

T H E

Reformed Presbyterian and Covenanter.

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THE MINISTRY—THEIR HABITS AND DEMEANOR.*

GENTLEMEN OF THE THEOLOGICAL CLASS:—Another year has elapsed and brings us to the opening of another session of our Seminary. We meet you with sincere satisfaction and once more extend our welcome to all, whether you have already been with us, waiting upon our instructions, or now for the first time appear in our Hall. The months that have passed since our last session closed have been eventful ones in the history of our land. Much has occurred in the providence of God calculated to impress our minds both with fear and gratitude: with fear, as his just and holy hand and power have been made manifest in the condign infliction of heavy judgments upon us, for the sins of the land, past and present, calling upon all men, high and low, to repent and turn to the Lord; with gratitude, as notwithstanding these inflictions He has left with us, has showered upon us, as a nation, many tokens of his forbearance and his bounty. The earth has still, in measure, yielded her fruits; no ravaging pestilence has visited our borders; the hum of busy commerce is heard in our cities, and throughout the extended thoroughfares of our land. While the barbarian enemy with whom the nation is at war, has been permitted to overrun some portions of Northern territory, his advance has been stayed, and few of our homes have been subjected to the tread of the spoiler. We may also remember gratefully the continued evidence of the divine presence with His church. "The word of the Lord has not been hindered." It has had 'free course.' Nor has his effectual grace in converting sinners, and confirming saints, been altogether withheld. The work of building the walls of Jerusalem has made some progress in these "troublous times." Nor are indications wanting that the calamities which have fallen upon our country have not been without some beneficial results. During these months many thousands of the oppressed have been "rid from the might of ill

* Read, by Prof. James M. Willson, at the opening of the Reformed Presbyterian Seminary, Allegheny, November 3, 1863.

due amount of out door exercise should be taken as regularly as possible. Walking and gymnastic exercises, in cities especially, and this not merely as necessary in the discharge of pastoral duties, but for the direct purpose of recreation. And what is better, if it can be had, riding, either in carriage or on horse-back—the latter far the best. Some have recommended, instead, some manual employment. This may be well enough in some instances, but few care to resort to this, and they are not much to be blamed. The fact is, what is needed is not so much work as a kind of play of muscle and of mind. (3.) Society—free, merry, if you please—under proper restrictions. (4.) Whatever the mode adopted, let there be an entire forsaking, for the time, of the routine of daily labor. Let the mind and, as far as may be, the heart be turned from the usual track, to take a freer course. Some have endeavored to combine work and recreation; they have walked or rode, but with book in hand, and have been held as wonders of wisdom, as most conscientious men, who would not lose a fraction of time, being accountable for every moment. Anything more absurd than this can hardly be imagined. All such plans are very good ones for taking exercise without recreating, and for studying without profit: for throwing two stones, and not even hitting one bird. What the student needs is both physical and mental refreshment—the latter for the sake of the former, the former for the sake of the latter. Endeavor, my young friends, to preserve the *sana mens in corpore sano*. You will thus do far more in the end, and do it better, as well as more happily; and now is the time to make this a habit, as much as a rule of your lives.

To be continued.

AMENDMENTS TO THE CONSTITUTION.

THE Address of the Committee appointed by the Convention which met in Pittsburgh, July 4th, 1863, in reference to the amendment of the Constitution of the United States, appeared in our last number. With the general scope and purpose of this paper we find no fault. It is designed to call public attention to a subject of immediate and momentous interest. It brings before the churches the claims of God Most High upon this nation; urges the insertion, in the preamble of the constitution, of an express recognition of his being, attributes and supremacy; ascribes the fearful judgment which has fallen from heaven, upon this land, to the fact that it has not given to God the glory due to his name, in our national constitution; refers to the Mediator by the quotation of passages of Scripture which demand of rulers submission to his authority.

So far it merits our approbation. With many of its statements and arguments we are highly pleased, and we hope it will contribute to the awakening of the Christian sense of this nation to the

consideration of the nation's sin and the nation's duty in this matter. But we regret to say that there are in it both statements and omissions which obliged us to withhold from it our sanction, when it was considered in committee. We mention the following :

1. The phrase, "*our* national constitution," occurs more than once. In a loose sense, this may mean no more than "the constitution of the United States." But we do not and will not use this language, for we had no part in making it, nor do we adopt it as ours. We refuse any such acknowledgment "of the whole system."

