

The Loyal Archite; or the Attributes of Legitimate Civil Government

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The Attributes of Legitimate Civil Government.

A SERMON BY REV. THOMAS SPROULL, D.D.

2 Samuel 16:18. "And Hushai, said unto Absalom, Nay: but whom the Lord, and this people, and all the men of Israel, choose, his will I be, and with him will I abide."

THE kingdom of Israel, when the events recorded in this chapter took place, was in a disturbed condition by a formidable insurrection. Absalom, a favorite son of David, having by guile gained the affections of many of the people, at the head of a powerful conspiracy aimed to dethrone his royal father and usurp the supreme authority. So skillfully had affairs been managed, that the plot was ripe for execution, when the king was startled by the news that "the hearts of the men of Israel were after Absalom." There was no time now to prepare for successful resistance. The only hope of safety seemed to be in flight. Soon, the king, his household, and faithful adherents, with the priests bearing the ark of God, are on their way towards the wilderness. Having crossed the brook Kidron, David directed Zadok to carry back the ark of God into the city, expressing in fitting words his hope and resignation, "If I shall find favor in the eyes of the Lord, he will bring me again, and shew me both it and his habitation. But if he say thus, I have no delight in thee; behold, here am I, let him do to me as seemeth good unto him."

Wending its way by the ascent of Olivet, the sad procession at length reached

its summit. There the king devoutly engaged in worshipping God. At this juncture Hushai, the Archite, came to him, with his coat rent and earth upon his head, expressive of deep and sincere distress. He was "David's friend," and a wise counselor. The king having learned that Ahithophel had joined with Absalom in the conspiracy, determined to use Hushai's skill and influence to baffle the intrigues of that wily and unscrupulous politician. Pursuant to the instructions given him by David, Hushai presented himself before Absalom, and saluted him with the formula employed by a subject to his ruler, "God save the king! God save the king!" To the sharp rebuke of Absalom on account of his laggard adherence to his cause, he replied in the words of the text: "Whom the Lord, and this people, and all the men of Israel, choose, his will I be, and with him will I abide."

It is sufficient now to say with regard to the ethical question here presented, that in all ages, the exigencies of war require and justify the deception of an enemy by any form of dissimulation that promises success. Joshua, by divine direction, deceived the men of Ai, and overcame them and took their city. The declaration of Hushai to Absalom was neither a hasty and unpremeditated utterance, nor a cunningly framed *double entendre*, designed to mislead by its ambiguity. It was a deliberate and clear statement of the attributes of a government to which he would be in loyal subjection. If Absalom was deceived the fault was his own, for he knew that his usurpation possessed none of the characteristics of; the government that Hushai said he would serve. In this utterance, Hushai stated in distinct terms, what is necessary in order that a national organization may have a right to be acknowledged by God-fearing men as a legitimate ordinance of civil rule. Let Absalom show that the government which he proposes to set up is the choice of God, that the people in their religious character accept it, and that all the men of Israel in the exercise of their political rights give their adherence to it: and Hushai will at once heartily espouse his cause and own him as a lawful ruler.

The principles enunciated in these words of Hushai, are of lasting and universal force and application. Civil government, to have a legitimate claim to the allegiance of Christians, must have the attributes here stated. Constituted according to the standard here laid down, nations have a right to the conscientious subjection and obedience of their Christian subjects. Appointed by God, approved by his people, and chosen by the subjects in the exercise of their political rights, those who rule are the ministers of God, and to them subjection is due, "not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake." These three requirements, as entering into the constitution of a legitimate civil

government, now claim consideration:

I. THE APPOINTMENT OF GOD.

II. THE APPROVAL OF HIS PEOPLE.

III. THE CHOICE OF THE SUBJECTS.

I. Civil government, in order to have a legitimate claim to the allegiance of Christians, must be the INSTITUTION AND APPOINTMENT OF GOD. The attributes that are essential to the being of a nation do not, of themselves, constitute it God's moral ordinance. The distinction between the existence of a nation as a subject of the divine government, and its moral character as of divine authorization, is founded on the distinction between God's providential ordering and his preceptive appointment. The former respects God's doings, the latter the actions of men. Deut. 29:29, "The secret things belong unto the Lord our God; but those things which are revealed belong unto us, and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law." The kingdom of the ten tribes came into existence by the secret will of God, and yet it was not his institution. Of it he says, Hosea 8:4; "They have set up kings, but not by me: they have made princes, and I knew it not." God's moral ordinance of civil rule has certain characteristics, that demonstrate that it is of his choice. Being under his moral dominion, its claims to have authority from him must be tested by a moral standard. Ps. 94:20, "Shall the throne of iniquity have fellowship with thee, which frameth mischief by a law?" That which has no fellowship with God does not exist by his command and appointment. It lacks the attributes of his ordinance of civil rule. What these attributes are we proceed to show.

1. *A recognition of the existence and authority of God.* That rational creatures should acknowledge their dependence on their Creator is a proposition to which every well informed mind readily assents. It requires no argument to prove that a refusal to do this is practical rebellion. Neutrality is impossible. Luke 12:30, "He that is not with me is against me." Those who do not confess Christ before men, deny him. Matt. 10:32,33.

Nations brought into existence by the providential doing of God, are persons. Their existence as such brings them within his moral dominion, and demands of them a recognition of his being, and subjection to his authority. Ps. 86:9, "All nations whom thou hast made shall come and worship before thee, O Lord; and shall glorify thy name." That the obligation to acknowledge God

which rests on men individually, extends to the national associations .which they form, seems to be so nearly an axiomatic truth, as scarcely to require confirmation. The denial of this would involve the absurdity, that men could by agreement place themselves beyond the limits of moral obligation. All they would need to do, would be to enter into national associations in order to free themselves from accountability to the Most High.

Assuming that nations, as such, are accountable to God, the logical inference is plain and unavoidable that they should acknowledge him as their Maker and Ruler. Command and obedience are correlates; and so are authority and subjection. By a refusal to own the authority of God, no less dishonor is done to him than by disobedience to his commands. Indeed, the former is the greater sin, inasmuch as it is the beginning of a series of acts of opposition to his authority which result in open and persistent rebellion. Let the defiant utterance of Pharaoh be an illustration of this. Ex. 5:2, "Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice to let Israel go? I know not the Lord, neither will I let Israel go."

