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CHRISTIAN CITIZENSHIP CONFERENCE,

DEVOTED TO THE CONSIDERATION OF

POLITICAL LOYALTY TO THE LORD JESUS CHRIST,

HELD IN THE

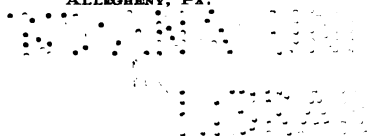
ALLEGHENY COVENANTER
CHURCH.

CORNER OF SANDUSKY AND NORTH DIAMOND STREETS.

MONDAY AND TUESDAY
FEBRUARY 24TH AND 25TH, 1902.

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PRESS OF JOHN C. PARK,
ALLEGHENY, PA.



The Rev. J. C. McFeeters, D. D., of Philadelphia, Pa., addressed the Conference on

The Need of Awakening the Conscience of the Christian Citizen to Loyalty to Christ.

The subject is a delicate one. It should be handled with tenderness and yet with candor. It implies that the conscience of the Christian citizen is asleep. Sleep is natural in season. Night is intended to suspend labor and watchfulness, and to close the eyes of man in slumber; but when morning comes, and the sun, rising in his splendor and majesty, chases the shadows away, man is expected to arise, and with open eyes and strong heart, take in the glory of a new day, and accept its solemn obligations.

While the world was in the night of darkness previous to Christ's first advent when only stars of Gospel light were shining, and even afterward when the night-like eclipse of the dark ages fell upon the earth, the conscience of the Christian was evidently, and somewhat naturally, asleep on the great question of the duty of the nations to the Lord Jesus Christ. But as the sun has risen and filled our land with light and liveliness, with energy and activity on a scale more stupendous and marvelously effective than ever witnessed under heaven, surely the conscience of the citizen ought to be awake on every great question of our republic. The night is past, the day is upon us, it is high time that we awake.

Citizens may be divided into two classes: Christian and non-Christian; the former being largely in the majority.

Christian citizens may be subdivided into voters and dissenters; the former of these far outnumbering the latter. In fact, the dissenters, that are enrolled are nearly all found in the Covenanter Church with its membership of about ten thousand.

The voting Christians are to be found in the other churches. Let us consider first the conscience of dissenters, and afterward that of Christian voters.

Let us then turn to the dissenters, and get as clear a view as possible of their conscience in relation to civil government. They are the people who have severed their connection with the government.

because it is disloyal to Christ; it refuses to own His authority and fails to conform to His will. Conscience has compelled this separation. Yet though awake in this regard, in other respects it is evidently asleep, and there is cause for alarm lest its sleep be unto death, even the death of the Covenanter Church.

If dissenters have discovered the Christ-dishonoring attitude of this government, and have knowledge of the gross insult offered to Jesus whom the Father has crowned "King of kings and Lord of lords," should they not be persistent in urging His claims and declaring His royal rights? Can anything, except a sleeping conscience, explain the intolerable indifference that at present exists?

If they believe that the relation which voting Christians sustain to the government is a compromise of religion, a violation of the sacramental oath, and a dishonor to Christ, should they not strenuously, yet kindly make it known to their brethren? And what can account for the shameful shyness on this subject, except a sleeping conscience?

If they are persuaded that the wrath of God will fall upon our land in judgments, except there be repentance and reformation—and what if the fires are already kindled—should they not use every effort to arouse the country to the knowledge of the danger, and urge the people to employ the means of escape?

What reason can be given for the half-heartedness, or utter indifference, seen in the work of moral reform? What, except a sleeping conscience?

If the Christian voter, whose eyes are closed to the great moral issues of the day, is guilty, because he allows his conscience to sleep, how great is the guilt of the dissenter, who, though the eyes of the understanding be open, indulges his conscience in the sweetness of slumber?

