

"CHRIST'S"
OR
SEPARATION FROM CHRIST-
LESS GOVERNMENTS

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"Ye are Christ's."—I Cor. 3:23.

SHOULD SEPARATION FROM CHRISTLESS
GOVERNMENTS BE MADE A CONDITION
OF MEMBERSHIP IN THE CHRISTIAN
CHURCH?

The Covenanter Church in the United States
requires as a condition of membership the ac-
ceptance of the position of Political Separation.

This means that her members may not ac-
cept any civil office or trust in which there is
required an oath of allegiance to the present
Constitution of the United States, nor vote for
any officer who is required to take such an
oath.

This condition of membership is founded up-
on two things, viz:—a scriptural doctrine and
an undeniable fact. The scriptural doctrine is
that the Lord Jesus Christ, as Mediator, is the
divinely appointed King of Nations, and that

His law as revealed in the Bible is the supreme rule by which to decide moral issues in political life. The undeniable fact is that the Constitution of the United States contains no recognition of the Lord Jesus Christ as the Nation's King, nor of the authority of His law; and that it contains provisions which are hostile to His royal prerogatives. The Church maintains this position of Political Separation in the spirit of patriotic devotion to our country, and of supreme loyalty to our Lord.

It is not the purpose of this treatise to discuss, either the doctrine of the kingly authority of Jesus Christ, or the fact of the Christless character of the Constitution of the United States; but to show that these things being true, this term of membership as maintained by the Covenanter Church is Scriptural; and, that, so far from being narrow and sectarian in its character, it rests upon one of the broadest, most essential, fundamental and practical principles of evangelical Christianity; and that its acceptance and maintenance by the whole Church is vital to the establishment of the Kingdom of Jesus Christ in the world.

SEPARATION.

Separation from Christless Governments Should be Made a Condition of Membership in the Christian Church.

The passage of scripture which stands at the head of this tract, gives the keynote of the Christian life. "Ye are Christ's." To have a right to membership in the Christian Church, one must be a Christian. To be a Christian, one must be Christ's. To be Christ's involves three things, viz.:-

First.—To be entirely consecrated to Christ.

Second.—To be transformed into Christ's image.

Third.—To be Christ's witnesses.

Upon these three principles acknowledged by all Christians to be true, it is undertaken to answer the above question in the affirmative.

CONSECRATION.

I.

Because the Church Should Require Her Members to be Entirely Consecrated to Christ.

This consecration includes three things:

1. The consecration of the whole man to Christ. "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me," (Matt. 16:24; 10:37-38). This is the condition of discipleship. It contains Christ's term of fellowship. The Church cannot modify it. She cannot admit as genuine the professions of faith of any one who holds back any sphere of his life from Christ. Ye are Christ's wholly.

The Rev. Dr. Terrett, of the Presbyterian Church, in an address of great power, on "Christ, the Nation's King," spoke eloquently on this subject. He said:

"Christ claims the man, the whole man, for Himself, in obedience and service. But man is whole only in his relations, domestic, social, and political. Man was born to be a citizen. He was made for the nation, as truly as for the home. He is not, cannot be, all that he ought to be as a man, until he is all that he ought to be as a citizen. If it be true, then, that man belongs by nature in political relations, who shall say that in these relations he is emancipated from the authority of Jesus Christ? If he be Christ's servant, he will show it here. * * * The best of a man's life is his relational life, and in all his relational life he belong to Christ. By what argument shall we be justified in saying, that, while a Christian man is bound to submit himself to Christ's authority, yield himself to Christ's influence, and open himself to Christ's inspiration in his domestic relations, in his social relations, in his business relations, that, in performing the duties, and bearing the responsibilities involved in his political relations, he is justified in recognizing some lower law, and in acting under the impulse of some poorer motive. If man belongs in the nation, he is bound to serve Christ there as much as anywhere. This is man's largest sphere; these are man's noblest engagements; solemnest obligations; shall he not, here, if anywhere, acknowledge Christ's authority, and seek to do His will? Oh! how much Christ needs trained, accomplished servants, who have learned that there is no sphere in life in which they cannot serve Him; that there is nothing worth doing for a man, which they cannot

do for Him. Christ cannot spare a single inch of manhood. He has redeemed and He can use it all." (The italics are mine).—National Reform Documents, Philadelphia conference, 1888.

These are noble words. Every Christian conscience responds to them. There is no answer to this argument. A Christian must be a Christian in politics. How then can he swear allegiance to a Christless constitution? "Ye are Christ's." At the door of the Church the question must be asked: Do you give yourself wholly to Christ? No man can consistently answer it in the affirmative who continues to incorporate with a Christless civil power. How could he? One advising young converts, said: "Get wholly into Christ, get wholly in; you will find it hard being a Christian, if you do not get wholly in."

