

REV. STUART ROBINSON

TO

PRESIDENT LINCOLN.

Toronto, Jan. 26, 1865.

To His Excellency Abraham Lincoln, President,
Commander in Chief:—

SIR,—I had the honor to address you a note on the 10th of December last, asking a countermand of "the monstrous order of General Burbridge, of November 19, 1864, for the suppression of the *True Presbyterian*, a purely ecclesiastical journal published at Louisville, Kentucky," and explaining to you the theory and conduct of that paper in the following terms:

"That my paper was established to advocate the doctrine (concerning the relations of the government and the churches) of your St. Louis letter; that it never contained a paragraph of political or military discussion, or even news, except as political and military affairs were obtruded upon the churches; that therefore this suppression, which popular opinion ascribes wholly to Dr. Breckinridge's personal malignity, and to the *odium theologium* against me, is a causeless and high-handed violence beyond any thing in the arrest of Col. Jacobs and Mr. Shipman."

Presuming that a great number of similar outrages in Kentucky were pressing upon your time and attention; and supposing that official documents laid before the legislature, containing an exposure, by so ardent a war advocate as Governor Bramlette, of the natural imbecility and mendacity and the clownish official insolence of your subordinate, General Burbridge, would constrain you, out of "decent respect to the opinions of mankind," to look into and rectify these outrages, I have waited patiently for six weeks before again troubling you. As, however, I have received no information of any such purpose it is reasonable to suppose that you assume the act of your subordinate, as a public transaction for which your administration holds itself responsible.

Aside from a reliance upon your native sense of justice and propriety, as exhibited in your St. Louis letter, I was aware of but little ground to hope for a favorable issue of this appeal to you. If, naturally enough, you turned for advice, in my case, to your new cabinet minister from Kentucky, you must consult one, unfortunately for me, whose statements, personal to myself, in the Senate of Kentucky in 1862, I was obliged in self-defence to brand in the *Louisville Journal* as "disgracefully reckless" falsehood, and so effectually, that neither he nor his friends have ever dared, within my knowledge, to challenge my counter statement. If you turned to your reverend adviser general in Kentucky, whose ambition to play at once Cardinal Woolsey and "Bloody Jeffies," you have at last gratified, you consulted one whose general treachery and malignity have made him so loathsome to the people that even his own colleagues, though by no means squeamish, "spew him out of their mouths," and are obliged to disavow his connection with their new religious journal at Danville; whose special malignity I have brought upon myself by my faithfulness as a minister of the church in exposing his worse than Iscarlot treachery to our Master's cause; and whom popular opinion regards as the real author of the outrage against which I protest. If you turned to the journals of the State more directly in the interest of your administration, they are in the hands of the creatures of your reverend adviser, malignant as himself, to the full measure of their very narrow and very shallow capacity. If you turned at last for light to the sentiment of the so-called religious press of the country, you consult those whose venality, corruption and faithlessness to the truth, made my paper a necessity of the times, and but for whose faithlessness to duty I would never have undertaken such labor and expense; and there-

fore, naturally enough you find them fairly represented by the most venal and treacherous of them all—the *New York Observer*, in its judgment that my paper “disgraced Kentucky”; and by the most inane and stupid of them all, the *Philadelphia Standard*—whose exuberant joy at the suppression of the logical lash betrays it into a petty larceny of worn out wit—braying an obituary over the suppressed paper.

It is, perhaps, not surprising that so singular a combination of hostile influences should have proved too strong for your native sense of right, quickened though it might be by Gov. Bramlette's awful exposures of your subordinates' outrages and contempt for the constitution and the laws. Deprived therefore of the accustomed channel for the utterance of my testimony, you and the public will bear with me if in this irregular way I seek to lay before you, and, through the use of your conspicuous name, before the public at large, some of the considerations which have constrained me, in the *True Presbyterian*, to essay the unpopular task of resisting and exposing the dangerous tendencies of the current confusion of the secular and the spiritual powers.

My fidelity to the constitution and laws of the country having been impeached by so many whose position, if they were true to it, should give them credence with the public, allow me, without the imputation of egotism, a few more preliminary words in vindication of my title to the public confidence in the statements and arguments about to be submitted.

