

A LETTER

FROM

RICHARD T. MERRICK, Esq.

OF BALTIMORE,

AGAINST

Uniting Religion with Politics.

BALTIMORE:
PUBLISHED BY MURPHY & CO.
No. 178 Market Street.
H. TAYLOR, SUN BUILDING.
1854.

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CORRESPONDENCE.

BALTIMORE, *4th October*, 1854.

MY DEAR SIR :

I have at various times heard conjectures as to your course at the coming election for Mayor, and to-day felt authorized, from conversations of late with you upon the subject, to contradict a statement made in my presence that it was your purpose to vote for the *Know-Nothing candidate*.

Allow me to say, that in the present unsettled condition of the politics of the city, your name is used for purposes which I do not believe you countenance or sympathise with, and to ask from you an expression of your views upon the important questions which are now in political agitation.

I am, very truly, your friend and obedient servant,

WM. MEADE ADDISON.

RICH'D T. MERRICK, Esq., *Baltimore*.

BALTIMORE CITY, *Oct. 5th*, 1854.

WM. MEADE ADDISON, Esq., *Baltimore*.

MY DEAR SIR :

Yours of the 4th inst. has been received. Your contradiction of the statement mentioned in your letter was an act of friendship for which I am obliged to you. It is my intention at the coming election to vote for Mr. THOMAS.

The Whig party seems to have been disbanded. It certainly will not appear in this municipal contest. It has passed from the field of political action for the present.

Sinking from its exalted position, it is now called to secure, not its own triumph, but the defeat of the Democratic party, by a combination with a new organization of sudden growth in the country and of the veiled and mysterious character.

If perfect ignorance as to the principles and purposes of this new order had been effected by a more cautious observance of secrecy—except that those purposes had reference to the government of the country, and that those principles were political—I should even then have been entirely averse to any participation in a scheme proposing to degrade a great national party to the condition of elevating to power a combination of men, united by political sympathies and theories sacredly kept from the scrutiny of the public view. Not only should I have felt a sense of shame in thus prostituting a party which had claimed a large share of my devotion, and which I had often eulogised in the expression of my honest conviction of its exalted merits, but I should have felt that I was degrading myself, as a man and a citizen, in thus blindly surrendering my judgment by using the elective franchise to give the power of the State to a combination of men, the solemn dignity of whose silence could not be broken even to inform their complaisant coadjutor what disposition they would make of the trust he was so humbly imposing upon them.

In a government such as ours, so intimately connected in its administration with the people who ordain it, a common interest coerces the presumption of a general wish for the common welfare—and differences of opinion upon political subjects are simply different conclusions of various minds as to the relative efficiency of different principles to answer the universal demand in securing the largest measure of national good.

Political theories thus formed seek light, not darkness—they seek elaboration and modification and supremacy by hostile conflict in open day, and winning adherents by the development of their wisdom, abide the test of the popular judgment. That party presents itself under unfortunate and suspicious auspices to the consideration of the citizens of the Republic, which seeks to obtain authority in the Government by the solemn mockery of a mysterious concealment. We can only account for the cautious protection of their opinions and views from the

obtruding examination of the people upon whom they are to act, on the supposition that those privileged to walk in the light of their sacred knowledge feel that they possess no attractive beauties for the public eye, and that exposure would only secure for some disgusting deformity the odium or the derision of the country.

We are in the present case more readily induced to this conclusion by what has been variously revealed as to the theories of this new order. For tho' binding its members to secrecy by the ceremonial of oaths, probably administered in some grave and imposing initiatory process, it is yet impossible that an association so actively engaged in the arena of political contests should not manifest some of its springs of action and expose in different ways its peculiar tendencies and objects.

It is true we know as yet but little, but that little is too much of dangerous evil.

United by sentiments of animosity and inflamed by religious fanaticism, the end and object of its being is the proscription of the entire Catholic community under the pretence of a measure of national safety. Its existence has inaugurated the dark principle of intolerant persecution in the country, now first commended to its hideous tasks since a blessed peace closed over the scenes of our revolution and the covenant of religious liberty spread its protecting illumination about the sacred rights of conscience.

This we are permitted to understand is one of the cardinal principles and cohesive elements of this new combination.

Another is,—and I believe this completes the measure of public information upon the subject,—a proscription of the naturalized citizens of the country, and an extension of the probationary period of the emigrant before admission to the rights of citizenship.