2. The second thing involved in this consecration is the acceptance of the law of Christ as the rule of life. In Matt. 28:19-20 we have the Church's commission: "Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things, whatsoever I have commanded you." Baptism is here appointed as the initiatory ordinance of the church and made the badge of the Christian profession. The terms on which it is to be administered are expressly laid down: "Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." This is Christ's term of communion. It is absolute. There is nothing to explain, and no room for argument. This condition of membership the church must insist upon.

The Government of the United States has also laid down conditions to be accepted by the candidate for official trust. He must accept the

Constitution of the United States and the laws made under it, as the supreme rule of his political conduct. Now there cannot be two supreme laws over a man's life. Our government renders no allegiance to Jesus Christ, nor recognizes any authority of His law. Under its supreme authority we have the God-defying Sabbath-mail service; the infamous license laws, that are the bulwark of the nefarious liquor traffic; the whole system of shameful, adulterous divorce laws: all permitted, authorized, maintained and executed. This is in defiance of the authority of Jesus Christ whom the Christian has solemnly promised to obey. Every Christian official of the post-office where Sabbath mails are established, from the Postmaster General down, fulfills his official oath by breaking his sacramental vow. The Christian judge who issues a license to sell intoxicating drinks, or decrees divorce in violation of the divine law of marriage, does the same thing.

My brethren, the Lord Jesus Christ offers no compromise. "No man can serve two masters." (Matt. 6:24). Christian men cannot go on administering unchristian laws. If the American people will not place their government in true allegiance to Jesus Christ, then the Christian Church must enforce the supreme authority of the law of Christ over the lives of her members, and let Christless governments be administered by Christless men.

3. The third thing involved in this consecration is complete separation from the Christless world. On this point the conditions of fellowship are equally explicit. "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you; and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." (2 Cor.

6:17). Can the Church so modify these terms laid down by her divine Head, as to admit to her communion those who remain in corporate fellowship with immoral, corrupt, and Christless civil powers?

It is often asserted that Christians are the salt of the earth and that they should enter this mass of political corruption and purify it. But Christians have no redemptive power without Christ. "Apart from me ye can do nothing." (Jno. 15:5, R. V.) "If the salt have lost its savor wherewith shall it be seasoned?" Christians are not permitted to take their Saviour with them into this government. The chief magistrate, although he himself professes to be a Christian, cannot even call the nation to Thanksgiving in His name. Talk about good men purifying politics which they enter on an express agreement to leave Christ and His law out! What is the result? The salt loses its savor. "And is henceforth good for nothing but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men." (Matt. 6:13).

The Church will soon be compelled to move in this matter to save her imperilled members. A godly minister remarked recently: "The condition of affairs is awful. Good men, officers and members of the Church are doing, or employing others to do, or consenting to have done, things which are a disgrace to American citizenship, to say nothing of Christianity." There is a demand, everywhere, for a higher consecration; for a higher plane of Christian living; for more complete separation from the world; for men sanctified and meet for the Master's use. The Church must demand that her Saviour King be admitted to this sphere of political life, or that the sons and daughters of the King withdraw from it. "Ye are Christ's" by entire self-surrender to Him; by absolute obedience to His

law; and by complete separation from the Christless world. You might as well undertake to fulfill these conditions in a Christless Church, as in a Christless state.

Transformation.

II.

Because the Church Should Seek to Transform Her Members into the Image of Christ.

"Whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son." (Rom. 8:29). This is the transformation of character. It is easy to see that character is more important than profession. Profession is for the sake of character. Profession without character is valueless. "Ye are Christ's" implies a Christ-like character. But character is a growth; and the upbuilding of character is an important function of the church of Christ. To this end two things are essential.

1. The Church must teach a perfect standard of morals. The basis of a true moral standard is the moral nature and will of God. This standard as applied to the life of man is expressed in the moral law: and this law is embodied in the perfect life of Jesus Christ. These, therefore, must embrace the moral standard taught by the Church. But neither the law, nor the life, of Jesus has any recognition as the standard of morals in our political life. Indeed it is emphatically provided that "no religious test shall ever be required as a qualification for any office or public trust under the United States," (Cons. of U. S., Art. VI.). If the Church will transform her members into the character of Christ she must teach a standard of morals which our government rejects. But she must do more than this. Hence

2. She must maintain that standard in the life of her members by the authority of her discipline. It is claimed by some that while the church should maintain a perfect standard of morals in her teachings, she may receive into her membership those who have not yet attained all that the Church has attained, and for the very purpose of educating them up to her attainments. This is true. But how shall the Church proceed to "educate them up?"