I have not only taught and practised submission to lawful authority as the ordinance of God, but have attested my sincerity in so doing by no doubtful proofs. My accusers attest their loyalty by the cheap process of noisy hurrahs for the power that gratifies their pride with office, their ambition with power, their malignity with the means of vengeance, and their avarice with abundant plunder. I have attested my fidelity to the constitution and laws by the costly process of patient endurance under infamous abuses of them, without allowing my reverence for them to be impaired thereby.

From the beginning of this unhappy war, though never having offended against the law, and never having failed in duty as the citizen of a State remaining in the Union and therefore entitled to the protection rather than the penal inflictions of the Federal government. I have been subjected, with my family, year by year, to spoliation, outrage and insult, and harassed with fears of a failure of bread to my household, solely on account of the plundering of the agents of the government that perpetually reminds me of my obligations of gratitude and taxes me enormously for its paternal care of my “life, liberty and property.” In common with a large number even of earnest war men I have continually been robbed, not merely by a lawless soldiery but by official representatives of the government, some of them high in rank.

I need not weary you, Mr. President, with details of facts notorious to hundreds of my neighbors, beyond a simple allusion to some of them. Cormorants such as your collector Robinson, at Evansville, representing your financial policy, have ruthlessly seized and wasted my property, in contempt of the authorization of their equals in office, involving me in most serious losses. Your military officers, clothed with despotic power, and yet failing to restrain their subordinates, have despoiled me. Thus your gentlemanly, but inefficient Gen. Cox, your unfortunate Gen. Scammon, your brutal Gen Hunter, and his colleague, Gen. Averill, authorized or permitted the wanton destruction of my property to the extent of thousands of dollars; seizing and wasting my boats and engines, entirely destroying the enclosures of our farm, and the harvested wheat and growing corn and grass; and, when the waste had been repaired, at an outlay of thousands of dollars, repeating the devastation during the past summer. Thus, again, your forces retreating, before Loring, drove off before them from my service, the only slaves I ever, even nominally owned;—and owned these only because, after your election, moved by their tears and remonstrances against being removed from their home on my premises, I lifted a mortgage of \$10,000 from their heads and placed it upon the home of my wife and children; taking, as my only guarantee, their promise, gratefully to serve me, at least, until their labor should liquidate the debt. Thus, again, your Gen. Stedman, while enjoying the free hospitalities of my house, failed to restrain Turchin's infamous soldiers, from running naked, in open day in crowds through my shrubbery, and driving our negro servant women, by their shocking shamelessness and obscenity, from the kitchen. Thus, your Gen. Gordon Granger, wantonly encamped his hosts in our lawn, to kindle their camp fires at the roots of our noble forest trees, tether their horses in our young orchards, and plunder the premises generally, while their general pitched his tent, with a mulatto mistress in it under the window of our family chamber. And, even as I now write, comes the intelligence that again, after the enormous expense and patient toil of two years in repairing the damage of previous vandalism, our home—hundreds of miles from the seat of war, on the verge of local Louisville, and in sight of Republican Indiana—has again been devastated by a ruthless soldiery as utterly as before! Forty thousand dollars would not make good my pecuniary losses through your agents, directly or indirectly,—thus, your administration protects property. Voluntary exiles here from my family, my pastoral charge, and my business, to avoid collision with and annoyance from the miserable creatures whom so uniformly you select to bully and dominate over communities in the Border States.—Thus, your administration protects life and property!

It would exceed the proper limits of this preliminary statement to enter into the proof that I have done nothing to forfeit the protection of the government, or give a shadow of justification to this sort of treatment. I submit a single testimony to that point from one of the truest and most trustworthy, if not the most trusted, of all your military agents in Kentucky, who occupied a position which enabled him, of all other men, to know best, and, therefore, a testimony which outweighs the mere rant and lies of 10,000 such as those who have assailed me. Says a letter from this high official, received by me as late as 1863:—

"I have felt that yours is a peculiarly hard case. For I never heard *even your bitterest accusers allege one act of yours which deserved condemnation*; and yet I feel sure that you are acting wisely in remaining a fugitive from your family, your congregation and your business." A statement equally honorable to me and disgraceful to your administration.

That I have retained my respect for the constitution and laws, notwithstanding all those outrages, and in spite of the humiliating picture of the government drawn in the last clause of this citation, is surely no doubtful evidence of my fidelity as a citizen. And all this, taken in connection with the fact that I have retained the confidence of the Presbytery, my constitutional overseers, and of a large and intelligent pastoral charge, who to this day have refused their consent to my official separation from them, I think justifies my title to the confidence of the public in speaking freely of the high and solemn issues between me and my assailants.

