

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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DOCUMENTS

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THE LEGISLATURE

OF THE

STATE OF MAINE,

DURING ITS SESSION

A. D. 1850.

Augusta:

WILLIAM T. JOHNSON, PRINTER TO THE STATE.

1850.

THE TRUE DIGNITY OF POLITICS.

A SERMON:

BY THE

REV. SYLVESTER JUDD,

PREACHED IN

CHRIST CHURCH, AUGUSTA,

MAY 26, 1850.

Augusta:

WILLIAM T. JOHNSON, PRINTER TO THE STATE.

1850.



STATE OF MAINE.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, May 27, 1850.

ORDERED, That a committee be raised to wait on Rev. Mr. JUDD and request, for publication, a copy of his sermon delivered last evening, at Christ Church, on the "True Dignity of Politics."

Passed — and the following gentlemen were appointed said committee:

Messrs. KNOWLTON, of Montville,

DAVIS, of Orneville,

FORD, of Minot,

QUINNAM, of Litchfield,

ROBBINS, of Dover.

EDMUND W. FLAGG, *Clerk.*



SERMON.

ISAIAH, XIII-6.—“The Lord shall be for a spirit of judgment to him that sitteth in judgment.”

POLITICS is from the Greek, polis, a city, or town ; signifying also, a state, the commonwealth. Political, is what relates to the condition or life of a citizen, or a statesman, or to the management of public affairs. Politics, by our best lexicographer is thus defined : “The science of government ; that part of ethics which consists in the regulation and government of a state or nation, for the preservation of its safety, peace, and prosperity ; comprehending the defense of its existence and rights against foreign control, the augmentation of its strength and resources, and the protection of its citizens in their rights, with the preservation and improvement of their morals.”

A politician, therefore, is synonymous with a statesman, and signifies one who looks after the public good ; in Latin phrase he is *vir rerum civilium*.

Politics then is a very important and dignified subject ; a politician has a grave, and venerable vocation.

There is the expression, Political Economy. Economy is from two Greek words, signifying law, and

family ; and Political Economy means the law of the family applied to the state.

Legislation, or the making of laws, is a branch of politics, a method by which the ideal in this thing may be realized ; and the wisdom and sagacity of public minds be embodied in popular life.

God was the first legislator ; he gave the original direction to the political affairs of men, and established the bounds of political well-being.

Moses was devoted to public or political action ; he wrote laws, established institutions, and superintended the welfare of the people.

David was connected with political matters, nor was he free from political anxiety during a large portion of his life.

Solomon carried the art of politics to a high pitch. God gave him wisdom and understanding, and largeness of heart, whereby he was able to judge among the people. He embellished and improved his country, he extended its borders ; he contracted alliances with foreign nations, he encouraged commerce, and was a large importer. He published many admirable political maxims.

Hezekiah and Isaiah were politicians.

Most of the distinguished names mentioned in the Old Testament history, were, in some way or other, concerned in the government of the people, or as we now say, politics.

The precepts and example of Christ have an intimate bearing on the political concerns and well-being of mankind.

In profane history, among men of the greatest celebrity, is Lycurgus, who originated the political constitution of Sparta. Solon was the political founder of Athens. Numa, one of the earliest and best of the Roman Kings, was a politician. Charlemagne, the consolidator, and perhaps real founder of the French empire, was an admirable politician; he admitted the people to a share in the government; he districted the country, and erected courts of justice in the several provinces. Alfred the Great, renowned for his virtues and his abilities, is chiefly remembered for the grandeur and purity of his politics. In our own country, Franklin and Washington, Adams and Jefferson, were politicians. I know of no two men whose political designs were so vast, so beneficent, and so wise, or so deserving the homage and the emulation of mankind, or that seem so coincident with the economy of the Governor of the Universe, as those of Franklin and Jefferson.

Shall we mention Lorenzo de Medici, Joseph II. of Austria, Ferdinand and Isabella, Peter of Russia, Rienzi.

“In the world’s history” says Charles Sumner, “the lawgivers are among the highest and most god-like characters. They are the builders of human

society. They are the fit companions of the master poets, who fill it with their melody.”

In a word, the most celebrated names sacred and profane, are politicians.

