, be, as he was, a descendant from the vicegerents of Heaven, coming to the Senate of the United States, not citizens, as my friend from Virginia has said, but as the organs of God; for the first time come here petitioning or presenting their views under the sanction of the obligations and responsibilities of citizens under the Constitution of the United States, but they have deserted the pulpit, and step into the political arena, and speak as the organs of Almighty God. Sir, there was a time in the history of the jury which is to pronounce the verdict and judgment of God upon earth. They do not present as citizens; no, sir; but they mingle in their protest what they would have us believe is the judgment of the Almighty. When the clergy take a province which is assigned to them, in which they can dispense the gospel—but gospel which is proper under the lash, not as the tiger or the lion—when they would descend from the humble, merciful position in the form of agitators, seeking whom they may devour, instead of meek and lowly representatives of Christ, they divest themselves of all respect which I can give them."

Here again you find that there was no disposition to deprive ministers of the gospel of any of their rights as citizens—no unwillingness to receive their petitions, memorials, or remonstrances, and to treat them with entire respect when presented in that capacity, and claiming no other or higher prerogatives than those secured to their fellow-citizens by the Constitution. But their divine right, emanating from a power higher than the Constitution, and above the sovereignty of the people and of the States of this Union, to decide a legislative question, and to command that decision to be made in the name of the Deity, was seriously but respectfully called in question.

The speech of Mr. ADAMS comes next in order. Let us see if your charge against him can be sustained by the record. Did he commit "an outrage upon the privileges of a large and respectable body of citizens?" Did he propose to deprive any one of the "prerogatives of clergymen of your" prerogatives as citizens?"

MR. ADAMS said:

"I cannot but say my friend from South Carolina in regard to the petition which he has presented, and referred to the Committee of the Judiciary of the Senate and House of Representatives by a body of individuals as ministers of the Gospel, I do trust I have as high a regard for their vocation as any other citizen; and I have no objection that the ministers of peace and good will on earth as say in their individual capacity, or in their collective and memorials and remonstrances precisely as I would those of other citizens. But when I see ministers and the ministers of Christ at an early day, that I knew the powers they suppose the sanctified ministers of the Gospel would derive to their successors, as the ministers of Christ attended to their mission, one which was given to them by their Master; and under all circumstances, even when the Saviour himself was subjected to persecution, and even to induce him to give opinions with reference to the municipal offices of the government, I say that if ministers have descended from their high estate to vassal the action of this body."

Where is the evidence of the truth of your charge against SENATOR ADAMS, that he meditated the degradation of the ministers of the Gospel of their rights of citizenship? Do you find it in the passage in which he declares that ministers of the Gospel are entitled to *the same deference precisely as I would those of other citizens?* Is it an outrage upon their privileges? that they should be treated precisely like other citizens? If you think so, you will doubtless persevere in the course which you have commenced. If you think otherwise, you will hasten to withdraw the unjust imputations and charges which you have made.

Following the order of the debate, the next member whom you have enlisted in your wide charge of an outrage upon the privileges of the clergy, is MR. PUTNEY. The first paragraph of his speech on the occasion is the following words:

"MR. PUTNEY. Mr. President, I am for the amendment liberty to the gentleman number one. I will not deny to any class of my fellow citizens, under whatever name or denomination, the right to petition; and under the general term of petition, provided it be in the form of the Constitution, I am willing to regard memorials and remonstrances, or whatever name, kind, or description, provided always they are respectful to the Senate."