The whole controversy between me and them is reducible, in its last analysis, to these questions: Is it competent to the Church of Christ to determine secular questions, civil, political or military? And is it lawful either for the Church voluntarily to employ her agencies, in any manner for the support of secular measures or in propagation of political principles, on the one hand, or for the secular government to interfere with the courts and ordinances of the Church on the other? These questions my assailants, directly or indirectly, affirm, I deny; and for this denial am denounced by obsequious ecclesiastics, persecuted and vilified by the petty minions of the government, and my paper formally suppressed with the high sanction of the administration at Washington. Permit me to set forth—though the limits of a letter require it to be done in mere outline—the grounds on which I have opposed, first, the committal of the Church to any civil government in general; and, secondly, to the support of such an administration as yours in particular.

The civil government, represented to us, primarily by the constitution and laws, and secondarily by your administration, so long as its acts accord with the constitution and laws, is undoubtedly an ordinance of God. And therefore by Divine authority you wield

the power of the sword to *coerce* obedience. But another government, in itself distinct and complete, is also ordained of Christ the Mediator among all Christianized peoples, to which government has been committed the "power of the keys," as to you the "power of the sword." As Andrew Melville had occasion to remind a tyrant, Stuart—"God's siltie vassal"—that "there be two Kings and two kingdoms, one the Kingdom of Jesus Christ whose subject James is, and of whose kingdom he is neither a king nor a lord but only a member, and they whom Christ hath called to govern his spiritual kingdom have a sufficient authority which no Christian king should control or discharge;" so I may remind you that there are two Presidents and Commonwealths in these United States; the one President Lincoln and the other President Jesus Christ, in whose Commonwealth President Lincoln hath no sort of official function. And I may say this with still more force than Andrew Melville, seeing that beside the Ordinance of Christ in his revealed statute book, the founders of the American civil Commonwealth have, for the first time in history, acknowledged by civil enactments, the independence of the Church, which King James denied. And therefore all utterances and acts, either on the civil or the ecclesiastical side, by which the secular intrudes into the spiritual, or the spiritual into the secular sphere are violations of the civil constitution of the country as well as of the statutes of Christ.

The distinction between these two powers is clear enough to all save those who have a purpose to serve in confounding them. The government which you represent, so long as your acts accord with the constitution, is derived from God the Author of Nature and has cognizance only of the interests that pertain to the present life of men—"Life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness." The spiritual government of the Church is derived from Christ the mediator, as its source, and can take cognizance only of men's eternal interests. Your government, in common with all civil governments, whether among Christian or Heathen people, has for its rule of guidance the light of nature and reason common to all nations, and equally obligatory on all, whether enlightened by revelation or not. But this spiritual government has for its *only* rule of guidance the positive statute law in the revealed statute book of its great founder and Ruler. Your government, by its Divinely appointed "power of the sword," restrains *overt* acts of wickedness and coerces outward obedience. The spiritual government, by its "power of the keys" for opening the visible kingdom of Christ to the penitent and obedient and shutting it against the impenitent and disobedient, guides the consciences of men and aims at the "thoughts and intents of the heart," primarily, as indicated by the overt acts of the life. Not a whit more absurd is the Mahomedan notion of enforcing religion by the "power of the sword," than the Erastian notion of enforcing political dogmas and

measures by her "power of the keys." All history, demonstrates, and among others the history of your administration, that where one of these absurdities is admitted the other is sure to follow. Once the church of Christ lends her "power of the keys" to enforce political dogmas under the sanction of religion, the state will soon begin to assume by its "power of the sword" to coerce conscience into subjection to political dogmas by "pains and penalties." Let me cite as illustration, the imprisonment, impoverishment and banishment, practically, of more Protestant ministers in the Border States during your administration than all that tyrant Stuarts ever banished from their livings for nonconformity; the blasphemous insolence of the Rosecrans' oath as a qualification for sitting in a church council and his military deputies, as Daniel's "abomination of desolation—standing where it ought not," placing themselves side by side with clerks of church courts to organize spiritual "Bump Parliaments;" the case of "Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites" armed with your military authority to rob church clerks of their records in Kentucky, and to condemn and crucify beloved pastors, by tearing them from their flocks, in Missouri; the case of your vulgar military upstarts forcing their loathsome liturgies upon christian ministers and worshippers and condemning the devoted Armstrongs and Wingfields with hundreds whom they represent to every ignominy and torture; now in the way of bodily labor and suffering in street sweeping; or now, worse still the mental torture of listening, in enforced silence, to the logical thimble-rigging of your Butlers and Wildes, garnished with their coarse, codfish sentimentalism and self-exalting patriotism; or now, still worse than all, the agonies of a reverent spirit and delicate conscience compelled to accept in silence the blasphemous "might makes right" dogmas of their Yankee ethics and hellish theology.

