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HUMAN RIGHTS, OR "NO RIGHTS."

THE first of these phrases is long familiar to us; the second is novel, and has originated in connection with the question, whether the United States is waging lawful war against the traitors and rebels, and semi-barbarous slaveocracy of the South. Some among us who take the negative on this question, or, what is the same thing, deny that a Covenanter can rightfully shoulder a musket, "with or without an oath," and enter the field of battle, would make very speedy work of it, by the assertion that this nation has "no rights" at all, and therefore no right even to defend itself; its integrity, its liberties and its civil rights. And this doctrine, they think, needs little, if any, other defense and vindication than what is found in the principle, that mankind forfeited all their rights in Adam's fall. From this they draw the conclusion that none but Christians have any rights at all. This, then, is the question we purpose to discuss in the present article, as preliminary to a more direct examination hereafter of the "war question." And here we note:

1. *That common sense and humane feeling revolts at this "no rights" doctrine.* To maintain that no man but a Christian has a right to defend his own life; to marry and have children; to protect his wife against the ravisher, or his children against the murderer, or his property against the robber, would be to teach doctrines shocking to every feeling of humanity and justice. If this be true, it is no sin or wrong to visit the coasts of Africa, kidnap its pagan inhabitants, transport them to Cuba, sell them, scourge them, and drive them by the lash under a torrid sun, to a speedy grave; at least no sin or wrong, so far as any wretchedness of the poor victims themselves is concerned, for they have *no rights* which *any body* is bound to respect! Such a doctrine once current in any community, would fill it with robbery, rape and murder. It is the doctrine of the Mormons, who deny to the Gentiles all rights, and when they dare, rob and murder them.

But suppose individual men and women have *some* rights, what

are we to say of a community immorally constituted? Has it any rights? The argument is a good one in the affirmative, that if the persons of whom it is composed have rights, the laws which they compose cannot be destitute of them, for it must be much worse in God's sight to mar by sin his own handiwork—the soul and the body—than for men to form, immorally, a body politic. If the latter forfeits, or never can have any rights, much more the former. But we prefer to argue by example.

And we select a city of this land; and, as best known to the writer, the city of Philadelphia. It is of course connected by every tie possible to a municipality, with the General Government of the country, and with the State Government of Pennsylvania; and hence implicated in the immoralities of both. This city, however, undertakes to prepare, and cleanse, and light the public streets, for the accommodation of its inhabitants. It even appoints a police to guard the persons and the dwellings of its citizens from the robber, the murderer, the incendiary. It has officers to try such as commit deeds of violence and theft. It has built a prison for the incarceration of convicted criminals. All this, according to the "no rights" doctrine, is carrying its presumption far enough; but it has done worse than this. It has actually built an alms house at great expense, for lodging, and, in general, caring for its outcast, homeless, helpless, suffering poor; and, as if this were not an enormity great enough, it has also provided for the safety and medical treatment of the dependent insane! It has done *all* these things as a municipality, through its public officers and at the public expense, and even taxes Christians to help it in doing these usurping acts! Surely God must be greatly provoked against it for these things; for it does them as if it had a right to, when it has "*no right!*"

But it may be admitted that a city may have a right to do some things, yet what of the nation itself? Let us try this. The nation, through the commander-in-chief of its armed force—not through its President, as the administrator of the Constitution, for in that character he had no power to do it—has proclaimed the emancipation of three millions of slaves. Of course, as the nation and its highest military functionary have "no rights," they are just as much slaves as ever. But not knowing this, the army, under orders of its chief, receives the trembling, joyful fugitives, treats them as men, enrolls them in its armies, or puts them to work for themselves, clothes and feeds their wives and children, welcomes missionaries and teachers among them, and actually supplies, more or less, the support necessary for these heralds of truth and mercy. Little does Abraham Lincoln know that, by such deeds as these, he is accumulating untold, additional guilt upon a nation that permits him thus to seize power that does not belong to him, and invade rights that he has "*no*" claim to!

But it is said, he leaves another million in bondage. Very well; who can blame him for that, when he has "*no right*" to liberate any!