I will not discuss this latter principle. It has exercised small if any influence upon my judgment in considering the course existing circumstances required me to pursue.

There is quite enough in the secret character and religious element of this new combination of political economists and speculators, to condemn it as the most unrighteous and dangerous faction upon our national annals. But I can scarcely be-

lieve that the period of its existence will be long or vigorous ; but that born in the dark and nurtured in guarded seclusion, it will die under the influence of the light into which it has ventured partially to obtrude, and passing away forever leave behind no record of its being.

This may reasonably be hoped from the sound sense and justice of the people. The past, however, teaches us in many instances of lamentable experience, that when the spirit of persecution is at work, a dangerous power is broke loose, which if not restrained by the vigorous action of enlightened public opinion may effect the most painful results to the peace and permanency of the State.

I can see no justification for aiding to the growth of efficient strength this beginning of confusion and wrong, in the argument urged upon the whigs that it will secure a democratic defeat. A singular confusion of ideas seems to prevail as to the triumph which will correspond with this defeat.—Gentlemen regarding the two organizations which have heretofore for some time claimed public attention as the only parties of actual and recognized authority in the political contests of the country, suppose that the humiliation of the one is necessarily the exaltation of the other.

They do not consider the power of the ally—not whom *they* call in to aid in their warfare, but to whom they become subsidized in a contest widely different from theirs, and of which *he* is the front;—they do not reflect that ultimate triumph shows him exalted to power with all his obnoxious theories incorporated into the political system of the nation, and wielding civil authority to secure their spread and permanency;—they seem to forget that any more terrible and calamitous circumstance can happen to the country than the triumph of an old political foe, and surrendering themselves to animosities whose impetuous ardor should be calmed by patriotic reflection, blindly uphold in an aspiring combination a principle which in itself they despise and condemn.

A moment of deliberation and judgment will show to them that they owe an obligation to the institutions of the country before which all animosities must cease, and all feuds be quieted, and ancient foes abandoning all smaller causes of difference,

submit themselves to unity of action for the preservation of the proudest and dearest right secured by the Constitution of the Union. Its high privileges could not be more endangered, and surely no more perilous calamity could be imposed upon the country, than in the rule of men united by religious fanaticism, and combined for the purpose of proscribing and disfranchising a large portion of the American people for the crime of following in religious matters, the dictates of conscience and the conclusions of judgment. To place civil authority in the keeping of such a party, would be to establish the dominion of a power imbued with the fierce and unholy spirit whose relentless and embittered animosity has uniformly perverted to its vindictive purposes the powers of government wherever it has been allowed to wield them, and with equal certainty destroyed and broken the harmony of society wherever it has been loosened upon it. Indeed it is matter of amazement and humiliation, that in this land and age there could be found any respectable number of citizens willing to adopt as their political creed the harsh and unchristian theory of a barbarous period, which peopled America by its merciless pursuit, and was expunged forever from the ethics of the world by the institution of her liberty. But such is the fact, however humiliating it may be, and we are called to preserve to our country what we had regarded as an established and enduring principle of our government, drawn from the highest and purest philosophy of the civil and moral relations of man.

A philosophy which has dignified humanity, ennobled government, and purified religion; and which leaving the consciences of men untrammelled and free, without fear of civil disabilities or civil penalties, rigorously enforces the enlightened principle of the mutual independence of civil and ecclesiastical power, and urges the great precept—that whilst man's accountability to God in his moral relation is a subject sacred from civil interference, he owes in his double relation of citizen and christian, a faithful obedience to the ruling authority of his country.

That liberty of conscience is an inherent natural right, inviolable in view of an ordinary sense of justice and every political and moral consideration, it cannot be necessary at this day to argue. Referring to man's ultimate destiny, it forms the

character of his relation with the supreme ruler and judge, and any attempt to coerce his opinion and under the terror of civil authority to restrain the perfect freedom of that moral agent upon whose enlightened action depends an immortality, is a desecration of the religion which holds among its tenets, that *free will* was given to man that he might choose according to its freedom, and *conscience*—that an inherent moral appreciation might direct his election. This election in all that appertains to it belongs to the kingdom of God—not man—and should be sacred, alike from the control and influence of civil power and the baser persecution of political faction.

