

WHY  
COVENANTERS  
DO NOT VOTE

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# \*Why Covenanters Do Not Vote



## I. EXPLANATION

Next Tuesday is the culmination of a great national political campaign. The stump speaker and the newspapers have been busy. Men and issues have been prominent before us. The question is which party or set of men will control the national government for the next four years; and on Tuesday in city and country from St. Paul to New Orleans, from Portland, Me., to Portland, Oregon, some fifteen million or sixteen million voters will go to the polls to deposit their ballots. It is a significant hour. The issue rests on what the individual voter will do, and people have a perfect right to turn to us Covenanters and say: "Why don't you vote? Since this is a free country and ours is a government by the people, and since there are important issues to be met, why don't you take hold and help settle them? Is it through lack of patriotism, or because of indifference?

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Would not there be anarchy if all others do as you do? What are your reasons?"

Such questions are to the point; and while it will not make a great deal of difference who is elected, it is after all important. Those who vote ought to have a good reason for the way they vote; and those of us who do not vote should likewise have a very good reason for not going to the polls.

Now in answering these questions, let us proceed at first by way of elimination. Let us clear the ground of any possible misconceptions that may exist in the minds of any. We will here consider certain things that are not reasons for our refraining from voting.

It is *not because of indifference* that we stay away from the polls; not because we do not care for certain issues, or certain parties, or certain men. We read the newspapers, we talk these matters over. We have our preferences. We also pray for our country, contribute to the work of reform, and agitate in behalf of a better government. We are deeply interested.

It is *not because we do not love our country*. I challenge the average citizen to show more patriotism than does the average Covenanter. In the Civil War many of our people fought on the side of the North for the overthrow of slavery, and the preservation of the Union. Not a single instance has been shown of a Covenanter who fought on the side of the South. The stars and stripes are dear to us. A few years ago when I heard the

American flag hissed in a certain country it aroused my fighting blood at once. This is our country. We are patriots.

We do not stay away from the polls because we think *that the Christian should not engage in politics*. We do not think that for a moment. We do not believe that politics is sinful in itself, that it belongs to the Devil, and that the Christian man must always stand aloof from it. What we believe is that politics under certain conditions is sinful. On the other hand, I am sure that our people, even more than the average Christian does, believe that it is a man's sacred duty in a democratic form of government to go to the polls and vote, if there is no immoral condition present. It is either a sin to vote, or not to vote; and if conditions were what we could approve, I am sure you would find that the percentage of absentees among our people would be considerably smaller than it is among people in general.

It is not because we are *opposed to the present form of government*, the democratic, the republican form, a government by the people. We believe that the republican is the best form of government.

*Nor is it because we deny this government rightful authority*. We think it is defective, but we do not say it has no authority. A son has no right to disobey his parents because one or both of them are not Christian people. We obey the laws of our country, not because we must, but because we ought. We recognize that the government has in great

measure, at least, proper authority over us.

Nor do we stay away from the polls because we are opposed to the *character of the laws of this government*. Some of them are wrong, of course; but many, perhaps the greater majority of them, are right.

It may be said here also, by way of explanation before we proceed further, that Covenanters are *not desirous of the union of church and state*. Such is not their purpose; nor their desire.

Some years ago in the Rocky Mountains when the writer was engaged in conversation with an instructor in one of the high schools of Denver the political attitude of the Covenanter people came up for consideration. I explained at some length to the friend our position; and when I was through, while I have no doubt that he was not ready to admit that we were right, he said, "I regard you as good an American citizen as I am." On another occasion, it is said, and I speak from memory, that one of our prominent ministers was the subject of conversation between two men, for a short time, on a street car. One asked the other how the minister would vote at the coming election; and the reply was: "Oh, he is one of these Covenanters that do not vote;" and on being asked why, he answered: "I cannot tell you. All I know is that it is something about Christ." The speaker would like to say again in this general paragraph before undertaking to explain the Covenanter position of dissent from the government, that last Summer he was privileged to call upon a

Covenanter friend who has since been called home. He was a scholarly, well informed, broad-minded Christian gentleman who was ready to co-operate in all good efforts. He was asked, with a view to the discussion outlined in this paper, about our position of dissent. His reply was: "It seems to me as plain as any Christian duty."