Men who have illustrated their times, and created eternal remembrances in the minds of posterity, have written on politics. Isaiah, Solomon, Paul, Plato and Aristotle, Bacon, Milton, Sidney, Burke, Adams.

Politics, the administration of public affairs, the right government of a people, the harmonizing of social interests, the development of the resources of a nation, protection to the individual and the prosperity of the universal;—no more profound, no more solemn, or interesting subject can engage earthly attention.

“The King,” says Solomon, “that sitteth in the throne of judgment scattereth away all evil with his eyes.” This of which I speak, sitting in its high place of authority and influence, scattereth away all evil with its eyes; its glance traverses from side to side of the state, it overlooks the busy city and the solitary hamlet, it searches the forest to see what is there, it beholds the ocean and asks what it can give, it listens to the wants of men, and metes out justice and judgment unto them, it contemplates the energies of society, and proposes how they may be employed, it unites people by its roads and bridges, enlightens them by its school house and its college, it gives the ship its clearance, and the rail-way its charter, for

the destitute it provides food and shelter, for the unfortunate an asylum.

There is undoubtedly oftentimes too much government; too great exercise of the supreme and common power, or too minute interference with private conduct. But that is not our alternative; our only alternative is either no government at all, or a wise government; a nomadic, loose, pebbly state of things, or a felicitous conjunction and profitable mutuality.

By government I do not mean, necessarily, coercive execution, or penal infliction. A wise and good government will suggest as well as decree, it will remove obstacles as well as provide means, it will encourage what is good as well as repress what is vicious.

It may be a question whether Congress, that is the general government of the United States, had better build the Railroad to the Pacific, or assist private individuals to carry forward that great work. But in either case, it will be a matter connected with the management of public affairs, it will be something with which politics, in the highest sense of the word, and government, have something to do.

That is the most admirable condition of politics, and that the best administration of government, which knows exactly when to step in and carry out an important measure itself, and when to let the people execute their own measures.

Yet, I shall insist, it is evermore a branch of rea-

sonable politics, and the duty of a wise government, to shed light upon, and afford what assistance it can, to all important matters affecting the welfare of the people.

Government can push inquiries, institute experiments, collect statistics, offer rewards, far more than the individual can do. Government can do more for the public good with one million of dollars than an individual can with five; because the government has only a single end in view, that same public good, while an individual is necessarily entangled in his own individualness. Government is richer for the public good with one million than an individual is with five; for the reason that government has nothing else to look out for but the public good; while the individual must take care of himself and family.

What is the foundation of all right politics? I answer the will of God; that will as revealed in scripture, in nature, or in reason and conscience. A regard to God's will, latent perhaps, yet actual, underlies all worthy legislative action. When you ask what is just, what is right, though you may not know it, you really ask, what is God's will? In the passing of a law, you may say, you are directed by an instinctive consciousness of rectitude; but that instinctive consciousness of rectitude, is merely an offshoot or up-bubbling from the eternal rectitude, whose influence circumscribes and underflows us all. You may say

you are guided by the will of the people; so perhaps you are. But what is the idea of the will of the people. That idea is expressed in the old maxim, *Vox populi vox Dei*; that is, God is supposed by his providence or his grace, by his spirit or his truth, to act in the will of the people. You are called to charter a corporation, to pronounce judgment at an assize, or to arbitrate on land-damages; certain questions of equity and justice arise; instinctively, irresistably arise; where do they come from? From God. If you say from the motions of your own nature, that nature is given you of God. If you say from the nature of things, the nature of things is of God. Beyond, and above, and deeper than all mere human opinion, or individual estimate, is the absolute and the divine, which of necessity underlies all right action of men. He who attempts to govern men, if he would govern them rightly, must govern them as God would govern them. All great principles applicable to human affairs, are God's principles, and are such as he would have applied to human affairs. The command, thou shalt not kill, is God's command; we may make it ours, we may forget that it is God's; we may think it originates in certain proprieties or expedencies of our own invention; it is God's nevertheless. The ordering of the universe, the divine disposition of things, is such that it is wrong to kill. God so made man, so ap-

pointed his lot on the earth, that it is wrong to kill. The ordinance of the Almighty touching human affairs is, thou shalt not kill.

