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"RIGHTEOUSNESS EXALTETH A NATION."

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Our National Reform Methods.

By Rev. J. M. Foster, Boston.

The different methods of pushing the advocacy of the principles of national reformation have had their opportunity of demonstrating their respective efficiency during the past year. A political dissent convention was held in the Allegheny R. P. church last February. This was the climax of the movement inaugurated by our Synod in 1894 in sending out Rev. A. J. McFarland, D.D., under the auspices of the Testimony Bearing Committee to preach "the ultimate truth" respecting political loyalty to Christ the king. It was a success. Not a discordant note was sounded in all the twenty-two addresses. Every stroke of the sword drew blood. The testimony of the witnesses was in power. "And they overcame by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony." There are those in our fellowship who think that all our effort should be limited to this way. And what they do for national reform in work and contribution is turned wholly into this line of work. And if this were the only way in which

Covenanters could deliver a full message respecting the allegiance of Christian citizens to Christ the king, their position would be the true one and the only one that is right. But it does not appear that there is ground for that contention. In November, 1901, the National Reform Association held a convention in the Second Presbyterian church of Pittsburgh. In the members attending, the power of the addresses and the wide circulation of reports through the daily and weekly press it was a great convention. The great principles of national reformation were accentuated. The responsibility of nations to God, the duty of governments to bow to the Lord Christ, the necessity of conforming legislation to the moral law were duly emphasized. But the ultimate truth that Christian citizens ought to refuse to incorporate with the political body by any act until the nation makes a constitutional recognition of God as Sovereign, the Lord Jesus Christ as Ruler and the Bible as the fountain of all law, was intentionally left

unspoken. There were Covenanter ministers in the convention. They were among its chief promoters. They were on the program and spoke well. But they suppressed this part of their testimony. Out of deference to Christian citizens in the convention who take part in political action they withheld their testimony against the sin in which these brethren are living. There are many in the Covenanter Church who regard this as the true course. And they would have Covenanters devote all their reform energy and contributions to the work of this Association. There were Covenanters in that convention and they contributed to its program, who regard the Political Dissent movement in our Church and the National Reform Association work as two parts of one whole, the two hands of the man, the two wings of the bird, the two oars of the boat. The difficulty with this position is, that the national reform message without political dissent is incomplete, while the one

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with it is "the ultimate truth." You clip one of the wings of a bird and it cannot fly straight. You cut off the fingers from one of a man's hands and he cannot work with it as with the perfect hand. With one long and one short oar the boat moves in a "vicious circle." In nature we seek the line of least resistance. But in grace we take the straight line of truth and do not cease driving until we reach the goal. It is not apparent that a witness for Christ the king has a right to agree before entering the convention that he will not declare the whole naked severe truth respecting loyalty to Him in the realm of politics. On the contrary, the high vocation wherewith we have been called would seem to lay upon us a corresponding obligation to declare this whole counsel of God whether men will hear or forbear. The power of the witnesses depends upon this complete and entire loyalty to the King of kings whom they are called represent in human society. "I will give power unto my two witnesses."

In January, 1902, a National Reform Convention was held in Park St. church, Boston. The topic discussed by one of the speakers was: "Is the Constitution of the United States Immoral?" A calm and dispassionate presentation of the facts led infallibly to the conclusion that the question must be answered in the affirmative. And the conclusion that a **Christian citizen** cannot swear to support it without sin inevitably followed. It seems to us that the National Reform platform is the place providentially prepared for this message. Dr. McFarland has demonstrated that he can carry this message into the pulpit of sister churches whose members take part in political action. Why can we not carry it onto the platform of this Association, even if many of its members are in politics? We have had six annual national reform conventions in our city during that many years. And in each of them political dissent has been brought out and enforced. It is perfectly feasible. And there is a special call for it in these times upon which we have fallen. Christian citizenship is a popular theme of our day. Perhaps the Christian Endeavor movement is responsible for this in a large measure. At all events it is a popular theme to-day. And this affords Covenanters an opportunity of setting forth the nature and law of Christian citizenship. And we cannot do this faithfully without teaching political dissent as the imperative duty of every follower of King Jesus. Opportunity involves obligation to improve it. And there can be no question that Covenanters have an obligation to preach this doctrine in our National Reform conventions that those of other denominations have not. "Who knows but that you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" And this makes us bow our head in shame and fear, when we think that last Synod laid on the table this resolution, the fourth item in the Report on National Reform, "that we counsel our ministers and workers to make a wise and prudent presentation of the nature and ground of