But now let us proceed to the consideration of reasons why, when on November 5, many of our citizens will go to the polls, the Covenanter will stay away; and as we endeavor to explain our position, it will be the aim to give not only what seems scriptural and logical to the speaker, but what will more or less fully describe the present attitude of the Covenanter Church, and its historic position on this matter. Let us notice here a few plain truths:

*Every Christian man must take the law of Christ with him into every sphere of action.*

Christ is king in every sphere of your life, not only of your heart and your church, your office and your home, but your social life, and your politics. Christ has purchased the whole man, and a man's relational life must be under Christ's control. Wherever we go, whatever we do, in whatever relation we act, we still belong to Jesus Christ. We have given ourselves to him wholly. We say: "Where he leads me, I will follow, and where he does not lead me, I will not go."

Then a man can't consistently be a Christian in his own room, and a heathen behind

the counter. He can't be a Christian at the prayer meeting, and a worldling at the card table. He can't be a Christian in the church pew, and a pagan at the ballot box. If John Smith the father asks the blessing at the meal, and John Smith the carpenter puts poor lumber in the building, John Smith the man is responsible for both. If John Smith conducts family worship at home, and at the store puts sand in the sugar, John Smith the man is responsible for both.

*This government is a representative government.*

If it were an absolute monarchy, each man's responsibility would, except in a general sense, be very small. If it were a limited monarchy, each citizen's responsibility would be greater, but less than it now is. Ours is a republican form of government, a democracy, and therefore the people rule, or are supposed to do so.

Of course, there is much bossism, much ring rule, and much rule by parties in the present hour. We have something of an oligarchy at times, and not pure democracy; yet theoretically, and more or less in practice, the people rule, and therefore the responsibility rests upon the people, upon the voter. This is the second step in our explanation.

*The authoritative standard in our government is the Constitution.* Ours is a constitutional government. The Constitution is the supreme law, the basis of government. Bear this in mind as one more step in the argument.

Observe, the standard is not your own rules of conduct, or your own desires. The standard of government is not the moral sentiment that prevails among the people, and that expresses itself so fully in our laws and customs; nor is the standard the many Christian institutions and features of our national life, nor is it the great body of our laws.

The basis of our government is not political platforms. Mr. Taft advocates one thing, Roosevelt another, Wilson a third, Debs something else, and Chafin advocates prohibition; but whichever one is elected, he will take the oath of office, not to his platform, but to the Constitution of the country.

We have a written fundamental law. That is the basis of our legislation and governmental action. We do not say that other things may not have interpreting power with regard to the Constitution, but it after all is the rule of action.

Now observe clearly that every voter must subscribe to this document. This is a representative government and every considerable officer must subscribe to this fundamental law before assuming his official position. In taking the oath to the constitution, he acts for you and me, as well as for himself.

*The fundamental law of a nation must contain such provisions as will honor the King of nations and also furnish a basis for the settlement of moral civil questions.* This is the next step in our explanation.

It must honor Jesus Christ. If God has given the Mediator all authority in heaven and on earth; if Jesus is the rightful king

over all men, and of all proper institutions; if Jesus is the King of kings, and if a constitution is a nation's profession of faith; if the latter is a great object lesson held constantly before the people; if it is the highest source of legislation; then it should distinctly acknowledge the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ. "He that honoreth not the Son honoreth not the Father that sent him." We cannot properly exercise authority under Christ without plainly recognizing the source of this authority.

Moreover, a Constitution is for the settlement of moral as well as of economic questions; not only for the adjustment of such things as revenue, taxation, tariff, finances, etc. Then what about such questions as Temperance, or Divorce, or the Sabbath Day? Clearly there should be in our written fundamental law a moral basis for the settlement of such preeminently important questions.

*Now, from this view point let us examine our Constitution.* Take it up and read it. We find it an interesting, able and remarkable document.

Surely we shall find in this magna charta of our liberty some devout recognition of divine authority! Surely, in view of God's providential kindness in the discovery of America, in such events as the landing of the Pilgrims, and their solemn compact in the cabin of the Mayflower—"In the name of God, Amen,"—surely, in view of the statement in the Declaration of Independence about "a firm reliance on the protection of Divine Providence," and in view of the fact

that twelve of the thirteen original State constitutions contain explicit acknowledgments of God and Christianity, we shall find some devout recognition of God in this remarkable document!

