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A NATION'S DUTY TO ACKNOWLEDGE CHRIST AS KING.

Substance of an Address delivered in the U. P. Church, near Canonsburg, Pa., August 17, 1865, before an Association to promote the religious amendment of the Constitution. By Rev. Thomas Sproull. Published by request of the Association.

THE amendments which it is proposed to insert in the United States Constitution are: A recognition of God as the source of all authority; an acceptance of the Holy Scriptures as the supreme rule; and a declaration of subjection to Christ as King. As these cover too wide a field to be fully discussed on the present occasion, I will pass by the first two and confine my remarks to the last. I do this the more readily because it is the amendment most earnestly opposed. Besides, if this is gained, the whole object is accomplished; but if this fails, the whole will be a failure. The following theses exhibit the outline of the proposed argument:

I. THE LORD JESUS CHRIST IS KING OF NATIONS.

II. NATIONS ARE REQUIRED EXPLICITLY TO ACKNOWLEDGE CHRIST AS KING IN THEIR CONSTITUTIONS.

III. NATIONS THAT REFUSE TO OWN CHRIST AS KING SHALL BE VISITED WITH SORE JUDGMENTS.

IV. BY SUBJECTING THEMSELVES TO CHRIST, NATIONS WILL SECURE TO THEMSELVES THE GREATEST PROSPERITY.

I. THE LORD JESUS CHRIST IS KING OF NATIONS.—He is invested with universal dominion. Mat. 28:20. "All power is given to me in heaven and on earth." Eph. 1:20-22. "He set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come; and hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the Head over all things to the church." Phil. 2:9-10. "Wherefore God hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." 1 Peter 3:22. "Who is gone into heaven, and

is on the right hand of God; angels, and authorities, and powers being made subject unto him."

2. Royal titles are given to him. Psalm 22:28. "The kingdom is the Lord's, and he is the Governor among the nations." Is. 32:1. "Behold a King shall reign in righteousness." Isa. 10:7. "Who would not fear thee, O King of nations, for to thee doth it appertain." 1 Tim. 6:15. "The blessed and only Potentate, King of kings and Lord of lords." Rev. 1:5. "Jesus Christ, the Prince of the kings of the earth." See also Rev. 19:16.

3. Nations are commanded to submit to him. Ps. 2:10-12. "Be wise now therefore, O ye kings; be instructed, ye judges of the earth; serve the Lord with fear and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son." Ps. 96:10. "Say among the heathen: The Lord reigneth." Ps. 99:1. "The Lord reigneth, let the people tremble." John 5:22-23. "The Father hath committed all judgment unto the Son, that all men should honor the Son even as they honor the Father."

4. Nations are threatened with judgments who refuse to submit to Christ. Ps. 2:12. "Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way." Ps. 9:17. "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and the nations that forget God." Is. 63:6. "I will tread down the people in my anger, and make them drunk in my fury, and I will bring down their strength to the earth." Luke 19:27. "But those my enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me." Rev. 11:18. "The nations were angry, and thy wrath is come, and the time that thou shouldest destroy them which destroy the earth."

5. It is promised and foretold that nations shall submit to him. Ps. 2:8. "Ask, and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession." Is. 72:10-11. "The kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall bring presents; the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts. Yea, all kings shall fall down before him; all nations shall serve him." Ps. 22:27. "All the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee." Rev. 11:15. "The kingdoms of this world have become our Lord's and his Christ's."

These several positions, sustained by clear scriptural proof, present combined an unanswerable argument in favor of our first thesis. Seeing that Christ has universal dominion assigned to him, and is designated in Scripture by royal titles; seeing that nations are commanded to submit to him, and are threatened with severe judgments if they refuse; and seeing, moreover, that it is predicted and promised that nations shall own Christ as their King, the conclusion is inevitable, that he is by a divine constitution ruler of nations.

II. NATIONS ARE REQUIRED EXPLICITLY TO ACKNOWLEDGE CHRIST AS KING IN THEIR CONSTITUTIONS.—It is now generally held by the religious part of the community, that nations enjoying the Bible and Christianity should be Christian. The question is not—unless by professed or practical infidels, with whom in this argument we

have nothing to do—should a nation have a Christian character by some kind of a recognition of Christ? but it is, how is this to be done? or what constitutes a national recognition of Christ? Many affect to believe that the character of a nation is determined by the character of its subjects; if they are in professed subjection to Christ, so is the nation. That this is a mere assumption without any foundation will appear in the course of the argument.