All who enter into a national organization and become members of a body politic that does not own God as supreme, are partakers of its sins. This statement covers the whole ground of the argument by which we arrive at the conclusion that we propose to establish. The nation is not one thing and the people composing it another. The nation is the people and the people are the nation. There is but one way of escaping the judgments of God on impenitent nations, Rev. 18:4, "Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues." The nation that does not acknowledge the existence and authority of God, is in rebellion against him. Such a nation is not the choice of God revealed in his word, and with a nation that God has not chosen Christians cannot incorporate.

2. *Subjection to the authority of Jesus Christ as Mediator.* At the head of the dispensation revealed to man after the fall, the Son of God as Mediator was placed. The authority with which he was invested was commensurate with the magnitude of the work he was appointed to do. It was universal. Less than this would not have availed to reduce a rebel province to subjection and repair the damage and ruin produced by sin; and less than this would not have been an adequate reward for the mighty achievement. Before he ascended to the right hand of the throne of God, he asserted his supremacy by a divine grant over all things. Matt. 28:18, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth." And to this the Holy Spirit bears witness by the apostle. Eph. 1:22, "And gave him

to be the Head over all things to the church."

From this unlimited right of dominion given to Jesus Christ, it follows by an undeniable inference, that nations are his subjects. The nature of the rule by which the various orders under his dominion are governed, is in adaptation to their position in the scale of created beings. Inanimate and irrational creatures are governed by laws in harmony with their nature and condition. Moral subjects are governed by moral laws consisting of commands and prohibitions sanctioned and enforced by rewards and penalties. Within this vast scope of unlimited dominion, we find nations occupying no inconsiderable space, and no unimportant position. Unless by the authority that conferred this unrestricted grant of power, nations are excepted, they are the subjects of mediatorial rule. But for such an exception no reason can be imagined, and of it there is not the remotest hint in the word of God. So far from this, we have line upon line, confirming the important truth.

There are royal titles given to Jesus Christ which would be meaningless if nations are not the subjects of mediatorial authority. Ps. 22:28, "Governor among the nations." Jer. 10:7, "King of nations." 1 Tim. 6:15, "The blessed and only Potentate, King of kings and Lord of lords." Rev. 1:5, "The Prince of the kings of the earth." 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, lest he be angry." 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." He will punish rebel nations. Is. 60:12, "The nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish; yea, those kingdoms shall be utterly wasted." Ps. 2:9, "Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel." Ps. 110:5, "The Lord at thy right hand shall strike through kings in the day, of his wrath." It is promised that nations shall submit to his authority. Ps. 72:11, "All kings shall fall down before him, all nations shall serve him." Rev. 15:4, "All nations shall come and worship before thee."

The authority of Jesus Christ as supreme over nations, demands their unconditional subjection to him. Refusing to do this they are his enemies. On this point, his own declaration is given in a parable in language of unmistakable meaning. Luke 19:14, "His citizens hated him, and sent a message after him, saying, We will not have this man to reign over us." Of these he says, ver. 27, "Those mine enemies, that would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me."

Can Christians incorporate with a government that refuses to submit to him whose right to rule over nations rests on such an immovable foundation? In professing the name of Christ, they give themselves wholly to him. Consistently with this unreserved surrender of themselves to him, they must see that national organizations of which they become a part are in voluntary subjection to him by owning him as their King and Lawgiver. The government that does this performs an act of obedience well pleasing to God, and secures to itself the benefits that result from his favor and approval. Ps. 33:12, "Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord; and the people whom he hath chosen for his own inheritance."

3. The acceptance, and application, of the law of God as the supreme standard and rule. From the positions already established, that nations should acknowledge the authority of God, and be in voluntary subjection to Jesus Christ, this follows as a necessary conclusion.

Law expresses the relation between a ruler and the ruled. Where there is no law, there is neither authority nor obedience. The moral law is the expression of the will of God to man as the rule of his conduct. It is adapted to the various conditions and relations of life, prescribing the duties of men, both individually and in social organizations. It is with law, as addressed to political institutions, that we have now to do; and what we affirm is, that a nation in order to meet the requirements of the divine institution of civil rule, must take the law of God as its standard in both its constitution and administration.

It would be destructive of the harmony that must characterize the order that God has established among his works, if any class of his subjects were freed from the obligations of his law, and left at liberty to make laws for themselves independent of him. Without a central and supreme legislative power to regulate the complex machinery of human society in its various parts and modifications, there would be no security for the preservation of order, or even of existence. Admit that men in their civil relations have the right to enact for themselves the laws by which they shall be governed, while in their families and as members of the church, the law of God is their only rule, the result would be social disturbance, confusion and ruin. It would be as though one of the planets were freed from the law of gravitation, and left to take its uncertain course through space independent of the sun and of the other bodies that revolve around it. Such an anomaly is nowhere found in the natural dominion of God, neither is it found in his moral dominion. Unless the laws of imperfect and fallible men are always right, which no one will affirm, they must at times

collide and clash with the laws of the infinitely wise Legislator. In such a conflict, though men may seem for a time to prevail, God will certainly overcome at last.

The ill success that has followed all the efforts of human legislation independent of the divine law, should long since have led reflecting minds to discover the mistake that was made, and to rectify it. The business of law making has been little else than a series of experiments, in which the enactment of laws is succeeded by their repeal, and the substitution of others in their stead. And the persistence with which this course is continued in shrews how little the human mind is disposed to learn from experience; a humbling exemplification of the reflection of the Psalmist, "They know not, neither will they understand; they walk on in darkness; all the foundations of the earth are out of course."

To legislate belongs alone to God, and the glory of his prerogative he will not give to another. "There is one lawgiver who is able to save and to destroy." Early in the history of his ancient covenant people, he gave them laws to guide them in their national affairs. When encamped on Mount Horeb, he organized them into a civil community, and made known to them that obedience to his voice was the condition on which they could secure to themselves the continuance of the relation of his people. Ex. 19:5,6, "Now, therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people; for all the earth is mine. And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation." To this they gave a hearty response, verse 8, "And all the people answered together, All that the Lord hath spoken, will we do." From the top of Sinai he made known to them his will in the ten commandments. These contained in the twentieth chapter of Exodus, are followed in the three succeeding chapters by a code of laws enacted by himself, designed to direct them in the management of their civil affairs. And at a later period of their sojourning in the wilderness, he gave them a summary of the precepts already enjoined on them, to which is added this significant command, Deut. 12:32, "What things soever I command you, observe to do it; thou shalt not add thereunto nor diminish from it." Obedience to his laws, not the enactment of laws independent of him, was what he required of them.

