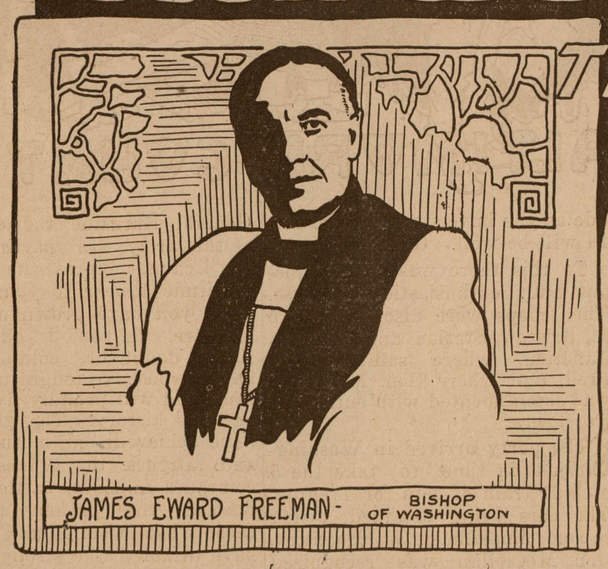
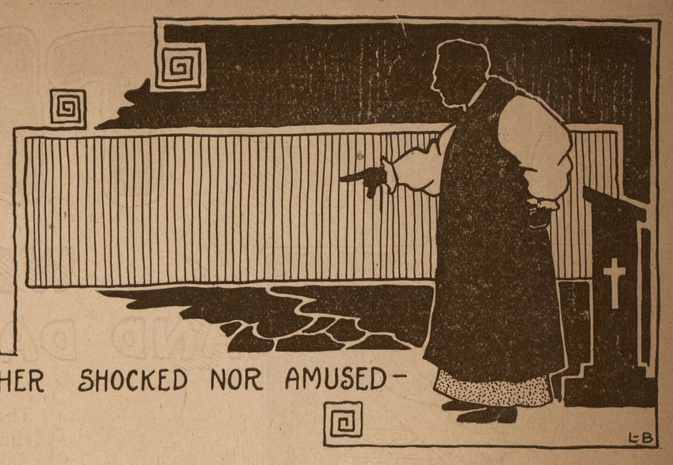
THE BUSINESS MAN THAT BECAME A BISHOP



AND PEWS ARE NEITHER SHOCKED NOR AMUSED- GRIEVED OR PUZZLED-



(By James B. Morrow)

The pews are neither shocked nor amused, neither grieved nor puzzled, when James Edward Freeman, the new Bishop of Washington, is in the pulpit.

While shepherds there are, who, over by themselves, in sight and hearing of their flocks, gestulate and argufy about errancy, inerrancy and so forth, Bishop Freeman is right in among the sheep. They—the sheep—are his prime concernment, made so both by his conscience and his ordination oath.

He agreed, in the sight of God and the world to do certain things, to teach certain truths. Trained in business (on two great railroads), understanding the inviolability among men of honor of contracts and the sanctity of the pledged word, he is doing those promised things and adhering to those covenanted truths.

That's all there is about it, as pertains to James Edward Freeman, Bishop of Washington and the Protestant Episcopal Church. Nor is it strange, under the conditions here set forth, that his pews are filled. It was so in the east, it was so in the west, and it is so right now, in the capital of the nation.

Why don't men go to church? Bishop Freeman never ha[illegible] ask that much-worn q[illegible] Not finding himself on [illegible] mornings drearily lookin[illegible] emptiness, save for the pr[illegible] of a few devoted women, [illegible] men and fidgety children, h[illegible] had no occasion to excuse himself, his commonplaceness, his tediousness or his ignorance of life— as lived by the pews, and solemnly —and, perhaps, stupidly — reproach his doctrines. He has not said, doctrines in mind: "I shall modify them, experiment with them," and then gone off into the desert, step by step (cautiously) furlong by furlong (more boldly) and then mile by mile (recklessly) until lost in the wilderness.