The point which I propose to prove is, that nations are required to acknowledge Christ as King in their constitutions. What is a constitution? It is the instrument that contains the terms on which a number of individuals combine together to accomplish some object. A national constitution is the bond of unity among those who constitute the nation. It is, moreover, the expression of the nation's political and moral faith. By the constitution alone can it be determined whether a nation is a republic, an aristocracy or a monarchy. By its constitution its relation to other powers is defined. They know it only as it is described in that instrument. If the constitution is republican, though nine-tenths or even all of the people should become monarchists, the nation would still be a republic. They might pervert the constitution, or they might change it; and one of these they likely would do: but so long as it remained in its integrity, so long the political character of the nation as known to other nations, would remain the same. A practical case will illustrate this. There is in this country a large class of professors of nominal Christianity who hate republicanism, and are in sworn allegiance to a foreign power. Suppose they should become the majority of the people; or suppose that all should become perverted to their faith, so that Popery would be the only form of religion found in the country, that fact would not change the republican character of the government. Though all were in sworn allegiance to the Pope, the government would not on that account be despotic. Until they lay hands on the constitution and conform it to their principles, it would still be republican. The correctness of these views is so manifest that few will be found to controvert them.

And it is by the same test that we determine what is the religious character of a nation. It is in that respect what its constitution says it is. If the constitution does not declare in favor of Christ, then it is unchristian; and while the Constitution retains this negation of Christianity, the nation has no claim to be called a Christian nation. Nothing but such a change of the constitution as will make it recognize Christ in his relation to nations as their King, will deliver it from the dangerous position of being hostile to him.

It adds to the strength of the argument to consider that God deals with nations according to their character, and not according to the characters of the individuals composing them. God taught Israel this truth by the prophet Ezekiel in these words, "Son of man, when the land sinneth against me by trespassing grievously, then will I stretch out my hand upon it, and will break the staff of the

bread thereof, and will send famine upon it, and cut off man and beast from it; though these three men, Noah, Daniel and Job, were in it, they should deliver but their own souls by their righteousness, saith the Lord God." Ez. 14: 13-14. A nation is a moral person, a subject to the government of God, and in order to escape the punishment due to rebels, it must profess subjection to Him by whom the affairs of the world are administered, and exemplify the sincerity of their profession by obeying his laws.

III. NATIONS THAT REFUSE TO OWN CHRIST AS KING SHALL BE VISITED WITH SORE JUDGMENTS.—If the preceding thesis be proved, this must necessarily follow. If the failure of a nation to recognize Christ as its King is constructive hostility to him, then by that failure the nation is exposed to punishment. God is jealous of his glory; he will not give it to another, nor will he suffer the honor of the crown of Messiah to be tarnished by any national refusal to submit to him. What he says to the church is eminently true in regard to her Head, "The nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish, yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted." Is. 60: 12. The infliction of severe judgments is often deferred; lighter chastisements are sent first to warn and admonish. But if these are disregarded they are followed by sorer visitations, until for their impenitence they are blotted from the face of the earth, and their memory survives only to be execrated. The history of the proudest nations of antiquity verifies these remarks. In the Jewish nation they have their full exemplification. The sad sequel of their history is recorded in the prophetic song taught them by Moses long before their denationalization and final dispersion. "Of the Rock that begat thee thou art unmindful, and hast forgotten God that formed thee. And when the Lord saw it, he abhorred them, because of the provoking of his sons and of his daughters. How should one chase a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight, except their Rock had sold them, and the Lord had shut them up?" Deut. 32: 18-19, 20. Let Christ's own declarations put this point beyond all doubt. "He that is not with me is against me." Mat. 12: 30. "Those mine enemies who would not that I should reign over them, bring them hither and slay them before me." Luke 19: 27.

IV. BY SUBJECTING THEMSELVES TO CHRIST, NATIONS SECURE TO THEMSELVES THE GREATEST PROSPERITY.—"Righteousness exalteth a nation." Prov. 14: 34. This rule of national greatness has both its affirmative and negative aspects. Without righteousness no nation can attain to true honor and prosperity. But the foundation of righteousness is to render to God the things that are his. Any other basis is a foundation of sand. The nation only is blessed that owns Christ as King. "Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord." Ps. 33: 12. He manages the affairs of providence in subordination to the kingdom of grace. He is "Head over all things to the church, which is his body." Eph. 1: 22, 23. Nations are put under him, that he may employ them in carrying forward to its completion the work of redemption assigned to him.