Most significant and pertinent to our purpose are the directions given to be observed by their king when they should set one over them. Deut. 17:15,18,19, "Thou shalt in any wise set him king over thee whom the Lord

thy God shalt choose. And it shall be when he sitteth upon the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write him a copy of this law in a book out of that which is before the priests the Levites; and it shall be with him; and he shall read therein all the days of his life; that he may learn to keep all the words of this law, and these statutes to do them."

The rejection by a nation of the law of God as the supreme rule, according to which to constitute and administer its government, is constructive rebellion against his authority. What could constitute disloyalty to him, if the assumption of the power to enact laws independent of him, is not to be disloyal? With a nation in this attitude towards the government of the Most High, his people who have solemnly professed their fealty to him cannot incorporate. Fidelity to their engagements forbids it. It is not the choice of God. "The Lord is our Judge, the Lord is our Lawgiver, the Lord is our King; he will save us."

4. *The protection and support of the church.* The definition of the visible church in the Larger Catechism is clear and comprehensive. "The visible church is a society made up of men in every age, who profess the true religion, and of their children." Sects and denominations are no part of the organization of the church of Christ. She is one, a unit. Between the church as defined above, and the world, including all associations of false religionists, there is a broad line of demarcation. The true religion, the possession of which constitutes church membership, consists in holding Jesus Christ the head, receiving and administering the ordinances that he has appointed, and submitting to his authority and law. It is for the church thus defined that we claim the protection and support of the civil power. The church is eminently a mediatorial institution designed and adapted to bring the world into subjection to Jesus Christ her head. In her interest he received, and he exercises universal dominion. Eph. 1:22,23, "And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all the kings to the church, which is his body." As he who is the Head of the church is the King of nations, it seems most reasonable that he would require his subjects to take care of the members of his body. Eph. 5:29, "No man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church." The opposite opinion is a reflection on the wisdom and goodness of Christ. Put into language it represents him as saying to his national subjects, "My church is in the world, a spiritual association. Take no notice of her as my affianced bride; treat her and my enemies alike, give her no protection and support that you do not extend to them; furnish her no assistance in accomplishing my design in her institution." How contrary

this is to the true state of the case we shall see by a reference to Scripture history, and to Scripture predictions and promises.

First. Scripture history. In the patriarchal age when the church existed in the simplest form, the nations where she sojourned received a special charge in regard to her. This was afterwards recorded in one of the sacred songs to be used in the praises of God. Ps. 105:13-15, "When they went from one nation to another, from one kingdom to another people; he suffered no man to do them wrong; yea, he reprov'd kings for their sakes, saying, "Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm." It would be a faulty exegesis, that would confine these words to a merely negative application: "do them no harm, let them alone." By a figure of rhetoric often used in Scripture, the negative injunction implies a positive command to do them good, to promote their welfare.

That the laws given to Israel discriminated between them as God's covenant people and the idolatrous nations, no intelligent reader of the Bible will deny. And moreover, they prohibited, under the severest penalties, the introduction of any form of false worship into their religious services. We need only refer to Deut. 13:1-8. While in the wilderness, the tabernacle with all its sacred furniture, and the attending priests, was in the centre of the camp, surrounded by the tribes under their respective leaders. Similar care was taken by Joshua, when they entered the land of Canaan, and during the wars by which the inhabitants of the land were subdued. Under the administration of pious judges, the laws against idolatry and false worship were executed and the true religion protected and encouraged.

During the reign of David, to whom and his sons the throne of Israel was secured by covenant, the care of the church by the civil power is distinctly marked. It was by David's direction that the ark of God was brought out of the house of Abinadab, in Gibeah, to be placed in the royal city. Though David was not permitted to build the temple for the permanent worship of God, yet he made extensive preparation for it, by large drafts on the public treasury. In 1 Chron. 29:3, he distinguishes between these and his own private offerings. "Because I have set my affection to the house of my God, I have of mine own proper good, of gold and silver, which I have given to the house of my God, over and above all that I have prepared for the holy house." There is no doubt that the vast additional expense for the temple and its services were paid out of the public treasury. Solomon was a skilful financier. "He made silver and gold as plenteous at Jerusalem as stones," and all was laid under contribution for

the great work that was the glory of his reign.

The reformation of religion in the reign of Asa was in a great measure the work of the civil power. Idolatry had found its way into the religious services of the people under the reigns of his predecessors. We are told, 1 Kings 15:12,13, Asa removed all the idols that his fathers had made. And also Maachah his mother, even her he removed from being queen, because she had made an idol in a grove; and Asa destroyed her idol." Jeshoshaphat carried forward the reformation that his father had so auspiciously begun. 2 Chron. 19:8,9, "Moreover, in Jerusalem did Jeshoshaphat set of the Levites, and of the priests, and of the chief of the fathers of Israel, for the judgment of the Lord, and for controversies." Hezekiah and Josiah were reforming kings. The records of their reigns abound with proof that the civil department was the prime mover and the efficient agency in reforming abuses in the church, restoring the pure worship of God, and promoting the observance of the institutions of religion that had been in a great measure neglected.

After the captivity, the kings of Persia contributed out of the treasury money for the rebuilding of the temple. In Ezra 6:8, the decree of Darius is recorded, "I make a decree what ye shall do to the elders of these Jews, for the building of this house of God; that of the king's goods, even of the tribute beyond the river, forthwith expenses be given unto these men, that they be not hindered." A similar decree by Artaxerxes is recorded, Ezra 7:21, "I even I, Artaxerxes the king, do make a decree to all the treasurers which are beyond the river, that whatsoever Ezra the priest, the scribe of the law of the God of heaven, shall require of you, it be done speedily." In verse 27, in Ezra's thanksgiving to God, what these heathen princes had done is ascribed to divine influence. "Blessed be the Lord God of our fathers, who hath put such a thing as this in the king's heart, to beautify the house of the Lord which is in Jerusalem."

