

THE  
PRESBYTERIAN QUARTERLY.

---

NO. 3.—JANUARY, 1888.

---

I. REVIVALS OF RELIGION.

The word Revival implies the previous existence of life ; more properly, it means resuscitation or resurrection from the dead. But according to usage, and with reference to the secondary meanings of the word *life*, it means calling into active exercise a life which has become torpid or has been slumbering. Hence, it has special application to the church, not to the world outside. In Acts 2: 41 ff. we have an account of a revival in the proper sense of the word ; for all the statements there concern the members of the visible church of God. What is commonly called a revival—a general religious movement among the unregenerate—was called by our fathers an “awakening.” There is a sense in which such an awakening may be called a revival, to-wit : a revival of God’s work, (Hab. 3 : 2)—that work of salvation, of calling in His elect—which He has been doing from the beginning. This work seems at times, and in some places, almost to cease ; the Lord seems to abandon His church and give it up to the power of Satan, as in the days of Elijah, at the crucifixion of Jesus, and in the “Dark Ages.” Then comes a time of reviving, a great movement among the dry bones, and a great multitude stand up for the Lord. (Josh. 24—1 Sam. 12.—Judg. 2.—1 Chron. 29.—Hezekiah, Josiah, the Maccabees, Pentecost, the Wilderness, the Brethren of the Common Lot, the Reformation, the Kirk of Shotts, Northampton,

universal decisiveness of the present life, with whatever relieving theories may support it, is now on trial, not the foolish and pernicious speculation about a Christian probation for all men." So let it be. Truth and peace together call on those whose position and profession and preparation are supposed to fully equip them for the work, to work out this deep subject to the clearest possible conclusion that reason and revelation will afford. The question is not whether we may safely indulge an "Eternal hope," that those who pass out of the world at enmity with God will somehow be brought back to Him after death. Beyond question there are passages in Scripture which restorationists recite with plausibility, in support of their Universalist creed. It is also as evident that only an infinitesimal part of the human race has ever had any such offer of Christ as to make Him attractive for their acceptance. But whether every one possessed of moral sense has or has not enough knowledge and conviction to lead him to become so far "a new creature" as that he will die a redeemed soul, if he yields himself to the best he knows, that is the question! If every human being (of moral faculty) has this much, then the present human life is universally decisive. If not, then the ground will be clear for schemes of relief like this future probation.

J. L. WITHROW.

*Chicago, Ill.*

---

#### NATIONAL REFORM.

All thoughtful observers of social, religious, and political affairs in America, must see that here, as in all other countries, there are many glaring faults and threatening evils. Influences are at work, in several departments of our national life, which do undoubtedly tend to the destruction of the foundations upon which rests the laboriously constructed fabric of our Christian civilization. That there are agencies operating among us which are radically and unchangeably hostile to all truth and virtue, does not admit of question; but whether these influences and agencies are stronger than those that work for man's highest well-being; whether the infidelity and immorality, loud and aggressive among certain classes, are stronger than the conservatism and common sense of the majority of the American people, stronger

than the prodigious Christian activities operating everywhere, does admit of question and does allow us to entertain a hope, not without definite reason, that America shall not be lost to God and the highest interests of humanity.

While we should by no means lose our judicial calmness in the presence of the enemies of the public weal, but go steadily forward with the determination and the expectation to win the battle, it would be the greatest folly to underrate the numbers or resources of our adversaries. Among the formidable evils which threaten us, is the corruption and prostitution of the civil service to partisan purposes. To have all the servants of the people understand that they hold their places only until there shall be a change in the political complexion of the government, to allow them to be taxed for money to carry on campaigns for the purpose of keeping in power the party from which alone they can hope for favor, necessarily welds them into an association offensive and defensive, transforms public servants into public masters, and constructs what is potentially, and often actually, a conspiracy against the suffrages of the people. Whether this great evil has become sufficiently apparent to arouse the conscience of the nation to rise above party considerations and sweep it from the face of our political system, will soon be determined. But if the day has not come, it will soon; for underneath the surface there lie in the soul of the nation a sense of right, and a patriotism, which are stronger than party affiliations and the influence of political leaders who too often are actuated by nothing but a desire to accomplish their own selfish ends regardless of all else; and when the danger becomes so great as to force itself upon the attention of true Americans, they will destroy it without mercy.

The black devil of intemperance has become most formidable. It has absorbed untold millions of the public wealth, and what is worse, has destroyed tens of thousands of happy homes. It has feasted on human nature and virtue; it has grown insolent, and formed organizations to secure the enactment of laws for the protection of its infamous traffic. What are we going to do? Allow this monster to overwhelm us? By no means. There are signs of an uprising of the people of this land such as has never been seen before on any question, and by methods, wise and unwise, they are likely to banish, in large measure if not altogether, the vice of intemperance from society.

