

THE

Reformed Presbyterian and Covenanters.

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No. 9.

APPENDIX TO MINUTES OF SYNOD.

REPORT OF TRUSTEE OF SYNOD.

Sept. 1. Received from the County Commissioners of Allegheny County, Pa., two registered compromise bonds, Nos. 225 and 226, for \$1000 each, and one do., No. 227, for \$322.67, in exchange for two coupon bonds for \$1000 each. The above new bonds are each dated 1st June, 1863, payable at fifty years from 1st January, 1863, with interest at the rate of five per cent. per annum, payable semi-annually on 1st January and July, at the Commercial Bank of Pennsylvania, in the city of Philadelphia, to William Brown, Philadelphia, Trustee of the Reformed Presb. Church in N. America.

This investment is for the Foreign Mission. Total, \$2,322.67. Received also from same source, two registered bonds, same as above in every respect, Nos. 223 and 224, for \$1000 each, and one, No. 228, for \$322.66. My financial report will show that I have received two half-yearly payments of interest on each of the above bonds, the interest commencing on 1st January, 1863. The last named three bonds received in exchange for two coupon bonds for \$1000 each, same as the first.

This investment is for the Domestic Mission. Total, \$2,322.66.

1864.

Fund for Educating Theological Students.

Feb. 26. I invested \$500, and on March 7, \$200, making in all \$700, in legal tender United States notes, bearing five per cent. interest.

Feb. 1. Deposited with the Philadelphia Saving Fund one year's interest on Superannuated Ministers' Fund, being balance in full, \$10.42; amount previously on deposit, \$83.66; total amount, \$94.08.

During the last summer I had the Water Stock Acheson bequest five per cent. loan of the city of New York, offered for sale in that city, through the agency of Jay Cooke & Co., several times, with a view of investing in United States securities, if they had sold at par; but no bid was obtained, consequently the change was not made.

Investment made in Washington City, D. C., under direction of the Board of Domestic Missions.—On the 18th of March last, I succeeded in purchasing a lot of ground from James F. Caden, on which to erect a church and school house, and some tenements, for those who have escaped from slavery, located on South First street, between N and O streets, containing fifty-five feet three inches in front, one hundred and seventy-three feet seven inches in depth, for

THE USE OF THE ELECTIVE FRANCHISE.

DOES the present condition of things in the United States—the union and emancipation issues involved in the coming fall elections, especially the Presidential—make any change in the moral aspect of the use of the elective franchise, as heretofore determined and held of the Reformed Presbyterian Church? This is now a question thrust upon us, particularly by the recurrence of the quadrennial election, which has so much to do with the course of governmental action, for the next four years and even beyond, upon matters of the highest moment, nationally and even personally. A change has taken place in the administration of public affairs; not embracing all that is desirable or essential to the nation's permanent welfare, but still great. Slavery no longer holds its place as the ruling power in the land; it struggles for existence, and struggles almost hopelessly. A large portion of the nation has turned to be its deadly enemy, and has set its heart upon its extermination. Its friends, and the friends of Southern ascendancy, are in a decided minority, but they do not abandon the contest, and will not without one more effort. They are banded together and pledged to a final struggle. The temptation is great to give aid, at the ballot-box, to the advocates of freedom, but this cannot be done by those who are bound by solemn ties to maintain the supremacy of Christ, and a consistent adherence to the great principle of human rights. This we proceed to demonstrate, and,

1. COVENANTERS have ever refused to exercise the elective franchise, because of *the evils incorporated in the Constitution*. Sins committed in administering a government, are national sins, and if the entire course of administration has been in a sinful direction—as of this country in reference to slaveholding—this becomes an important fact in determining the character of the Constitution; and, perhaps, it is possible for an administration, even under a good constitution, to become so persistently and universally wicked as to compel such as would keep themselves free from the guilt of the nation, to withdraw entirely from all active share in political acts. With these things we have not now to do. We repeat, that “Presbyterian Covenanters”—we give the language of the Testimony—“perceiving immorality interwoven with the General and States’ Constitutions of the government in America have uniformly dissented from the civil establishment.” Again,

“Since the adoption of the Constitution in the year 1789, the members of the Reformed Presbyterian Church have maintained a consistent testimony against these evils. They have refused to hold any office which implies an approbation of the Constitution, or which is placed under the direction of an immoral law. They have abstained from giving their votes at elections for legislators or officers who must be qualified by an oath of allegiance to the immoral system. They could not themselves consistently swear allegiance to that government in the Constitution of which there is so much immorality. In all these instances their practice has been uniform.”