In this reference to Scripture history, we see that the civil power by divine direction discriminated between true and false religion, protected and supported the former, and opposed and suppressed the latter. "Whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning." As the relation between the church and the state is not adventitious, dependent on the caprice of men, but is settled by the appointment of God, it cannot be changed but by his authority. And as there is no record in his word of a change, the conclusion is that it is the same now as under the former dispensation.[1]

Second. Scripture predictions and promises. Predictions of blessings to be

bestowed on the church are, in fact, promises. What God declares shall be done for her, he assures her that he will do in the fulfilment of his purposes of mercy towards her. Moreover, the promise, are preceptive. It is a rule of Scripture interpretation that will not be called in question, that whatever good thing God has promised to his people, it is the incumbent duty of all those through whom the blessing is to be bestowed, to be the willing instruments in its communication. If it is promised that civil rulers shall minister to the welfare of the church by protecting her from her enemies, and showing her favor as the affianced spouse of Jesus Christ, then, wherever the church is found within their dominions, it is their duty to render to her this service. Assuming the correctness of these views, we proceed to adduce some of the promises that have a direct bearing on the point before us. We add here another preliminary remark, that promises of the kind under consideration made to Christ, are made to him as the Head of the church and, of course, to the church, which is his body.

The following are a few out of many quotations that might be made. Ps. 68:29, "Because of thy temple at Jerusalem, shall kings bring presents unto thee." Ps. 72:0, "The kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall bring presents; the kings of Sheba and of Seba shall offer gifts;" verse 15, "And he shall live, and to him shall be given the gold of Sheba." Is. 49:22,23, "Behold I will lift up my hand to the Gentiles, and set up my standard to the people: and they shall bring thy sons in their arms, and thy daughters shall be carried upon their shoulders. And kings shall be thy nursing-fathers, and their queens thy nursing-mothers; they shall bow down to thee with their face toward the earth, and lick up the dust of thy feet." Is. 60:12, "The nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish; yea, those kingdoms shall be utterly wasted." Micah 6:1,2, "In the last days it shall come to pass, that the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills; and people shall flow unto it. And many nations shall come and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem."

In the twenty-first chapter of the Revelation, the excellence of the millennial church is set forth by imagery that seems to reflect the glory of the heavenly state. Verse 24,26, "And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honor into it; and they shall bring the glory and honor of the nations unto it." From these statements of the service which the nations of the earth shall render to the

church in the time of her promised triumph, may be inferred the part which they will be honored to act in accomplishing this glorious result. When they shall recognize the church as the spouse of Christ, and fulfil their obligations to her, a new era will be introduced. Then shall be realized what John witnessed in vision. Rev. 11:15, "And there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever."

We have made it appear that a nation, in order to be the choice of God as his institution, must acknowledge his being and authority, be in subjection to the Lord Jesus Christ as Mediator, accept and apply the divine law as the rule in all national deeds, and recognize, protect and support the church. "Happy is that people that is in such a case; yea, happy is that people whose God is the Lord."

II. Civil government, in order to have a legitimate claim to the allegiance of Christians, must be ACCEPTED BY THEM AS GOD'S MORAL ORDINANCE. We use the term Christians in its proper sense, denoting the followers of Christ in covenant with him. To them, through the constituted authority in the church, belongs the right to determine by the proper standard the character of the government to which they will render conscientious allegiance.

When Hushai included the choice of "this people" with that of the Lord, and of all the men of Israel, as one of the requirements of a ruler whom he would serve, it is evident that he meant them as constituted the people of God.[2] The importance of this element in an aspirant to the throne was in the mind of the pious Archite, and to no one wanting it would he pledge his fidelity. He knew that the priests, the ministers of religion, with the ark, the symbol of the divine presence, were on David's side. He was the choice of the covenant people. This qualification of a righteous ruler Absalom did not possess. It belonged only to David, the Lord's anointed.

We adduce in proof of the proposition before us:

1. *The relation of the church to the state, as co-ordinate with it.* The duties that the church owes to herself, constitute the basis of this argument. Civil and ecclesiastical organizations are both agencies by which the Mediator governs the human family, and guides their affairs to their final destination. These organizations consisting largely of the same persons, must work harmoniously together, each in its own sphere, in order to accomplish the design of their Author. The existence of each must be recognized by the other, and their

respective boundaries ascertained. If, as we have shown in a preceding argument, the state should protect and support the church, what is plainer than that it must know the church to which these acts are to be performed? If men in their civil capacity, constituting one branch of the government of God, owe duties to the church, the other department, it necessarily follows that they have the right to distinguish her by scriptural marks from all rival aspirants to her name and position.

By parity of reasoning, it follows that a corresponding right belongs to the church in regard to the state. Before she can enter into alliance with any political organization, she must know that it is possessed of those attributes that constitute it the moral ordinance of God. Her honor and safety demand this, for nothing but evil ever has come, or ever can come, from any alliance of the church with civil institutions that lack these attributes. It is on this quarter that she has suffered sorely from those Erastian encroachments on her rights, that have furnished plausible arguments for her entire dissociation from the state. The false logic is very common of rejecting the use of a thing because it has been perverted and abused. So far from the exercise of the right for which we contend being dangerous to the church, it will conduce to her safety and prosperity, and equally to the safety and prosperity of the state. It is only when the relation between these institutions is adjusted on scriptural principles, that the welfare of both will be secured. It is when "the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and be exalted above the hills, and all nations shall flow unto it," that "they shall beat their swords into plough-shares and their spears into pruning-hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more." Is. 2:2,3.

The relation of the church to the state for which we contend has nothing in common with either the Romanistic or the Erastian theory. The former places the church over the state, the latter makes it subordinate to it. If either of these systems is what is meant by the union of church and state that excites so much alarm, we are ready to join in the outcry against it, as alike dishonoring to God and damaging to the civil and religious welfare of man. But we are equally opposed to the Deistic view of the state ignoring the church, treating her with the same cold neglect with which it treats the grossest system of infidelity, superstition or paganism. The church and the state should not, and they cannot, be united so as to form one organized body, but they can, as two distinct and independent bodies, agree on terms of friendly alliance, securing to each independence of the other. Each has its position and duties assigned to

it by him who is the Head of the church and head over all things to the church, and he holds them to strict account, and requires them to co-operate, each in its own sphere, in accomplishing his purposes in their organization and establishment.