So I might refer you also to the case of sanctimonious Ecclesiastics with a roving commission from the war department, and armed with the power of the sword to go and rob Southern Christians, or rather to rob the God they worship, of the property consecrated to His cause. All this, Mr. President, I regard as but the logical consequence of the ecclesiastical sycophancy against which I have so earnestly warned the Churches. With shame and humiliation I must confess, that it was the church in the first instance that led you astray, and these are precisely the results threatened to the church, in the Word of God, as the punishment of such wanton prostitution of herself to the secular power. In the strong figure of the old prophet when the church has "played the harlot with the Assyrian clothed in blue," her judgment shall be the contempt, the excoriations, and the cruel tyranny of her lover. It is a curious verification of this rule by its exception that the Roman Catholic Church, which has from the first refused to prostitute her agencies to political and military purpos-

es, now stands erect and defiant. No military authority interferes with her ministry or worship save to be defiled and humiliated. No Roman Catholic priests pine and starve in exile. Seldom, if ever, has Roman Catholic church property been desecrated and destroyed. And while every poor Protestant minister trembles at your conscription which ruthlessly tears him from his family and flock with no hope of exemption, your war officials carefully shield, by special orders, the members of a priesthood who have no families to leave broken-hearted when the war-call forces them off. The explanation of this anomaly is to be found in the principle of the prophetic threat of judgment to be visited on the church in the shape of the contempt and insolent exactions of the secular power to whose purposes she has debased herself.

That this charge against the Protestant Churches of apostacy to secularism is well founded will readily appear by a simple reference to the political history of the country on the one hand and to the utterances and acts of church courts, pulpits, theological professors and church journals on the other. The proper limits of this letter preclude anything beyond a general reference to the more notorious facts.

Every intelligent citizen knows that, since the origin of the government, two great political parties have existed, representing two widely different constructions of the constitution. And no logical mind can fail to see that in the ecclesiastical acts and utterances to which reference is here made the solemn sanctions of religion that bind the conscience—for church courts and pulpits speak in the name and by the authority of Christ—are brought to the support of one of these constructions of the constitution as against the other, and the measures of one party as against the other. It is immaterial to the argument which of these parties is right, nor have I, as an editor, ever presumed to determine. The simple point of my charge against the churches is that they should have assumed to determine such questions at all, contrary to the tenor of all Christ's instructions and to the very nature of the spiritual power committed to them.

In illustration and proof of this I refer you to some of the ecclesiastical utterances of the last three years, beginning with my own church, that I may not be suspected of sectarian partiality in the matter.

The General Assembly at Columbus, in 1862, declared, in the name of Christ, that "it is the clear and solemn duty of the national government to preserve, at whatever cost, the national Union, enjoining upon all, in the name and by the authority of the Lord Jesus to examine their heart and temper toward the government." And the same body, in 1864, in Christ's name, though seemingly careful not to mention the name of Christ in their pronouncements, endorse in effect the leading political acts of the party in power, some of which I understand

you to admit, in your letter to Hodges, to be violations of the constitution in order to save it.

The other Presbyterian Assembly at Cincinnati, in 1862, not only endorsed in full your war policy, but also gave utterance to their special "*lauding for some in the loyal States, in Congress and high in civil life, and in the more ordinary walks of business, who never utter a manly thought for the government, but they follow it with two or three smooth epigrams for Southern insurrectionists.*" This same body, in 1863, under the lead of Dr. Barnes, in a paper, characterized, as utterances from that quarter commonly are, by its singularly nebulous verbosity, undertook to settle the construction of the constitution—and that to the contrary of Madison's and Jefferson's theories—and not only enunciated, but formally sent to your Excellency a declaration that must have startled you with its absurdity and subseverancy—"That the present administration is the government to which alone, under God, all citizens of this nation owe allegiance!"