Bishop Freeman has studied Ralph Waldo Emerson—but more of that later on—and, no doubt, remembers this quotation: "That a man," wrote the Sage of Concord in his 'Heroes and Hero Worship,' "parade his doubts and get to imagine that debating and logic is the triumph and true work of what intellect he has: alas, this is as you should overturn the tree, and instead of green boughs, leaves and fruits, show us ugly taloned roots, turned-up into the air, and no growth, only death and misery going on!"

My dialogue with Bishop Freeman took place in his beautiful and handsomely furnished library, on the walls of which are autographed photographs of Warren Harding, Woodrow Wilson, Chief Justice Taft, General Pershing and other famous Americans. On the shelves are scores of volumes concerning capital and labor, the classics, such as Adam Smith's, as well as the outpourings of minor philosophers, sound and unsound, since the day of the great Kirckcaldy economist. A man of the world (answering letters as soon as received and keeping appointments to the minute) and a man of the spirit, was the testimony of the library and its well-ordered contents.

There, breathing the air of culture, I couldn't help but think of scholarship, a word now much dwelled on by certain groups of ecclesiastics; two Isaiahs, Adam's daughter-in-law, Jonah's sensational submarine and anatomical adventure, the five loaves and two fishes and so on—such scholarship as I heard years ago in a drowsy mid-western village as expounded on all occasions by an insurance agent of farmers' houses and barns, by an unhappy grocer, whose "sugar" on itemized bills was turned into "shuger," and by a trader of spavined and wind-broken horses. I was thinking of the two groups of scholars, the similarity of their arguments and energy and their delight in words, when Bishop [illegible]reeman entered the room.

Well, now, he is a man, physi[illegible]lly. Five feet and ten, I'd [illegible]ess, measuring much more around the shoulders than the girth, which is respectably, even elegantly, flat. Not lean and undernourished, is the Bishop, not obese and overnourished—simply level up and down, with slender legs and straight ones, at that, and tapering hands that look as if they never done a lick of work. Perhaps the hands should be larger, firmer and stronger. Beautiful hands are often dangerous. Vain men are likely to want to show them and to think very little of anything else. Consider the time and genius that have been wasted on curly hair, side-whiskers and full beards.

But the Bishop is not a vain mn. Furthermore, he is too busy, virile and wise to be weak, too enthusiastic over his work to give undue thought to himself. And his chin—blunt as a block of granite—a driving chin that in no time at all, comparatively, has brought, right in Washington, to the cathedral building fund new subscriptions totaling $1,100,000. Nine million more is to be collected elsewhere than in Washington, and the Bishop will get it. Big-chinned and big-nosed men, backed up by steam and brains, can get almost anything.

The brown eyes of the Bishop looked at me curiously as he shook my hand. He had caught me smiling, neatly and comfortably to myself, over the two schools of theologians, provincial and metropolitan, and their correspoondence in purposoe and research. I told him of the grocer, the horse dealer and the agent and their exegitical exercises over and behind counters, in barnyards and on street corners.

"Ah, yes," he said. But he did not smile. I fancy that he thought it to be a grave matter. He looked out into the bare gray trees of St. Albans, which surround the Bishop's mansion, and, after a moment, said:

"A clergyman should be a diagnostician. He should not bring into the public matters which ought to be settled in theological schools. No physician drags into the room of a typhoid or any other kind of a patient the machinery of a medical and surgical laboratory. He leaves that behind, where it belongs, and is supposed to know how to read the case and deal with the case; and it does harm to wrangle with the patient and disturb his confidence."

The Bishop might have said, in dismissing fundamentalists and modernists from his talk with me, quoting Paul to the Thessaloonians: "We beseech you, brethren, that ye study to be quiet and do your own business."

There are those who believe that the will of the Almighty has shaped the life of James Edward Freeman. The belief is not without the support of contributory facts and the merit of reasonableness. No doubt it is entertained by the Bishop himself. He often speaks of "the mosiac of my human experiences," of his contacts with all manner of men in the church and, more to the point, out of it. His is a life of preparation, it would seem, for the collection of ten million dollars with which to rear on the wooded hill, called St. Albans, a splendid temple, to be a fountain of inspiration for the public. "And I will raise me up," First Samuel, second chapter and thirty-fifth verse "a faithful priest . . . and I will build him a sure house."