I am aware that many jurists of Europe have drawn a distinction between ordaining a State religion and limiting all participation in civil authority to its conformists—and the direct restraint of freedom of conscience by coercive and penal enactments; and whilst claiming the former to be a legitimate exercise of sovereignty, they regard the latter as repugnant to justice and reason, and in violation of a natural and inherent right of humanity.

However correct this distinction may have been in view of the organization of the governments under the protection of whose institutions they wrote—and it is not necessary for my purposes to examine it further—it is manifestly erroneous when applied to a Republic, in which an equal participation in power is a declared element of its character and a political right of its citizens. In such a government, and indeed in any, coercion may be exercised as fully and bitterly by the deprivation of civil franchises as by the infliction of any other penalty, and freedom of conscience is necessarily restrained so long as civil disability is incident to any religious conviction. Fully appreciating this and intending to establish a government under whose glorious and enduring power a mighty people might live and prosper, secured in the inviolable sanctity of the inalienable right to enlightened liberty, the founders of the Republic provided in the constitution by which its powers and character were to stand forever defined, the perfect immunity of its citizens from civil disability on account of religious opinions.

This great principle, originating in the colony of Maryland and there nurtured and developed, became the proudest ele-

ment of American freedom. Recognizing the solemnity of man's relation with another life, it elevated his dignity and ennobled his duty in this. It threw about that relation a sacred protection from fanatical invasion, whether it came in the shape of penal enactments or political disfranchisement, and a merciless persecution which had gloated in fraternal discord for ages, shrank withering before it.

There is not in the constitution anywhere a more emphatic declaration than in article VI relating to this subject. After stating that various public functionaries shall be "bound by oath or affirmation to support the constitution" it concludes,—*but no religious test shall ever be required as a qualification to any office of public trust under the United States.*"

The citizens of a free country appreciating in full and noble gratitude those who have bequeathed to them the blessed inheritance of such a government as ours—secured through such vast privations, and erected and fortified with so much labor,—should feel the impulse of living according to its spirit and for the preservation of its purity as the highest obligation for the experience of its benedictions. They should bow before it with respectful love—they should look to it as a mighty power, in the permanency and vigor of whose existence was involved their peace and happiness, and the peace and happiness of those who should come after them. They should repress as unrighteous and dangerous every attempt to cultivate and extend a public opinion and spirit not in harmony with its exalted theories, and deprecating every manifestation of irrevalent disregard for its sanctity, protect it with firmness and caution from the first approaching step of a daring and reckless innovation.

But we have in this new party a combination of citizens united upon a principle not only repugnant to justice and reason, and against the most sacred right of man as recognized in the philosophy of an enlightened civilization, but against the spirit and letter of the federal constitution. They do not seek to cure the distempers of the State and purify the administration of its civil functions, or correct abuses and remedy evils, but denouncing the inherent character of its organization they assail a fundamental principle of the government. They can see nothing in the mighty past—they can feel no power in the rigid

tests of experience—they can appreciate no force in the large and growing prosperity of the country to satisfy a reliance upon this constitution. The perfect safety of the nation—its unparalleled progress—its majestic growth—its stupendous glory—the content and happiness of its people—can present to them no sufficient assurance of the power and wisdom of the present organic law. The liberty which it embodies needs some new expedient for preservation—some additional protection from the danger of Catholic aggression. It is not safe, it is not secure, and some new device is imperiously demanded to preserve the independence of Church and State, and protect the civil from the adulteration of the religious power.

An experience through a period which has now reached within only a few years the measure of a century has established the wisdom and matured the authority of the constitution, and demonstrated its efficiency as it stands, to preserve in the government the vigor and power of the great principle at whose imagined peril this new order professes such alarm.

What has lately transpired to excite the serious and unpleasant apprehensions, and agitate the fears of these gentlemen who seem now so much disturbed, they have not informed the public. We are ignorant what new experience they have discovered which falsifies so large a precedent record.

But in any event the measure they propose seems singularly inefficient for the accomplishment of the purpose contemplated.

There being but a very small class of our people who do not belong to one or the other of the great denominations, the exclusion of all Catholics from office involves putting none but Protestants in. In this view of the disposition of political trusts, religion becomes a test of official qualification and is demanded from the public fiduciary as a guarantee for the faithful discharge of duty.—It is no longer excluded from the power of the State, but is one of its elements here, as potential and active as in her dominion is the established religion of England. Test acts, as stringent

as Parliament ever enacted or the fanaticism of Britain ever maintained, are practically in force throughout this government, and only bide the day of sufficient power to take their place among the statutes. They exclude from office—they mark the class fit to be the recipients of public trusts—they elevate to authority and they degrade to disfranchisement—and denying all merit in capacity—all claim in virtue, and all excellence in patriotism, they establish religious belief as the criterion of official ability and the measure of official faith.