We wish the point we now make to be specially marked ; as a church, our difficulties in the way of exercising the elective franchise have been found in the character of the *Constitution*, and not in the administration.

2. *The Constitution remains what it ever has been.* No change has yet been made in this instrument ; and hence, if we have been right in withholding our votes all along, and on the grounds on which we have so done, it is our manifest duty to continue on faithfully in the same course. Had we justified our refusal to vote, sit on juries, &c., merely on the ground that the *administration* of the Government was unjust or impious, in that case a change of administration for the better might furnish a plea, and even a reason for a change in our relations to the National Government. But as we have seen, our objections have been to the *Constitution*. Of course if the Constitution remains the same, there is not even a shadow of a reason for voting under it now, that did not exist in 1789 and onward to this day. Let this be marked also.

3. *In reference to the matter before us, attempted amendments to the Constitution are of no account.* There are amendments proposed to the Constitution of our country. The principal one, is to prohibit the enslaving of human beings anywhere within the limits of the national domain. A most important amendment. A majority of both houses of Congress have voted in favor of this amendment—an overwhelming majority of the Senate, but in the House, not the two-thirds required by the Constitution for its passage. The attention, moreover, of the religious part of the community is, to a certain extent, directed to a still more important amendment of the Constitution, by which God, his Christ and his law shall be acknowledged by the nation. *But these amendments have not been made.* That the first will be, ere long, we have well grounded hopes. But as yet even this is no more than a *proposed* amendment. The representatives, and the President and all other *civil* officials of government chosen at the coming election, will take the oath to the Constitution *as it is*, not as it may be at some future time. And hence, while we rejoice that the attempt is making to bring the Constitution, in regard to slavery, to be a righteous Constitution—and give due credit for it—the case, as now before us, is the same precisely as it ever has been, and we repeat, “If we have occupied the true position heretofore, it is our imperative duty as faithful witnesses for the rights of our Lord and Master and for the rights of the slave, to hold it still.”

But even were this anti-slavery amendment adopted, it would not materially effect our position. The long list of sins, immoralities with which the Constitution is charged in our Testimony—page 124, ed. 1849—would still remain ; we would still be obliged to stand aloof and call upon this nation to “honor the Son,” and till this should be done, to submit to our present privations and disabilities.

4. *All this reasoning is not affected by the fact, that we have not as a people withheld our help from the country in the existing war.* For, (1.)

If we have been wrong in this, two wrongs will not make one of them right. Our dissent from the *civil* institutions of the land, stands upon its own independent grounds. If to help the country is wrong, no other act of wrong can make it right, and in this matter each man must answer for himself. God will not accept the plea, that he and others have done an act analogous to voting, as an apology for sending a man to swear to support an immoral Constitution. But, (2.) There is a wide distinction between giving help to the *country* in its trials and becoming implicated in its constitutional evils. If a riot occur in city or county, the suppression of the riot by force is an act due to social order and personal security and defense, and to the higher interests of peace, civilization, education and religion. And so the defense of the land, its property and its integrity against foreign aggression, and still more, the subduing of an insurrection designed to destroy the integrity of the land, and to establish outrage and wrong upon the national territory.

Finally, and as a summing up, there is this day no excuse that can be offered in favor of voting at the polls of the country, which would not have been as valid twenty, thirty, fifty years ago, for whatever changes have taken place in public sentiment in reference to one great constitutional evil—whatever changes for the better have been made in the laws of the land—in the prohibition of slaveholding in the territories of the nation, emancipation in the District of Columbia, the admission of colored men's testimony in United States courts, the repeal of the laws for the rendition of fugitive slaves, &c., the instrument to which the President, &c. became sworn is the same identical instrument it ever was, and the oath involves the same guilt, or rather enhanced guilt, for there is at this day a far greater amount of light on the evils with which the Constitution is justly chargeable. Let us wait a little longer patiently, in the hope that the divine judgments, accompanied by the diffusion of his truth, and the outpouring of his Spirit, will ere long bring our beloved country to see its sins, to confess them with sincere mourning and penitence, and thus to accomplish a complete reformation of the Constitution and administration. "Hold fast, that no man take thy crown."

J. M. W.

THE BANNER OF THE COVENANT.

On the page that belongs to our New Light friends, of this weekly octavo, we find some remarks on the action of our Synod on the war question. After giving the answer of Synod to the reasons of dissent, the writer says:

"Our brethren are manifestly feeling their way toward the light, and, we anticipate, will soon attain the position which we now occupy. They will ere long perceive how absurd it is to suppose that if the Constitution is to be amended, and our government made a truly Christian government, those who