We turn the pages of the Constitution and seek for some acknowledgment of God. We turn the pages carefully; but—we find no mention of his name.

We look again to see if Jesus Christ the king of men and nations be recognized, and again we find no reference to him, except in the date; and that can have no particular moral significance.

We look still further for some reference to the Word of God as a source of jurisprudence and a guide in legislation, but we find none.

Now what is our national basis for the settlement of the Temperance question, or the Sabbath question, or the matter of Divorce? Do we say these are State questions, rather than national questions? But they certainly are national questions, and provision should be made for meeting such by our national Constitution. And there are hosts of moral issues in our national life.

Let us examine the Constitution still further. We come to the oath prescribed for the President. It says, "I do solemnly swear or affirm) that I will faithfully execute," etc. No reference is made here to the authority of God. Contrast this oath with that taken by John Haynes when inaugurated Governor of Connecticut in 1639—"I do swear by the great and dreadful name of the ever living God, to promote," etc., "so help me God, in

the name of the Lord Jesus Christ." An official who took an oath like that would feel that it meant something. Compare the oath of the President with the scriptural injunction, "Thou shalt fear the Lord thy God, and serve him, and shalt swear by his name." An oath is not an oath with the appeal to God left out.

As we examine further the Constitution, we observe that it states that "no religious test shall ever be required" as a qualification for office. Observe that it does not say no "sectarian" or "denominational" test. Such a provision as the latter would have naturally been proper. Of course it may be that some of the members of the Constitutional Convention intended some such interpretation to be placed upon it, but the omission of the divine name from the presidential oath and the provision that no religious test should be required for office were manifestly intended to harmonize; and it should also be distinctly observed that to have presented an oath with an appeal to God would have been a religious test. There should never be any denominational test; but there should be a moral, religious test. Does character count for nothing? We are to provide "able men, such as fear God."

It is also well to remember that the Constitutional Convention began its sessions without prayer, notwithstanding the fact that Benjamin Franklin proposed that they should ask the guidance of God in their duties. It has been stated that prayer was offered, but the historical evidence leads to the opposite conclusion.

Again, it should be remembered that the first Congress which convened under the new Constitution was sworn in with an appeal to God, but that the first act which this Congress passed was to provide an oath with the name of God left out.

In conversation some years ago with a prominent reformer and lawyer in the City of Denver, we said that we did not understand how it came about that the Constitutional Convention omitted all reference to the authority of God, unless it was through the influence of French infidelity. His reply was: "Yes; French infidelity was rampant at that time," and his reason for the omission was in a measure at least correct. A writer widely-informed on such matters has said that the national convention that framed the constitution manifestly designed that all acknowledgment of God should be omitted.

*Let us now come to the application of all this to our political life.* Let us keep carefully in mind what has already been said. You are approaching the ballot box. It is a solemn act. Should you not as a Christian voter think somewhat as follows—"I am a Christian man, and must take Christ with me wherever I go. This is a representative government. The man for whom I vote, if elected, will take the oath of office for me, but the fundamental law which must guide him, and me, does not recognize the authority of God, nor of Christ, nor his Law. God's name is even dropped out of the President's oath. My depositing this ballot is an agreement on my part to continue the government on its

present secular basis. Am I willing so to do?" And the Covenanter says: "No!"

## 2. OBJECTIONS CONSIDERED

There are many objections to the Covenanter position of not voting. It is not strange that this is so. Some of these are worthy of careful consideration. If this were not true, all clear headed, consistent Christian people would be on our side. Let us listen then with care and patience to the consideration of some objections that have been made to the Covenanter position on voting, or that might be brought against it.

1. "There must be civil government. Society cannot get along without it. We cannot expect it to be perfect. Every man owes certain duties to the society in which he finds himself. He cannot avoid responsibility for it. Should we not all take hold and help along the government as best we may? We are not responsible for all the defects in it."

On the whole I think that this is the strongest argument that can be brought against our position; but let us remember that nothing needs to exist on a wrong basis; that we are not absolved from doing wrong because it may seem to us necessary. Because the family is necessary, and marriage a duty under natural conditions, a man would not be justified in getting married on wrong conditions. He would not be justified in marrying his neighbor's wife.