In this speech you find no attempt to deprive the clergy of their rights of citizenship; no denial or limitation of their privileges as citizens. Their right to petition, memorialize, or remonstrate, "under whatever name or denomination," is conceded and affirmed in so many words. It is true, Mr. PUTNEY spoke in very strong and decided terms upon the assumption of the reverend gentlemen to make known the mind and will of God concerning the Nebraska bill. He denied what they undertook to proclaim as a revelation from the Almighty, either prophetically of events to happen or judicially of judgments to be inflicted. But no rebuke or word, he made no suggestion, against their full and uncontested rights, in their own manner, as men and ministers, to petition Congress upon any number, and called for the purpose of considering that question and none other. It was adopted in connexion with the protest, and forms a part of the same transaction. The language objected to was, "a flagrant violation of the name of Almighty God" as "a great moral wrong"—as a breach of faith eminently injurious to *moral principle* of the community, and, "as exposing us to the righteous judgments of the Almighty." The resolution declares "that the *ministry is the divinely-appointed institution for the declaration and enforcement of God's will upon all points of moral and religious truth!*" Do not the protest and resolution refer to the same question, to wit, the Nebraska bill now pending before Congress? Surely you will not deny that such was your understanding. You assembled to consider that question and none other. You acted upon that subject and that alone. Your resolutions are declaratory of the extent of your rights and powers as clergymen, and your protest was your action in conformity with those assumed rights and powers.

I understand, then, your position to be this: that you are "ministers of the Gospel;" that "the ministry is the divinely-appointed institution for the declaration and enforcement of God's will upon all points of moral and religious truth;" that this "divinely-appointed institution" is empowered "to declare and enforce God's will;" and that, clothed with "full authority" as "ministers," this "divinely appointed institution" proceeds to issue its mandates to the Congress of the United States "in the name of the Almighty God." This being your position, I must be permitted to refer you, in all Christian kindness, that I differ with you widely, radically, and fundamentally, in respect to the nature and extent of your rights, duties, and powers as ministers of the Gospel. If the claims of this "divinely-appointed institution" shall be enforced, and the various public functionaries shall yield their judgments to your supervision, and their consciences to your keeping, the result will be a return to your temporal power except your own wise discretion and virtuous forbearance. If your "divinely-appointed institution" has the power to prescribe the mode and terms for the organization of Nebraska, I see no reason why your authority may not be extended over the entire continent, not only to the country which we now own, but to all which may hereafter be acquired.

Nor do you propose to confine your operations to the supervision and direction of the action of Congress in the organization of territorial governments and the admission of new States into the Union. It is difficult to conceive of any matter of private or public concern, pending before Congress, or in the legislatures of the different States, or in the judicial tribunals, which does not quite as much as the Nebraska bill "involve some point of moral and religious truth;" and we are informed, in your resolution, that "upon all points of moral and religious truth" the "ministry is the divinely-appointed institution for the declaration and enforcement of God's will." I do not wish to be understood as intimating that it is your present purpose, through the agency of this "divinely-appointed institution," to declare and enforce God's will" in all matters affecting our foreign policy and domestic concerns, nor that you intend to direct the movements of the political parties, and control the local and general elections throughout the country. It is enough to fill with alarm the mind of every patriot, and of every statesman and friend to the liberty of Christian, that you have asserted the right to do this in all cases, and have in one case attempted the exercise of this divine prerogative "in the name of Almighty God." It is true that while you assert the right, in the broadest terms, and propose now to establish a precedent which will justify its exercise in all future time, in your second resolution you "disclaim all desire" to do certain things from which it might be inferred, on first view, that you do not intend to meddle with party politics, nor attempts to control the political movements of the day. This, however, turns out to be illusory, on a closer examination.

Resolved, 2d. That while we disclaim all desire to interfere in questions of *war and policy*, or to mingle in the conflicts of political parties, it is our duty to recognize the moral bearings of such questions and conflicts, and to proclaim, in reference thereto, principles no less than to other departments of human interest, the principle of inspired truth and obligation."

You do not "desire to interfere in questions of war and policy." Thus far I heartily approve of your action. But how can you refuse to leave the question of war where the Constitution has placed it—in the hands of Congress, the constitutional depositary of the power of the States of the Union.

You "disclaim all desire," also, "to mingle in the conflicts of political parties." This sentiment is admirable. It will meet the concurrence and approbation of every patriot and Christian. But you immediately follow it with the declaration that it "is in our power to recognize the moral bearing of such questions and conflicts!" You do not desire to engage in war nor to fight the battles of political parties, but you do claim that it is your right, and, if you please, your duty, by virtue of your office as ministers, through the agency of this divinely-appointed institution, to declare, in the name of Almighty God, a war, in which your country is engaged with a foreign power, to be immoral and unrighteous, although the representatives of the people and of the States, in pursuance of the Constitution, have declared it to be just, necessary, and right. You claim, also, the course of your ordinary pastoral duties to your several congregations, but as an organized body engaged in the political movements of the nation. I cannot recognize the principle that, while you are protected in the enjoyment of all your rights as citizens of the United States, as ministers, you are yet released, by virtue of your office as ministers, from your allegiance to the country during war, and from your obligation of obedience to the Constitution and laws and constituted authorities at all times.