That men have inalienable rights, is an annunciation of a certain fact, which fact originates with God. It is a truth based upon the harmony of certain ideas, which harmony is a divine creation. It is a formula in which is set God's will to man. That a people should improve their resources, is simply saying that a people should do what God would have them do.

Politics becomes more and more perfect the more it approximates the divine idea. That government is doing the most for its people which carries out God's will most fully towards that people. Political wisdom is heaven's wisdom; true political results are as a fulfillment of prophecy.

But between God's will and the people intervenes what we call a Constitution. A Constitution is to the State what the Bible is to the Church. But what is a political Constitution? It is a summary of general principles applicable to the civil relations of men. Yet such principles as we have seen, have a divine foundation. Therefore a political Constitution is none other than an expression of such divine principles as are applicable to human affairs. A political Constitution again is an agreement among men as to how they will live together, and prosecute a

varied intercourse with each other, and make common laws, and further the public good.

But how can men live together politically, that is, in public relations, in any other way than God shall prescribe? They cannot. That one may not injure his neighbor, or deceive in weight or measure, that he pay his debts, that he oppress not the poor, are things of God's appointment; they may be ours by re-appointment; but they are primarily God's.

A Constitution then undertakes to define and set forth, what I may call the political will of God towards man. If it be in all things a righteous Constitution, it is a just reflection of that will.

I shall ask your attention for a moment to our own State Constitution. Some of you recollect the period of its adoption. That, I should think, must have been an interesting period. I see venerable names in the Convention that was called at Portland nearly thirty years ago for this purpose, not many of whom remain. Thatcher, Green, Holmes, Chandler, Dana, King, Bridge, Cony, where are they? The survivors of that time, a few of them are in the midst of us, honored men, shining in their own virtues, revered by their connection with the past; may no shadows fall upon the State or the people whom they have so nobly served!

But what I would have you notice is, that a certain relation to God was recognized in the doings of those

men; a religious awe seemed to brood over their minds.

They met in a Church; almost their first act was prayer to God for guidance and direction. The Hon. William King, on taking the chair, expressed his thanks to the Great Legislator of the Universe for affording the people of the State an opportunity of entering into a solemn compact with each other; and his words on leaving it were that he hoped the Constitution with which God been pleased through the Convention to bless the people, might abundantly answer its design. Let us notice some incidents of the occasion. Mr. Holmes thought there was great propriety, when forming rules for the government of a people, that we should acknowledge our subjection to God. Judge Whitman said, "All government is in a manner founded upon religion; it constitutes the basis of social order." This gentleman desired that the following in substance might be added to the Constitution: "as the happiness of a people, and the good order and preservation of civil government especially depend upon piety, religion and morality, the Legislature shall have power to encourage and support the institutions of public worship." Judge Thatcher said he wished to have the Constitution go out to the people with the appearance of being founded upon religious principle.

The preamble of the Constitution is in these words,

“We the people of Maine, in order to establish justice, ensure tranquility, provide for our mutual defense, promote our common welfare, and secure to ourselves and our posterity the blessings of Liberty, acknowledging with grateful hearts the goodness of the sovereign Ruler of the Universe in affording us an opportunity so favorable to the design, and imploring *his aid and direction in its accomplishment*, do agree, &c.”

Now in all this what is apparent but that which I have indicated, that a Constitution is a summary of divine principles applicable to the political affairs of men; that it is, so to speak, the political law of God written in our statute books; and that the framers of a Constitution are the prophets and evangelists of a political dispensation.

Mr. Vance said, “I left the waters of the St. Croix with my own impression, and that of my neighbors, that there was but one principle to govern us, in the forming of the Constitution, that of justice and equal rights.” I do not say that Mr. Vance was a religious man, I do not know that he had God in all his thoughts; I only know that that principle which he brought with him all the way from the eastern line of the state, was God’s principle; not his, not any man’s, excepting so far as he had made it his own by adoption and life. So Mr. Holmes, at the close of the Convention, says: “The only inquiry with all has been, what is right.”

Do not understand me to say that a political Constitution is an embodiment, or exponent of religious doctrine; I say no such thing; I only say that so far as is reasonable and right, it is founded upon God's will, and is an expression of principles by which God himself would have the world governed.

