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WHAT THINK YE — OF — CHRIST?

A Question to National Reformers.

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WHAT THINK YE OF CHRIST?



As we have read the arguments of the so-called National Reformers, in which they claim for Christ a political sovereignty, we have involuntarily asked the above question. We have wondered whether they really regarded Christ as the divine Son of God or as a scheming politician. Two quotations will suffice to show that our query is well grounded. In the *Christian Statesman* of April 22, 1886, in reply to the statement that "the apostles and primitive Christians never tried to get an amendment inserted in the statutes and laws of the Roman Empire," M. A. Gault says:—

"Christ and his apostles did not work to amend the Roman laws and constitution, because it [Rome] was not a republic. Its power did not come through the people. Its laws were not a reflection of the sentiments of the people, and it could not be made a Christian nation in the sense in which ours can."

That is as much as to say that if Christ had come in the days when Rome was a republic, he would have set about amending its laws. Instead of going about Judea and Galilee doing good, preaching the gospel to the poor, healing the broken-hearted and those that

were oppressed of the devil, he would have gone to Rome, got himself elected senator or consul, and would at once have set about making Rome a Christian nation, by legal enactment ! This is the way the National Reformers are doing, and they profess to be followers of Christ. The Lord, through the psalmist, said to the wicked, "Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself," and that statement seems to be applicable in this case. Because they bring religion down to the level of party politics, they imagine that Christ would do the same.

Before commenting any further on the above, we will quote the illustration which a National Reformer gave to show why Christ did not accept the office of king when he was on earth. The illustration is quoted by Rev. Wm. Ballentine, in his reply to Dr. W. Wishart. Said the lecturer :—

"Had General Grant, after taking Richmond, been offered the office of township constable in any locality, he would have repelled the offer with disdain. So Christ, being offered the small principality or kingdom of the Jews, refused acceptance, but if he had been offered the kingdoms of the whole world, as Grant the presidency of the United States, like him, Christ would have accepted."

We cannot conceive how a man calling himself a Christian could use such language, except on the ground that he was drunk with the idea of a union of Church and State. The question, "What think ye of Christ?" is indeed a pertinent one to put to the self-styled National Reformers. And the answer to the question, as drawn from their own statements, would be, "A selfish man of the world; a politician seeking

the highest office." In this we do not wish to be understood as implying that General Grant was such a man. There is no point of comparison between General Grant and Jesus Christ. General Grant was a man; Jesus Christ is the Son of God. General Grant, as a man, acted with manly dignity; but if Christ had done the same thing he would have been a man and not God. The party of which the *Christian Statesman* is the organ, is wont to brand everyone who opposes it as an atheist; but the above quotations show that the effect of imbibing National Reform principles is to give low views of Christ and his work. We never heard an infidel express sentiments more derogatory to the character of Christ. Being Christians ourselves, and adoring Christ as the divine Mediator between God and man, we oppose the work of the National Reform party because it is unchristian in its tendency.

To go back to Mr. Gault's assumption that Christ would have attempted to amend the laws of Rome if it had been a republic. Says he: "Its laws were not a reflection of the sentiments of the people; and it could not be made a Christian nation in the sense in which ours can." No, of course not; there would have been just the difference between an empire and a republic. The laws of Rome reflected the sentiments of the emperor, and the people acquiesced in them just the same as the people in a republic do in laws made by their representatives. The emperor was to them a divine being, an object of adoration, and therefore his laws did reflect the sentiments of the people. Therefore if Christ had been such a one as he is described by the Religious Amendmentists, he would have gone

to Rome and converted the emperor. The emperor being converted would at once have placed "all Christian usages, institutions, and laws" on an undeniable legal basis, and, *presto*, Rome would have been a "Christian nation." And since "the empire of Rome filled the world," by that act the whole world would have been "Christianized."

But, hold; that very thing was done. Not by Christ, however, but a little less than three hundred years after he declared, "My kingdom is not of this world." Constantine the Great is generally known as "the first Christian emperor." He made laws in favor of Christians, and although he was not baptized till near his death, he identified himself with the professed Christian party. In his day the whole Roman Empire became "Christianized." At that time there existed just the state of things which the Religious Amendment party is now striving to bring about. As an evidence of this, and to show how thoroughly "National Reform" principles were carried out, the church historian, Socrates, tells us that no one was allowed to possess any Arian document, under pain of being burned at the stake, together with the prescribed document. And so strictly was this edict of that "Christian" emperor carried out, that not a line of the writings of Arius is in existence.

Like causes produce like effects. As the result of the "Christianization" of the State by legal enactments in Constantine's time, bishoprics were bought and sold just the same as secular offices were then and are now. The richest and most influential men secured the office of bishop, and used that office to increase

their wealth and influence. Since religion was regulated by the civil law, the emperor was the natural head of the church; and since he also was the dispenser of patronage, men professed Christianity in order to secure office. The emperor continued to be head of the church until he transferred that dignity to the powerful bishop of Rome, whose assistance he needed in civil matters. Religion was then a matter of policy. And that is just what would happen in this country if religion were upheld by legal enactment. We care not how pure the motives of some of the advocates of the Religious Amendment may be, when the proposed Amendment is adopted, the results briefly indicated above will follow just as surely as the night follows the day. And that is the state of things which these men, in their blindness, imagine that Christ would sanction!

And this naturally brings us to another thought that was suggested by the second quotation, which says that if Jesus had been offered the kingdoms of the whole world, he would have accepted. We call to mind the fact, recorded in two of the Gospels, that Jesus *was* once offered "all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them." Did he accept? Not even in thought. Why not? Because the condition was that he should fall down and worship Satan. That same offer is still held out to the church. Many are becoming dazzled by the sight, and many, led by a selfish zeal which they suppose is zeal for Christ, are eager to accept. But the conditions have never changed, and if at any time before the nations are given to Christ to be dashed in pieces, his professed followers accept, professedly in his name, and for him,

the sovereignty of any or all of the kingdoms of this world, it may be set down as a fact that it is because they have accepted the conditions which Christ rejected with holy scorn.

If those who are so loudly clamoring for Christ to be recognized as the head of this Government, would study his life and get proper ideas of his exalted character and of the nature of his kingdom, they might truly honor him. As it is, their work tends only to degrade Christianity and to dishonor Christ. Christ not only did not seek, but he resolutely shunned, political alliance, and "he that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked."

E. J. WAGGONER.

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