Do you not say that you consider it your duty to take cognizance of "the moral bearing of the conflicts of the different political parties." The moral bearing of the Nebraska bill "is the soul of the whole party, and of the abolition party are each to be recognized by your divinely-appointed institution; and the Nebraska bill is your duty" to proclaim in reference thereto "the principle of inspired truth and obligation." You propose, through your divinely-appointed institution, to apply the test of "inspired truth" to each of the political organizations and to their respective conflicts, and "to declare, rebuke, and exhort this divinely-appointed institution, to declare and enforce God's will upon all points of moral and religious truth." They also declared that it was their duty to recognize the "moral bearing" of the Nebraska bill "upon political parties, and to "proclaim in reference thereto the principle of inspired truth and obligation." When the Mormon prophet proclaimed the principle of inspired truth, "in the name of the Almighty God," and through the agency of his divinely-appointed institution, that it was the decree of heaven that Brannan A. Young should be senator, and his organ present elected to Congress in the Quincy district, the people of that portion of Illinois did not acknowledge the authority of the prophet, nor did the result of the election strengthen my opinion in the validity of his claim.

I have wandered over distant and extensive portions of the globe, during the past year, in search of the existence of Mahomet's prophet and enforced God's will on earth, according to the principles of inspired truth and obligation, as recorded in the Koran; and, by the potency of his divinely-appointed institution, held, in the hollow of his hand, and suspended upon his breath, the lives, the liberties, and the property of millions of men, women, and children. When within his dominions and surrounded by his hayonets, I had neither the time nor the disposition to argue the question of his right to "reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with all authority and doctrine," in the name of the Almighty! But, when I set foot on the shores of my native land, under the broad folds of our national flag, I claimed to be under the protection of one of the American institutions, I did not feel like recognising any such rightful authority of that divinely-appointed institution, in moral affairs, here or elsewhere.

Nor can I admit the supremacy of this divinely-appointed institution are subversive of the fundamental principles upon which our whole political system rests. What is the necessity of a Congress, if you can supervise and direct its conduct? Why should the people subject themselves to the trouble and expense of electing legislatures for the purpose of enacting humane laws, if they are subject to the veto and sanction of your divine authority? Why maintain a vast and complex judicial system to expound the laws, and administer justice, if you combine all disputes in respect to human rights, if your divinely-appointed institution is invested with all authority to prescribe the rule of decision in the name of the Deity? If your pretensions be just and valid, why not dispense with all the machinery of human government and subject ourselves freely and unreservedly, together with all our temporal and spiritual interests and hopes, to the justice and mercy of this divinely-appointed institution?

Our fathers held that the people were the only true source of all political power; but this avails little, if the people, and the political authorities established by the people are to be controlled and directed in all their action and judgment, not by the will of their constituents, but by the divinely-constituted power of the clergy? Does it not follow that this great principle, recognised and affirmed in the constitution of the United States and of every State of this Union, is thus virtually annulled, and the representatives of the people converted into machines in the hands of an all-controlling priesthood?

The will of the people, expressed in obedience to the forms and principles of our constitution, is the supreme law of this land. But your "divinely-appointed institution" is not recognised in that instrument. Its existence and directions are not to be found in the Constitution. Your divinely-appointed institution is not recognised in that instrument. Its existence and directions are not to be found in the Constitution. Your divinely-appointed institution for the declaration and enforcement of God's will" is not revealed by your character as a body of ministers, you cannot claim any political power under our system of government.