We acknowledge that there are certain duties in civil life which every man is under obligation to perform. He cannot possibly

avoid them, but one of his first duties is to refuse to identify himself with anything that is evil in civil affairs. He owes that to his country as well as to his God. That is true patriotism.

2. "Well you cannot mix religion and politics. It is like trying to mix oil and water, or fire and water, or putting sand in sugar. They will not go well together. It has been tried in the Old World with disastrous results. It resulted in persecution. They must be kept apart."

Covenanters do not wish a union of church and state. Such a union would not be the same as the union of religion and the state. When church and state are united two organizations are brought together; and either the church controls the state, or the state controls the church. When a man is wedded to a woman, two persons are united; but when a man is wedded to an idea the union is not of the same kind. Christian principle in the nation is what we desire.

We must mix religion and politics. We might just as well speak of not mixing religion and business, or religion and social life, or religion and the home. Booblers don't wish to mix religion and politics. Lieutenant Becker was evidently opposed to any such union. The men who reaped such heavy graft in erecting our Capital at Harrisburg did not mix religion and politics. Neither do the men who hold caucuses in saloons desire to mix the ten commandments with their politics. If we do not mix religion and politics, we simply let politics go to the devil.



3. "There is so much Christianity in our government that we fail to see why you Covenanters should feel obliged to stand aloof. You seem to forget how much Christianity there is in our national life. Remember the Mayflower; early colonial documents; the Declaration of Independence; the recognition of divine authority in nearly all of the thirteen original State constitutions; the inscription on our coins, "In God We Trust;" the chaplains in the army and navy and Congress; the oath in courts of justice; the Bible in so many of our public schools; the Thanksgiving Days appointed by the President and State Governors; the resolution adopted by the United States Senate in 1863; and the more recent statement of our Supreme Court, that this is a Christian nation. Why you Covenanter friends seem to forget that our government is simply undergirded and permeated by the principles of Christianity."

Yes, and we might offset this in great measure by recalling the fact that the Constitutional Convention declined to ask God's guidance in its most important work, and that in 1797 in a treaty with Tripoli we said, "The government of the United States of America is not in any sense founded on the Christian religion." Also, we should remember the licensed liquor traffic in so many of our States, the Sabbath Mail service conducted by the government, and the twenty-five different legal grounds of divorce that are found in our country, as well as one thousand other plain failures on the part of the government to harmonize with God's law.

But what we want to say just here in answer to this objection is this, that these

Christian features, for which we are profoundly grateful, are not the basis of government, nor the test of citizenship, but it is the Constitution. That is the foundation, and about Christ it is silent, with an audible silence.

4. "The lack of reference to God in the fundamental law is only a small matter. It is just the name of God in the Constitution. Don't quibble. There is nothing perfect here anyhow. Don't stay out of the government on a mere technicality. You would not do any Christian work, if you waited until all conditions were perfectly satisfactory."

We reply by saying squarely that the error in our governmental life is not small, not technical, not indifferent, but is fundamental, vital. Do you mean to say, Christian brother, for the shadow of a moment, that omission of God from the Constitution, and of Christ, and of reference to his law, and the removal of God's name from the Presidential oath, are small matters? We answer that such omissions are tremendous, deep-seated, far-reaching matters.

Observe that our objection is not to errors of administration. The governor of a State may fail to bring lynchings to justice. The mayor of our city may fail to close up disorderly houses. But we are not staying out of the government because of such failures as these; nor is the Covenanter objection merely to bad legislation. We do object to the twenty-five grounds of divorce, and to the licensed liquor traffic; but such objections, if the Constitution were right,

would not be sufficient to keep us from participating in the government.