I must confess I am unable to appreciate the logic which concludes that a principle necessarily leading to such a condition of things is a safe or expedient preservative of the mutual independence of Church and State. I can see in it nothing but corruption and danger, and ruin, for both the one and the other. It wears to me the harsh appearance of unchristian fanaticism and lawless persecution and political depredation—and not the mild promise of purity in official duty and protection in civil rights. It approaches the constitution not to sustain it in the great and invaluable privileges it secures to this people—but with a defiant and irreverent opposition to break down its guards—to invade its sanctity—deface its beauty—destroy its glory, and wither and crush out its power.

And what grave and dangerous emergency is it that these gentlemen would induce us to believe is upon us, thus agitating the harmony and good feeling of society and demanding these perilous expedients?

Reposing in a profound political calm and experiencing every blessing within the gift of a great government, stable, permanent and just, we are suddenly aroused by the startling revelation that our belief in the patriotism of a large class of our fellow citizens is credulity, and our faith in the peace, prosperity and security of the country is a delusion; that we are surrounded by treason and in the midst of national peril; that enemies within are preparing the way for enemies from without; and that the concealed treachery of a religious de-

nomination is about to immolate our liberty at the shrine of the Vatican.

In repelling this grave charge, the Catholic,—(the object of its infamy,)—invokes to his advocacy the glory of his country.

From the gray dawn of its morning twi-light to this hour of its effulgent splendor, who has sacrificed to it with more devotion, who worshipped it with intenser love—whose blood has flowed more freely for its illustration, whose heart bounded more nobly to the contests of its defense than his? The bones of his brethren and ancestors who have gone before him in his now persecuted faith are upon every field on which our banner was ever planted—their deeds are upon every page of our history where deed of patriotism are recorded, and the glory of his country is—*his own*. They have shared in the perils of winning it—they have participated in all the dangers of its defense—they have heightened and brightened its lustre—and giving to him their high title to this priceless inheritance of all our people, he has guarded it through every moment with the vigilance of a devoted freeman, and now invokes its power to repel the accusation by which he is sought to be degraded. He claims no more than others, but he claims equally with any; he seeks to depreciate none, but he desires that none may depreciate him; he makes no haughty demand in the spirit of inflated pride, but he simply asks for justice, because he is persecuted and wrong.

But of times even beyond the dawn of our national day, history's muse has kept a sacred memorial which shall be honorable to his faith so long as religious freedom is cherished among men. When driven from the world the refuge of its safety was the shadow of a Catholic altar, where alone then grew the olive, rising from a raging deluge of sectarian discord in holy promise of a covenant of peace. It stretched forth its branches to the persecuted of America, and they fled to the repose of its fragrant shade from every quarter, pursued by every degree of religious animosity, and there grew up about it under the auspices of Lord Baltimore, a

colony composed of all denominations of christians, yet equal in civil privileges ; of all forms of worship, yet united by fraternal love ;—founding itself upon the great principles, then first proclaimed,—*of the inherent right to perfect freedom of conscience and the moral and civil wrong of political disability on account of religious conviction.*

This was the commencement of Catholic history in America, and this the germ of American freedom. There is not in that history, from this its beautiful and auspicious beginning down to the present time, the record of one single act to justify or countenance the bold aspersion so recklessly cast upon the members of that church.

They regard the Papal sovereignty over the domain of the church in Italy as a purely political institution of that people and not an emanation from ecclesiastical authority. Recognising the supremacy of the religious head in religious matters, they deny and repudiate his control in civil ; they hold as a matter of religious duty, obedience and faith to the laws of the country as the only guarantee of civil peace and social harmony ; they regard allegiance to the nation in whose protection they live, as one of the first obligations they owe to heaven ; they consider the interference of the ecclesiastic in civil affairs as a desecration of his high calling ; they believe the only voice which should be heard in the temple is “the healing voice of christian charity ;” and reverencing the faith of their ancestors in religion and politics, proudly point to its illustrative monuments in the glorious record of the foundation of the colony of Maryland.

