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A
CORRESPONDENCE

BETWEEN SOME OF THE MEMBERS

OF THE

PINE STREET

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

AND ITS PASTOR.

SAINT LOUIS:
PRINTED FOR THE INFORMATION OF THE MEMBERS OF THAT CHURCH.
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CHARLES ELLIOTT PERKINS
MEMORIAL COLLECTION

To the Members and Congregation of Pine Street Church :

DEAR BRETHREN : You are all no doubt aware that there has been a correspondence between some of the members of our church and myself. The first paper dated June 18, was handed me July 1. To this the paper dated July 8 was my answer. The next paper was the series of resolutions adopted October 15, and handed me on the 20th. I returned an answer November 5. I have been informed that a reply would be made to this last paper of mine, and I have waited for it now twenty-seven days, and would have continued to wait if I had not learned that in the meantime a paper is being privately circulated, the object of which is to get members of the church to pledge themselves to ask a dissolution of the pastoral relation existing between myself and Pine Street Church. I say nothing now of this extraordinary proceeding, unknown to the Presbyterian Church, and in manifest violation of its constitution and usages. But as this correspondence is necessary to the full understanding of the case, I could not delay longer to have so much of it as is in my hands printed, that you may have all the facts before you, and the means of correcting any misrepresentations you may have heard as to my real position on the matters herein contained. The communication dated December 1st, will explain itself.

S. B. MCPHEETERS.

St Louis - Pine Street Presbyterian Church

ST. LOUIS, June 18, 1862.

REV. S. B. MCPHEETERS, D. D. :

DEAR PASTOR :—For more than a year past, a terrible civil war has desolated our country. Upon one side, the combatants seek, by force of arms, to dismember the Union, and as a consequence, to destroy the government, and establish in its place, over a portion of the country, another independent Confederacy.

Upon the other side, the National Government seeks to maintain its authority, and put down the rebellion. A controversy so serious in its character, so momentous in its results, naturally awakens the strongest emotions, in the minds of all thinking men.

Probably there is not an intelligent, thinking person in this country, who has not formed a decided opinion upon this bloody controversy, and taken a position in his own mind, upon one side or the other of this unnatural struggle.

As members of the Church and Congregation to which you minister, we feel a deep interest in all that affects the character and usefulness of our Pastor and Church. Knowing that a diversity of sentiment prevails in our Church, on the subject of the war, many of us have felt disposed to forbear the earnest expression of our own views in reference to it, where it might give offense, that we might avoid even the appearance of a disposition to stir up strife and bitterness among those who still walked to the house of God in company.

This has not been owing to any lukewarmness or indifference, in our opinions of the struggle in which our Government is engaged.

We regard the rebellion as utterly without cause or provocation, and totally indefensible, upon any just or reasonable principles whatever; as inaugurated by designing and wicked men, for purposes supremely selfish and diabolical, and carried on by means utterly devoid of truth, honor, and righteousness; as sustained by ambitious demagogues, who know that the pretensions put forth by them, to stir up and sustain a treasonable opposition to the Government, are false, and fraudulent in every particular; and whose sole object is to arouse, by systematic falsehood, misrepresentation and deception, such prejudices against the Federal authorities, as will give them a hope of success, in their efforts to destroy a liberal, just, and prosperous Government.

We are aware that upon your return from Fort Union, last summer, you resisted the importunities of avowed secessionists, and refused to announce your views upon our national difficulties, or to take sides in this controversy. While we thought then, and still think, that the question of secession and rebellion has always had a right and a wrong side, when judged by the standard of God's word, we were disposed to believe that you were, at heart, upon the right side, and that neither in your private influence, nor by any act of yours, would the rebellion, which we regard as so infamous, find aid or comfort.

But as time has rolled on, and hundreds and thousands have sacrificed their lives to maintain the authority of the Government which we value above every thing on earth, next to the blessings and privileges of the Church of Christ, we feel more and more convinced that it is every man's duty, not only to be on the right side in this controversy, but to have it known and understood, that he is on the right side.

While we have the highest regard for your character and qualifications as a minister of the Gospel, we believe you have also a character to maintain, and duties to perform, as a citizen, which you cannot neglect, without seriously compromising your character, and affecting your usefulness as a minister.

We think you took a very erroneous view of your responsibility as a member of society, when you argued before the late General Assembly of our Church, that no man had a right to ask, or to know your views upon the question of our national difficulties. "None of us liveth to himself." It is the duty of every man to let all his influence be felt, upon the side of right. To do this, his opinions must be known.

It cannot be that a rebellion which has plucked a peaceful and happy nation into all the horrors of civil war, is so devoid of moral qualities, as to justify a Christian minister in concealing his views respecting it. We have no desire that you should "*preach politics*." But the outcry against this error has been too often used to conceal the criminal purpose of encouraging treason, and divert efficient influences from the support of order and good government.

The support of such a Government as ours, and opposition to the rebellion which seeks its destruction, has no more connection with "*politics*," than the observance of the Sabbath, or any other question of good morals.

Government is ordained of God, and He has commanded us to "be subject unto the higher powers," because "the powers that be are ordained of God."

These are moral duties as much as to obey our parents. They must be performed, until there is cause for rebellion, which will justify it, in the sight of God and man, or we are morally guilty of a violation of God's law. "Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God."