Let us keep in mind that there are different degrees of responsibility, and different ways of freeing one's self from responsibility. Permit us to use a crude illustration: You are a member of a literary society. A proposal is made to change the hour of meeting from 8:00 to 7:30. In your judgment 8:00 is the proper hour, but you make no objection when the motion is passed. You feel that you are not particularly responsible. Let us suppose again that in this same society it is proposed to reduce the janitor's salary from \$2.00 to \$1.50 per day. You believe that the man is entitled to the larger amount, and accordingly you vote against the reduction, and by doing this, you feel you are free from further responsibility in this matter. Again it is proposed in the same society to hold its next meeting on Thanksgiving Day. In your judgment this is not in harmony with the purpose of the day, and when the motion is carried in favor of such meeting, you arise and enter your protest, thus freeing yourself from responsibility. But let us illustrate still further by supposing that it is proposed to hold the regular meetings of this organization on the Sabbath day. As a Christian man now what will you do? Can you free yourself from responsibility otherwise than by separating from the society? When the error is fundamental, the only consistent attitude for the Christian is that of separation.

5. "You Covenanters pay taxes, and you pay them even for conscience' sake. Thus you recognize the government by supporting it. Does this not make you responsible for it?"

Of course we do pay our taxes as has been stated, not because we must, but because we should. We are protected by the government, and enjoying this protection and our liberty, we feel that we should render a proper equivalent. Remember we do not deny this government legitimate authority. We believe that we should obey its proper laws. Observe here, however, that a taxpayer is not necessarily a member of the governmental firm. The alien, the minor, the woman, even the non-resident, all pay taxes; and our being taxpayers does not make us members of the governmental society.

6. "But here are Biblical examples for you Covenanters. There was Joseph in the land of Egypt, and he was a man of fine character. He was a prime minister under Pharaoh. There was Nehemiah who held office under the King of Persia; and there were Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, and also Daniel, who held office in Babylon. If these men held office under these heathen governments, surely you Covenanters must be immaculate, if you cannot hold office under such a good government as that of the United States."

But notice, my voting friend, that these were not constitutional governments, not representative governments. They were not carried on by voting on the part of the people. These officials were not asked to swear solemnly to support a written constitution of government that contained no recognition of

the authority of God. There is no reason to assume that in the discharge of their official duties they were called upon to take any such position as this. We have no evidence that Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, who faced the burning fiery furnace rather than worship a golden image, would have accepted on oath a fundamental law that contained no recognition of the authority of the Lord of heaven?

7. "But the Constitution has a provision for its own amendment. You don't swear to keep it just as it is. Nobody claims it is perfect, and you can accept it, intending all the time to secure as soon as possible the changes which you think to be necessary."

Yes, it is a good thing that the Constitution has such a provision. It is not perfect. It has had fifteen amendments already and will no doubt need more; but it is to be kept clearly in mind that the officer and voter accept it as it is, not as they hope it will be, nor as they intend to make it. You are not freed from its present stipulations because you intend to change them as soon as you can. Let us suppose that the Abolitionist before the war had said, "While I believe the Constitution supports slavery. I am willing to take the oath of office, because I intend to amend the Constitution in the matter of slavery, at the earliest opportunity." Would such a position have freed him from responsibility for the slave traffic; and have made his acceptance of the Constitution consistent? Let us keep in mind that the candidate elected next Tuesday will swear to support not

his own convictions nor even his party platform, but the Constitution.

8. "Well, then, you Covenanters should not live in this country. If you cannot help to conduct the government on its present basis, you should go somewhere else, and leave this country to those who feel free to carry on the government." In my hearing some years ago, a brother minister said: "If a man cannot organize himself into a democracy in this country, I think he should go to Botany Bay. Yes, if I had my way of it, I think I should send him to Botany Bay."

In reply to such criticism we plainly say that this is God's country, and those who give their allegiance in civil matters first to God, have surely as much right on this soil as those who have set up a government without recognition of him; and the man who obeys God, and the laws of his country, who pays his taxes, who prays for his country's welfare, who gives of his means for reform, who labors and sacrifices in behalf of his nation, has a better right on this soil than the man who takes part in the government and perhaps does not pray; or the man who criticizes Covenanters, and, it may be, never sacrifices for his country's sake. Why don't men talk of transporting certain of our infamous politicians to some other climate? In our judgment they could be spared with as much profit as Covenanters.

It is a trifle, just a trifle illogical, and we may say unchristian and unbrotherly, for a man, if he reflects on God's great goodness to America in the dark days of the war of

the Revolution and in the Civil war when we were kept from disunion as a nation; and if he reflects on our great forests, and rivers, and plains and orchards, and mines of ore and coal, which God gave us, and then remembers that we have set up a government without acknowledging God, to turn to the man who can't take part in the government because God is not acknowledged in it, and say to him he ought to get out of this country and go some place else.