our political dissent as 'the ultimate truth' respecting the duty of Christian citizens to an immorally constituted government, when in their judgment occasion calls for it," and substituted for it the following: "We counsel our ministers and other workers of our Church in their cooperation with the National Reform Association to make all their discussions bear wisely and effectively upon the great aim of that organization—the Christian Amendment of the United States Constitution." This item is the truth. But it is the truth with which the Association started thirty-eight years ago. Is it possible that Covenanters have so far lost sight of this, that it was necessary for Synod to solemnly remind them of a forgotten or neglected duty? It is the most glaring case of an anti-climax that we have met in many a year. After thirty-eight years' work the Covenanters must be called upon to resume the original business of the Association. That ought not to have been necessary. We hardly think it was a necessity. The original item was necessary. We must glory in our message and speak it without fear or favor, or the Spirit will withdraw and we will lose the conviction necessary to hold and maintain it anywhere. Paul declared the whole severe message though he was mobbed and imprisoned in almost every city into which he entered. Our fathers in Scotland declared this whole unwelcome truth, though the fires of persecution were kindled and a ruthless soldiery invaded their land. The Abolitionists declared this forbidding message, though they were rotten-egged and tarred and feathered and burned in effigy and shot down in cold blood, and John Brown was hung. But as Dr. Sloane said to a mob in Cooper Institute in New York: "Virginia could not furnish rope enough to hang the principles for which John Brown died!" It is time for us to think less about courtesy to those brethren who are sinning against God in their political relations, and more about the honor of our Saviour-King, whose crown is plucked from His brow and trailed in the dust by His professed friends. If we hold our peace respecting the sin of swearing allegiance to the immoral Constitution of the United States when we go into National Reform conventions, these voting brethren will be the most severe in condemning our silence, when God's judgments fall upon a sinful nation and their eyes are open to see the sin in which they were involved by their political affiliation. Better have their unjust wrath now and God's favor, than their justifiable wrath then and God's displeasure also. We have everything to gain and nothing to lose by declaring the things which we have seen and heard. This concession is indeed graciously made, that if any one advocates voting in the convention as a method of reform, then we may advocate political dissent. But we must not take the initiative. We are warranted in speaking only when our profession is attacked.

But a little reflection will convince the candid mind that this is untenable. If it is wrong for Covenanters to take the initiative in advocating political dissent, then it is wrong for voting

citizens to do so in advocating political action. And it is no justification for the Covenanter to do wrong because the voting citizen does so. It is the right and duty of the Covenanter to rise and rebuke the voting citizen for doing wrong in introducing the question of method at all. But he has no right to match one wrong by another wrong. That idea of doing wrong to counteract another wrong is false in principle and pernicious in practice. It is a painful juggling with ethics. It is a disingenuous shuffle. If the voting citizen has a right to introduce his method, the Covenanter has a right to introduce the method which he has received from God as a trust to be given to the people, the whole people.

The National Reform Association has never questioned the right of dissenting citizens to speak their convictions on its platform. Why should the witnesses be reluctant to exercise their liberty? "We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard."

Editorial Comment on Above.

We print this article from the pen of Rev. J. M. Foster, not because we endorse all its positions, but because it represents the sincere convictions of one who is entitled to a hearing among his brethren, and because it contains much of timely and important truth.

Mr. Foster is President of the New England Association, auxiliary to the National Reform Association, and is entitled to express an opinion as to what may be legitimately done on the National Reform platform, though we are compelled to say that on this particular point we do not agree with him.

We are in entire accord with his views as to the obligation resting upon our Church to bear the fullest testimony, not only to the fundamental principles of national religion, and to the religious defect of the Constitution of the United States, and to the imperative demand for the **Christian Amendment, but also to the duty** of all Christians in supreme loyalty to Jesus Christ to separate from a government which is founded upon an unchristian Constitution, and to refuse to swear to administer laws which contravene the law of God.

On the other hand we do not agree with Mr. Foster in his strictures upon the action of last Synod in declining to adopt a resolution submitted by the committee on National Reform instructing our ministers and workers laboring under the auspices of the National Reform Association to give prominence to the discussion "of the nature and grounds of our political dissent as the ultimate truth respecting the duty of Christian citizens to an immorally constituted government." The National Reform Association is organized on the basis of a constitution

which embodies its principles and declares its aims. The doctrine of the separated life as held by our Church is not embraced among its principles, and the advocacy of political dissent is not one of its objects. The "ultimate truth" to which that Association is committed is the advocacy of the Christian Amendment. The resolution adopted by Synod recognizes that fact when it "counsels ministers and other workers of our Church in their co-operation with the National Reform Association to make all their discussions bear wisely and effectively upon the great aim of the organization, the Christian Amendment to the United States Constitution." Referring to this resolution, Mr. Foster himself says: "This item is the truth; but it is the truth with which the Association started thirty-eight years ago." Just so. And it is just as true today as it was then. The Association was formed for the purpose of uniting members of all the churches in a common work. It is an independent voluntary society. The Covenanter Synod has no power to change its constitution by engraving upon it principles peculiar to ourselves. Nor have we the right, even if we were able through preponderance in the control of the Association, to employ its resources to propagate views which the great body of its members repudiate. In declining to adopt the resolution submitted by the committee Synod simply recognized the fact that we could not give the peculiar testimony of our Church through a society made up from all the churches.