2. It appears to us too sweeping in its admissions regarding the excellency of the constitution. That it is excellent, we are most happy to acknowledge. No existing constitution, besides, provides so well for the security of free men. It is in this aspect, beyond comparison, superior to the constitutions of the most advanced nations of the old world. But we cannot assert that, even as a political instrument, it is "worthy of all commendation." Still, this is a comparatively small matter. It does not secure freedom of the poor slave. It was not intended to do this; for, while its framers, most of them, had certainly "a clear conception of human rights and of the great principles of civil liberty," they most impiously and fatally departed from their own convictions in the introduction, in various clauses, of provisions designed to protect the slaveholder in his claims upon his slave, and, in one, to permit the increase of the number of his human chattels.

3. We cannot accord with the writer of the address in declining to maintain that "the constitution is liable to the charge of infidelity." This is a just charge. Moreover, we had supposed that the day was past for adducing the arguments in the fourth paragraph, in vindication of the constitution from this charge. The President may "affirm," might be an atheist, so far as anything in the constitution is concerned, and refuse to do anything else than give his own solemn promise, without any reference to a God at all. The "oath," even, may be by any God, or by the cross. The clause "Sundays excepted," takes for granted that the man chosen to be President may not be disposed to attend to public business on the first day of the week, but does not even hint that the nation is pledged to own that day, or its Lord. And we cannot see how the mere affixing of a date to an instrument, and using the common designation of the Christian era, by which every one here and in Europe measures time, can be regarded by the most remote implication, as containing an acknowledgment of Christ as Lord. If it means *anything* of this sort, it must mean *everything*; and why go about to bring the nation to an acknowledgment of God and of his Christ, for it has done it already in explicit terms! Who believes this? and yet whoever so interprets this matter of "dating" the document, must go the whole length.

4. There is no *express* mention in the paper of the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. We know that Ps. 1 : 10 is quoted, where He is styled "the Son." We understand this text. Many others do so. But we are extremely dissatisfied that, in a document designed to

turn the attention of Christians in this land to the defects of the constitution in not making an "explicit" acknowledgment of Christ's supremacy, this very error should be found. Surely we ought to state our object clearly. We are not ashamed of Christ.

5. A reference to slavery may not be regarded as a desideratum in a document put forth with the design and end of bringing this nation to acknowledge God. But we are sure that some allusion to this subject, especially in a time when God is smiting this nation expressly for this sin, would have been precisely in place. We go for a free, as well as expressly Christian constitution.

6. The statements in reply to the cry of "union of Church and State," we accord with, in the main; but, notwithstanding, we would have liked that this had been less liable to misapprehension, as if we did not hold it to be the duty of a reformed Christian nation to recognize the Church of Christ, and give her all such countenance and aid as are consistent with the ends and appliances of scriptural civil government.

7. It is said that "as the disciples of Him whose kingdom is not of this world, we do not consider that it is within our province to interfere with anything in our constitution which is strictly of a political character." If it had been said, "strictly and exclusively," and then, "as ecclesiastics," instead of "as disciples of Christ," we would have been more satisfied with this. We desire to act in all things "as disciples of Christ." Besides, we do not assent to the implied meaning which has been affixed to the phrase, "kingdom not of this world." That much abused text does not mean that Christ's kingdom is not *in* the world, but as the same record is made in another place, is "not *from* heaven."

A pretty long list of objections. We regret very much to have been constrained to offer them at this stage of the effort to lead this nation to God. Let us understand each other. We mean to hold our position without swerving a hair's breadth. If others are not yet ready to come to the same position, the Lord will take the *whole* matter in his own hand, as He has the matter of national slaveholding.

J. M. W.

A VOICE FROM THE PAST.

A SMALL pamphlet, containing the following act, was sent to us some time ago by Rev. G. M'Millan. Believing its re-publication seasonable at the present time, we lay it before our readers. The plainness with which the subject of slavery was treated in South Carolina sixty years ago, is proof of the faithfulness of our fathers. The voice of the Reformed Presbyterian Church was heard denouncing, in strong terms, the wrong, when every other church was silent. We have no doubt that Rev. James M'Kinney wrote the paper.

T. S.

An Act of the Reformed Presbytery in North America for a Day of Public Fasting, with the Causes thereof:

The times and circumstances in which the remnant of the Reformed Covenanting Church, in the United States of North America, finds herself exist-