This if they do not willingly they shall be constrained to do. He maketh the wrath of man to praise him.

In order that they may be active instruments in building up the kingdom of Christ, they must be loyal subjects to his government. Submitting to his sceptre and ruling by his law, they secure to themselves the blessing of his gracious reign. Those who honor him will be honored. While the nations that will not serve him shall perish, those that bow to his authority shall be established and prospered. The condition of the world when Christ shall be acknowledged as Lord of all, is described in Psalm 72: 2-7, "He shall judge thy people with righteousness, and thy poor with judgment. The mountains shall bring peace to the people, and the little hills, by righteousness. He shall judge the poor of the people, he shall save the children of the needy, and shall break in pieces the oppressor. He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass; as showers that water the earth. In his days shall the righteous flourish; and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth."

Having demonstrated the correctness of the preceding theses as general truths, I now proceed to apply these to the government of our own country.

1. The Government of the United States is not in the relation of voluntary subjection to the Lord Jesus Christ. This is a sad truth, humbling and disgraceful, but it is one we must neither deny nor conceal. This nation, that has enjoyed from the beginning so many tokens of divine favor, has ungratefully refused to enthrone him as its sovereign by whose hand these gifts have been dispersed. To the command of God, "Kiss the Son," this nation has practically answered, "We will not have this man to reign over us." In the United States Constitution there is not the remotest reference to any power higher than the people. The preamble ignores and repudiates any higher power. Its language is, "We the people of the United States, do ordain and establish this Constitution." This is in accordance with the sentiment in the Declaration of Independence, that "governments derive their just powers from the consent of the governed"—a sentiment which, though true as it regards the *medium*, is most untrue in regard to the *source of power*. And it is most clearly in the first sense that it is used in the Declaration. It is a claim of the right of self-government, free from any accountability to God or his Son in the constitution and administration of the government about to be established.

I am aware that this is denied; and that it is held that the Constitution does recognize God, his Son and law. This, it is maintained, it does not in form but in substance. The first of these recognitions it is alleged is in the words, "I swear," in the oath of office administered to the President. The second, in the word "Sunday," in the section defining how long the President may retain a bill before returning it to Congress: "ten days (Sundays excepted)." The third, in the words, "in the year of our Lord," in the date of the Constitution. The words "I swear," it is urged,

refer to God by whom men swear, and is a recognition of his being and men's accountability to him. But it should be remembered that the President may refuse to swear; he may affirm. The words are, "I do solemnly swear or affirm." He may prefer the latter, in which there is no reference to God. What then comes of the argument? "Sundays excepted," it is pretended, is a recognition of the moral law, because the fourth commandment requires the Sabbath to be observed. But the section in question does not require the President to observe the Sabbath. It merely does not include the Sabbath among the secular days of the week, not because its observance is required by the laws of God; for then the clause would not have been a mere permission, but a command to observe the Sabbath. It was done wholly in accordance with custom. As it regards the recognition of Christ in the date; in the copy of the Constitution in my possession the words in question are not found at all. Judge Story, whose Exposition of the Constitution I consult, certainly did not see the importance in "*Anno Domini*" that some have found in these words, or he would not have left them out of the copy found in his book.

But let us bring this matter to a true test. Suppose this nation arraigned at the bar of the King of nations, to answer for its disregard of God, his Son and law. Let the apologists for this neglect be its advocates, and what plea do they present? In answer to the charge of not acknowledging God as the source of power, they say: the President is required to say "I swear," or "I affirm," &c., before he enter on the duties of his office. As it regards the divine law, "Sundays excepted," are words that respond to the command, "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy," and merely a permission to keep one commandment implies an obligation to keep them all. And in the words, "our Lord," in the date of the Constitution, the nation obeyed the command, "Kiss the Son." The way this pleading would be treated is best expressed in the words of our Lord in a similar case: "Many will say unto me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name; and in thy name have cast out devils; and in thy name have done many wonderful works? and then will I profess to them I never knew thee: depart from me, ye workers of iniquity."