No unprejudiced man can pretend that when the conspirators against our Government commenced their efforts to overthrow it, there was any justifying cause for their revolutionary course. They are therefore morally guilty of despising, and fighting against one of the ordinances of God.

In a time of rebellion such as we are passing through, every man of any influence occupies his position. He is known as the friend or the enemy of his Government, just as certainly as his position on any other question of morals, is known.

Circumstances may have concurred to place him in a false attitude, but it is impossible that he should hold a neutral position. For several months past, we have been pained to perceive that our Church is regarded as more congenial to those of secession principles, or sympathies, than to the friends of the Union, and that the friends of this rebellion claim you as one of their number. We are unwilling to believe that you have given any express authority for this opinion, and hope it is the result of associations, and the consequence of your persistent silence

upon the subject, rather than of your personal opinions, and we still trust that you are not yet prepared to take sides with the enemies of the Federal Government. But there are only two sides to this controversy. There can be no neutral ground.

Neutrality in this contest seems to us as unnatural, and abhorrent to correct sentiments, as neutrality in religion. The language of Scripture, "he that is not with me, is against me," seems as applicable in fixing the position of every citizen with reference to the Government, in a time like this, as in determining the moral standing of every man, with reference to the Church of Christ. Whatever your wishes may have been, or may now be, you do not occupy any neutral ground. The friends of the Union in our Church are constrained to feel that you are not heartily in sympathy with them upon this absorbing question, while the friends of secession claim you, as a friend of the rebellion. Whether you will or no, we are satisfied that unless you can disabuse the minds of both parties by a plain declaration of your sentiments, your personal influence will continue to sustain this wicked and bloody opposition to the authority and laws of our Federal Government, and encourage those, who, without provocation or excuse, have taken up arms against the Government, and are now filling the land with bloodshed and unutterable misery.

The baptism of the child of Sam'l Robbins, in our church, on the 8th inst., by the name of that arch rebel and traitor, *Sterling Price*, we regard as a premeditated insult to the Government, and all its friends in the Pine Street Church. We consider it nothing less than a public, and sacrilegious prostitution of a sacred ordinance of God's house, to the gratification, on his part, of the most contemptible and malicious feelings of hostility to "the powers that be."

Such a public and shameless exhibition of a spirit of rancorous rebellion against the best of governments, manifested in the Church to which we belong, through what, we sincerely trust, was the unwilling agency of our own Pastor, will not permit us longer to remain silent.

We do not desire from you, as we have before stated, any ostentations, or pulpit manifestations of attachment to our Government, unless it should be considered such to pray in public for the "President of these United States," and those in authority under him, in so intelligible a manner, that your congregation shall not be in doubt as to whether it is the legitimate officers of the Government who are meant, or the spurious pretenders to office, in the rebellious States.

But we do ask that you will state in your reply, in a plain and candid manner, whether you are in favor of the Government of the United States, and believe it right for it to seek to maintain its authority over all the States of this Union, or whether you are in favor of the rebellion, and wish the success of those who seek to dismember the Union, and to establish a "Southern Confederacy."

Very truly your friends,

Geo. P. Strong, Martin Simpson, Rob't C. Totten, John S. Thomson, Thos. Morrison, James M. Corbett, R. D. Fenby, H. B. Graham, Jas. C. Butler, John M. Ferguson, Sam'l D. Mitchell, William Cox, Lesley Garrett, B. B. Graham, Chas. A. Biggers, Robert Dougherty, James Dougherty, Ralph Manson, John Lowey, Wm. Sensesderffer, John Devlin, Alexander D. Wilson, Jno. M. Wilson, Geo. Urquhart, James Love, J. H. Alexander, John T. Holme, John Ifinger, Morris Pauly, Rob't M. McCreery.

While I agree to the main object of the foregoing, I dissent from the general severity of expression.

W. W. Greene.

St. Louis, July 8th, 1862.

Messrs. George P. Strong and others :

DEAR BRETHREN : Your communication, dated June 18th, (the day after I had left the city for a trip to St. Paul,) was handed to me immediately on my return, with the request that I would, at my convenience, give you a written answer.

To go into a full consideration of all that the communication contains, would require a much longer reply than I deem it necessary for me to make. I shall therefore omit everything but such points as, after a careful reading of the paper, I consider important or proper for me to notice.

Your communication relates to my views and conduct as a Minister of the Gospel, and also to my views and conduct as a citizen of the Commonwealth ; and it is of the utmost importance that the duties, obligations and responsibilities which grow out of this two-fold relation of minister and citizen, should not be confounded. It is not a distinction without a difference unless the distinction between the Church and the State is also a distinction without a difference. In discharging my duties as a Minister of the Gospel, I am bound by the word of God, and I have accepted the standards of the Presbyterian Church as a true exposition of the Scriptures, in relation both to faith and practice, and my responsibility for the faithful discharge of these duties is to the Head of the Church, and under Him to the Presbytery to which I belong. In the discharge of my distinctive duties as a citizen I am bound by the laws of the land, and my responsibility is to the civil authority ; but, since my civil duties are at the same time religious duties, my Presbytery may also inquire into my neglect of any of my civil duties. I mention these very plain things for the purpose of setting at rest any claim which you brethren, or any number of gentlemen, have either as Church members or as citizens to demand as a matter of right an answer from me to such a paper as that presented. It is perfectly manifest that no such right exists, and if it were distinctly and formally claimed, I would be compelled to resist it. It is, moreover, with me a question of very grave doubt whether I should permit feelings of courtesy and personal regard to lead me even to appear to lend the influence of my example to a practice which, if it should become common, would, I am persuaded, destroy the harmony and mar the peace of all our Churches. For, brethren, if you may ask of me as your pastor a written answer to a paper going over the whole field of a great national convulsion, involving not simply questions of moral right and wrong, but also questions of constitutional law, and most intricate questions of State policy, then what questions may you not ask and demand of me my answer ? If a pastor begins such a course, upon what principle can he ever stop ? If one portion of his congregation may rightfully and wisely call upon him to define his position on public affairs, may not another portion do the same ? If wise and judicious members of a congregation begin such a course,