The teachings of the word of God confirm the views that we have presented of the harmonious co-operation of these institutions under the government of the Mediator. Prophecy sheds light on the future of the world in the enjoyment of the blessings of his wise and gracious administration. United under one Head, yet remaining distinct in their nature and duties, civil and ecclesiastical organizations are the agencies that shall be the means of transforming the wastes of moral and spiritual deadness into scenes of life and holiness and beauty. Ez. 34:23,24, "And I will set up one Shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, even my servant David; he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd. And I the Lord will be their God, and my servant David a prince among them." Chap. 37:26,27. "Moreover, I will make a covenant of peace with them; it shall be an everlasting covenant with them: and I will place them, and multiply them, and will set my sanctuary in the midst of them for evermore."

To Zechariah this same truth was exhibited in a highly significant vision (Zech. chap. 4). He saw a candlestick with a bowl on the top of it, from which branched out seven pipes joined to seven lamps. The explanation is given to the prophet of the meaning of the vision (verse 6): "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts." The two olive branches that supply the lamps with oil, are explained (verse 14): "These are the two anointed ones, that stand by the Lord of the whole earth." There is manifestly allusion to Zerubbabel the governor, and to Joshua the high priest, standing respectively at the heads of the civil and the ecclesiastical departments. And the reference to this vision in Rev. 11:4, gives it a more enlarged interpretation, extending to the times of the New Testament dispensation. The two witnesses to whom it was given to "prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth," are declared to be "the two olive trees, and the two candlesticks standing before the God of the earth." The number two taken from the vision of Zechariah refers to the same two institutions of church and state, as presenting the cardinal truths for which the witnesses bear testimony: a scriptural magistracy and a gospel ministry. And moreover, as two witnesses are the lowest number competent to prove a charge, the promise in verse 3, "I will give power to my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy," secures a succession of persons to bear testimony for the great truths at issue

before the world. Whether in actual existence as exhibited in the vision of Zechariah, or held forth in the testimony of the witnesses as presented in the vision of John, the same truth is taught, that the church and the state, in their normal relation to each other, agree and co-operate in accomplishing the end of their establishment in the world.

It seemed necessary to present at some length the proof of the relation that we maintain should exist between the church and the state, because it is generally overlooked and by some denied, and also because of its bearing on the point to be demonstrated in this head of the discourse: that the choice and approval of the church is an element that is required to give a system of civil rule a right to the allegiance of Christians. To a nation with which the church cannot be in alliance, her members cannot be in voluntary and conscientious subjection. And on the other hand, when the church decides, by the scriptural standard, that the nation possesses the attributes that constitute it an agency with which she can co-operate, it then becomes not only the privilege but the duty of Christians to unite with it as God's moral ordinance.

2. The mission of the church as a reformatory power. There are duties that the church owes to men in their civil as well as in their ecclesiastical relation. Having the Bible committed to her as the standard of morality, it devolves on her to employ it as the means of promoting the social welfare of men. This end was contemplated in her constitution. In the seed of Abraham "all nations of the earth shall be blessed." The commission given to Jeremiah includes with the special and extraordinary call to the prophetic office, the duty of the ministers of religion at all times. .Jer. 1:10: "See, I have this day set thee over the nations, and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build and to plant." Our Lord sent forth his apostles with the charge to "teach all nations," Matt. 28:19. It is the gospel going forth from the church that will bring nations into subjection to Christ. Matt. 24:14, "And the gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness to all nations; and then shall the end come."

To a superficial observer the means employed seem inadequate to produce such results. And this, perhaps, is one reason why the church is so much overlooked in the well intended efforts that are made to correct social wrongs and elevate the tone of public morality to a higher standard. A spiritual association in the use of latent forces, she is not likely to attract much attention. The world affects to despise her, and the hearts of her friends are at times discouraged when they see how much is to be done, how little has been

effected, and how vast the disproportion between her visible strength and the work to be accomplished. "By whom shall Jacob arise, for he is small?" The solution of the problem is found in the statement by the apostle, "The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds; casting down imaginations and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ."

The opposition with which the church has to contend in the work assigned her, seems the more formidable when it is considered, that it has always been the policy of the "god of this world" to enlist in his service the national organizations that men establish for the promotion of their interests. In this aspect of the case the world always has been, and is still, on the side of the usurper. Assuming on certain grounds that these associations shall in due time cast off his yoke, and become loyal subjects of Him whose right it is to reign, it is manifest that the mission of the church to reform the world extends to nations and their rulers. Governments as well as individuals are among the all things that shall be put under his feet. And with the civil institutions of men the church has to deal in the fulfilment of the commission which she has received from her King and Lord. It is her right and her duty to try them by the standard of the divine law; to point out wherein they lack conformity to its requirements; to warn them of the danger of persisting in rebellion against the authority of God, and to urge them by every consideration to subject themselves to it, and secure to themselves the blessings of prosperity to be enjoyed under his administration.

The sentiment that religion has nothing to do with politics, so generally maintained, has had a damaging effect on this part of the work of the church. Her enemies would shut her out of the entire field of civil obligations and duties, and her friends are too ready to accept of the exclusion in order to get rid of the reproach she is sure to meet when she passes beyond the prescribed limits. And it is pretty evident that this desire to bar the entrance into the domain of politics, against the church, arises from a dread of her power and a consciousness that the works of darkness perpetrated within, will not endure the light that flashes from the torch of revelation which she bears in her hand. But all such efforts shall be in vain. The signs of the times and the word of God give ample assurance that the day is not far distant when the church shall be hailed as the benefactor of nations reformed and saved by her vigilance and faithfulness. In the language of an eloquent divine of the last century: "The joint triumphs of enlightened reason and true religion must soon become

glorious. One thing that highly gratifies the friends of revelation is, that they clearly see those struggles that liberty makes can never be successful without the helping hand of religion. That liberty and equality which infidels ignorantly worship, the Scripture and its friends declare unto men." [3] When through her instrumentality, applying the law and the testimony to civil institutions, the Scripture standard of national reformation shall be reached, there will be none to question her right to decide on their claims to be those of God's appointment for the good of his people. Rev. 21:24, "The nations of them that are saved shall walk in the light of it." Micah, 4:2, "Many nations shall come and say, Come and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord's house, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths, for the law shall go forth of Zion and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem." Is. 60:2,3, "The Lord shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee; and the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and their kings to the brightness of thy rising."

3. The office of the church to instruct her people in the requirements of the divine law. The duties that the church owes to her members, extend over the whole range of human conduct and responsibility. The law given by Moses was committed to the priests and Levites, to be employed in teaching the people. This was an important part of their duty. Deut. 33:10, "They shall teach Jacob thy judgments and Israel thy laws." In a later period of that dispensation we find that duty still required of them. Mal. 2:7, "The priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth, for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts." The same function belongs to the New Testament ministry. 2 Tim. 2:2, "And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also."