Law is an educator. "Wherefore the law was our school-master to bring us unto Christ." (Gal. 3:24.) But it is law applied that educates. There is no educating power in a law that is not enforced. For instance, a prominent feature of Christian character is Sabbath-keeping. One of the most effective influences in forming a Sabbath-keeping character is home training. Every one knows that this training does not consist in teaching theoretically the fourth commandment, but by parental authority requiring obedience to it, until by the educating power of the law the child is transformed into the image of Christ as a Sabbath-keeper. Sabbath laws, when enforced, educate a community into Sabbath-keeping. Prohibitory laws, when enforced, educate a community into sober citizenship. Character is moulded by law. But there is no transforming power in an un-enforced law.

The argument is presented, on the other side, that, the church should not enforce a law against incorporation with a Christless government, until she has educated her members into the conviction that such incorporation is sinful. The answer is that the enforcement of the law is the educating process by which the conviction that it is sinful is produced. "By the law is the knowledge of sin." "I had not known sin but by the law." (Rom 7:7).

It is most absurd to say that the Church can transform her members into the image of Christ by maintaining a high standard of morals in her teaching, and permitting a low standard of morality in the lives of her members. To say "It is no matter what a man believes if he only does right" is absurd; but to say it is no matter what he does if he only believes right is wicked. The life of Jesus is the standard of morals in the Church's teaching, and, if she would transform them into His image, she must apply the same standard to the life of her members. Who believes for a moment that Jesus Christ would incorporate with an immoral civil power, or an unscriptural constitution? What Christian believes that our blessed Lord would carry on the Sabbath mail service, or administer our infamous license laws, or grant divorces in violation of the law of God? "He that saith he abideth in Him, ought himself so to walk, even as He walked," (1 John 2:6.)

Witnessing.

III.

Because the Church Should be a True Witness for the Royal Rights of Her Divine Lord.

"Ye are Christ's," means ye are Christ's witnesses. Witnessing for Jesus Christ is the duty both of the individual Christian, and of the Church as a body. The one who has wholly consecrated himself to Christ, and is transformed into his image is thereby qualified for this most exalted privilege, to be His witness. "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you, and ye shall be witnesses unto me, both in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." (Acts 1:8.)

There are two great facts for which they that are Christ's are to be witnesses. First that He and He alone is the Redeemer and Saviour of men! Second, that He is the Supreme Ruler of the universe. These two facts present different aspects of Christ's redemptive work. The first has to do with the personal salvation of His people individually. The second has to do with the redemption of the race, from the domination of the Prince of Darkness, and the restoration of the world to its true allegiance to God. I undertake to say, that, without requiring separation from Christless and immoral constitutions of civil government as a condition of membership, the Church is not, and cannot be, a true witness to this second great fact. The fact to which the Church is to bear witness is a very simple and definite one. It is this: The Son of God having become the Son of Man, and dwelling still in a glorified human nature as the God man, has, by the appointment of the Father, been enthroned as the world's Ruler." (Phil. 2:6-11.) The nations and their kings and princes are commanded to render allegiance to Him. (Ps. 2:7-12.) To these glorious truths the Church is a witness. Her testimony embraces two points.

1. The first thing to which the Church is to be a witness is the rightfulness of Christ's claim to be the nation's King.

The Church must bear testimony for Him, both by the authoritative declaration of this truth of His Word, and also by the life of her members. These two must be consistent with each other. A witness must not contradict himself. If he does his testimony is ruled out. Of what value was the testimony of the Church against slavery, while slaveholders sat at her communion table? Of what value is the

came by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony." (Rev. 12:11.) Reflect for a moment what the result would be if the Church of Christ would assert the supremacy of His law over the political life of her members, and demand their withdrawal from the administration of governments that are not in allegiance to the King of kings. How long would it be before the Constitution of the United States would be placed in harmony with the law of God if no Christian were permitted to take the oath of office until this was done? How long would the Sabbath mail service continue if every professed Christian found implicated in it were excluded from the privileges of the church? It is the disloyalty of Christ's own followers that leaves His crown in the dust. I dare affirm that, never until separation from Christless and Immoral civil governments is made a condition of membership in the Church, have we any reason to expect the Kingdom of Christ to come in this world. On the other hand, when the Church takes this position, every nation on the globe in which Christianity is the most powerful moulding influence, will at once become a kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ.

3. This will be the condition of membership in the Church of the future. The Lord is preparing a people for Himself. The movement for a higher consecration is begun. Men are bending over their Bibles. There are bands of earnest Christians in all the Churches. They are determined to find a more complete separation from the Christless and Christ-hating world. They are full of expectation of the coming of their Lord. They will soon clasp hands. This

is the Church of the future. If the Covenant Church remains true to her Lord, she will lead the way for the Church of the New Jerusalem coming down from God out of heaven; and the hosts of the Lord, and the Lord of Hosts, will march on to complete and final victory, and the banner over all the world will be inscribed with one word—Christ's.

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