The persecutions of our ancestors were too fresh in the memories of our revolutionary fathers for them to create, recognise, or even tolerate, a church establishment in this country, clothed with temporal authority. So apprehensive were they of the usurpations of this, the most fearful and corrupting of all despotisms, whether in the form of assaults on the purity of the church or the happiness of the people, that they provided in the Constitution that "no religious test shall ever be required as a qualification to any office or public trust under the United States." Still, fearful that, in the process of time, a spirit of religious fanaticism, or a spirit of ecclesiastical domination, (yet more to be dreaded, because cool and calculating,) might seize upon some exciting political topic, and in an evil hour prostrate or entrap the people into a dangerous concession of political power to the clergy, the first Congress under the Constitution proposed, and the people adopted, an amendment to guard against such a calamity, in the following words:

"Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof."

The doctrine of our fathers was, and the principle of the Constitution is, that every human being has an inalienable, divinely-conferred right to worship God according to the dictates of his own conscientious convictions, and that the constitution, nor any "institution" on earth, can rightfully deprive him of that sacred and inestimable privilege.

However, it is no part of my purpose to inquire into the wisdom, or to an equal footing with the original States, it was stipulated that slavery should be forever excluded from all the territory which was acquired from France north of latitude 36° 30'; and that the north line of Louisiana, as far as it was retained as a part of the obligations, and that the south, having secured all its advantages, now seeks to have that compromise repealed, as a law too charity to believe that you have been misled by the misrepresentations and misstatements which, in an imposing form, has been spread broadcast throughout the free States, and is calculated to deceive and mislead the people for partisan purposes; and, relying on the truth of the statement, and having confidence in your delusion, you have had the misfortune to pronounce judgment "in the name of the Almighty God."

If you will condescend to listen to human authority, to legislative enactments, and contemporaneous facts, in derogation of your divine testimony, you will find that Missouri was admitted into the Union UNDER the act, of the 6th of March, 1820, called the Missouri compromise; that, if the said act was an irrepealable contract, it was thus disavowed and repudiated by the north within eleven months from the time it was passed; that Missouri came into the Union conformable in all respects to said act, was denied admission into the Union in February, 1819, because the people of the north, by a vote of 61 to 33, on motion of MR. MALLORY, of Vermont, refused to admit Missouri into the Union, because the constitution responding with the precise terms of the allowed to exist in that State. In addition to these, you will find that Congress, in the act providing for the admission of Arkansas into the Union, in 1836, and especially when considered in connection with the debate which preceded and accompanied its passage, and the votes by which it was carried, have decided that the Missouri compromise, and the principle involved in it, was inoperative and void, and that the people of Arkansas, and of every State and Territory formed out of the territory which was ceded by France, have the right to establish their own institutions and domestic concerns, free from the restraint of that section, or perseverance in your opposition to the principle upon which the bill is founded.

In your protest, (alluding, I presume, to the sentiment of the Missouri compromise,) you denounce the Nebraska bill "as a great moral wrong; as a breach of faith imminently injurious to the moral principles of the community, and subversive of all confidence in national engagements." Upon what authority do you base your judgments of the Almighty?

I am rejoiced to learn that the "clergymen of Alton, Illinois, assembled" in the city of Chicago have come to the firm conclusion that "a repeal of the bill, that the sacredness of "national engagements" is "a great moral wrong," exposing the offenders "to the righteous judgments of the Almighty."

I remember well my feelings upon this subject, in October, 1850. I believed, and still believe, that a very large part of the country had been misled from your lips, to have known that you were ready to assail, in your pulpits and in public places, the sanctity of "national engagements," and the "great moral wrong" of their violation. I believed, especially when connected in the Constitution our fathers made for us, and which we, as public functionaries, are sworn to support, that you would "*further provide, in and by said constitution, that neither slavery nor involuntary servitude shall be allowed in said State of Missouri;*" that, in consequence of the refusal of the people of that Territory to accept the act of Congress entitled an act to authorize the people of the Missouri Territory to form a constitution and State government, and for the admission of such State into the Union "on an equal footing with the original States, in all respects whatever," and the admission of such State into the Union, "upon the express condition that the people inhabiting the said State do agree and declare that they forever disclaim the right of electing, appointing, or employing any person to any office of trust or profit, until he shall have produced satisfactory evidence that he is a citizen of one of the States of this Union, and do also agree and declare that they will not pass any law by which any person may be prevented from settling in those territories and States, or compel us to conform to an article of religious faith;" repugnant to our conscientious belief. Although you may be of the opinion, and doubtless are, that the practice of performing secular duties, and attending to worldly affairs on Sunday, is not in accordance with the divine law as recorded in the Holy Scriptures, it does not appear that you desire the interference of Congress in this particular to deprive the people of the Territories and new States of the privilege of regulating these matters according to their own views of propriety and duty. I trust that the great body of the American people look upon the manufacture, sale, and use of intoxicating and implements of gaming as a wrong eminently injurious to the public morals; yet I have heard no objection to hearing the people of each State and Territory free to determine that question according to their sense of right and propriety.