It is agreed by all, that it belongs to the church to teach through her ministry the obligations that devolve on men in their relations as citizens and subjects. The Scriptures are often quoted, and sometimes perverted, to enforce obedience to "the powers that be." The place where the limit is placed on ecclesiastical authority in political matters, is the dividing line between the ruled and the rulers. So long as the church confines herself to teaching the duties of the former, no fault is found. The precepts, "Let every soul be subject to the higher powers"; "Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates"; "Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake," and others of a similar kind, it is readily granted belong to the code, that it is not merely her right, but her duty to enforce. But if she

crosses the line and begins to apply Scripture texts to the authorities demanding obedience, she is reminded that she is entering a domain from which she is excluded. It is hard to conceive of greater inconsistency than this. With what show of reason can she be denied the right to try the moral character of rulers by the same law that prescribes the duties of the ruled? One would think that such Scriptures as these: "Provide out of all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness, and place such over them"; "He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God"; "Rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil," are sufficient authority to warrant the church to pass over the line that the advocates of irresponsible civil power have marked for her, and assert her right to apply the divine law to governments and rulers, as well as to subjects.

The truth is, polities lie as really within the domain of ethics, as the laws that respect the right to property, liberty or life. And the church is recreant to her obligations if she shrinks from declaring to the world what are the characteristics of a nation which has a right by divine authority to claim obedience to its command. And we go farther and say, it is her duty to enforce by discipline on her members, all those enactments of her courts that respect their relation to existing civil authorities. Such has been the course of our own church in Britain and America. The governments of both countries have been weighed in the balance and found wanting. And her loyal sons have not hesitated to bow to her authority, and relinquish their political rights, convinced by her teaching that this was required by fidelity to Christ.

An objection may be noticed here, plausible and specious, but of no weight. It is asked, how can the church try and decide on the moral character of a nation over which it has no jurisdiction? We say in reply, that the church does not need to have authority over public institutions in order to determine what is their character. If they are immoral, and her members are exposed to danger from them, she has a right to say so, and warn against them. She does so with systems of false religion; she does so with secret associations; and why not with immoral governments? Her members are accountable to her courts, and for their sake the warning is given. If they disregard it, she deals with them. And when, on the other hand, she finds the government under which she lives to be the choice of God, she declares that it is her choice, and her people accept it, and render obedience to it.

4. The character of the church as witnessing for Christ. The contest begun at the fall between the seed of the woman and the serpent, is waged on the broad

field of moral right and obligation. The weapons employed on the respective sides are light and truth, and darkness and falsehood. The devil gained the ascendancy over our race by guile and deception, and he employs the same appliances to perpetuate his usurped dominion, he is a liar and the father of falsehood. His kingdom is darkness, and all in subjection to him are children of darkness.

The church is the medium through which the world is to be enlightened, and restored to allegiance to its Creator. "Ye are the light of the world." The work to be done is to convince men that they are in a state of rebellion against God, and that terms of reconciliation are offered to them. To this the church is called, and this she does by bearing clear and faithful testimony for Christ Jesus, her Head. "Ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord." "Ye shall be witnesses unto me, both in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth."

All the truths of the word of God are to be witnessed for by the church in this moral contest. They are all constituent parts of one grand whole, and must stand or fall together. But there are some cardinal principles that lie at the foundation of the system against which the head of the rebellion directs his fiercest attacks. That the Son of God in human nature should have the glory of restoring all that was lost by the fall, destroy Satan's kingdom, and inflict on him the punishment due to his treason, stirs up in his malignant mind rage and hate, and urges him on to oppose this truth, and war against those who maintain it. On this field the church has had many a severe conflict and won many a proud victory. The nations of the earth have been generally found on the side of the usurper, and are willing allies in promoting his cause. "The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord, and against his Anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us."

Against this formidable array the church is to maintain a constant warfare, with "the armor of righteousness on the right hand and on the left." To the demand of her Head, "Who will rise up for me against evil doers? who will stand up for me against the workers of iniquity?" her ready response is, "Here am I, send me?"

It is interesting and encouraging to notice the progress of this conflict; in the ages that are past. All the powers of darkness have never been able to crush the witnesses for Christ, nor to silence their testimony. As faithful subjects of

Prince Immanuel, they maintain the rights of his crown as "Head of the church," and as "King of nations." After his ascension to heaven and the communication of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, the whole world became the arena of the conflict. The question now was, Shall Jesus Christ rule by his law, or Caesar in the exercise of arbitrary power? By an expressive analogy taken from facts of human life, the work of the church in witnessing for the supremacy of her Head over nations, is set forth in the prophecies of both the Old and New Testament. In immediate connection with the promise of the birth of Jesus Christ in Bethlehem, Micah 5:3, the declaration is made, "Therefore will he give them up, until the time that she which travaileth hath brought forth; then the remnant of his brethren shall return unto the children of Israel." In the preceding chapter, verse 10, the same imagery is used: "Be in pain, and labor to bring forth, O daughter of Zion, like a woman in travail." While the birth of converts into the kingdom of grace is doubtless meant in these verses, the words have a farther and a higher meaning.

The visions of John shed light on the prophecies of Micah. In Rev. 12:1-5, John records that there "appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars: and she being with child, cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered. And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads. And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth: and the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born. And she brought forth a man-child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron, and the child was caught up unto God and to his throne."

In this vision, the parties in this conflict are set distinctly before us. The woman arrayed in glory and beauty is the New Testament church, fitted for the mighty undertaking to which she is appointed. The great red dragon is the devil, personated by the Roman empire. The man-child which the woman brought forth is the Mediator in the exercise of his power, as "Prince of the kings of the earth." That for which the church labored and suffered, was to bring the empire into subjection to Jesus Christ, her Head. The spread and faithful preaching of the gospel was the mighty agency that in her hands was to accomplish this work. By the persecutions inflicted on her in the first three centuries under successive emperors, the dragon sought to devour the man-child as soon as it was born. He was disappointed. In the beginning of the fourth century Christianity became the established religion, and Constantine

assumed the title of a Christian emperor. The time had not come, however, for the permanent establishment of Christ's authority over nations. "The child was caught up unto God and to his throne." The administration of civil rule which the Son of God will in due time commit to his qualified deputies on earth, he retains now in his own hands, governing by providential agencies the kingdoms of the world, and so guiding their movements as to prepare the way for their recognition of him, in due time, as their Lord and King.

