

# THE CHRISTIAN SENTINEL.

I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and will watch to see what he will say unto me, and what I shall answer when I am reproved.—HAB. ii. 1.

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## SERMON ON THE DEATH OF HIS LATE MAJESTY GEORGE IV.

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(Concluded from p. 58. No. VIII.)

IF then, we find a country where the Religion of the Gospel, purged of all human pretences and unscriptural additions, yet retaining every essential ordinance and following the rule of primitive usage, is interwoven with the state, and respect secured to it without the aid either of artifice or force; where the Fathers of the Church, without entangling themselves in politics, have their place in the great Council of the Realm; where ample institutions are provided for qualifying those who undertake the pastoral office and sufficient means allotted for their support, apart from other professions and engagements; where they themselves are so distributed in fixed stations that every corner of the realm may enjoy the regular administration of divine ordinances, and send up, as it were, one voice to the throne of God; where this worship, however, is advantageously recommended, not authoritatively enforced; where the Scriptures are held to be the Truth and spread open to all classes of the country; where no attempt is made upon the conscience of the subject, no secular arm uplifted to produce that monstrous contradiction in terms, a *compulsory system of belief*; then we may trust that we there see the state of things, (if the expression be allowable,) which God himself intended—the just and natural posture of Christianity upon earth in its present advanced stage and under a government professing that religion. In such a country then, although abuses and scandals may exist,—(for alas! “it must needs be that offences will come.”)—for the correction of which we ought fervently to pray,—although the good proposed may often be lost by the fault of those who are to dispense it, or defeated by the perverseness of those who are to receive it,—yet there, if any where, we may hope to discover the marks of the divine presence, protection, and blessing, and as it were, the Angel of the Lord going before the people.

Such a country does exist—it is the native country of many of us—the mother country of us all. “If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning.”—In the course of this subject I have in more than one place, made use of thoughts, which (although probably forgotten by my audience,) I have presented to them upon former occasions; and in following up the particular argument upon which I am here insisting, I once endeavoured to make the application of these last observations:—I endeavoured to trace the hand of Omnipotence in the History of our own country, since the Reformation, and to prove by entering into details, points which I can now simply enumerate,—that the established constitution of Church and State has been signally protected; has been wonderfully restored when overthrown;—has been strikingly delivered from the very jaws of destruction; has remarkably contributed to the exaltation and prosperity of the country.—The facts of History, however, upon which I then enlarged, are sufficiently known, and carry with them many serious and important lessons.

In the History also, within the last half century or less, of a country the neighbour of Britain, which, partly through the wickedness or the weakness of those in power, is now again convulsed, we read a warning to the world which is written in characters of blood and fire.—God in his mercy grant that the present “beginning of sorrows” too much partaking of the character of the former, may lead to far different results!—The horrors and atrocities such as men shudder to mention, the cruel wrongs and sufferings

greater in amount within a very few years than might have been caused by the uninterrupted iron rule of a long line of despots,—which characterised the former French Revolution,—and the miseries which, thence taking their rise, overflowed so large a portion of the world, all originally sprung from the principles of Infidelity and the monstrous varieties of anarchy and wickedness which these immediately produced. God was in that country openly mocked—publicly defied:—Christianity and even the immortality of the soul were pronounced to be impostures by a decree of the state.—We see on the other hand, that our own mother country was visibly blest and favored during the troubles which ravaged the rest of Europe, and so far exempted from the curse of that war in which she bore so leading a part, that it never should find its way into her bosom;—that her arms and her influence were the main instruments selected to counterwork the desolating evils which were so widely permitted, and to bring about the high designs of Providence;—that the great scourge of these latter days in whom power and iniquity were united in a degree scarcely paralleled in History, was ordained to be moved by her means, to a remote corner of the world and set up upon a rock,—a warning monument of wicked ambition, teaching us to muse upon the great reverses of the world, and to ask in the singularly appropriate language of Scripture; “Is this the man that made the earth to tremble?—that did shake kingdoms? that made the world as a wilderness and destroyed the cities thereof, and opened not the house of his prisoners?” If our country has been thus favored and thus distinguished, we are to view it in connection with her national principles and feelings—the general character of her policy—the integrity and good faith of her government—the equal dispensation of Justice to her subjects—the purity of her established Faith and Worship—the tribute of Honor which the realm pays to Religion—the prevalence of real and effectual belief in the name of Christ—the growth of “the peaceable fruits of righteousness”—the part which she has latterly taken in wiping out that dark and deep stain upon human nature, the actual traffic in slaves;—the endeavours which she makes to pour the waters of life abroad over the world.—We cannot, therefore, see without alarm the tendency and disposition which now manifest themselves among our countrymen, to discard Religion from the public proceedings of the country, and to divorce her from the National Institutions. The opinion has been openly stated upon a very popular occasion in London that “in forming the estimate of a man’s character the ONLY CRITERION should be his faithfulness in the discharge of his duties towards his neighbour,” and a hope has been openly expressed that “England has arrived at a period when no other will be taken.” \*—What is this, then,—where *man* and not *God* is proclaimed to be the *prior* object of human obligation,—what is it that such persons do but to cast off their God, to “blot him out of their remembrance,” to “cause the Holy One of Israel to cease from before them,”—to refuse to “retain him in their knowledge”—consequently to provoke him to “give them over to vile affections;” to dare that divine jealousy which burns like fire against those who hate him? What could we anticipate, if such sentiments should spread themselves over the land, but that God would remove our candlestick out of its place, and make us like the states and cities “which he overthrew in his anger and in his wrath,” so that “all nations shall say; wherefore hath the Lord done thus unto this land? And then men shall say, because they

\* These quotations and some part of the remarks upon them, immediately subjoined, are taken from a late Address of the Rev. H. H. Norris, of Hackney, to his parishioners.