Who can consider the increasing desecration of the Sabbath by the mass of the people, under the leadership of the great railway, telegraph and other corporations, and by the government mail service, without dismay? The first day of the week is being robbed of its sacredness and religious character by many influences, but by none more insidious than the Sunday newspaper. London and the other great cities of the British Empire manage to exist without Sunday newspapers, but our American cities have come to consider these among the necessaries of life. No Christian should allow himself to be served with newspapers on the Lord's day. These things are undermining public morality. Some time ago, a prominent official of a great railway asked me half in earnest "whether preachers could not invent some way to make conductors and ticket agents honest?" The obvious answer was: "Yes, if you will stop your trains on Sunday and let the men come to church."

We hear a great deal about the dangers to our civil and religious liberties from the encroachments of Popery. The Roman Catholics are under the control of a foreign potentate, and must, at the peril of their souls, obey his mandates; and, under a wily and vigilant priesthood, nothing is left undone to secure political influence. They threaten the liberty of the ballot, and the integrity of the public school system, not only by endeavoring to destroy this institution as it now exists, but also, and, in many cases successfully, to divert public money to their own sectarian purposes. In connection with this we are reminded of the portentous flood of foreigners, in many cases from the worst classes of Europe and Asia, that is pouring in upon us. Thousands of these make industrious, law-abiding citizens, and all such are welcome; but multitudes come, exasperated to unreason by real and fancied wrongs, accustomed to respect neither God nor human rights, to find a fortunate field for the operations of communism, anarchism and nihilism. These dangerous elements mass in our cities and threaten the destruction of all the rights of persons and the rights of things under divine and human law. There is no doubt but that all they lack is the power to re enact among us the most diabolical scenes of the French Revolution. Now and again does a cloud dark and ominous arise along the northeastern or northwestern skies, whose mutterings are heard from sea to sea, causing a shudder to run through the nation.

These things are not secrets, but they stand out boldly on the face of public affairs in the United States. The great dangers which threaten European society are no longer subjects to be read of in books of travel or history, or in foreign correspondence. They are at our doors. The sounds of dreaded footsteps are heard at our own gates, and faces we fear to look upon are gazing into our windows. What shall we do? It is the question of the hour, in the lips of all students of public morality. What shall we do?

Various answers are offered to this inquiry. One is the formation of what is termed "The National Reform Association," whose noble design is to counteract or destroy these and other evils which threaten to overwhelm our religious and civil liberties. No fault can be found with its character or its intention. The Association is composed of good men who are endeavoring to do a good thing. Nor can there be any doubt but that they will do good, even though their methods be not the wisest possible. If no good thing were ever accomplished in this world except by efforts which were perfectly wise and judicial, there would be nothing done; for no human scheme, nor human operation of a divine scheme, can be perfect. At the same time a little friendly criticism may not be unfraternal nor discourteous; nor may a morsel of advice as to the line along which success may be attained be considered wholly impertinent.

From the tracts, and from their official organ, *The Christian Statesman*, issued from the headquarters of the "National Reform Association," in Philadelphia, one may readily learn the plan of procedure. The following is an authorized statement of the design of the Association:

"The object of the National Reform Association is to maintain, and to develop into harmony and completeness, all existing Christian features in the American government. Its work is based on the belief of these fundamental principles, viz: That Almighty God is the source of all power and authority in civil government, that the Lord Jesus Christ is the Ruler of nations and that the revealed will of God is of Supreme authority in civil affairs. Perceiving the subtle and persevering attempts which are made to prohibit the reading of the Bible in our public schools, to overthrow our Sabbath Laws, to abolish the Oath, Prayer in our National and State Legislatures, Days of Fasting and Thanksgiving, and other Christian features of our institutions, and so to divorce the American government from all connection with the

Christian religion; believing that a written Constitution ought to contain explicit evidence of the Christian character and purpose of the nation which frames it, and perceiving that the silence of the Constitution of the United States in this respect is used as an argument against all that is Christian in the usage and administration of our government, this Association seeks such an amendment to the Constitution of the United States as will indicate that this is a Christian nation, and place all the Christian laws, institutions and usages of our government on an undeniable legal basis in the fundamental law of the land."