Is it possible, that there is any body in the world, with a head and a heart, who can believe that the doers of such things as these have, after all, "no right" to do them? and that they sin against God in undertaking to do them? But,

2. *The doctrine of "no rights" would set aside much of the moral law in its claims upon all men in every relation.* We have already seen, we think, that the "no rights" doctrine cuts up by the very roots the right of the poor pagan African to claim even the sympathy of the Christian, because, suffer as he may, he is not wronged; inasmuch as you cannot wrong a man who has "no rights." He is worse off than the brutes, which have a right to "merciful" treatment. As to our present averment, it is also perfectly clear and certain. If an immoral man has "no right" to protect his own person or the persons of his wife and children from violence, then the sixth commandment does not bind him, at least that part of it which requires us to use "all lawful endeavors to preserve our own life and the life of our neighbor!" Equally the seventh commandment, as it requires us "to preserve our—neighbor's chastity," &c. For we take it for granted, that no one, who is fit to be abroad without a straight-jacket, will deny that a man has a right to do what he is under moral obligation to do. Admitting this for men, what of nations? And here we thought it was admitted on all hands—among us, at any rate—that the *whole* moral law is binding upon all nations; and we know that the Most High, addressing immoral rulers, says: "Relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow;" and we know that among the sins for which God will judge, as he has often judged nations, pagan and nominally Christian, sins against the second table of the law hold a conspicuous place. And need it be more than said, that a citizen or a nation which disregards the cry of its poor and oppressed, will encounter the wrath of Him, who is "the God" of just such in some emphatic sense. Is it not for this, among other sins, that this land is to-day burning in the furnace? But, according to the "no rights" doctrine, there must be some mistake in this matter; for when it has not acknowledged God in its Constitution, it has "no right"—not even to emancipate these three millions, and of course, it is under no obligation, and Mr. Lincoln "ran before he was sent," and ought to have left them all in chains, until the grand defect of the Constitution was remedied! In trying to set the captives free before the time, he has done a bootless "job," one that he and the nation through him ought not to have done! In short, this "no rights" doctrine exempts from the authority of the second table of the law, all who do not, in the first instance, obey the first table. In a word, a man or a people cannot, as to some, perhaps many things, sin against the second table, unless the first table be previously recognized; and so away go myriads of personal and national sins! Such a doctrine must border upon heresy.

3. *This "no rights" doctrine militates against the grand principle of Christ's universal administration, and unscripturally limits the benefits*

that men enjoy through his purchase. Scarcely any doctrine of the Word of God is more evident, than that of the entire forfeiture of all human rights by the breach of the covenant of works. The penalty of that covenant was death—instant death. "The wages of sin is death." "The day thou eatest thereof," &c. But Adam did not undergo instant death, so far as his body was concerned. Sinners live; they have many enjoyments; they *appear* to be happy; they wax rich and *seem* to be prosperous. All this is true, moreover, not only of such as are the elect of God, but of such also who are, as the event shows, of the number of the reprobate. How is this consistent with the justice and the truth of God? We answer: because the world, since the moment of the fall, has been under a mediatorial dispensation. Since that fatal day, the Triune God reigns and has reigned through Jesus Christ. He "bare up the pillars of the earth." The administration then passed into his hands—the entire administration—and has remained there ever since, and will do so to the end. And hence, whatever men have or enjoy, is owing to the fact that the world is now *directly* governed, both morally and providentially, by the one Mediator between God and men. And this, moreover, in direct connection with his sacrifice of himself in the room and on the behalf of his people. Of this entire statement, we have a most beautiful and convincing proof in the Noachic covenant and the circumstances attending it. We quote the narrative:

"And Noah builded an altar unto the Lord, and took of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl, and offered burnt-offerings on the altar. And the Lord smelled a sweet savor; and the Lord said in his heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake; for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth: neither will I again smite any more every thing living, as I have done. While the earth remaineth, seed-time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night, shall not cease." Gen. 8: 20-22.

In the next chapter, this general statement and promise is put into the covenant form, thus:

"And I, behold, I establish my covenant with you, and with your seed after you; and with every living creature that is with you, of the fowl, of the cattle, and of every beast of the earth with you; from all that go out of the ark, to every beast of the earth. * * * And God said, This is the token of the covenant which I make between me and you; and every living creature that is with you, for perpetual generations: I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth." (Gen. 9: 9, 10-12, 13.)

This is a *gracious*, that is, an undeserved covenant of blessing. It is made with Noah and his seed; with the earth and every living creature. It is made in Christ, for Noah offered burnt-offerings, and the Lord smelled a savor of rest; and, as we must infer from the language, made upon the ground of Christ's atoning work. It is a covenant of forbearance and patience. It is not, however, the special covenant which the God of salvation makes with believers

in Christ; for it includes "every living creature." It is a *dispensation*, merciful and unmerited, toward mankind. It is the act of Christ—of the Mediator. It is his act, as he is invested with the government of the world and of all that is in it. It is designed to open the way for the exercise of long-suffering; for, resting upon the regal authority of Christ, the Lord of all, it allows of such long-suffering without disparagement to the claims of eternal truth and justice. It had, in fact, virtually existed from the instant of the fall, but is now reduced to an express covenant form, and secured and manifested by a visible token and pledge, seen by all the world.