Now God, in the view of many persons, living at the time, makes at the start, palpable mistakes in choosing agents for particular work. There is no use to mention names; but Abraham Lincoln comes spontaneously into one's mind. And here and now we have James Edward Freeman who, not even for an hour, ever studied theology in a school or seminary.

Preachers are chosen to be professors of theology. They teach their students how to preach thus: What, on this beautiful Sunday morning do we see i[illegible] text? Three things: First [illegible] twenty minutes or more), s[illegible] so. Second, (for another t[illegible] minutes or less), so and so. [illegible] in conclusion and thirdly, fi[illegible] (for ten minutes, perhap[illegible] and so. In the meantime [illegible] of the brethren have go[illegible] sleep. Why don't more m[illegible] to church? Can the root o[illegible] evil, so-called, be found i[illegible]

(Continued on Back Pag[illegible])

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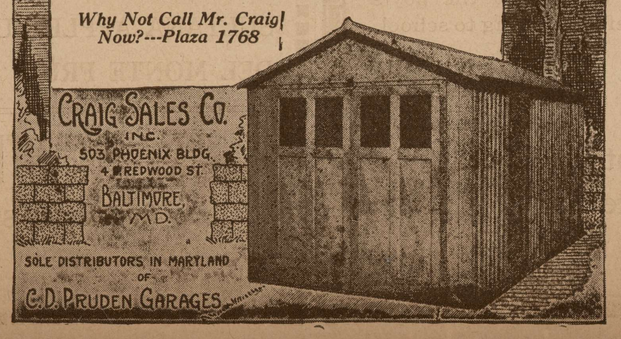

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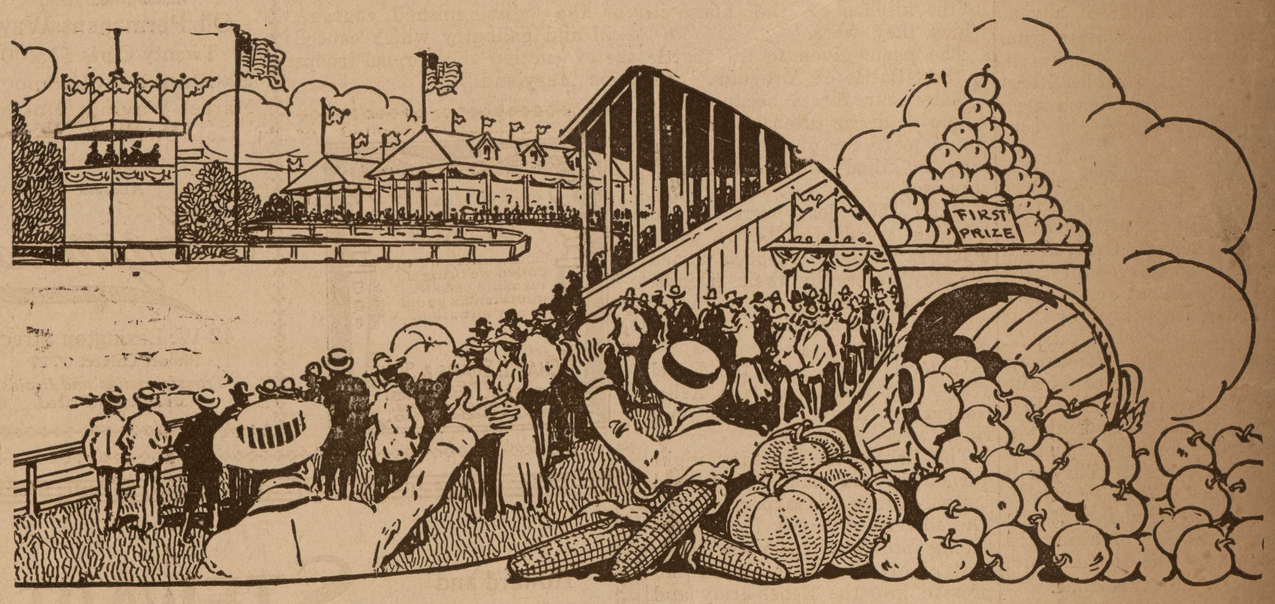

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