The Reformed Presbyterian Synod, in 1862, denounced "Congress, the executive and the judiciary, in that for many years they have perverted the constitution to crush the rights of man," and declared that "the compromise with slavery in the constitution is the rock on which we have split." The Synod of the Dutch Reformed Church resolved "that it is the duty of all Christians to support the President." While the American Baptist Missionary Association declared it your duty to put down the *unprovoked* rebellion, as though they were competent to determine the issues involved in all the previous sectional troubles; and resolved that slavery, as the cause and origin of the war, must be exterminated."

The course of Bishop Potter and the Pennsylvania Episcopal Clergy in getting up a solemn semi-official protest against the learned and venerable Bishop Hopkins in form, but evidently designed in fact to serve the purposes of the Republican party in gubernatorial election; the lending himself, with all the influence of his holy office, as a political emissary to Europe by Bishop McIlvaine and the political deliverance of the Episcopal General Convention, embodying in germ most of the utterances already cited, are facts too well known to you and the public to need more than this general reference.

The Conferences of the Methodist Church, as might naturally be anticipated from the comparative indifference of that body touching the *jure divino* autonomy of the church as a spiritual commonwealth, have transcended all others in the extent and absurdity of their political deliverances. The Erie conference solemnly reviews and approves the enactment by Congress of the extinction of slavery from the territories, of the sweeping confiscation acts, &c. as all constitutional and just. The blood-thirsty and blasphemous speeches in the New York conference in 1863, and its political deliverance, commending a vigor-

ous prosecution of the war, vouching for the financial policy of the government, denouncing copperheads, &c. &c., are somewhat notorious. The pious justification of the general conference at Philadelphia over the capture of Richmond, their resolves in favor of your war policy and emancipation policy are also, doubtless, familiar to you. And the innumerable incidental acts of these religious bodies, the utterances of their pulpits, presses and theological chairs have all been in perfect accord with these official declarations. Thus, for instance, the general assembly at Newark refused to vote a *fast* but a *thanksgiving*, instead, over the slaughter of Spottsylvania and the Wilderness, on the ground, as stated by the mover of the substitute, that a *fast*, indicating reverses and secedency, would injuriously affect United States funds in Europe, and distress the cabinet at Washington. Church courts made official pilgrimages to "Loyal League rooms," gave assurances of the financial stability of the treasury department; lectured the people for voting against political candidates who had every mental and moral qualification. Pulpits everywhere resounded with discussions of the party issues of the day, with calls for recruits and money to buy substitutes, and with denunciations of all who desired either the war to be conducted according to civilized usages, or negotiations for peace. Theological professors sent forth ponderous articles laden with the absurdest theories of the constitution and of the proper conduct of the war, but filled with the spirit of blood thirst and violence to rouse and sustain the fierce passions of the people. The religious journals labored to apologize for and defend the outrages of the army that disgraced our name all over the civilized world; reiterated for the masses all the absurd dogmas of the church courts—defended, or refused to protest against even the most inhuman and despotic acts of the government's agents against their own brethren, and imposed upon the confidence of the people in their religious leaders, by collecting from the secular press and circulating the most enormous of all the lies of the telegraph to fire the Northern heart. Ecclesiastical history presents no more striking illustration of how the church, which has the assurance of Christ's presence to teach all wisdom, while acting within her sphere, is punished for transcending her sphere and wickedly perverting Christ's authority and ordinances to secular ends, by being given over to folly and blindness of mind, than is to be found in the amazing absurdities promulgated by church courts, preachers and learned professors in their utterances touching the political and military questions of the day. The political leaders who vainly imagine an endorsement of their theories and measures by these learned politico-evangelical courts and doctors, of special value, may find to their sorrow that under the great law of Christ's spiritual kingdom ordaining punishment in kind, the political and military wisdom of such men is of all follies the greatest.

It is not surprising, Mr. President, that, having worked for the secular government so zealously, to the neglect of their own appointed work of propagating the gospel, the ecclesiastics should now begin to claim of the civil government a helping hand, and resolve, as assemblies and conferences have done, that the people shall make their civil constitution propagate an orthodox gospel, by amending it so as not only to recognize a God—a truth of natural religion, which civil governments properly enough acknowledge—but also the revealed doctrine of the supreme divinity of Jesus Christ, the inspiration of the scriptures, and their authority as the foundation of civil government.