If a hotel were on fire, and a few of the inmates were awake in time to escape, and would withdraw without making greatest effort to arouse all the others, would they not be held in everlasting disgrace? Dissenters who withdraw from the government without striving to bring non-dissenters to a knowledge of the sinful and perilous condition of our country, and of their sins in relation to it, are of all men the most censurable. Yea, it seems to us, they are of all men the most guilty. Greater guilt is scarcely conceivable. It is to be feared that they who have such intelligence, and bestir not themselves to awaken others, are in a stupor which can be dispelled only by the terrific judgments of God. With what derision does the prophet speak of the "Watchmen," that are "dumb dogs, that cannot bark, sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber."

Now let us consider the condition of the conscience of the Christian voter, as it appears in the light of existing facts.

The conscience is the power of mind that acts upon moral questions, reaching conclusions concerning right and wrong. Whether it be awake or asleep can be known only by the conduct of the person. If a Christian lives in wrong relations, if he persists in a wrong course of conduct, his conscience must be asleep. Now consider the relations which the Christian voter sustains, and the course he pursues, and in our humble judgment, nothing is more manifest than that the conscience of all such is overpowered with a weighty stupor, or sunk into a deep sleep. And if God will graciously use these words to awaken any one, or any number, we shall have our earnest desire, and He shall have all the glory.

1st. The Christian voter is involved in the great wrong done to Christ by accepting and enforcing a Constitution of civil government that disclaims all relation to the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus says: "All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth." The apostle says: "There is no power but of God; the powers that be are ordained of God." Yet this government, in its highest accepted law, is oblivious to this royal fact, and unconsciously perhaps, but no less wickedly, despoils the Lord Jesus of His authority over the nation, and idolatrously clothes the people with His power and glory.

Can a man, redeemed by the blood of Christ, and saved by His grace from eternal wrath, do this, unless his conscience be asleep? Can he, with open eyes, and heart astir, for any known reason whatever, so deeply and shamefully wrong his Lord and Saviour?

2nd. The Christian voter becomes responsible for the laws that proceed from this Constitution, and for their effects. He belongs to the organization that applies the constitutional rules, and acting voluntarily under them, personally accepts the responsibilities that arise therefrom. Here we find laws directly in conflict with Christ's law, desecrating His holy day by calling into the mail service more than one hundred thousand men on the Sabbath, corrupting the home and filling the land with adultery by vicious divorces, increasing misery and multiplying crime by sustaining the saloons. The Christian voter has hand and part in all this, inasmuch as he is a personal factor in the organization that does it. What an attitude for a man of Christ to assume! What guilt in relation to the saloon alone! What sorrows, what blighted homes, what blood, to make answer for! Could the dead bodies of those slain yearly by the saloon alone be piled up like cordwood, the ghastly pile would stretch for miles. The assassin of our beloved President might indeed say, as Jehu said: "I have slain my master, but who slew all these?" And how shall the Christian voter arise and confess to the awful deed? How can he explain his part in the horrible slaughter? What man redeemed by the Lord can

be thus implicated in crime of gravest character, without having a sleeping conscience?

3rd. The Christian citizen betrays the important trust of civil power, consigned by the Lord Jesus to his care, when he gives it over to the enemies of his Lord. Civil power absolutely and originally belongs to God; mediatorially he has invested it in Christ; administratively Christ has deposited it with the people; and representatively the people transfer it to the officials whom they elect to office. In this sense the people are sovereign. The Lord has invested them with the power of self-government. This power is a most sacred trust. The rights of our seventy-five millions, the interests of future generations, the progress of Christianity, and the glory of our Lord, are involved in the use of this power. To deposit it in the hands of those who are hostile to true religion is to betray a most sacred and precious trust. Nor is this an unfrequent occurrence. How often, for instance, have the Christian people to rally at the State capitol to prevent the enemies of our Lord from repealing the Sabbath law and opening wide the gates of Sabbath profanation! And why? Because Jesus has been betrayed by His people who have turned His entrusted gift of power over into the hands of His enemies. Can such cold and continuous treachery be practiced by those who are saved by the blood of Christ and consecrated by His Spirit, except the conscience be asleep?

4th. The Christian voter is chargeable with a horrifying wrong when he chooses a man of God to fill an office in the government on the basis of the present Constitution. Selecting a man of high moral standing and unsullied conscience, the voter places him in a position where he must take an oath to meet the requirements of his office according to existing laws. This often involves him in great wrongs.