9. "I think such an amendment to the Constitution as you Covenanters desire would be an infringement upon the rights of others who do not agree with you, such as the Jew, the secularist, and the infidel. You have no right to enforce your convictions on them."

We reply, first, that a nation has rights of its own, and duties of its own. It is a moral person, and responsible to the moral Governor. Shall a nation, because of the objections of some, forget its own obedience to God?

The Lord Jesus Christ has rights. It is God's purpose that to him every knee shall bow and every tongue confess. The day is coming when all kings shall fall down before him; all nations shall serve him. He has purchased this exaltation by his death on the cross, and we have no right to withhold from him the honor which is his due.

The Jew has his rights and no one must be allowed to take them away, but what infringement would such acknowledgment in the fundamental law be upon the rights of the

Jew? Has he any more right to shut the Lord Jesus Christ out of America than he had to shut him out of Palestine? Are his rights more sacred than those of Christ? Are they any more sacred than those of the nation? Are they more sacred than those of the majority? Are they more sacred than mine? He is not bound to take the oath to the Constitution. Nobody would compel him to do so. Covenanters do not say they are persecuted now because they cannot swear to the Constitution; and I imagine also that the Jew would not abstain from holding office, even if the fundamental law recognized the authority of Christ. Shall the family rule out the Word of God, and the family altar, and the blessing at meals, because, forsooth, one or two members of the family wish to deny the inspiration of the Bible, and the power of prayer, and the divinity of Christ?

10. "If all men did as you do, anarchy would result. Some people must carry on the government. If all good people did as you do, affairs would go into the worst hands."

There is no danger that all will do as we do. If good people in increasing numbers would begin to abstain from governmental activity, the nation would soon get its eyes open; and we need not refrain from doing what is right for fear that if other people also do right great harm will result.

Do we not see also that this objection is on the basis of apparent necessity; that the end justifies the means? If it is wrong to engage in governmental activity in the pre-

sent hour, no argument will justify it. Are we so afraid of God's work failing that we must do wrong to keep it from failing? Yet we do not fear to meet this argument. We must leave consequences with God. "Do right though the heavens fall," but we know that they never fall. It is not our business to take care of God's work at the sacrifice of conscience.

"I am glad to think  
I am not bound to make this world go right;  
But only to discover and to do with cheerful  
heart  
The work that God appoints. I will trust in  
him  
That he can hold his own; and I will take  
his will  
Above the work he sendeth me to be my  
chiefest good."

11. "You Covenanters are simply throwing away your votes. You are free citizens, and yet you do not care to take part in the great privileges which this government offers you."

There are many others who throw away their votes. It is estimated that at the election to be held this Fall there will be about fifteen million votes cast, and that there are about twenty-seven million men over twenty-one years of age in our country. Thus many million people throw away their votes, and few of them apparently for conscientious reasons.

How about the Prohibitionists? Do they expect to succeed at the next election? Are they throwing away their votes? Do the Socialists expect to elect Mr. Debs? Are their

votes only thrown away? Most people expect Mr. Wilson to be chosen President. Are all the others, then, simply throwing away their votes? No man who votes for a principle throws away his vote. I admire the Prohibitionists because these men stand by the principle of no-license. I admire the Socialist because he votes for what he thinks is a necessary social change.

12. "You Covenanters are not doing anything. You simply fold your hands, and sit idly by while others carry on the government. You let others do the work, and you enjoy the fruit of their labors. Yours is a do-nothing policy. You are drones in the political beehive."

We are not afraid for a moment to meet this argument, or rather accusation. The most prominent thing about it is that it is untrue, tremendously false. Let us endeavor to consider in how many ways a man can serve his country. He can lead an orderly life. He can help in the enforcement of law. He can vote for no-license. He can pay his taxes. He can agitate for moral reform. He can contribute of his means to such reform. He can sacrifice time and strength for his country. He can fight in its defense. He can vote for officers to conduct the government.