It would insult your intelligence as a statesman, recently ordained Doctor of Laws at Princeton, to suppose any argument needful to your perceiving that the foregoing church action involves directly or indirectly the assumption that it is competent to the church to take cognizance of, and determine, the civil, political and military issues that divide the political parties of the country. From the foundation of the government, as you well know, a political party, and that, generally, the dominant party, have construed the constitution as a bond between sovereign States; but these politico-ecclesiastical utterances and acts, expressly or by implication, adjudge the constitution to bind the people into one consolidated State. This dominant political party have always held the allegiance of the citizen to be due primarily to his State and *through* the State to the general government; but these ecclesiastical jurists declare it is due directly to the general government—some of them, that it “*is due, under God, only to the present administration.*” The dominant political party—at least a large section of it—have held that a Union of the States cannot be coerced, nor is such coercion consistent with the solemn covenants of the constitution, but these political ecclesiastics, one and all, declare this coercion to be a duty of the highest and most solemn obligation to God. The dominant political party have, in time past, steadfastly maintained that ours is a *white men's* constitution, regarding the negro as both a person and a property, but not a citizen; so, in fact, did all political parties for forty years; and so late as 1828 a Northern administration forced Great Britain, after a resistance of fourteen years, to pay a million and a quarter dollars indemnity for three thousand slaves taken in the war of 1812, on the ground that the slaves were “*private property*,” but these political ecclesiastics one and all declare the recognition of any such right of property in negro labor a sin against God, calling for His righteous judgment. Not to weary you with specifications I add, finally, that a large, though not the dominant party, at the recent election, by over a million and three quarters against less than two and a quarter millions of votes—representing some ten millions against twelve millions of the population—condemned the prominent measures of

your administration; its negro emancipation policy, its confiscation policy, its extermination policy, its financial policy, its arbitrary arrests and imprisonments, its consolidation of irresponsible power in the central government; but these political ecclesiastics, speaking in the name of Christ, have solemnly endorsed your measures and enjoined the support of them as a religious duty, and those most explicitly which your opponents denounce as the bloodiest, cruelest and insane of them all.

Now, it matters not to the argument what is my opinion or yours touching those measures, nor have I again, Mr. President, had anything to say of them, but left them to the judgment of citizens as such and to their leaders, civil, political and military. I have simply concluded, first, on the highest doctrinal grounds that the church had no function touching such questions, and violated fundamentally, her great charter in meddling with them. And secondly, on the grounds of the highest Christian expediency, that the church sinned enormously in thus driving away from her ordinances and influences into infidelity and Popery ten millions of the people to whom she has been commissioned to preach the gospel, and the gospel only.

While, on these two grounds, resisting generally any league of the church with any civil administration as fatal to the truth and dangerous both to the civil and religious liberty of men, I am obliged in candor to say that, over and above all this, I have felt and uttered a special repugnance on the score of the just influence of the church and the credit of religion among the people, at home and abroad, against any such league of the churches with your administration. Here again it matters not to the argument what my opinions or yours are of that matter. I simply refer to opinions very widely prevailing in the world and the injury to religion in such state of opinion. Neither do I mean any offence in the reference, nor desire to enter into the question how far “*military necessity*,” “*diplomatic necessity*,” or “*political necessity*” may justify any administration in transcending the great laws of ethics and the convictions of conscience. But I must remind you that, however mankind may bear with, and apologise for, violations of ethical laws by secular governments under military, diplomatic or other necessity, they always condemn and despise any endorsement of, or apologies for, such violations by the church of Christ.

As to the application of this fact in the present case, you cannot be ignorant that a large body of the people, at home and abroad, charge, whether justly or unjustly I do not say, that your administration has been signalized, in the first place, by a remarkable contempt for the great ethical laws of truth. That coming into power in the midst of public confusion and political disorganization, you thought it expedient to employ the strategy of concealment

and deception from distrust of your ability to govern by open straight-forwardness of speech and forcible restraint of the unruly. That while your friends sedulously proclaimed you "the honest," your utterances, from first to last, evince the consciousness of a necessity to speak evasively and deceptively, so that each of the two hostile parties might flatter themselves that you were the champion of their measures, until you could secure power to enforce your policy. That once committed to this policy you have been obliged to continue it.

