

EDITORIAL

## COATES AND GOWNS.

By DANIEL DE LEON

**D**AVID C. COATES, one of the successful candidates at the recent municipal elections in Spokane, is reported by the *Spokesman-Review* of March 2 to have delivered at the closing rally of his partisans an address, in the course of which he declared that “ministers were supposed to teach the people about Christ, and had no right to take any active part in politics in any form.”

Wherefrom flow two conclusions—

First, the Gowns took the field against Coates;

Second, the experience gained by Coates in the course of his variegated and migratory political career has left him unenlightened upon a certain historic fact, which none engaged in politics may ignore without sooner or later, and oftener sooner than later, bumping his nose against.

As to the first conclusion it is too obvious to require comment. Less obvious is the lesson involved in the second.

If the Republican party, for instance, were to set up a religious annex to its organization, adopt a form of liturgy and a special garb for the officiants, and these politicians were to take the stump in the name of religion and denounce their rival parties as “impious”—if the Republican party were to do that everybody would laugh: the imposture would be too transparent to arouse ire. If the Democratic party were to resort to similar stratagem the popular amusement would be no less. This notwithstanding, when bodies, with aims in view material, of the nature that moth and rust can corrupt, and to be laid up, not in heaven, but where thieves can break in and steal—when, in short, such de facto political, hence terrestrial, bodies take the stump, in clerical outfit of words and gowns, a curious delusion frequently obsesses the mind of not a few who should know better. These politicians in disguise are called, as did Mr. Coates, “ministers,” and their conduct, as Mr. Coates did, is

censured as beside their calling to “teach the people about Christ.”

When a social delusion is popular it will ever be found to partake of the character of optical delusions in physics—sportive pranks of Nature; and, as these, to be subject to simple tests that prick the delusive bubble. A simple test answers the question whether the alleged “church” is a church, or, in fact, a political concern; and whether the alleged “minister” is such or, in fact, a politician. “My Kingdom is not of this world,” said Christ. The body that concerns itself with this world, its hard material facts from hard cash and office down or up, that body is not a “church,” it is a political affair; its spokesmen are not “ministers”; gowned though they may be, they are politicians, and, of course, have other fish to fry than to “teach the people about Christ.”

A little less attention to the “practical” ropes, a little more attention to the philosophy of the history of politics would save Coates from being duped by Gowns.

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