All things on earth thus comprehended under a mediatorial *dispensation*, it becomes possible not only to spare mankind, but to continue with them, during the period of forbearance—both with men individually and with the world as a whole—the enjoyment of not a few blessings. Hence they may have the Word, the offer of the gospel, all the meliorating influences and effects of these; and common temporal mercies besides. All this, primarily, for the sake of the elect of God, who alone have or shall have a direct and full interest in the atonement. In other words, this arrangement and dispensation exist with reference to the carrying into effect the immediate and chief end of the eternal covenant between the Father and the Son. But, nevertheless, the world enjoys real benefits, although it has them, not for its own sake directly, but through its connection with the elect of God.

Under this covenant, the world is reprieved; the condemnation and forfeiture, richly deserved, is not at once carried into full execution. For this is the nature of a reprieve: it withholds the infliction of merited punishment. So with mankind sinners. Their forfeiture of all blessings is not at once exacted. Some of them are elected, and often, just as in the case of reprieves by human authorities, they, in the appointed time, receive a full pardon; while, in the case of the reprobate, the temporary reprieve is followed by the infliction of the penalty with enhanced severity, in consequence of their abuse of the "goodness and forbearance of God." Mark: in all this dealing with sinners, our Lord is acting *as King* and Lord of all. He does so in extending overtures of salvation to all who hear the gospel. "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth; go ye, *therefore*, and preach the gospel," &c. This kingly office he has purchased for himself by his "doing and dying." (Phil. 2: 8, 9.) In the exercise of this same office, he sends "rain and fruitful seasons," and "maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust."

The Testimony of the Reformed Presbyterian Church, while it testifies most truly and faithfully against the error, "that Christ purchased any benefit for the reprobate," makes the following clear statement:

"The reprobate world, by means of their connection with the elect, who live among them, or may descend from them, are partakers of some benefits which flow from Christ's death; the world is continued under its present economy

until all the elect are brought to salvation; these, and similar benefits, are necessary consequences of Christ's purchase and care of his church, foreseen by God, in forming the system of grace, having been predestinated from eternity." Chap. 6.

In the old controversy between the Secession body and the Covenanters, the former saw that all sinners must have some right to eat the food for which they labor, and to provide food for their households, inasmuch as the sixth commandment requires men to take the necessary means to preserve their lives and the lives of those dependent on them, but they denied that this right comes through Christ's purchase. They could not understand that it came *directly* from Christ's kingly office, for they denied its universality, and hence the controversy. The Covenanters understood better the economy of the covenant, but did not always present their views as plainly as they might have done. The world is under a mediatorial dispensation—sinners are reprieved for a time—in this state they have still duties to perform, both personal and social, and have a right to perform them; but all this, because the Triune God transacts with men through a Mediator, and not in his absolute character, and so transacts in the execution of a covenant entered into, primarily for the salvation of the elect, but comprehending every thing required for the bringing of the elect into existence, and the gathering of these elect "out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation." The Secession regarded it differently. They imagined that, in many things, the Most High deals with mankind in his essential character; and hence the error we have noticed, and not a few others.

Some of ourselves appear to have fallen into the same error, and hence seem to infer that it is no benefit to the world that Christ exercises universal, mediatorial, providential dominion; that men, unless Christian men, have "no rights;" a doctrine that, if carried out to its consequences, would deny the right of sinners to have a Bible and read it, and even the right to enjoy the general benefits of order, and civilization, and security, which result from the diffusion and influence of the gospel. God in Christ, and in the exercise of mediatorial sovereignty and supremacy, has reprieved men. He has made it their duty and their consequent right to do many things, while this reprieve endures, which contribute to the preservation of life, and of social order, and of the common weal. These things have reference, directly or indirectly, in the divine purpose regarding them, to the peace, the spread and the ultimate prevalence of the Church; but they are also allowed, as a part of the present economy, in token of the goodness and forbearance of God. Among these "many things" are, of course, no acts or deeds in themselves sinful. Sins are never allowed. The matters to which we allude, are things in their own nature lawful, or enjoined. In doing such things, the *motives* of the unregenerate, whether elect or non-elect, are never fully such as God approves. Hence, *as done by them*, they are, at best, but "splendid sins." Still, they all have a right, and may even be bound to do the *acts*.