may not the unwise and injudicious feel called upon to imitate their example? Does not the principle, if once admitted, and the practice if once established, throw every pastor helpless into the hands of any party or faction that may at any time arise in his congregation? But while I feel constrained to call your attention to the very dangerous principle which such a course involves, and while I must and do solemnly declare that I will not admit this to be a precedent by which I will be governed in the future, yet such is my disposition to treat you personally with courtesy, and your wishes with respect, that I shall proceed to make such statements as in my judgment should be satisfactory.

As to my position as a Minister of the Gospel, those of you who have been longest connected with my Church, will bear me testimony that from the time I came to this city, now more than eleven years ago, to the present day, that I have never on any occasion, or under any pretext, introduced into the pulpit any matter of a political kind—that I have uniformly condemned the practice as contrary to the example of the inspired Apostles—as evil in itself, evil to the Church, and evil to the State.

I have over and over, and long before our present troubles began, explained to you my views of the relation of the Church and the State; how both are ordained of God, but ordained for different purposes; that they move in different orbits, have different ends to accomplish, and that they are independent the one of the other. Upon all these subjects my convictions, so far from being changed, are confirmed—and whether you agree with me or not, I can and do appeal to every one of you, and to all who know me, that my whole teaching and practice upon these subjects have been uniform and consistent during the entire time I have ministered to you—and I can only say that my conduct and views upon all these matters being the result of religious convictions, that until these convictions are changed there is nothing left for me but steadfastly to continue through good report, and through evil report, to do as I have done. I certainly shall not allow idle and baseless rumors circulated through the community by silly or malicious persons to turn me from a course I have deliberately and long since adopted as a matter of conscience.

It was during my absence in New Mexico that the angry clouds, which had long lowered above the political horizon, burst upon the land in the fearful storm of civil war. With startling rapidity the country passed from argument to arms. When I got back the discussion was over—the war begun. All this I learned with feelings of unutterable sorrow, as from time to time I received intelligence from the States. I saw then as distinctly as I see now, that the country was to be involved in a fierce, bloody and desolating war. Isolated as I then was, outside of the currents that were moving the whole country, I considered carefully and prayerfully what course I would pursue upon my return. I will not pretend that the conclusion I reached was absolutely correct. I will even admit that a constitutional abhorrence which I have to strife of every kind may have unduly influenced my mind. Be that as it may, I formed the deliberate purpose to have just as little to do with the political troubles of the country as I could—to exert

myself to the utmost to calm the passions and soothe the asperities of all parties, and in my pulpit to hold up these great truths of the gospel which, important at all times, are especially important in times like this. I believed then, and I believe now, that in this way I should render the best service it was in my power to render, either to the Church or to the State. The course thus marked out I can honestly say I have endeavored to follow.

There are two matters mentioned in the communication before me, which require me to say a word by way of explanation. The first relates to the baptism of the child of Mr. Robbins, by the name of Sterling Price, which seems to have been the immediate occasion of this paper. Now, I wish you to bear in mind that my entire agency in that whole matter was just what was *seen by the congregation and no more*. The parents never consulted me as to the name their child was to bear, nor did either of them ever tell me what it was until in the very act of administering the sacrament, I asked them. I clearly had no option in the matter. Our Directory of Worship, chapter vii, section 5, says—"The Minister is to pray for a blessing to attend the ordinance, after which, calling the child by its name, he is to say—I baptize thee," &c. This is all that I did. I had no right to decline doing it, and it never once crossed my mind that I was doing anything for which any reasonable person, knowing the circumstances, could or would blame me. Nor do I see how any one of you, placed in my circumstances, could have acted differently without assuming an authority which did not belong to the ministerial office. One of the signers of this paper is the clerk of Session. Will he refuse to enter that child's name upon the Church Register? I suppose not. But why, I ask, should my simply official act in pronouncing a name be considered in a different light from his official act in recording the same name upon the public register of the Church? And I cannot help saying, that when this paper charges Mr. Robbins with "sacrilegiously prostituting a sacred ordinance of God's house, to the gratification of contemptible and malicious feelings of hostility to the powers that be," that in my judgment such language is exceedingly harsh and uncharitable—for I have it from his own lips, that he had no purpose of doing any such thing as is attributed to him. We should not charge any one with motives which they distinctly deny.