2. The American nation, for the dishonor done to Christ by refusing to acknowledge his authority in its Constitution, has been visited with severe judgments. None will deny that God has once and again laid his hand heavily on the nation. Most will admit that there were moral causes for these inflictions. The civil war, the last and most terrible of all these judicial visitations, has left no ground for skepticism on this point. By its continuance in sin, the nation treasured up wrath against the day of wrath, and the revelation of the righteous judgment of God. By the last stroke of the rod of God's indignation, it was wounded near to death. However deeply the sin of slavery entered into the composition of the cup of the nation's iniquity, it was not the only, nor even the principal ingredient. It was itself an effect of an antecedent

cause—a refusal to constitute the nation a voluntary subject of the government of Christ, ruled by his law. Was it to be expected that a people insensible to divine claims would be at all scrupulous about human rights? It may be set down as a rule for judging the actions of men, that those who reject the first table of the law will disregard the second.

It has been often remarked that the finger of Providence in this war has pointed with unerring certainty to slavery as its procuring, as well as its immediate cause. This is admitted; but the admission does not militate against the position we are maintaining, unless it be meant that slavery was the alone cause. To us the finger of Providence points to the rejection of the authority of Christ as the moral cause of the war with a clearness no less distinct. It seems to be in exact harmony with God's way of dealing, to punish rebellion with rebellion—to permit secession in a nation that had seceded from his government. This is retributive justice. And can it be hoped that God will be less ready to put forth his power to bring to subjection a revolted province, than the Government was to subdue the rebel States? It is the promise of God the Father to the Mediator, that his enemies shall be made his footstool—a promise that shall be fulfilled, though it be by terrible works in righteousness. There is given to him a rod of iron, with which he will break in pieces, as a potter's vessel is broken, every power that will refuse to do him homage. With his iron rod he has smitten and nearly broken this nation, and now it remains to be seen whether it will repent and return, and give glory to the God of heaven.

3. It depends on the nation's treatment of the claims of Christ whether it shall receive still heavier judgments, or enjoy the greatest prosperity. If the severe rebuke just given be unheeded, a visitation still more dreadful may be apprehended. Let no one say, The rebellion is now crushed, and we have nothing to fear from any other quarter. Is the armory of heaven emptied? Are the stores of divine vengeance exhausted? Hear God's own words: "Is not this laid up in store with me, and sealed up among my treasures? To me belongeth vengeance and recompense; their feet shall slide in due time; for the day of their calamity is at hand, and the things that come upon them make haste." Deut. 32: 34, 35. "He put on the garments of vengeance for clothing, and was clad with zeal as a cloak. According to their deeds, accordingly he will repay fury to his adversaries, recompense to his enemies." Is. 59: 17, 18. The heart of the enlightened patriot trembles for his country when he reflects on the fearful results of a continuance to withhold from Christ the recognition of his royal rights. "Let the potsherd strive with the potsherds of the earth; but woe to him that striveth with his Maker."

There is nevertheless hope concerning us. God is infinitely gracious. He is ready to receive the returning and penitent. He has ever shown himself willing to forgive the sins of nations turning from the evil of their ways. The history of Israel abounds

with instances of this. Let then the American people, with a sense of mercies misimproved and warnings neglected, bow down before Emmanuel, and lay the sovereignty of this great nation at his feet. He waits to be gracious. He has granted a respite from the calamity of war. Let it be improved by speedy and genuine repentance and reformation. Let him have the glory belonging to him as Prince of the kings of the earth. Place his name on the front of the Constitution as a declaration of the nation's allegiance to him; and then he will bestow on us the innumerable and priceless blessings of his gracious administration. "With righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity, for the meek of the earth. And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins. The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion, and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them; and the cow and the bear will feed; their young ones they shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice's den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mansion; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea."

"That people blessed is who be
In such a case as this;
Yea, blessed all those people are
Whose God JEHOVAH is!"

SYRIA MISSION.

LETTER FROM REV. J. BEATTIE.

LATAKIYEH, October 31, 1865.

DEAR BRETHREN—Ere this reaches you, you will, in all human probability, have seen and conversed with Mr. Dodds, and have learned from him particulars in reference to the Mission, up to the time he left. He and family, in company with Mr. Morgan and family, a missionary of the American Board, occupying the nearest station to the north of us, set sail from Latakiyeh in the beginning of August last, at the close of our summer term, and just after one of the most interesting events in all the past history of our mission—our first communion in Arabic. We had the pleasure of admitting five native brethren to our fellowship on that occasion, and while it was with no little hesitation and anxiety that we concluded to receive them, I am happy to say that their general deportment since the time of their public connection with us has been such on all occasions as to justify our action. May God add to this little number daily of such as he will have to be saved. The first news that reached us after the departure of our brethren for