Is the case in point that of a President, or a Governor, a Mayor or a magistrate? And is he found in active relation with the church of Christ? Is he esteemed for piety, prayer and faith? Is he celebrated for the breadth and depth and height and weight of his principles, and the grand Christian character they have developed? Does he arise in holy might and majesty above his fellows like a mountain above the plains? Surely such a man is best qualified to wield the powers of office. But will the Christian voter take a person who thus fears God, and place him where he must vitiate his conscience, violate the laws of his Lord, and incur the wrath of the Almighty? While the Constitution of government remains as it is, such is the horrifying position of Christian officials in our country. Consider some of our Presidents, with their irreproachable personal character, their devotion to the church and her work, their private religious life, and follow them as they enter office, and solemnly take the oath to administer the

laws, as they exist, and call upon God to help them. Then think of some of these laws diametrically opposed to the revealed will of Christ, profanely antagonistic to His ordinances and kingdom, perniciously and persistently destructive of home and happiness, morality and religion. Such are the laws that relate to the Sabbath mail service, the system of divorce, the saloon, and other ponderous iniquities. But the climax of the most glaring presumption seems to be reached when the candidate-elect, in taking the oath of office, calls upon God to help him to administer such laws. Hear, O heavens, and give ear O earth! Can a more horrifying position be conceived for a religious man to occupy? Can a Christian voter take his brother, whom he loves, and whom God loves, and place him where he will be involved in such flagrant guilt and awful peril, except the conscience be asleep?

5th. The Christian voter is adding his part to the great wickedness which may eventually provoke God to pour out direful judgments upon our country. The great sin is forgetfulness of God. Other sins arise out of this like strong branches from the trunk of the oak. God has ordained civil government to reveal Himself therein. Every law should be traceable to His illustrious and exalted Self. Every act of legislation and administration ought to be a ray emanating from His all-radiant Person. But the government has been ingloriously separated from God, and degraded to the low level of human will. The system is a wall shutting out much of the light of the glorious high throne.

The connection between God and our government is cut off at the fountain head, the Constitution. Thus the highest object which God had in view in ordaining government on earth, the manifestation of His presence, power and Person, is at least partially lost. Hence the pernicious laws and monstrous wrongs that arise in the government out of the will and lust of man, as naturally as flags grow up in the mire. Such perversion of government and its uses, if continued, cannot fail but result in divine wrath. The Judge of all the earth will do right. He cannot deny Himself. He may suffer long, but not always. The ruins of the kingdom of Israel are the monuments of His avenging wrath. The warning is for all nations. And can the Christian citizen assist in nullifying God's greatest purpose in civil government, and thus provoke Him to His face, unless the conscience be asleep? Can he thus imperil his country and hasten inevitable and destructive judgments? Can he engage in a work which in the light of divine truth resembles treason rather than patriotism, unless conscience be asleep?

They who will do their best for Christ and for country must keep the conscience awake on all the great questions that are pressing to the front for solution. And no question is more important than that

which involves the claims and rights of our Lord Jesus Christ in civil government.

It gives no pleasure to speak such words. They may appear to be severe and full of censure. But they come from the heart, and with deepest emotions of sympathy with our fellow citizens, and interest of our country. We speak the words of truth and soberness, as God hath shined into the heart through the face of Jesus and the written Word. Such truths are a burden. The soul shrinks from uttering them. But the welfare of our country demands the truth as it is in Jesus the King. Multitudes of souls are thirsting for the truth in its fullness and power. Faithfulness to our generation requires clear trumpet notes of the truth. The peril of our beloved nation, the peril of souls around us, our own peril in the great Day of Accounts, lay heaviest obligations upon us to tell the whole truth on the vital question of the reign of King Jesus over the nations. In the spirit of humility, and with all charity, have we declared that which is in the depths of the heart. "According as it is written, I believed, and therefore have I spoken. We also believe, and therefore speak." And to any who may take issue with us, we cordially and sincerely say: "Come now, and let us reason together."