The other point upon which I wish to say a word is in relation to the public prayer in the Sanctuary for the civil authorities. Paul, in his first epistle to Timothy, who was a Minister, exhorts him "to pray for kings, and all who are in authority; that we (Christians) may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty." The rule here laid down plainly makes it the duty of all who conduct the public worship of God's house to ask for God's blessing upon all the civil rulers of the earth; for the expression is not *the king*, but "for kings and all who are in authority," and the idea is that God having a Church scattered through the world, the Church is to pray that God would so bless and guide all civil rulers that they may not hinder the Church in its work. If, however, it is a duty to pray for the civil rulers in all the world, much more is it the duty of the Church to pray for those who stand in immediate relation to particular pur-

tions of it. But when the Church of God unites in prayer for the civil authorities there is no expression on her part of approbation or disapprobation of either their personal character or civil administration. The duty has remained the same through all the changes of men and measures which have taken place for eighteen hundred years. And when this inspired command was given to ministers, Nero was Emperor of Rome! As a minister, and in my official capacity, I am bound—yes, and private Christians too are bound—to pray for those in authority over us, whether we like or dislike, whether we approve or disapprove of the civil acts done by them. This is very plain, and it is just as plain that neither the Scriptures, the Church of God, nor Christianity *know any thing of prayer as a means of showing loyalty, or of praying up to the requirements of some popular standard of loyalty.* If I were living in the dominions of the Sultan of Turkey I would pray for Kings, and all who are in authority, and especially for him, and had I lived under the administration of Washington I would have done no more. Of course then, I have no objections, and in the very nature of the case could have none to “praying for the President of these United States.” It is just what I have done during every administration since I became a Minister, and it is just what I expect to do. It is true, I seldom use that form, having generally offered prayer for Kings and all who are in authority, and more especially for those who are in authority over us. My reasons for this are—*First, it is a Scriptural form—Second, it is very comprehensive—Third, it is in general the form I have used since the beginning of my ministry.* And it seems to me as simply ludicrous to say that the form—“those who are in authority over us”—leaves the matter in doubt as to the person meant. If any one feels any doubt as to “who are in authority over us,” and will express that doubt publicly, his doubts will speedily be solved.

Now, as to my purposes as a citizen, I have but a word to say. Whatever duties I have learned, or may hereafter learn from the Word of God (which is my rule of faith and practice) to be incumbent upon me, I shall endeavor in time to come, as I have in time past, to perform. Before I came to this State I did on two occasions take an oath of allegiance to the Constitution of the United States. To me that oath has not grown old. The God, by whose name I swore, is the “living God.” When the Convention of the State of Missouri, at its last session, enacted a law requiring an oath from those who solemnize the civil part of the marriage contract, I felt it to be my duty to take it. I expressed my purpose to do so before I left home for St. Paul. I have taken it since my return. I mention these dates to show you that neither this paper nor any circumstances which have subsequently occurred influenced my decision on that point.

In conclusion, brethren, let me say that this reply has been dictated by feelings of kindness—my great aim has been to promote the peace and unity of the Church, and to prevent any root of bitterness from springing up to trouble us. I hope you will receive it in the same spirit in which it is written. When I was ordained, I vowed before God and His Church that I would “study the peace, unity and purity of the Church.” All of you who are, or have been, office-bearers in the Church, have taken and are bound by the same solemn vows—and every member of the Church is under the same obligation. There is absolutely no

question now before us affecting the *purity* of the Church. There is, therefore, nothing which, in the sight of God, can justify any of us in disturbing its *peace* and *unity*. Up to the present time, by the great mercy of God, our Church has moved on in peace and harmony. There has been, as there should have been, a disposition to exercise mutual forbearance upon points about which you differed. Let this continue. It is what the Lord Jesus requires of us all. The interests we meet in God's house to promote, are infinitely above any or all the interests of time. We are not only citizens of the State, but we are also citizens of a Kingdom not of this world. The dreadful contest now going on is one to which the Church, as such, is not a party, let us all see to it that she is not made a victim. Those who handed me this paper told me that I was to consider it as coming from my friends. I have so treated it; and this answer is not written with any design of being published, and I give it to you with the express understanding that no part of it is to be published without my consent.

I am, your servant in the Gospel,

SAMUEL B. MCPHEETERS.

At a meeting of the members of the Pine Street Presbyterian Church, who are in favor of sustaining the Government of the United States, in its efforts to put down the rebellion raised against it, held on the 15th of October, 1862, Mr. Joshua H. Alexander was called to the chair, and Richard Holme appointed Secretary.

By request of the meeting, the answer of Rev. S. B. McPheeters to the communication addressed to him in June last, inquiring whether he was a friend of the Government, and desired its authority re-established, or a friend of the rebellion, and desired its success, was read and discussed.

It was then unanimously Resolved, That the answer was not satisfactory, for the reason that it entirely omitted to inform us, whether Mr. McPheeters was a friend or an enemy of the Government of the United States.

It was further Resolved, That inasmuch as the communication of June 18th, 1862, was addressed to our Pastor for the purpose of ascertaining the truth or falsity of reports, very current in St. Louis, and elsewhere, that he sympathized with the rebellion, and desired the success of the Southern States, in their attempt to dismember the Union, and establish a Southern Confederacy, and also to relieve our Church of the odium of being a secession Church, which was fast settling upon it, owing to the silence of our Pastor and the active disloyalty of many of its members, and inasmuch as the omission of any reply to the inquiries made of our Pastor, has left us without the means of contradicting the reports, and correcting the very general opinion of his disloyalty at heart, and inasmuch as he requests that his answer shall not be published, and as its publication would only confirm the opinion of his disloyalty, that therefore his answer be returned to him, as wholly unsatisfactory.