The action of our ministers who co-operated with the National Reform Convention in getting up the program and taking part in the discussions, and preparing and adopting the resolutions, in confining themselves to the sphere of truth covered by the principles and aims of the Association under whose auspices the convention was held, was in exact accord with the direction of Synod.

But while dissenting from the views of our contributor in these particulars, we are profoundly convinced of the truth of his main contention, that somewhere and somehow the full testimony of the Church must be given. And the Conference held in February, whose proceedings will soon be published, demonstrates that it can be done. Many of the same persons participated in both conventions.

Mr. Foster may question the right of our Church to unite with other denominations in a voluntary society for the advocacy of National Reform principles on a platform which does not include the vital part of her testimony concerning the separated life or political dissent. *That question we do not now discuss.* But he can hardly insist that, having entered into such an Association, she can make the advocacy of political dissent a prominent feature of the work of that organization.



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The Free Church Minority.

A small part of the Free Church of Scotland refused to enter the union with the United Presbyterian Church. This minority has the largest following in the Highlands, among the Gaelic-speaking people, and in the Isles. The situation in Lewes is noteworthy, because of the show of force in the eviction of the congregation at Ness. The sheriff mustered eighty constables, and set off for the isle of Lewes. The *Bellona*, a six-gun vessel of the Royal Navy, was off shore. The party then went to the church and found it barred against them. They broke in, and remained in possession till the Sabbath, when the United Free Church minister ministered to a fraction of the congregation and the eighty constables. The ousted people met in the school house, being led by peaceful counsels from a Free Church minister. This reads like the stories of sixty years ago in which Chalmers, Guthrie and McCosh had part. The times may not be so hard for the present Free Church people, for they will not be compelled to take to the public road, as some were when shut out by the lord of the soil. What we have related seems a sorry business for descendants of the Free Church movement of only two generations past, and no doubt they balk at it a little themselves.

The Gospel Minister.

The gospel minister combines in himself three offices, or, rather, in his office as minister, he discharges three kinds of service.

First and foremost, he is a teacher of the Word of God. Paul charged the young minister Timothy to "preach the word." No other work can surpass or even equal this in importance. The minister has to do with men in matters that are of supreme importance, because they are in reference to eternal interests. Of all phases of the minister's work none is so vital to the salvation of men as the work of unfolding and explaining the word of truth which is able to save their souls. "It has pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." No work is fraught with such awful possibilities as that of bringing to men the message of eternal life. Because of his message, he becomes either the savor of life unto life or of death unto death to

his hearers, and well may he say with the great apostle, "Who is sufficient for these things?"

In addition to the office of public and authoritative teacher the minister adds that of pastor. He shepherds the flock, stands between them and danger, points out the way of safety, and goes before them leading them in paths of righteousness and peace.

Moreover, the minister is a ruler in the house of God. Together with the elders he constitutes the session in the congregation, which has authority to try judiciously, those who break the law of the Church, and to visit its censures upon them. According to Presbyterian order (and by Presbyterian we mean Scriptural order), the minister is not competent, of himself, to pass censure, as in the Episcopal form of government, but is only one member of the court. It will thus be seen that the minister has just the same power in ruling as any of the elders, and adds to this the other offices of pastor and teacher. His responsibility, then, for the faithful administration of the law of the Church would seem to be no greater than that of the lay elder, because he possesses no more power. "Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially they that labor in word and doctrine."

The Will of Cecil Rhodes.

Cecil Rhodes made a notable will. He has left a large sum for education with the object of bringing England, the United States and Germany into accord, hoping thereby to secure the peace and progress of the world. Selected young men are to meet at Oxford, and to spend the years of college life together, and thus Cecil Rhodes hoped to attain great ends. So Andrew Carnegie has provided for education by a vast outlay for many communities on both sides of the sea, and has also added many thousands for music. So far, so good. Men characterize Cecil Rhodes' ideas as evidence of a high mind. What a bitter disappointment to him must have been the situation, when the *coup d'etat* of 1895 failed, and he found that the Dutch had a resolve to die if need be, to maintain their independence. It is evident that Cecil Rhodes' will does not partake of the full spirit of the Gospel, or he would have seen a higher unity than that of England, America and Germany. His ideas are characterized as dreams, but far beyond his dreams is the early revelation to Abraham: "In thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed." The more the spirit of the Gospel is regarded, the more clearly it is seen, that nations ought to regulate their intercourse by a higher rule than self-interest. Secretary Hay has spoken of the Golden Rule, as for nations. That is part of the Higher Law for nations. It is a long road out of the present situation, wherein one people is forcing its higher civilization on another people, by such means as condemn themselves. Witness the present revelations as to the torture of Filipinos, and slaughter and burning by order of the officers.

Cecil Rhodes' will helps, but he might have done far more good if he had willed a larger sum to missions in South Africa. Far more is needed than education to uplift the world. What is needed is the religion of Christ, not nominal but real Christianity. Millions are poured out like water, to carry on war, vast sums are given for education, while Christian missions are hampered for means, and more men and women are