

of the law, which stamps bigamy and polygamy, as criminal offences; or if they should refuse their countenance to an enactment for the protection of the Sabbath from open profanation, or if they should fail, in a word, to do "all in their power to conform the laws of the land to the principles of God's word." Having gone thus far, however, the preacher before concluding, thinks it proper to throw in a caveat or two, with the view of guarding the official conscience of his hearers from the risk of self-deception on the above matters.—And what is the nature of the warning he gives them? Is the object of it simply to admonish them, that they may really, in external act, conform to all the injunctions above indicated, and yet fall far short of coming up to the standard of obedience to which Christ requires them, in common with all other hearers of his word, to conform? A warning of this sort would be quite a proper one. But this is not the drift of the admonition which the preacher supposed, deems it proper to give. He prefers to tell his titled auditors, that the exhortations he has been giving, apply exclusively to those of their number who are converted men; and that if there be any of them who have not yet "embraced Christ for their own salvation" they are not, in their existing state, required to take any practical action on the lessons which he has been inculcating, and that in their present circumstances, any attempt on their part to do so, would be an "act of gross presumption and hypocrisy." He thinks it, moreover, necessary to add, in conclusion, that as "civil rulers for the most part, and nations always, are mixed companies," it follows that there can be no obligation resting upon them, as a collective body, to acknowledge publicly the authority of God's inspired word, or to act upon the acknowledgment by framing their acts in harmony with it. A theory which is capable of being practically enforced in this way, has surely something suspicious about it.

We have already remarked, that it is erroneous in principle, and to sustain this opinion, there seems to be no need for going beyond the admissions made by the writer himself.

He tells us, for example, in one place, that the obligation to serve Christ in an official capacity, is peculiar to the converted ruler, as he alone is able to render acceptable obedience; but in another part of the same communication, he includes christian professors generally, among the number of those upon whom this species of obligation rests. And in view of such an interchange of terms, some will be inclined to ask, whether all those who make a profession of christianity, are to be marked down as necessarily regenerated men. The answer to this query, would require to be very decidedly in the affirmative, in order to maintain the consistency of the position laid down by the writer, in which he makes the duty to serve Christ, dependent upon the possession of "a gracious influence."

Again, the writer admits that the Magistrate is bound, in his official capacity, to honour and serve God, or to submit to the requirements of the divine moral government, even though he happened to be possessed of no other information in regard to his duties, than that which is furnished by the "significations in nature," and "the suggestions of his own mind," or in other words, by the light afforded from the bare and dubious intimations of natural reason and conscience. "By the constitution of nature," he says, "all men are under obligations to obey God, and all men have the means of knowing this to such an extent, as that they are without excuse for disobedience." Thus, it would seem, according to the views of the writer, that while the light of nature is of itself sufficient to create an obligation to serve the God of nature, the light of revelation is no in itself sufficient to create an obligation to serve Christ, or the God of the Bible. In the one case there is no requirement of service, except upon the supposition of a capability to render acceptable obedience, while in the other

case, obedience is demanded without any respect whatever to the capabilities of the individual.—The magistrate whose lot is cast in a land of heathen darkness, is bound, whatever be his character, to frame his official acts, by "the significations in nature," or the will of God as revealed in nature; while on the other hand, the magistrate, in a christian country, is free from the requirement, to act for Christ, or to shape his official conduct by the light of revelation, unless his character happens to be moulded by "a gracious influence." Statements like these appear to conflict with each other, and seem to require in order to the perception of their unity, the aid of some harmonising principle, which the writer has omitted to state.

Another test may be applied, to ascertain the accuracy of the theory we are examining. "We cannot deny," says the writer, "that there are such things as national sins and national duties, and from the connection in which he introduces the divine word, he leaves us to infer, that it is by that standard, according to his view, that such sins and duties are to be determined. If this be so, it necessarily follows, that a nation enjoying the light of divine truth, is guilty in the light of God, in so far as its national actions contravene the tenor and express requirements of the divine word. How, then, it may be asked, can any one affirm national guilt, as defined by the Bible, and at the same time deny national responsibility to the authority of the Bible? If guilt really exists in any case, responsibility must exist likewise, and if the divine word be the rule in accordance with which we estimate the former of these things, it must also be the standard, according to which we estimate the nature and extent of the latter. Guilt and responsibility, in a word, are correlates, and if we accept the one, we put it out of our power to reject the other.