It was further Resolved, That at a time when the existence of the Government under which we have enjoyed unequaled civil and religious privileges, is seriously threatened, by a rebellion of unparalleled atrocity and wickedness, we deem it the duty of every man to encourage and sustain our rulers, in their efforts to overthrow the power of the rebels and re-establish the Union. And we are unwilling to countenance, by our attendance, a Church, whose moral influence encourages the rebellion, and where treason is unrebuked: and unless our Pastor can find it consistent with his feelings and convictions of duty, to make himself known as a friend of the Government under which he lives, and in leading the public devotions of his people, can pray for the success of that Government, in putting down armed resistance to its authority, we shall feel constrained to abandon a Church to which we are devotedly attached, until a cordial obedience to the lawfully constituted authorities of the State, and opposition to treason are taught from the pulpit, and by the private influence and example of the Pastor.

Resolved, That a Committee of three be appointed to return to Rev. Mr. McPheeters the answer above referred to, and also to furnish him with a copy of these resolutions, signed by the Secretary and Chairman of this meeting.

Messrs. Thompson, Morrison and Strong were appointed on that Committee.

RICH'D HOLME, Sec.

J. H. ALEXANDER, Chairman.

ST. LOUIS, November 3d, 1862.

Messrs. Jno. S. Thomson, Thos. Morrison and Geo. P. Strong, Committee:

GENTLEMEN: The series of resolutions purporting to have been adopted "At a meeting of the members of Pine Street Presbyterian Church, who are in favor of sustaining the Government of the United States in its efforts to put down the rebellion raised against it," which you were appointed to hand me I have received, and having considered them, I request you to submit to the organization which you represent, the following, as my reply.

Before I begin, however, let me call your attention to what, if not a clerical error, must not be permitted to pass without notice. You say, "at a meeting of the members of Pine Street Church, in favor of sustaining the Government," &c. Perhaps you intended to say, "at a meeting" of some or a few "of the members," &c., for you will hardly claim that the eighteen or twenty, who composed your meeting, are all of the members of Pine Street Church who are in favor of sustaining the Government? If you think so, it may be as well to tell you that there are many others quite as earnest as yourselves "in sustaining the Government," who were not with you in your meeting, and who are not likely to be with you in your present movement. For, let me further tell you, that the real questions in controversy between us are not, as I will presently show, questions as to the duty of citizens to sustain their Government, nor questions as to the right or wrong of the efforts made to dismember the Union, nor questions of loyalty or disloyalty, but questions of a very different kind, viz.: What is the relation of a pastor to his people?—what rights does it

involve?—Is it purely ecclesiastical and spiritual, or is it ecclesiastical and political? And your preamble would have been far more accurate if it had been couched in some such language as this: "At a meeting of some of the members of Pine Street Presbyterian Church, who claim that a pastor is bound to give a formal answer to such civil and political questions as his people may see good to ask him, it was resolved, &c. For the main ~~part~~ point in your resolutions is just this, that I omitted to answer the questions you propounded to me in your paper of June last.

point

A word now as to that paper. It was gotten up, you remember, during my temporary absence on a trip to St. Paul, and was handed to me on my return. I read it not only with astonishment, but sorrow. The claim, which it quietly assumed, that the members of my Church had a right to demand of me, as their pastor, a written answer to such questions as were there asked, struck me as so unheard of and absurd; the yielding to such a claim seemed to me so evil and dangerous precedent; some of the language used I thought, upon a fair construction, to be personally so offensive, and the whole proceeding I regarded as so irregular and unpresbyterian that my first impulse was to return it without a word. But upon learning something of the history of the paper, that in the getting up, it was the work of one or two individuals who wrote and handed it around for signatures, and knowing how easily by plausible representations signatures might be obtained, and being morally certain that many who signed it had no purpose whatever of disturbing the peace of the Church, and charitably thinking that the language to which I made exception might be explained by the author of the paper, (which, in private, he has subsequently done,) and hoping that a reply might be made which, while it yielded nothing as to the right of asking such questions of me as a pastor, might at once tend to the harmony of the Church, and to the satisfaction of those who wished to be satisfied. I determined to return a reply, and to answer such parts of the paper as I "deemed it important or proper for me to notice." Upon all the matters relating to my pastoral and ministerial duties I aimed to be full and explicit. Upon my duties and opinions as a citizen, while I entered a formal protest against the right of Church members to question me about my opinions on such matters, I, nevertheless, so far waived the matter as to tell you explicitly that as far as I knew I discharged to the best of my ability all the duties of a citizen enjoined upon me by the word of God or the laws of the land. But I did purposely and of deliberate design omit a formal answer to the questions which you asked me, because, while I was willing to do almost anything not in itself wrong, to prevent discord, I felt that it would be wrong to yield to so pernicious a claim as I then suspected, and am now convinced was there set up.

Before the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church I solemnly and formally denied the right of any ecclesiastical body, from the highest to the lowest, to question a Minister upon his political opinions, and as you saw good to deny that position, it was hardly to be expected that I would yield it, when claimed by a few members of my Church who had no right to question me judicially upon my theological, much less my political, opinions.

