

To the Editor of the Record

MR. EDITOR.—I have stated, in my former letter on the subject of the contemplated union between the United Presbyterian Church of Canada and our own, that there appear to me to be two previous questions which must be determined in order to bring the controversy to a satisfactory issue—first, what are the conditions on which a union or alliance, or I may indeed add, any formal connection whatever, can be admitted on Scriptural grounds, to be formed between the Church and the State? and, secondly, what are the nature and limits of civil and political authority? What is it competent for the State to do, and within what bounds is its action, in the nature of things, necessarily circumscribed? If we can come to a satisfactory determination of these two preliminary questions, little room will be left, in my judgment, for further difference or discussion between the parties.

But before I proceed to the discussion of these two questions, it may be proper to guard myself in *limine* against misapprehension, by entering my solemn protest against the doctrine which the advocates of what is called voluntarism, are said (I would fain hope unwarrantably) to entertain, viz., that the State, by its original constitution and character, is precluded from all legislation and action, direct and indirect, in regard to the interests of religion. I will not believe that this is a correct apprehension, or fair statement, and faithful interpretation of their real principles, until, at least, I shall have first submitted to their candid judgment what appears to me to be the sound doctrine—philosophical and scriptural—concerning the relations and responsibilities which subsist between the Church and State, disentangled from the perplexity, and cleared of the confusion and obscurity in which it seems to me to have been involved, by not distinguishing in the discussion of the question what governments and states *ought* to be, from what in point of fact they are, and must, I fear, continue to be, until Christianity shall have had its perfect work. That it is the duty of the State, in every country and nation—whatever be its form of government—to seek the glory of God and the happiness of its subjects, which surely involves as its primary and all-pervading element the chief end of man, that is, his moral and religious responsibilities,—and that this obligation admits of no other limitation or qualification than the measure of the State's competency to further this end,—appears to me to be a principle as self-evident and indubitable, as that it is the chief end of man in his *individual* capacity to glorify God. Indeed the former is a corollary from the latter, or is rather implied in it and indissolubly bound up with it. For surely that must be the chief end of society, which is the chief end of man. That which is the supreme duty of the individual person or soul, must be the duty of thousands and millions united in civil society for the common end of universal good. Men collectively in society, living under the bond of that civil government which, in its true nature and design, is the ordinance of God, are bound—as far as in them lies—in consistency with the laws of the natural, political, and moral systems—laws which cannot but be in harmony—to do his will and work, most chiefly in all that relates to the highest interests and duties of our race. Is not the social and political system constituted for the very end of promoting the highest improvement and happiness of every soul of man within its pale? And can there be any other limits to the exercise of this beneficent and truly God-like power, save what there is to all power—(that of God—with reverence be it spoken—not excepted) the simple possibility, whether natural or moral, of its exercise? I could as easily be persuaded that agriculture does not come within the legitimate sphere of national legislation and polity, as that education—which Bacon calls the Georgics, or the agriculture of the mind,—in all its departments, not only mechanical, secular, intellectual,

but, a *fortiori*, moral and religious, is not the paramount object of a nation's care, even because it is the vital element, the very life-blood of the nation's well-being and happiness. I would not be guilty of the absurdity of seeking to reason with the man who should boldly aver, that it is not incumbent on all men as the creatures of God to obey in their civil and social, as well as singular, private, domestic capacity, the laws of His moral government; and on the very same grounds that it is not incumbent on all men, by parity of reason, as fallen creatures, which all confessedly are, to be subject to the government of Christ in His mediatorial kingdom, even as to the Father in His natural and moral kingdom; or in the words of our Lord himself, "to honour the Son even as they honour the Father." If this argument have any *validity* in its application to every individual man, is it not equally valid and decisive when applied to a multitude of men? The conclusion, then, appears to me like a self-evident and necessary truth, that states and nations are under a supreme obligation, as God's creatures, ministers, organs, and ordinances, to do whatever it may be naturally or morally competent for them to do, in furtherance of the glory of God, which is one with the chief end of man—with his moral and religious improvement and perfection, what scripture emphatically denominates "the whole of man." And let me add, that I know not any duty of the Churches of Christ and the ministers of the gospel, more certain in its evidence and imperative in its obligation, than that of pressing home upon the Princes and Rulers of this world what is the paramount and primary end for which the powers that be are ordained of God, namely, "to be his ministers for good, a terror to evil-doers, and a praise and encouragement to all who do well,"—*terms these*—of the Divine Commission, or charter of the Civil Magistrate—comprehensive of the whole range of morality and religion.