I will not trouble you further with this class of cases, having cited enough to illustrate the principle. The entire criminal code of each State and Territory of the Union, and every section and provision thereof, is supposed to relate to some great moral wrong which the people in their sovereign capacity have deemed it their duty to prohibit, and, if possible, prevent by penalties and punishments. Inasmuch as you are willing to leave these questions, and all others which are supposed to be injurious to the morals of the community, to be settled to the best interests of society, in the hands of the people of the respective States and Territories, would it not be better and more just to extend the slavery question to the arbitrament of the same principle? Why not leave the people free to exercise all self-government which lies at the foundation of all our free institutions? If I correctly understand your position, you do not object to permitting the people of the Territories, in the first instance to decide in the manner as the like rightful power and authority in all matters affecting the rights, interests, and happiness of themselves and their posterity, in a spirit of self-government, I do not understand that it requires any higher degree of intelligence, virtue, or civilization to legislate for the negro than for the white man. It will not be pretended that the negro's interests are more important than or could, under the Constitution, deprive any freeman, black or white, of his liberty, except for crime; nor will it be insisted that Congress has the power to confer any such authority. Hence the power in the territory's free man to be reduced to slavery, or of the number of slaves in the United States being increased by the passage of the Nebraska bill. The only evil that could possibly have in respect to the slave is, that, in a certain contingency, he might be permitted to enter the country, and remain there as such, and in a certain other contingency he could not. If a slave should be retained from Kentucky to Nebraska, the effect would be to reduce the number on the east side of the Mississippi to the same extent that it was increased on the west, without enlarging the political power of the slaveholding States, or any injurious consequences to the slave; while, by the mere fact of his removal from an old country to a new one, where poor lands in fact, from a scarcity to an abundance of provisions, his temporal condition would be improved and his physical comforts increased. His presence in the new *Territory* could not in any mode or degree affect or injure any free white man in any other Territory or State. If his presence should be offensive or injurious to any body it would be to the people of the Territory in which he was located. Then, why not leave it to the people of each Territory or State to decide for themselves whether he shall be permitted to come or not? No body else has any interest in it; no other State or Territory would be affected by it. It is purely a question of domestic concern, which, for none of the evils or effects people of each Territory or State, and no body else. You think that you are abundantly competent to decide this question one way or ever. If you should remove to Nebraska, with the view of making it your permanent home, you would be any less competent to decide it when you should have arrived in the country?

Thus, you must see that the question of Nebraska bill is purely a question of self-government, involving the right and capacity of the people to make their own laws, and manage their own local and domestic concerns. This is the only controversy presented by the terms of the bill. I am unwilling to believe that, upon mature reflection, and with all the advantages which the evidence accessible to the human mind may enable you to summon to your assistance, you will sustain the declaration that a proposition to carry the principle of this bill into a great moral wrong, exposing us to the righteous judgments of the Almighty.

It is the principle upon which the thirteen colonies separated from the imperial government. It is the principle in defence of which the battles of the Revolution were fought. It is the principle to which all our free institutions owe their existence, and upon which our entire republican system rests. This great principle is recognised and affirmed in the Constitution and bill of rights of every State in this Union, and the corner-stone in the temple of our liberties. It was under the operation of this principle that slavery retired from the New England States. It was in obedience to its potential influence that slavery disappeared from New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania. It was by virtue of this principle that Illinois came into the Union with her free constitution. It is in obedience to this principle that slavery is excluded from all the free States of this Union; and I trust that, whenever, in God's providence, it shall be extended to the States where it now

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