Hence it is also charged that every department of your administration has caught the inspiration of this policy of governing by deception. That your Foreign Secretary has been "making history" of current events for foreign countries on such a scale of deception as to have made American, like Chinese, diplomatic statements a scoff and derision; that your War Secretary seizing and appropriating the telegraph to making current history for the people at home, plays upon popular credulity in a manner which would cause the Chinese to stare, and the author of the veritable Baron Trenck or Baron Munchausen to wonder. That your Financial Secretary moves the wires for the depletion of the pockets of the masses and the impletion of the pockets of the favored few with all the treacherous secrecy, dissembling and falsehood of the gambling hell. That religious journalism, imposing upon the popular confidence in statements from such sources, sedulously gathers and circulates with its endorsement the stories hardest of belief. That the pulpit assumes them as the foundation of its homilies on the times, on the situation and on the Providence of God. And, at your suggestion, from time to time, when the success of the deception is specially important to your measures, the ministers of religion under the guise of prayer tell the story to God, in the presence of the people, as assurance to them of its truth.

Need I remind you that, so far as such impressions of your administration go, the Church of Christ, who is the King of Truth, and whose religion is distinguished from all others by its supreme regard for truth must, by committing herself in any way to an administration so conceived of, destroy her influence for good and expose religion to the scoff and derision of the multitude. That however diplomatic Talleyrands may define language as "an instrument for concealing thought," or military necessity, as an instrument for circulating falsehood, the great representative of Christ's religion on earth must stand clear of endorsing the ethical justice of either definition.

No again with the popular conception of your administration as signalized by its faithlessness to pledges and solemn constitutional covenants. It is widely held that your only real conquests in this war have been the now plundered and desolated Border States, whom you seduced into subjection by solemn

pledges never kept, and purposes solemnly avowed the direct contrary of which have been executed. Such was the assurance of your want either of right or disposition to interfere with or injure, in any way, their property in slave labor. Such the pledge through your earlier representative, Mr. Holt, that "the tread of your armies, if quietly admitted, should not crush the lowliest of their beautiful flowers nor a blade of their green grass!" And the reward of their credulity is desolations wider, and spoliations more infamous, of a fairer Eden, than those of Hyder Ali in the Carnatic. You are understood, indeed, to avow the right to set aside the covenants of the constitution whenever necessary according to the paradox of the Hodge's letter, to save it. You have recently put at the head of the Supreme Court, chief interpreter of the constitution, the committee man of the Buffalo Convention in 1843—long before the days of "military necessity" and "slavery aggression"—who reported the monstrous resolve—

"That we regard and treat the third clause of that instrument, (the constitution), whenever applied in the case of a fugitive slave, as *utterly null and void*, and consequently as forming no part of the Constitution of the United States, whenever we are called upon as sworn to support it!" And allow me, Mr. President, to bear my testimony against another form of this same ethical wrong, about which the public clamor has said little. I refer to the shocking irreverence for the oath which has infected the whole country by reason of the policy of your administration in devising all sorts of conscience—entangling oaths, and enforcing them by all sorts of cruel pains and penalties; by permitting the framing of such oaths to coarse, brutal and ignorant subalterns, oftimes to be extemporised as the occasion calls for them, and filled with stupid falsehoods to be affirmed before God; imposing absurd *oaths of citizenship* on women and children, and multiplying oaths to be taken touching the most frivolous matters, until the sense of the solemnity of a special covenant before God is becoming extinct among the people. And this crying sin has its chief source in the absurd and unconstitutional claim of the civil government to legislate and make inquisition not for *overt acts* merely but for the thoughts of the mind and the sympathies of the heart also.

Now, bad as all this is in the popular conception of a secular administration, it becomes utterly ruinous to the influence of religion, when observed to be countenanced and approved by the church whose God is the "Angel of the Covenant," who reveals Himself, as keeping his covenant, forever, and threatens with special wrath the covenant breakers.