This appears to be a well-intentioned scheme to advance the moral and political condition of the people of the United States by LEGISLATION in behalf of the Christian religion. The point of criticism we make is this: that *the Christian religion is not a proper subject for legislation*. Of course no one denies that it is proper to legislate concerning all moral and political matters. It is also granted that certain matters come within the range alike of politics, morals and religion, as, for example, divorce, theft, etc. These are fitting questions for the legislature, the court and the pulpit. It is eminently proper that strong laws should be enacted against such evils. The Christian religion works for the maintenance of the marriage relation and everything else in public morality, but it would be a hasty judgment that we should therefore establish the Christian religion by law. The State may legislate for some of the same ends as those sought by religion; but though they work for the same results in some cases, they are separate and independent institutions, and their methods, as well as their ultimate designs, are totally different. The legislature is to strive for the advancement of an earthly and visible State, but the Church for the establishment of an invisible spiritual kingdom. One deals with the external acts of men, considering motives only as they relate to definite deeds, and administers material punishments; the other enters into man's soul and claims authority over his inmost thoughts and desires. If the State adopts the Christian religion, it logically should go on and inflict corporeal penalties upon those who disobey any of its fundamental requirements. This takes us back in history three hundred years, over a weary path of blood and persecution. The State has nothing to do with the Church of God, and if called upon to protect it in any of its material interests it can only deal with it as it would with the Free Masons or any other human organization in society.

This matter comes up in a practical form in the question as to

the right of the State to teach religion in the public schools. There is a general tendency to exclude all religious instruction and thus leave nothing but a godless educational training for the youth of our land. This, it is earnestly urged, would produce a generation of skeptics and communists. It is dangerous to educate the head without the heart, and it needs no prophet to show that there are real perils before us. But no prophet out of the large number that have spoken on this subject, in behalf of the National Reform Association, has told us satisfactorily what is to be done about it. If religion is to be taught in the public schools, who is to decide what religion it shall be? or shall we have all religions? If the Christian religion, what form of it? Calvinistic or Arminian, ritualistic or non-liturgical? If we decide to have one, what about those who believe in other forms, but still have to pay taxes to teach what they do not accept as true? Shall they send their children to private schools of their own faith, and still pay taxes to support schools which they cannot patronize? These are problems not easy to solve. It is a serious question whether the State has a right to impart anything but a rudimentary education. Is the State to teach any religion? If so, shall it be a religion that all sects could agree upon as far as it goes? That would be a religion without Christ, a system of morals without the cross. God forbid.

“Speak they of morals, O Thou bleeding Love?  
The great morality is love to Thee.”

There is a vague idea prevalent that somehow great things are to be accomplished for religion by secular legislation. The National Reform Association seems based upon that principle. It should confine its efforts to securing *moral* legislation for the safety of the State, and not seek *religious* legislation for the sake of the Church. It is striving to have God recognized in the Constitution of the United States, and of the individual States; to procure legislation which shall set the American people before the world as a Christian nation. These ideas were strongly advocated at the annual session of the Association in Saratoga, during the month of August last. The meetings were not largely attended, though it was in the height of the season. The interest was not great. The principal sederunt on Tuesday night was rather long, and a little languid, and the audience nearly all left the church, at the close, without being dismissed, though requested

to remain for a collection. The "National Reform" movement does not take like wildfire. Is it because the people have no sympathy with moral aims, or is it because there is a fundamental instinct in the American nation against the interference of the State in matters religious? The fact is, the State, with reference to the Church, is merely a police force. The business of the State is to maintain order, the function of the Church to teach religion. All crime is indeed irreligious, and marriage, temperance and the Day of Rest are religious, but they are also political matters; and the State can only regard them as such, and in their bearing upon public order and safety. God has appointed the Church to teach religion "to every creature," and all that the Church needs to ask the State is, *protect us in our property rights as citizens, and let us alone.*

In view of the great dangers which threaten the nation, those mentioned above, and others, what is the Church to do? It is to "preach the Gospel to every creature" from the pulpit, by house-to-house visitation, by the circulation of good literature, above all the Bible. "*Every creature*" who is born among us, or who comes to our shores from afar, is to be attacked for Christ with the Gospel of the cross. The crisis is upon us; the hordes are coming from every quarter of the globe; we have no time to parley, no time for interdenominational controversy, and waste of strength upon each other; we are to try to make "*every creature*" a Christian, and then there would be no trouble in settling these questions of public weal. To this end our greatest need is a mighty "baptism of the Holy Ghost and of fire;" and the way to get this is for the whole body of Christians to pray for it. It does not seem likely that the National Reform movement is going to save the country; the Gospel will do it if it is done. ROBERT. P. KERR.

---

### THE "PERSONAL LIBERTY" MOVEMENT.

One of the latest and most insidious of the social heresies of these days is that which has recently appeared under the plausible pseudonym of "Personal Liberty League," or "Society for the Vindication of Personal Liberty." There is something fascinating to the ears of Americans about the very word "liberty." It brings to mind and heart those inalienable privileges of civil and