The uniform conduct of clergy and laity throughout the country has been in accordance with these views ; and when discord and agitation has disturbed the people and rancorous animosity and excited passion has been inflamed, as lately occurred at the North, to resist the execution of the laws, it was this church, whose covert treason perils our national existence, that called its members to obey and defend the outraged authority of the country. From its pulpits everywhere throughout the land goes forth to those who will hear it, the moral precept of civil obedience as the paramount duty of the

citizen ; and in its people everywhere that precept manifests a calm and steady acquiescence in the supreme power of the State. And if, indeed, ecclesiastical thunder ever rightfully belonged to Rome for use in civil emergencies, its bolts would seem to have been surreptitiously appropriated by some of our dissenting brethren at the North, who in their paroxysms of indignant wrath fulminate them with indiscriminate fury against the patriotism of our people, and the peace, government and dignity of the Union. Unfurling from the temple the banner of a *higher law*, they denounce as unchristian the legislation of the country, in terms of invective cultivated for a different purpose and more suitable to less sacred places, and threaten with the terrors of divine malediction obedience to the sovereign law of the nation.

If such might stop in their career, and for a moment pause to hear the *traitor* teach *his* flock their *treason*, they would learn—that in *his* theology the higher law ordains the supremacy of civil power, and that in society and government, instituted to promote the great purposes of peace and virtue and happiness among men, obedience is the greatest glory—the noblest duty, and the HIGHEST LAW—and that to advise resistance to the authorized enactments of national sovereignty is offensive to Heaven—a desecration of the temple, and a soiling of the white robe of the ministerial office.

It is through such plausible pretenses and such ridiculous semblances that the peace and good feeling of society is to be disturbed and religious bigotry is to gratify its heated animosities and its bad passions. And when under the auspices of this new order, and through the influence of the fanaticism so assiduously cultivated as a measure of political and christian duty, and which is now spreading throughout the country, a disregard for the great principles of constitutional liberty, and the rights of man should be so far engendered—and God forbid it ever should be!—as to effect the disfranchisement of the denomination now assailed, and the Catholic, stricken down in civil rights should become in this great government of freemen a servile pensioner for protection—which of the other denominations that make up the mighty

whole will next follow in the experience of political degradation? Will not the competition of aspiring pride be lessened yet a little more, and government confined to a class yet more elect and holy and *limited*?

Persecution having risen restored to full vigor by the perverted and misguided sentiment of the people, will not stop at one small conquest but will seek new glories with which to adorn its recovered strength.

Wherever it has gone forth in the world, like a mighty tempest it has swept over society, and those who have loosened it in the anxious hope of witnessing its devastations, tremble to behold the overwhelming fury of a power beyond their direction and control.

Vain for him is the teaching of all past experience; vain the repeated manifestations of the destructive and relentless animosity of human passions excited by religious prejudice—who does not appreciate as necessarily following in the triumphs of this new order, a long line of social feuds and embittered hatreds, and broken political privileges and countless evils and discords.

And who can see the end of this lamentable beginning?

The light of history thrown forward upon it reveals a scene from which we gladly turn to a cheering belief in the still propitious guardianship of the power which has watched over the splendid progress of this country, and reposing a calm faith in the high appreciation of our people for their sacred rights and common justice, we feel that though the passion of the indiscreet and the evil may for a time disturb the peace of society—yet, returning reflection will quiet its agitation, and awakened patriotism preserve our sacred privileges from the dangerous protection of this new order, whose unholy spirit disguises its repulsive features by a seeming solicitude for the national welfare.

You have asked an expression of my views, and in accordance with your request I have given them.

I am sir, respectfully, your obedient servant,

R. T. MERRICK.

WM. MEADE ADDISON, Esq. *Baltimore City.*

The first part of the document discusses the importance of maintaining accurate records of all transactions. It emphasizes that every entry should be clearly documented and verified. The text continues to describe various methods for ensuring the integrity of the data, including regular audits and cross-checking of entries.

In the second section, the author details the specific procedures for handling discrepancies. It is noted that any inconsistencies should be investigated immediately and resolved through a transparent process. The document also outlines the roles and responsibilities of the staff involved in the record-keeping process.

The final part of the document provides a summary of the key findings and recommendations. It stresses the need for ongoing training and updates to the record-keeping system to adapt to changing requirements. The author concludes by expressing confidence in the system's ability to provide reliable and accurate information.