

concerned in the legislative or administrative action of the State) is bound to regulate his official procedure, as well as his personal conduct, by the revealed will of Christ.'

The United Presbyterian Church, being Voluntaries in their notions of State interference in Church affairs, naturally felt scrupulous on this question. The Presbyterian Church in this country, though practical Voluntaries, have not adopted the principle of repudiating State interference, so far as the *support* of the Church by the State was concerned, or so far as the interference of the Civil Magistrate in enforcing what they considered the opinions of the Church on some moral and religious questions was concerned. How far the Civil Magistrate can go in this direction has not been defined. Were we to attach the natural and ordinary meaning to the article above quoted, we might be justified in stating that he might, if his conscience so directed, fine and imprison all who infringed upon those principles which he had gathered from the New Testament; for the article tells us plainly that 'all men in every capacity and relation, and particularly the Civil Magistrate (including under that term all who are in any way concerned in the legislative or administrative action of the State), are bound to obey His will as revealed in His Word,' which is all that Popes and persecutors have ever contended for, the question of their right to interpret what that will is being first considered. That this right must be conceded on the principle avowed, cannot be denied; or, if it is, we are driven to the alternative that the Church must interpret for him, which is a concession that we think the advocates of the article in question would scarcely consent to, and if they did, there could not be worse Popery on the earth. It would then amount to this,—We interpret the 'will,' and you must execute it: it is revealed in His Word, and you are 'bound' to enforce it.

Against either of these results the United Presbyterian Church consistently objected, and the compromise appears in a previous part of the Basis of Union in these words: 'Whereas, besides, it is desirable to prevent any possible misapprehensions in reference to the fourth of said Articles, it is therefore *hereby declared*, that no inference from that Article is legitimate which asserts that the Civil Magistrate has the right to prescribe the faith of the Church, or to interfere with her ecclesiastical action.' How the two statements are to be reconciled with each other, we confess ourselves unable to understand, unless it be that it is lawful for the Civil Magistrate to punish the sinners but not to touch the saints. He may give the Church endowments, but he must not interfere with its ecclesiastical action.

In these days the concrete is taking the place of the abstract. Generalizations and centralizations are the order of the day; and were we to give utterance to a doubt that unions formed on such a basis were an abandonment of ideas heretofore considered important and essential, or such a mystification of them as would lay up in store ample material for future controversy and separation, we should be deemed an enemy to what we very much desire, if it could only be honourably had, the union of all Christians in the bond of love and peace.

If this union is based on *principles*, it will last; but if, as we apprehend it, it is based on compromises which the consciences and judgments of men in future time will not recognize, it will come to nought. The future must explain and develop the contradictory, or at least vague and indefinite, ideas embodied in this part of the Basis of Union. For our part, we shall not know what opinion the Presbyterian Church holds on this question till we are further instructed. As the text and comment stand, we can see no other natural meaning in the words adopted but direct antagonism. We can understand the basis of the Kirk of Scotland, because she adopts the theory and practice of State Churchism, and she is at least consistent with herself; but we cannot understand a Basis of Union which leaves the most difficult and disputed element of the Basis of Union in a mist of words which men of only ordinary capacities will, we are afraid, be unable to comprehend, or, comprehending, to reconcile.