Let us see if this is a fanciful or overstrained exposition of the vision. The apostle, in the succeeding verses, has his attention directed to the great conflict that issued in the Reformation of the sixteenth century. And mark the statement in the 11th verse: "And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death." It was the testimony of the church witnessing, by her faithful sons, to the truth committed to her as a sacred trust, that won the victory.

To the same period we refer the vision in the beginning of the eleventh chapter of the Revelation. The little book, the Bible, so long closed by Papal tyranny, is again opened. The government of the church that had become an insufferable despotism, is restored to its Presbyterian simplicity. Those who have the administration of it are directed how to perform their duty. In verse 2 they are commanded not to measure the court of the Gentiles, but to leave it out (literally, *cast it out*). They were officially to reject those human organizations in which paganism and infidelity are the predominant element. The two witnesses and their testimony are included in the same connection. And it is particularly worthy of notice what is stated as the reason of the exultation of their enemies over them during the brief period of their silence: "These two prophets tormented them that dwell upon the earth."

Has not the church of Jesus Christ the right, and is it not her duty, to bring civil institutions wherever she exists to the standard of the word of God, to determine their moral character, and as they stand or fall by the trial, to accept or reject them. We have shown, we conceive, with a plainness sufficient to bring conviction to every intelligent and impartial inquirer, that from her duty to herself as a department of the moral government of God co-ordinate with civil institutions; from her duty to nations to warn and to direct and encourage them in their efforts at reformation; from her duty to her own children to guard them front the evil of uniting with immoral associations of civil rule; and from her duty to her Head, as bearing witness for him, his throne and crown—the church of Jesus Christ would be faithless to her calling if she should fail to

pronounce on the character of civil institutions tested by the infallible standard. And when, through the divine blessing on her agency, they are brought to exemplify the scriptural model of civil government, it will be for her to declare the cheering fact. To the voice from heaven proclaiming that the kingdoms of the world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and his Christ, the response is given by the four and twenty elders falling from their seats before God, and uttering their thanksgiving for the wondrous change and deliverance. "We give thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come; because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned." "Men shall be blessed in him; all nations shall call him blessed." "The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations."

III. THE CHOICE OF THE SUBJECTS IS NECESSARY TO THE LEGITIMACY OF CIVIL GOVERNMENT. "Whom all the men of Israel choose, his will I be, and with him will I abide." It is not necessary that every one should express his choice. The majority, it is agreed on all sides, in political affairs, represent and act for the whole. On this part of the subject little more is necessary than a specification of what is included in this right of choice. On this point there is general agreement; for, as stated in a sermon from which we have already quoted, "there is nothing of which natural men are better judges, than of the common rights with which humanity has been endowed by its bountiful Author." [4]

1. *It is the right of the subjects to choose the form of the government under which they will live.* In this respect civil government differs from the government of the church. The state has no particular form exclusively of divine institution. It may be a monarchy, or it may be democratic, according as the people choose. The kingdom of Israel was a legitimate government under judges and under a monarchy, as well as under the democratic form as first constituted. Their voluntary subjection to the authority placed over them by divine appointment, whether elders, judges or kings, constituted it a lawful government, and laid on them the obligation to render to it conscientious subjection.

While we do not maintain the divine right of kings under the gospel dispensation, we do not see any sufficient reason why, if it was the choice of the people, the supreme authority in a nation might not be hereditary, the right of succession being fixed by the constitution. It might not be wise to do it. Facts show that fitness to rule does not continue long in the same race. It is not likely, however, that the monarchical form will generally be accepted. There is

a fascination in the possession and exercise of the right to elect rulers, that will have its influence in determining the masses in favor of a popular form of government.

2. *It is the right of the subjects to choose as their government that which possesses the attributes of legitimacy.* What those are, we have exhibited in this discussion. It is not meant that they have the right to refuse a government with these attributes. What is meant is, aside from their choice it cannot be their government. We might suppose the case of a nation in a state of disorganization. In the formation of the government the choice of the people is to be taken into the account. If a constitution were prepared possessing the other requisites of legitimacy, it could not be thrust on them by military force; or if this was done, it would not be their government. They must have the opportunity of a free election. And by their acceptance of it they make it their own, and establish it as the system of rule to which they will submit.

3. *It is the right of the subjects to choose the officers who shall administer the government.* In the system of rule first established among the Israelites, this right was distinctly specified by Moses. Deut. 1:9-13, "And I spake unto you at that time, saying, Take ye wise men and understanding, and known among your tribes, and I will make them rulers over you." In their choice they were confined to those who had the requisite qualifications. Ex. 18:21, "Provide out of all the people, able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness." The wise exercise of this right is indispensable to national welfare and prosperity. A bad ruler is a curse to his subjects. Prov. 28:15, "As a roaring lion and as a ranging bear, so is a wicked ruler over the poor people." A good ruler is a public blessing. Prov. 20:26, "A wise king scattereth the wicked, and bringeth the wheel over them."

"Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter." A government, in order to possess the essentials of legitimacy, must be the choice of God, its source and author; of the church, its co-ordinate department, and of the people, its subjects. Thus constituted, it will be the ordinance of God for good to man, and to it Christians will be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake. "Blessed are the people whose God is the Lord, and the people whom he hath chosen for his own inheritance."

We proceed to apply the subject.

I. Faithfulness requires us to apply the standard of legitimacy to the government under which we live. We cheerfully grant that its constitution

possesses many excellencies. As a political instrument, now that slavery is abolished, it is nearly all that could be desired. But truth demands of us the statement, that in the elements of a Christian government it is utterly defective. Lacking those characteristics that would prove it to be the preceptive institution of God, we are constrained to withhold from it conscientious allegiance.

Some expressions found in the constitution are adduced to show that we are mistaken in our judgment of it. At the end, as giving the date of its adoption, are the words "in the year of our Lord." "Sundays" are excepted out of the period of ten days during which the President may retain a bill before he signs it. And the officers of the government are required to swear or affirm in order to qualification for office. We doubt much if any intelligent person ever seriously thought that the design of those expressions was to give the government a Christian character. If we are right in the views presented of what constitutes legitimacy in a government, it will be seen at a glance that in order to this, the recognition of God and of Jesus Christ, of the divine law and of the church, must be direct and avowed. "In all thy ways acknowledge him." "Whatsoever ye do, in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus."

