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## Letter to C. P. Mcllvaine

John McLean

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John McLean, Supreme Court Justice to Bishop Charles P. McIlvaine

Washington  
1 Febr. 1861

My dear Bishop,

In regard to our Government, I see but little in the future to hope for. Through the influence of demagogues our country has become demoralized. And when this is lost /?/, as our basis of action, where shall we find a resting place. I have seen the approach of this condition of things and have deeply lamented it. I have warned my friends, faithfully, but they did not believe me. Some may have supposed that I was prompted by ambitious views and that I did not understand the nature or tendency of our government.

As much as any other man, I lament the disgrace and ruin which has come upon us, it is seen and felt generally but some are so blind as not to admit it. A very large proportion of the slave states have seceded and they, probably all, will unite in a southern confederacy. We want experience, wisdom and virtue.

In less than thirty days I fear a southern confederacy will be formed, and the contest may be between the north and the south. Who shall occupy the seat of government at Washington? There are not wanting men who claim the south as the United States.

I am painfully exercised on this subject. As a people we have no principle that will save us. And yet I see many men who are insensible to the present danger. I shall be glad to see you in Washington.

Truly & affectionately yours,

John McLean

Bishop McIlvaine

Notes: John McLean (1785-1861). A lawyer, Congressman, Judge, Postmaster General under President Monroe. A Justice of the Supreme Court from 1829. Best remembered for his dissenting opinions in the Dred Scott case. It was before the Court 1855, 56 & 57. Ruling was that a slave was a chattel. The Government had no power to make a citizen out of a Negro slave or his descendants. McLean strongly fought against this action. He died shortly after writing this letter.