Now I have shown you that our Fathers, in drafting the Constitution of the State, were actuated, in considerable measure, by this sentiment, and appeared like men; who, as Moses did, went up into the mount to receive the oracles of God.

But does it follow that any given State Constitution is perfect? By no means. It is perfect just so far as it stands upon God's law. In reference to this very point, on the particular occasion under review, Judge Cony said, "We are all imperfect," let us do the best we can.

Does it follow that a Constitution may not be amended and altered? By no means. I say it is founded upon God's will, as that will is revealed to us in the Bible, nature, reason and conscience. Our fathers acted according to their insight into these things. Thirty years may afford further illumination.

The original Constitution of this State ordered that the great majority of our people should do military duty. I think that requisition was based on an entire misapprehension of the will of God, and the mass of our fellow citizens are beginning to think the same.

But my great point is to show that our political doings, and especially the graver matter of a governmental constitution, has a connection with God, and is founded on principles which God has ordained. It is founded here, or it has no just and righteous foundation whatever. We are wont to say indeed that such matters are referable to the will of the people; but what is this will except a will enlightened by or supported by the Bible, or nature, or reason? The draft of a Constitution is sent home to the instincts, the good sense, and reasonable expectations of the people; and instinct, and good sense, and reasonable expectation, all originate in God.

I wish that politicians so called, public men, might rise to a sense of the greatness of their office, that they might see that their duties, rightly interpreted, connect themselves with, and are a parcel of what is most solemn, most august, in the Universe, even with the decrees and ordinances of the Almighty; that politics might be understood to have no other proper basis but eternal and immutable justice, that we might all remember it is God who says, execute judgment, deliver the spoiler out of the hand of the oppressor, and do no wrong.

Out of the Constitution come Laws, or special provisions to meet popular exigencies. These laws will be right in proportion as the constitution is right. If in process of time, it should appear from the Bible,

or nature or reason, that certain laws are needed which the Constitution forbids, or certain ought to be avoided, for which the Constitution provides, then that instrument should be amended.

My own impression is, that the Constitution is richer in grants, vaster in scope than some imagine. It does not require us to go to war, and we shall be within its limits if we eschew all war. It does not require us to keep arms, and we shall not violate it if we go unarmed. Peace in this State is constitutional. Indeed, Judge Thatcher, on the occasion beforementioned, touching the question whether the Quakers should be exempted from military service, said, "he himself was against war, and was much inclined to the opinion that Christians ought not to go to war, and he had no doubt that as people acted upon pure evangelical principles, they would become averse to war." God grant that evangelical principles may prevail, and all men become averse to war, as the Quakers now are, and what the Constitution has delivered on this subject shall be but as the shadow of things that were. But as I was saying, the Constitution, if it be based on divine ground, has unsounded depths; it is an instrument, in its own words to promote the common welfare and secure the blessings of liberty, and legislation under it has the same intent. The common welfare, the blessings of liberty, these are God's will and purpose, and when our fathers met

with these feelings, it shows how near they were to the people on the one hand and to God on the other.

Under the Constitution, might not legislation, while it is already doing much, do yet more for the education of the people; ought it not to assist the great interest of agriculture; has it not important duties to manufactures, the arts, science?

A recent and very intelligent English writer observes, speaking of his own country, "We are perpetually making laws, but I cannot discover that we have ever attempted to legislate in any way to make the hearts of the people glad; to make the weary and the heavy-laden forget their toils and cares." How true is this of America. Do we ever think of legislating in a downright way, for the happiness of the people, to promote social feeling, and joyous intercourse, and to elevate the masses to a more refined and spiritual existence. How little legislation there has ever been designed to reform men. The common welfare demands hospitals not arsenals; superintendents, not brigadiers. The Constitution represents God's political law, and our legislators, God's law-givers; do they seek sufficiently to carry out the divine mind in respect of the people of this commonwealth? God would have all men every where repent; shall the State only punish?

The bane of the State is partyism, as that of the Church is sectarianism; the impulse of party is office,

as that of sectarianism is petty power; partyism is popularly known for politics, as sectarianism passes for religion; in the State however we have no nobility as in the Church we have a prelacy; the misery of partyism is that we have much poor legislation, as of sectarianism that we have much poor religion; there is a deal of ignorance and prejudice in the parties as there is in the sects; there is likewise some sound purpose, conscientious earnestness, and candid feeling in the several parties, as there is in the several sects. The rulers of the parties, and of the sects alike are an aristocracy; the people may govern the state, a few men govern the parties.