In how many ways according to this analysis can a man serve his country? Nine; and the Covenanter serves in every respect but one. Does he lead an orderly life? Not many of them are found in jail. He helps in law enforcement. It is in harmony with his

church position to vote for no-license, where no oath is required to the Constitution. He pays his taxes. He continually agitates for reform. This congregation gave last year for reform about \$2,600 and the year before \$600. The young people of our congregation have spent many an hour, sometimes at considerable sacrifice, in preparing reform literature for distribution. Covenanters have often fought in defence of their country, and yet, because we do not vote, we are sometimes told that we do nothing.

Did Dr. A. M. Milligan, who occupied this pulpit for nineteen years, do nothing for the final triumph of religious truth in this great land?

Did Dr. David McAllister who was active in the pulpit, on the platform, and in the editor's chair, for many long years, and whose manual is an authority in political philosophy, sit with folded hands?

Was Dr. T. P. Stevenson merely a drone in the political beehive? Our country has not yet produced a greater Christian statesman than he.

Is there any other band of people in all this city that does more for governmental reform than this congregation? Is there any other body of 9,000 people in this country that is doing more to present important truth in the political sphere and to place our nation on a permanently prosperous basis than the Covenanter Church? We unhesitatingly answer, No!

Let us turn to our voting friends, and ask, What are you doing with regard to moral questions in public life? You have been conducting the government for one hundred and thirty years. What great moral reform has been accomplished through voting? Do you say slavery was thus abolished? We reply, not preeminently by voting, but by the hand of God in the Civil War. We do not deny that noble questions are involved in some measures in the platforms of the three great political parties; but after all what great moral question such as the Saloon, the Sabbath, or Divorce, can the Christian man reach by identifying himself now with any of these three leading parties?

The position of protest is a position of power. Remember Elijah, how he spoke the truth to Ahab. Shadrach and his friends in the hour of danger in Babylon did not acquiesce until the storm would pass by, but boldly said, "We will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up." Would they have acted more wisely and effectively to have yielded, and then in some quiet hour to have approached the king with their message? Peter and the other Apostles said, "We ought to obey God rather than man." The strokes of Luther's hammer as he nailed the ninety-five theses on the church door at Wittenberg are still heard in the world. The old time Abolitionists would not accept the constitution because they believed it supported slavery. They asserted that it was a covenant with death, and an agreement with hell. They refused to vote or

incorporate with any political party; and a prominent leader of their day has said that they did more to overthrow slavery than all other influences combined.

A great difficulty in connection with this whole subject is that men fail so much to take the Christian viewpoint in politics. We have lurched so far from the approval of the union of church and state, that we have come in great measure to the conception of civil government as entirely secular. We have been so afraid of mixing religion and politics that we have given politics over to the devil. We have become so sensitive to the rights of conscience, that we have forgotten the rights of Christ. We have been so concerned for the rights of the minority that we have forgotten the rights of the majority. We have so considered the claims of the Jew and the secularist that we have forgotten the rights of the Christian. We have so considered the rights of the individual that we have overlooked the rights of the nation. In our concern for the rights of man we have forgotten the rights of God.

We Covenanters need not be disturbed at the criticisms that are expressed about us. I hear them. No doubt you do also. Perhaps at the office last week some one said, "You are one of these Covenanters that will not vote. You fail to help us along in this government. You have no right to live here." Allow me to refer to a letter received during the past week after the discourse of last Sabbath. A man, and he is a friend of mine, (though it may be fair to say he is not a

Christian man, and may have read a somewhat distorted account in the press of last Sabbath's discourse,) writes me as follows of Covenanters: "Believe me, I have more respect for Tom Paine and Bob Ingersoll, infidel patriots" \* \* \* "To my mind such a creed as that of Covenanters is nothing short of rank blasphemy, or moral cowardice, or blind bigotry." That is plain language; isn't it? But it does not do me any harm. I think of Jeremiah, of whom we talked recently, and who said, "I am become a laughing stock;" but I am sure that Jeremiah in heaven to-day is glad that he was willing to endure such things for the sake of his Lord; and I think of another, greater than Jeremiah, of whom his friends said, "He is beside himself," and they went out to lay hold on him.

He is the true patriot who refuses to identify himself with any evil in his country's life, and when some future historian shall write the history of the United States he will trace a golden thread back to those who in those days were willing, even at the price of criticism and scorn, to stay out of the government because Jesus Christ was left out.