With this preliminary statement of the general obligation of States and Nations to be fellow-workers with God, in promoting the moral and religious interests of the subjects of their government, let us proceed to the consideration of the two questions on which we believe the whole controversy to be suspended. In regard to the *first question*, viz.: What are the conditions on which a union or alliance, or indeed any formal connection whatever can be admitted, on scriptural grounds, to be formed and maintained between the Church and the State?—it seems to me that the answer is, *in promptu*, easy, obvious. The one essential indispensable condition of any formal connection whatever between these Bodies must be, that the State shall leave the Church in the most absolute and undiminished possession of spiritual, and therefore, necessarily, of ecclesiastical freedom and independence, responsible to no human authority, except in civil matters, nor liable to any act of obtrusion or intrusion on the part of the State; secured against any co-action of law, or any influence, which, operating by fear or favour of man, might infringe the rights and liberties of the Church or endanger its purity and integrity as the body of Christ: in fine, that the State shall in no wise, in any circumstances, or under any pretence, interpose either its authority or its influence, much less the terror or the force of its power, to overawe or control the Church in spiritual matters, which are not of a nature to admit any interference of the civil power, or any abatement of the most unlimited freedom both of counsel and action on the part of those vested with the government of the Church, "which, as the body of Christ is not of the world," as surely as "Christ, its Divine Head, is not of the world." This, if I mistake not, is the theory of an Establishment, as held by the Free Church of Scotland, fully expounded and proclaimed in her late controversy with the State. Now, what is this but the identical doctrine which I laid down in my first letter as the only one compatible with what appears to me to be the just and scriptural view of the relation of the Church and the State as two bodies,

which not being homogeneous in their nature, or identical in their ends, cannot move in the same orbit, or occupy a common sphere, but may, nevertheless, move parallel and co-operate with one another, each in its own sphere, with perfect harmony, implying the most absolute and entire independence of the Church in all matters that are and ought to be the exclusive objects of the spiritual and ecclesiastical body. Civil matters are "the things of Cæsar,"—but ecclesiastical matters—all that pertains to the government of the Church—her discipline, worship, and ordinances,—are "the things of God," and therefore the maxim of her Divine Head, "Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and unto God the things that are God's," seems capable of direct application to this case. In this hypothetical exhibition of the connection of Church and State, according to the most recent and authoritative exposition of the theory, there appears to be little which in my judgment can throw up any material barrier between the advocates of such a connection and those who are on the footing of voluntaries. Dissenters enjoying the protection and manifold benefits of the civil government, while they are supported by the free-will offerings of their congregations, are not more independent in their spiritual capacity, than such an Establishment would be, could the theory be realised.

But in every view that can be taken of the possibility or probability of such a connection, in the existing condition of the Church and of the world, whether we try the question by an appeal to speculative principles or to history and actual experience, I feel myself constrained to confess that the voluntaries appear to me to have the better in the argument. For I contend, in the first place, that the conditions which Dr. Chalmers and the Free Church have laid down as the only basis on which, in accordance with the principles of scripture, such a connection can be advocated or admitted, are, such as in point of fact, would amount to no connection at all. The only condition, if it can be called such, being, that the Church shall faithfully discharge her proper functions, independent altogether of the powers and authorities of this world, and subject to no other law or authority,—to no other Lord or Lawgiver than Him whose kingdom is not of this world. In this way it was most truly said, (I think by Dr. Chalmers,) that the Church would best serve the interests of the State and of the country, and make the best return for whatever the patronage and bounty of the government might confer upon her. To this opinion I most cordially and unreservedly subscribe. But what hope is there that such a proposal would ever be listened to by our present race of statesmen and legislators? and were such a condition gravely proposed as the basis of a union with the State, they would no doubt treat it as did old Regent Morton, Knox's splendid scheme of education, contemptuously stigmatising it as a "*derout imagination*." They would laugh to scorn the very idea of an institution or body deriving its support from the State, and yet exempted from all intervention of either the legislative or executive governments in its affairs. Here, then, we have another proof how much men are liable to impose upon themselves by mere words and names. For, is not such a hypothetical relation a complete denegation of all formal or legal connection, since, in this case the Church would receive her endowments and enjoy all the benefits of State protection and patronage, with no condition or obligation whatever annexed, save that which is proper to and inseparable from her nature and destination, as the ordinance and institution of Christ? Accordingly, we need not wonder, since all other compacts and covenants imply a reciprocity of obligation between the contracting parties, that this view of the connection has been scouted by the vast majority of British statesmen as visionary and chimerical.

Nay, more, have not the leading men of the Free Church, with the late venerable and lamented Dr. Chalmers at their head, explicitly and st-