2. The second ground on which the writer thinks it necessary to maintain the theory, which makes the requirement to serve and obey Christ, dependent upon moral character, we find announced in the following words:—"Besides it" (that is the requirement of such service from collective bodies of rulers,) "would be a blending of Church and State matters, and thus the very Establishment principle, which we do not seek our brethren to renounce, but which they must forswear with us, in meeting with our unqualified condemnation."

This is another statement which will not, we fear, bear any very close examination, even though we should bring to bear upon it no other aids to enquiry than those furnished by the writer himself. We do not stop to test the accuracy of the language which represents the Establishment principle, as equivalent to a blending of Church and State matters, or an identifying of the kingdoms of this world with the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ. Let us assume, for the time being, that the language is faultless, and the view which it embodies strictly correct. And what in this case is the inference which may very justly be drawn, in relation to the peculiar view of this writer, on the right of the state to over-ride the prerogatives of the Church? It will be somewhat difficult, we fear, to avoid suspecting him of a leaning to Erastianism. He defines very satisfactorily the obligations which devolve upon the Christian magistrate, that is, the magistrate which is really a converted man; and the only fault we find with him is, that he contracts a little too much the circle of those on whom these obligations rest. He anticipates, however, the arrival of a period when his circle will expand to the dimensions of our own; and he intimates that in that happy age or epoch, during which "the people will be all righteous," our present views of national obligation will acquire the element of verity, and that nations will then be bound to conform their actions to the requirements of Christ. Must we suppose then, that Erastianism, or a blending of Church and state matters will prove itself to be one of the

necessary products of this happy state of things? We hope not, for we have ever been exceedingly sceptical, as to the possibility of any real good being secured, under any circumstances, from an interblending of civil and ecclesiastical functions. If however the writer cherishes a different opinion from ourselves, in regard to the Church-state during the blissful period referred to, one would think, that in this case, he might with propriety use a little less incisiveness in his mode of denouncing establishments, which are really in themselves, when they approach the model, which their best advocates have pleaded for, much more innocuous things, as we should suppose, than are the evils incident, upon a blending of church and state matters.

But is it actually after all, the case that national fealty to the claims of the divine word, must necessitate the undesirable results to which the writer refers; or will it even, of necessity, occasion the consequence of a return to the plan of state endowments? Undoubtedly it will, if statesmen be conscientious, and if the Bible lays it down as among the duties of the magistrate, that he should supervise and control the affairs of the church, and impound her treasury from the resources of the national exchequer.

It occurs, however, to ask, whether our United Presbyterian friends, believe, that either the one or the other of these things, is prescribed in scripture as a civil duty? We had imagined them to be decidedly of an opposite opinion; and we feel utterly a loss, therefore, to understand, on what grounds they can base the allegation, that an acknowledgment of national fealty to the claims of the Bible, must necessarily eventuate, in causing such things, to assume the rank of national duties. Our respondent should not be the first, to assume the appearance of a want of faith, in the soundness of that mode of biblical exegesis, by the aid of which he professes to have reached the conclusion, that it is the duty of the state, not only to refrain from meddling with the scriptural liberties of the Church; but to abstain likewise, from relieving her, in any degree, from the necessity of acting as a self-sustaining institution.

In reference to the manner in which he deals with the third general principle announced in my former letter, I have little to say, as he has not himself done much in the way of discussing its merits. He begins his remarks on this point, by characterising the assertion, that the Bible imposes new duties upon nations, as a gratuitous one, and he ends as it seems to me, by making the assertion his own. I will close these remarks, by expressing the hope that if on any point, I have in the slightest degree mis-stated the idea which the writer meant to convey, he will be generous enough to believe that the mistake on my part has been unintentional.

I am, Mr. Editor,

Yours respectfully,

ROBERT URE.

VANKLEEKHILL.

At a special meeting convened at Vankleekhill, on February 21st, 1855, for the purpose of taking into consideration the scanty and destitute state of many localities around us, as regards religious books, and tracts, &c., and believing in dependence upon the Divine aid, that the circulation of such publications throughout the country, would greatly tend to the moral and spiritual improvement of the community—

1. *Resolved unanimously*, That we do form ourselves into a Society to propagate christian knowledge, through the medium of such religious publications as the Directors of the Society may approve of.

2. *Resolved*, That this Society be denominated "The Ottawa and St. Lawrence Society, for Propagating Christian Knowledge."