A father, who is not a Christian, is under obligation, by the fifth commandment, to feed and clothe his child—the mother, to allow the child to draw from her breast the nourishment that is there prepared for it. Among these "many things" is the right to exercise the conjugal and parental affections, the social affections in friendship and sympathy, and the same element of human nature in combining together for mutual help and defense.

This brings us to a 4th remark: *This "no rights" doctrine contradicts our Testimony.* And it is most noticeable that it does so in reference to the very subject that has given rise to this doctrine—the right to form governments. See Testimony, as follows:

"It is the will of God, revealed by the constitution of human nature, and more clearly in the sacred Scriptures, that his rational creatures, living together in one part of the world, and connected by a common interest, and by common duties, should enter into a civil association, for the better preservation of peace and order, in subserviency to godliness and honesty." "It is the *duty of all men* voluntarily, to form civil societies, establishing such authority as may best tend to preserve order, liberty and religion." (Testimony, chap. 29.)

And to show that these statements are not to be restricted to such as even *possess* the Word of God, it is added, in a subsequent paragraph:

"It is lawful for Christians residing in nations in which the light of the gospel has not been generally diffused, to continue in submission to such authority as may exist over them, agreeably to the light of nature, which, when revelation does not exist, is the only standard of civil duty. In such cases, the infidelity of the ruler cannot make void the just authority conferred upon him by the Constitution."

Other questions arise in connection with these quotations, and other paragraphs and clauses which accompany them, but we now allude only to their bearing on the matter before us. And how trenchant do they cut through and through the "no rights" doctrine! "It is the will of God, that his rational creatures should enter into a civil association;" "it is the *duty of all men* to form civil societies;" and more distinctly, "it is lawful for Christians residing in nations" even partly enlightened, "to continue in submission to such *authority* as may exist over them, agreeably to the light of nations. In such cases," the existing "*just authority* is not made void."

There is here (1) "authority;" (2) it may be "just;" (3) it is not made "void" by the infidelity of the "ruler;" (4) all this in pagan nations even—for it is of them the paragraph speaks. Of course, this church holds that such nations have a right to establish governments "agreeably to the law of nature;" that these governments have "authority;" that even Christians scattered among them may be in "submission" to this "authority." Whatever some of us may imagine, the fathers did not hold the "no rights" doctrine. And it would be well if Presbyterians would study more carefully the standards in which they have professed their faith, and to which they have avouched their adherence. These do not say that every government in heathen, or Mohammedan, or Papal or other lands, pos-

sesses "just authority," but they take for granted that such *may* exist, even among a people, none of whom, according to some modern teachings, have any rights at all.

This part of our task is now closed for the present. Every humane mind and heart revolts at the idea that it is no sin to rob or murder an immoral man; every Christian rejects the dogma, that either the law of God does not bind the unregenerate, or that the subject of God's moral government has no *right* to obey its second table, unless he adopt the first—and every Covenanter will repudiate a principle that robs the mediatorial administration of our Incarnate Redeemer and King of the glory that belongs to his exhibition of the goodness and forbearance of God, and that contradicts his own avowed principles.

We shall hereafter take up the questions relative to the design of the present war in this country, and prove that it is a lawful war.

J. M. W.

THE CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS.

BY REV. SAMUEL COLLINS.

It gives us great pleasure to lay the following article before our readers. The writer is a minister of the U. P. Church. The sentiments have the true ring. We copy from the January No. of the *Repository and U. P. Review*. Eds.

WHEN this proposition was first publicly made, in the Convention in Xenia, February, 1863, we hailed it with delight. We then regarded it, and we do still, as one of the most promising "signs of the times," that soon "a king shall reign in righteousness, and princes shall rule in judgment." We consider it another, and a very important step in the progress of those events, which are to result in "the kingdom and dominion, and greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, being given (as is promised) to the people of the saints of the Most High." It seems to be in that direction, too, which promises to bring about this result, not as in former times was attempted by force and bloodshed, but by the popular vote, adopting as a fundamental principle in our civil constitution that which is the foundation of all moral, religious and spiritual life, viz., the Sovereignty of God the Creator, the Dominion of Christ the Redeemer, and the obligation of the Holy Scriptures.

We expected "the fool, who hath said in his heart, There is no God," to oppose this step; for, fool though he is, he could not but see that this is a long stride toward bringing the nation to serve Him who "rules the nations."

We also looked for opposition from the openly vicious, as we expect in

"The rogue who feels the halter draw,
A poor opinion of the law."