When my reply was prepared, I publicly requested the signers of the paper to meet me at a time and place designated. At that meeting, a majority of the signers of the first paper being present, I read my answer and we had a free conversation on the whole subject. The interview was pleasant and as I supposed satisfactory. Several who were present expressed themselves, (if language can convey thoughts,) as entirely satisfied; others thought the whole thing would do good and tend to the harmony of the Church. And the impression made upon my mind, and I think would have been made upon the mind of any person present, was, that the whole had come to a happy and satisfactory conclusion, and when the meeting adjourned, it was with mutual congratulations. I ought in justice to say, that neither of the two gentlemen who drew up the paper were present at this meeting, both of them being at the time out of the city temporarily, and that upon their return and reading my answer, they told me frankly that it was not what they hoped and desired it should be.

Some of the signers of the first paper who were present at the meeting just mentioned, have shown that they were and are satisfied, by refusing to have anything further to do with the matter. Others, who were there, and who were among the first to express, in most distinct and devout language, their joy at the "happy result of the whole matter," I find now among the "unanimous" in declaring their dissatisfaction, nay, in returning my paper as "wholly unsatisfactory." Of this I do not complain. I freely grant that men have a right to change their opinions, and to learn what should satisfy them; and three months and a half is a long period in times like these. But let this go. I return to the true and only point at issue between us, which is this. You claim the right, in virtue of the relation which exists between us as pastor and people, to ask and receive my written opinion and personal position upon civil and political questions no way connected with my office and duty as a minister of the gospel. That this claim was set up by the movers in this matter, I suspected, as I have intimated, when I read your paper of June last. That it is now distinctly announced seems to be plain beyond dispute, since you have organized yourselves with chairman and secretary, and send your committee to deliver the resolves which you have taken, in case I fail to yield the claim by practical obedience.

Now, gentlemen, before I can yield what you demand, you must show me what foundation your claim has in reason, scripture, or the standards of the Presbyterian Church, and until you do this I must tell you plainly that this claim I utterly deny, and feel compelled to resist. And I do now resist it by refusing to be catechised by you. By again declining any answers to questions of the kind which you propound; by making no promise of obedience to your demands, and by refusing to plead at your bar. And this position I take, not from any disposition to stand out captiously upon an abstract question of right, nor from any disposition improperly to conceal my views on political questions, but from a conscientious conviction that I cannot yield the thing you claim, without, to the full extent of my example, compromising the rights of every minister, and endangering the peace of all our churches. The claim of right to ask and receive an answer from your pastor to such questions, clearly rests on an unscriptural

and dangerous error as to the pastoral relation itself. It is in no sense, and to no degree, a civil and political relation. It has no concernment with men, viewed in any other light than as citizens of "a kingdom not of this world." All of the duties and rights which belong to the relation of pastor and people grow out of relations which they bear to Christ and his Church, and the moment we cut loose from this, we are at sea without chart or compass. If a pastor begins to answer such questions as you ask, where can he consistently stop? Let him once yield the right to some, and he cannot consistently deny it to any. Let him once begin to give his written opinion and personal position as pastor upon any of these questions, *no matter how important in themselves*, and how long will it be before he will be called upon as a pastor, to take his official position upon the various questions of State policy which arise; to express and defend, as a minister of the gospel, his views upon the proclamations and orders at any time issued by the government? The magnitude and profoundly interesting character of the questions about which you asked my views, does not in any degree alter my position; nay, it is to me a matter of gratitude, that since the question has come up, that it has risen, not upon any subordinate question of party politics, but upon questions which, in their civil aspect are nationally important and vital. Because, by resisting the whole claim here, I resist it everywhere. By testifying against it under these circumstances, and at what personal perils and penalties I know not, I am enabled to bear testimony against the whole system of church secularization, which I solemnly believe is a sign of the times, and which, if carried out, will end in degrading the ministers of the gospel into politicians, and the Church itself into a thing of State.

You may think that I am alarmed at a chimera, that the danger I seek to avoid is only in my imagination. I might be persuaded to believe this, if I had not learned what has taken place in many parts of the church, and seen what has fallen under my own observation. Nay, gentlemen, if you will but look at your own course, you will see that my fears are not imaginary. While I was in New Mexico, when I was entirely ignorant of the views of any of you, I prepared a pastoral letter, declaring my purpose as your pastor, to avoid intermeddling with these exciting political questions, and urging the members of the church not to permit them to come into the house of God. And when I returned, I told you distinctly, that it was my purpose not only not to introduce them into my pulpit, but as far as possible to stand aloof from them as an individual.

Without exception you approved of my course. It was, you all told me, what you desired. I remember the individuals among you who said, "we have the war all the week, and want the gospel on Sunday." "I hear you with respect when you expound the Scriptures, but I believe I understand political matters as well or better than you do," and well do I remember the mortification and indignation which one of your number expressed, when a military officer of high rank, made a patriotic instead of a religious address in the Sunday School with which he is connected. Thus things stood for months. The first intimation I had of any change in your views, was in the paper of June last. I then learned that some

of you were changing your ground. Still, even in that paper, you say, "we do not desire from you, as we have before stated, any ostentatious or pulpit manifestations of attachment to the government, unless it should be considered such to pray in public for the President of the United States, and those who are in authority under him," &c. In my reply I distinctly told you that I considered it as clearly a duty enjoined in the Scriptures to pray for those in authority, and as the President of the United States undoubtedly had authority over us, that I did and would continue to pray for him. Again, the majority seemed satisfied. And now, after three months and a-half, you come and tell me, "unanimously," that you are not satisfied and will not be satisfied until the whole subject is prayed over and discussed from the pulpit! And what you will desire and demand three months and a-half hence, who can tell? I therefore call attention to your own course as a thorough vindication of the wisdom and necessity of mine, that I did not resist unreasonable demands too soon, if I intended to resist at all.