I say the impulse of party is office.

But office in any rightly constituted government is honorable as it is needful. Yet what has party to do with it? Nothing. Political government is a method of administering human affairs according to God's will; what business has a demagogue with so grave a subject?

Yet office is honorable; it is dignified, and I had almost said religious; and this is the point to which I would come. Any Governor or Councilor, any Senator or Representative, any man connected with the administration of public affairs under a rightly constituted government, occupies a high and holy post.

In other words I would detach politics from mere partyism, and elevate it to its proper place as be-

longing to the counsels of the Almighty. I would have a politician feel that as connected with public affairs, he is neither the ruler nor the servant of a party, but is as the minister of God.

I have shown that politics properly signifies what relates to the highest well-being of communities and states; that that well-being consists in concurrence with God's will, and conformity to the divine arrangements; I have shown you how holy and great men of all time have made of this subject a grave study and solemn practice; I have shown what is the drift and import of a political Constitution; and moreover, with what solemnity of feeling, and if I may so say, what prayerfulness of spirit our own fathers entered upon the work of providing a Constitution for themselves and their posterity.

What need I say more?

I would awaken the recollection of these great ideas, I would revive a sense of God in this matter. I would that our politicians, our public men, and all who are interested herein, should comprehend the gravity of their position. Every good citizen, it may be presumed, desires to know, not only the rights but the grandeur of citizenship. An image of immortal beauty is American citizenship, too long trailed in the dust; who would not see it elevated to the pedestal where God Almighty originally placed it? God is concerned for this country, the prophets are concerned

for it, the gospel is concerned for it, and why should not those who preach the gospel seek to impress that concern on the public mind? How can I be any more indifferent to the welfare of this state and people, than Isaiah was for that of Judah and Jerusalem?

It follows that politics has something to do with religion and religion with politics; that one may be a politician and a religious man, a religious man and a politician. "We would have our Constitution go out to the people," said Judge Thatcher, "with the appearance of being founded upon religious principle."

It follows that politics has something to do with conscience. We have intimated that conscience is one method of ascertaining the divine will. Of course conscience has a most legitimate connection with political action.

Here is a territory of thirty thousand square miles; here is a population of six hundred thousand souls, here an unequaled sea-board, and majestic rivers; we have a climate temperate and salutary; a soil that is fertile in all useful results; back of us stretches the forest with unmeasured depth and wealth; on every hand are mines and quarries that have slumbered on from the Creation, awaiting the touch of enterprize and skill to awake to wondrous life; the rail-road, that Genius of modern civilization, essays a passage through our domain; intelligent men, thoughtful men, everywhere, are asking after the best aids of development,

and the best methods of stable prosperity ; whatever is beautiful or noble, choice and beloved, in a people, whatever is fitting a patriotic instinct, or worthy a patriotic remembrance, longs for revival ; History lingers on our steps to record our doings ; the Future broods wistfully over us.

We are part of a great empire, we have intimate relations with every nation on the globe.

How honorable, I repeat, how solemn is the position of our public men. Do they know this, do they feel it ? Do they remember that God has a work for them to do ?

What business have faction and clique, private selfishness, and party intrigue in this field ? Why has politician come to be synonymous with trickster, and politics with scrambling ? Unsufferable degradation ! Will we pollute God's name with handfuls of barley and pieces of bread ?

The Lord is calling us as a people to great duties ; he hath sifted the nations to sow us here ; on us at this moment shines the political light of six thousand years ; empires and ages that have perished speak to us from their graves. The flash of glorious prophecy, where does it strike if not here, what hills shall reflect it back if not ours ? Eddying through the dimness of time, on what shore shall the hope of Humanity culminate and resurge in everlasting beauty if not ours ?



STATE OF MAINE.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, May 30, 1850.

ORDERED, That 1,000 copies of the foregoing Sermon of Rev. Mr. JUDD
be printed for the use of the House.

EDMUND W. FLAGG, *Clerk.*