It is not a light thing for freemen to deny themselves the exercise of the rights of citizenship. The election of persons to fill the various offices in the administration of the government is an important and honorable function, in which we should not, on slight grounds, refuse to participate. But when the question is presented in the practical form, as an issue between our obligations to God and identification with a nation that does not acknowledge his authority, the way of duty is plain. "We ought to obey God rather than man." It is no evidence of the want of love of our country, that we notice what is wrong in its constitution. It is the part of patriots to show the cause of national danger, and to seek its removal.

II. We owe to our country duties that we should be ready to perform. Though dissenters from the government, we live under it and enjoy many advantages from it. So far as is consistent with our duty to God, we are ready to contribute our part in promoting its welfare. The directions given to the captives in Babylon, apply to us with equal force. Jer. 29:7, "Seek the peace of the city whither I have caused you to be carried away as captives, and pray unto the Lord for it; for in the peace thereof ye shall have peace." We realize the obligation to "live a quiet and peaceful life, in all godliness and honesty." 1 Tim. 2:2.

As Christian patriots, we desire and labor for the removal of the hindrances that bar our way to an active participation in political affairs. Our dissent consistently carried out is a standing testimony against the dishonor done to God by the omissions which we charge against the constitution. In this way we tell our fellow-men, in a manner more emphatic than if uttered merely in words, that the nation is guilty of great sins, which will call down on it the judgments of God, unless there be speedy repentance and reformation. To avoid complicity in its sin, we refuse to be an integral part of the nation until the evil is corrected.

And this duty is especially required of the Covenanter Church. We rejoice to see that brethren in other evangelical bodies are becoming convinced of the necessity of amending the constitution in those parts where it is so sadly defective, and are exerting themselves to have it accomplished. This shows that our testimony has produced important results, and encourages us to continue faithful in its maintenance until the end be attained, it is not to be expected, however, that we will have the co-operation of fellow-Christians in urging the claims of the church to be recognized by the state. The reaction in this country from the oppressive Erastianism of the governments beyond the Atlantic has been so violent and extreme, that it is not strange that in the policy of the government to let the church alone, there is a disposition to acquiesce. The idea of the union of church and state conjures up the spectre of persecution for religion. It is perfectly marvelous that thinking minds cannot see that there is a world-wide difference between making the church a vassal of the state, and treating with her as an independent institution appointed by Christ for the good of men both temporal and spiritual. She owes not her existence to the state, nor any of the rights with which she is endowed by her Head. But she is in the world an existing institution, with which the state must have some connection, and it is her duty to call on the nation first to render to God the glory due to him, by owning the authority of his Son, and then to treat her as a co-ordinate branch of the mediatorial dominion.

This she is to do in no sectarian spirit. The Covenanting Church puts in no claim exclusively for herself as a branch of the great evangelical family of Christians. She recognizes true believers of every name as constituting the church for whose rights she contends. And if among them she discovers a disposition to yield those rights, the call is the more pressing on her to testify against this spirit of neutrality, and urge all the friends of Christ to push forward the work of national reformation to its consummation. When this nation shall have recognized the existence and authority of God, subjected

itself to Jesus Christ as its King, taken the law of God as its rule in all things, and rendered to the church that protection and support required by her Head, her work as a witnessing church will be completed, and the land shall enjoy the blessedness of a "nation whose God is the Lord."

III. This consummation shall be attained. These attributes of legitimacy shall yet be possessed by the government of our country. We make this assertion not from any favorable indications that we see in the movement of public affairs. Alas! in the political horoscope there is nothing, at first sight, to encourage the observer. The corruption of public men is spreading over the body politic like a leprosy. The moral atmosphere is tainted until the stench is becoming intolerable. And what makes the condition worse, there seems to be no inclination to discover the cause and have it removed. "The wicked walk on every side, when the vilest men are exalted." In the canvass already begun for the next incumbent of the presidential chair, the two great parties are selecting their candidates with a view to availability, and not to the fitness that the word of God requires. The outward aspect of affairs presents but little ground of hope. "If one look to the land, behold darkness and sorrow; and the light is darkened in the heavens thereof."

Still we have strong confidence that this highly favored land shall become a "kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ." And it may be soon. We remember that slavery was never more arrogant and defiant than immediately before its overthrow. When the devil has "great wrath, it is because he knoweth he hath but a short time." Wickedness in its gross forms, infidelity, irreligion and popery, with myriads of subordinate auxiliaries, are making a desperate effort to overthrow Christianity and blot the church out of existence. Let them dash themselves against her, it will be to their own destruction. "Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of trembling unto all the people round about, when they shall be in the siege both against Judah and against Jerusalem. And in that day will I make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all the people; all that burden themselves should be cut in pieces, though all the people of the earth be gathered together against it." Zech. 12:2,3. "Whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken, but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder." Matt. 21:44.

In this mighty moral conflict the weapons of the church "are not carnal, but mighty through God." She opposes light to darkness, truth to error. She shall prevail. "The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it." "The saints of the Most High shall take the kingdom, and shall possess the kingdom forever, even forever

and ever." "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper, and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt, condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord."

Footnotes:

[1] It is objected to the argument from Scripture history, that the Jewish state was a theocracy, and therefore, the conclusion that untheocratic nations should protect and support the church is not logical. The reply to this is: First. The Persian government was not a theocracy. Second. Every government should be a theocracy. The theocratic element in the Jewish commonwealth was not that it received its constitution immediately from God, but that it acknowledged him as its Supreme Ruler, and received his law as its supreme rule. Nations should do so still.

[2] There is an emphasis in the original of the words "this people," that cannot be well expressed in our language. The article is connected with both the noun and pronoun. "The people, the this," is a literal rendering. The same repetition is found in Ex. 12:51, and is rendered in connection with another word, "the self same day." Hushai, in the emphatic form of expression that he employs, means the people in some well known and recognized relation. How natural for his "mind to advert to the declaration concerning them when first taken into covenant relation with God, Ex. 19:5,6, "If ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then shall ye be a peculiar people to me above all people, and ye shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation."

[3] Rev. James McKinney's "Rights of God."

[4] Rev. James McKinney's "Rights of God."