In your former paper and in the one now before me, you refer to "reports here and elsewhere, affecting my loyalty," and you tell me that the sole object of the paper of June last with reference to me, was to ascertain the truth or falsity of these rumors. All that I can say is that if that was the "*sole object*," you adopted a very unfortunate way of accomplishing it, when you place before me the alternative of yielding to a most dangerous and unreasonable claim, or remaining silent. With my views of right and duty I could not hesitate which alternative to choose. I had rather endure false rumors than false assumptions of rights. *Rumors are things of a day — rights are perpetual.*

I am not ignorant of the fact that rumors have been circulated, and printed too, charging me, directly or indirectly, with disloyalty. I know also, that it is a day of rumors, and falsehood and detraction. And the only notice I have felt called upon to take of these things, has been to contradict them by the quiet tenor of my life. I have thought, yea, and I still think, that the "rumors of disloyalty" need not alarm one, who, recognizing civil government as "ordained of God," has been "subject" unto it, "not only for wrath but for conscience sake;" who, in obedience to the divine command has "submitted himself to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake;" who has "rendered to all their dues—tribute to whom tribute is due, custom to whom custom, fear to whom fear, and honor to whom honor," and who, in public and private, has prayed for those who are in authority.

All this I claim to have done habitually and as a part of my duty to God. And to bring this matter to an issue, let me say, there are civil, military and ecclesiastical courts, and that I do now challenge any and all men — all makers, and spreaders and endorsers of these rumors, to prove before any one of these tribunals, an act that I have done or a word that I have said, that a good citizen has not a perfect right to do or say. I cannot however dismiss "these rumors of disloyalty," without calling your attention to the fact that one of your resolutions may, and in all probability will be taken as giving them a quasi endorsement. Now, if with the knowledge which some of you have, your conscience and self-respect will allow you to do this, I have nothing to say but what my

own self-respect forbids my saying. Of one thing I am certain, that I can far better afford to have such charges made, than any good man can afford to make them. So much for the rumors which have me for their object.

A word now as to those which charge Pine Street Church as being a "secession church." If by a "secession church" is meant that there are a number of its members or attendants who hold the political dogma that a State has a right to secede from the Federal Union, I have to confess that I do not know whether the charge is true or false. For I do not know the views of one in ten on these subjects. And if any one should say that our church is a Democratic church, or a Republican church, or an Unconditional Union Emancipation church, or a President's Proclamation church, using all of these appellatives in the same sense, I would be equally at a loss to affirm or deny. I know but little of the political opinions of the members of my church, never having assumed the right of catechising them. But that Pine Street Church is "a secession church" in the sense that such doctrines are taught from its pulpit, or inculcated by its pastor, or in any manner or to any degree characterizes its worship, government or discipline, is what no man will dare to say, who has one principle of truth, honor or honesty. When Pine Street Church becomes a secession church, or any other kind of church but a Church of Jesus Christ, for one I will turn from it with the loathing that I would feel for a bride who has deserted her husband to follow another. But while it remains true to Christ, the attempt, either directly or indirectly, to darken its name with so odious a slander, is a fearful sin, and God will not hold men guiltless who commit it.

I will not close this communication without telling you that I greatly regret the course which you have been led to adopt in this whole matter. It must strike every Presbyterian as, to say the least, unusual. The first intimation I had of any dissatisfaction in the Church, was the formal paper of June last. Not a word had been said to me in private on the subject, and yet, from the intimacy that existed between myself and not a few of your number, this was what I felt that I had a right to expect: but not to insist upon this, which is only a question of propriety, I must insist, that if action was to be taken concerning things affecting the interest of the Church, that the Church Session was the only proper body to move in the matter. According to the Presbyterian Form of government "the Church Session is charged with maintaining the spiritual government of the congregation." It is "to concert the best means for promoting its spiritual interests." Surely the matters which you thought so gravely affecting the spiritual interests of the Church, should have been at least brought before this body, which, according to our standards, has that matter in charge. There was no difficulty in getting either a formal or informal hearing in that court as the two originators of this movement were both of them members of the Session—yet not a word was said in the Session—they were not consulted, nor even informed as to what was going on; and now you have formed an organization in the Church itself, which, according to your own preamble, seems to me to be distinctly and professedly political, and by formal resolutions tell me what I must preach and what I must pray, declaring, if I understand the language, that if I do not thus

preach and pray that you are determined, in violation of your vows and duty, to abstain from the ordinances of God's house as administered in the Church to which you belong, and of which some of you are office-bearers. Now, I appeal to your better judgment if this can be justified? Is it not manifestly schismatical? It seems to me that you are doing in the Church of God what you so thoroughly condemn when done in the State.