Multitudes of the people at home, and most of the civilized world abroad, regard your administration as signalized also by its unprecedented ferocity and bloodthirst in the conduct of the war. Making all due allowance for the party spirit that may have exaggerated

the facts connected with the supplanting of the McClellans, Buells, and other representatives of a civilized and manly warfare, by the Burnides, Butlers, Hunters, and a hundred other representatives of a barbarous and cowardly warfare, still the moral sentiment of the world, independent of partisan feeling, has been grossly outraged. I spare you and myself the painful recital of the atrocities of your Butlers, Turchins, McNells, and their large class; of cruel outrage upon helpless non-combatants, even old men, ministers of religion, women and children; of Shenandoah devastations; of Georgia deportations of women and children by the thousand, in cattle trains, to be thrown out hundreds of miles from home, breadless and shelterless, to perish of disease and want under an August sun; of universal robbery of private dwellings, and ruthless plunder of every thing beautiful, tasteful, or sacred in Southern homes; of Northern Christians fed at their gatherings on the Sabbath, with sermons stolen from stolen libraries, and at their fashionable gatherings, dancing in finery stolen from their Southern sisters, amid stolen parlor ornaments, upon stolen carpets, to the music of stolen pianos. Am I to blame Mr. President, because I remonstrated and struggled against any complicity, in the public judgment, of the church, representing a religion of love and justice, with an administration of such repute in the world?

In conclusion, I may refer you also to the fact, that so large a part of the people regard your administration as signalized, beyond all constitutional governments of modern times, for its tyrannical contempt for personal liberty, freedom of speech and of the press, liberty of conscience and freedom of religion. They stand appalled as visions rise before them of your bastilles, crowded with their mystified, terrified, dejected, wasted tenants; of your detectives "crawling as vermin" through society without, numerous and bathegome as the vermin within your filthy prisons; of whole communities whispering in subjugated tone and watching with stealthy, uneasy glance as they whisper; of midnight seizures by your minions and the agony of terrified wives and children, sisters and mothers; of victims of a lacerated conscience, lost self-respect and wrecked manhood under the burden of your half-devised oaths; of ministers of Jesus Christ, weak and helpless, under the brutal insolence and godless irreverence of the cowardly butlers to whom you give over weak and helpless communities; of your provost-marshals, with blasphemous effrontery, presuming to constitute courts of Jesus Christ by enforced military oaths, or as blasphemously bullying a worshipping congregation and its ministers into offering solemn mockery to God in the sacrifice of prayer; of myriads of men torn from their families by your ruthless conscriptions, driven into a conflict which as citizens they revolt at, and slaughtered in a warfare whose success can bring no glory and defeat

overlasting disgrace. Now, whether these visions of so large a portion of the public are real or only imaginary, I have earnestly contended that the church of Christ should not be associated with them in the popular mind.

But I weary you; and thereby, perhaps, endanger the effect of these suggestions upon you and the public. It would have been desirable, otherwise, to expound to you that one other feature of my testimony as an editor—my antagonism to the anti-slavery dogmas of Church and State—which has been wholly on religious grounds, believing all forms of that dogma to be directly subversive of the inspiration of the scripture and fatal in its tendency. I say not that no abolitionist can be a christian, yet I feel obliged to say, "how hardly shall they that have"—contemned God's word and vilified the church of God in inspired and uninspired ages alike—"Enter into the kingdom of heaven." But all this would carry me beyond the bounds of public patience.

Such, Mr. President, are the general grounds on which I vindicate my course as an editor, and denounce the act of your government—suppressing my ecclesiastical journal, as an outrage on the freedom of the press and of religion. Having now discharged my duty in thus protesting against the insult to the laws, in my person, I am content to wait patiently the developments of God's Providence as to my future in His service. I rejoice to learn that others less objectionable to your opinions, perhaps, and a far than I, will provide for taking up my testimony. Whether I should labor hereafter in assisting them in this struggle on the ecclesiastical side, or forbidded to do that, devote myself to the assault on the same great heresies on the political side through the secular press is not yet clear to me. I confess the conviction grows upon me that it is God's purpose to deal with the present apostasy of the church through mightier instrumentalities than such labors as mine in the ecclesiastical sphere. It has been the method of His Providence often to drive his apostate church back to the truth through secular men as His instruments. So He used the heathen Cyrus. He used preeminently the statesman Jefferson, reputed a sceptic and yet author of the Bill for religious freedom. So He probably will use a great political party by obliging it in self-defence to adopt into its platform Jefferson's principles concerning the separation of the spiritual and the secular power; and, through the propagandism of the political canvass, they will arouse the people to indignation against the politico-evangelical impostors who assume to force upon them, under the sanction of religion, the political dogmas of one party as against another. It will cause perhaps much scoffing at religion, but open scoffs are far less dangerous to the truth than the cant of its treacherous friends.

Asking your kind and thoughtful attention to this plain but honest statement, I remain,

Yours truly,

STUART ROBINSON.