Is schism less a sin than secession? And what if in imitation of your example I should get a paper telling me that "at a meeting of the members of Pine Street Church, who are in favor of sustaining the government of the" (Presbyterian Church) "in its efforts to put down" (the schism) "raised against it," (resolutions were passed demanding that) "a cordial obedience to the lawfully constituted authority of the" (Church) "and opposition to schism should be taught from its pulpit and by the private influence and example of its pastor." I call your attention to this, not because it is likely to occur, nor because if it did occur that I would be likely to give any other attention to the demand than I expect to give to yours, but I ask you to look at it to see where the principle you adopt and the course you have pursued logically lead. I do sincerely hope that you will reconsider this whole matter and take a different view of your duty. But upon whatever course you may determine, and whatever results may follow it, I feel conscious that in these times of violence and faction that I have aimed to conduct myself circumspectly as a minister of Christ—that I have studied and sought after the things that make for peace—that I have tried to avoid all occasion of irritation—and so true is this that those who complain of my course complain not of what I have done but of what I have not done. I know there are sins of omission as well as of commission, and if I am guilty of the former I am truly sorry; but this I can say—I followed my best judgment in view of my responsibility to God. This I say with regard to those subjects more or less connected with the troubles of the State, which might be legitimately presented from the pulpit. As to my launching out in the pulpit upon politics, state or national, expounding or defending the Constitution of the United States, advocating or opposing the measures of the administration, I have no more idea of doing so than I have of doing anything that would bring conscious self-degradation.

I regard the whole generation of ministers who do these things in the pulpit, as a disgrace to the Church, and an intolerable nuisance to the State, and that they are anywhere tolerated, is to my mind evidence of such a state of corruption as goes far to explain the fearful judgments that God has sent upon the land. I expect, therefore, in time to come, as in time past, to preach the great distinctive doctrines of the gospel: nor do I see any good reasons why I should change the petitions which I am in the habit of offering in the sanctuary. I believe them to be scriptural, and such as all good men should be able heartily to unite in offering to God. I pray for all our civil rulers. This Paul enjoins. I ask God to give them the wisdom their station demands; to let his blessing rest upon them; to incline them to do that which is right, and to restrain them from doing, anything that would be hurtful or wrong. In reference to our national troubles, I confess our national and individual sins as the cause; acknowledge the jus-

tice of God in afflicting us; implore his pardon for the past, and his mercy for the future; and without prescribing to him the method or the means, I beseech him in the name of Christ so to order and control all these events, that they shall result in his glory, the advancement of his kingdom, and the good of the whole country.

And I have selected petitions like these, not as adapted to this or that locality, but what, as in my conscience before God, I believe to be becoming and proper in the Church of God, which, in my conception of it, is in its very nature spiritual, beneficent and catholic; belonging to no party, section or nation; having no head or law-giver but Christ, and having no work to do and no kingdom to uphold but His. I know that there are ministers who go much further in all these things than I do, and I know that among them are many eminent for wisdom and piety. I do not judge such. I honor and love them. Still, as every man is to give an account of himself to Christ, I must do what, after earnest and prayerful meditation, I believe Christ will approve. If I have adopted this course for fear of man, or to please men, or from any unworthy or sinful motive, I have reason to fear his displeasure; but if I have adopted it from a conscientious conviction that it is right—from a desire to please him, even if I am mistaken, I shall still humbly hope in his pardon.

But I close this communication, already too long. In my former reply I told you that without my consent I did not wish it to be published. My reasons for this were, first, I hoped the whole thing would be settled among ourselves without going to the public. Second, I feared that its publication in the present excited state of the public mind, might be seized upon by anonymous writers, who, under cover of patriotism and loyalty, might seek to vent their personal or sectarian spleen against the church; and third, out of regard for yourselves; for I considered your communication in its whole tenor and spirit, as so foreign from what is customary between a pastor and his people, and so evidently tinged by the violent and denunciatory character of these unhappy times, that I believed that you yourselves, would in time to come regret its publication. But since you have seen proper to say, in one of your resolutions, that the publication of my paper would only confirm the opinion of my disloyalty, I now give my full consent to its publication, on the conditions, first, that the whole communications that have passed between us be published; second, that those who signed the paper of June last, and do not wish to have their names connected with it, be allowed to withdraw them without remark; third, that I am to see and have an opportunity of replying to anything you may choose to say on this paper; that I shall be consulted as to the place and manner of publication; and I ask you to appoint a committee to confer with me as to the time and manner of its publication.

Yours, respectfully,

SAMUEL B. MCPHEETERS.

SAINT LOUIS, December 1, 1862.

Rev. S. B. McPheeters, D. D.:

DEAR PASTOR:— We, the undersigned, desire to express to you, that having signed the communication addressed to you, subscribed by a portion of the members of your church and congregation, dated the 18th of June last, and having heard your response, written and read by you, at a meeting held subsequently, at your request, in the lecture room of the church, at which nearly all of said subscribers were present, and at the close of which meeting we understood your response to be quite satisfactory. We have since then learned, with much regret, that some of those subscribers are yet discontented. We desire to state that we do not wish to be considered as having any connection with the movement now understood to be made in the church, looking to a dissolution of the pastoral relation.

M. SIMPSON,
W. W. GREENE,
LESLEY GARNETT,
ROBERT DOUGHERTY,
JAMES DOUGHERTY,
JAMES LOVE.