

# 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.

ISAIAH XLIX. 22, 23.

(Continued from p. 34. No. V.)

THE King is dead.—Well—the King was only a man, and like other men must die. Yes—but his death is an event of public interest. He was the head of the first empire on earth, to which his regency and reign have added a lustre which will beam through all history while the fashion of this world endures. And, as subjects of that wide spread empire, his death concerns us all. He stood in a direct relation to us all. He loved his people—that cannot, I think, be questioned,—and under his rule they were permitted to win resplendent trophies which are associated with the preservation of the best interests of mankind. His own personal qualities and attainments were such as eminently fitted him for dignity, for counsel, for command. He was a man cast in no common mould, and gifted in no common way. But here we must make a general observation, without particular reference to the case now before us, that the faults of Kings and Princes are as conspicuous as the points which we admire in their characters; and although we ought in duty and decency to veil them, the pulpit is the last place in which the language of flattery should be heard. There at least we must estimate things by the pure and holy standard of the word of GOD who is to judge us all;—and which of us, from the Prince who is exposed to all the most dangerous snares of pride and pleasure, to the humblest individual who keeps his way

“Along the cool sequestered vale of life,”—

which of us can bear to be brought to such a test? “Who may abide the day of his coming, and who shall stand when He appeareth?”—As a King, we may venture, I think, to say of the deceased Monarch, that he “fed” his people “with a faithful and true heart, and ruled them prudently with all his power.”—As a Christian,—we surely ought to indulge in the same charitable construction of his preparation for eternity, which we should put upon any other case where equal grounds of hope might be afforded.—All of us are sinners before God, and it is no treason to say that our King was among the number;—it would be treason to the KING OF KINGS to say otherwise:—but we may hope that he was a *repentant* and *believing* sinner. Many contradictory things are always said by different parties, of the private life and habits of a king; and persons on either side, affecting to enjoy the best information, make statements inconsistent with each other, in a manner the most positive and precise; but one thing we know, that the King had for a length of time about him the present Bishop of Winchester, a prelate of decided and eminent piety, in whose society he much delighted, and who was believed with good reason to have been an instrument in producing a salutary effect upon his mind.—We know also that there were other faithful and uncompromising Preachers of the truth of God whom the King often heard. When therefore we hear that, upon the bed of death, the Monarch received the announcement of its near approach with the words, “The will of God be done!”—and that he then called for another Prelate who was in attendance upon him at the last, to administer to him the pledges of a Saviour’s love,—we ought to hope that a mind so discerning and so well informed, would not, in that last struggle, when Royalty in the grasp of death was the mere frail thing that other men are, desire to participate in those holy memorials as in an empty ceremony or a superstitious charm, but that he believed and sought an interest in the redemption of sinners by the blood of Christ, whose sufferings are represented in that ordinance. This is what we ought to hope; and thus we leave this portion of our subject—only adding a general caution, that this hope to which we cling for others, ought never to be perverted into a delusive reliance for ourselves. For though God,

whose favours are of grace and not of debt, may receive and recompense those who engage in his service at an advanced period of their day, and even at the eleventh hour which precedes its close,—it is not for those who deliberately calculate upon such an opportunity that the mercy can be expected to be reserved. They who abuse his long-suffering, are in the direct way to be “given over to a reprobate mind,” and are only “heaping up to themselves wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God.”

(To be Continued.)

## MARTYRDOM OF POLYCARP.

Marcus Antoninus, at the age of twelve years, embraced the rigid system of the stoical philosophy, which he also endeavoured to inculcate on the minds of his subjects. He even condescended to read lectures of philosophy to the Roman people, in a manner, says Gibbon, who nevertheless eulogizes his character, more public than was consistent with the modesty of a sage, or the dignity of an emperor. Under his reign commenced what is generally accounted the *fourth persecution* of the Christians. It is not improbable that he had beheld with an anxious eye the lenity which had been shown them by his predecessors, and that the occasional interruptions that had been given them were at least with his connivance. Certain it is, that no sooner had he attained to the full exercise of power, than he completely discarded the tolerant principles of Antoninus Pius, and threw open once more all the flood gates of persecution.

The churches of Asia appear to have suffered dreadfully at this period. Polycarp was pastor of the church in Smyrna, an office which he had held for more than eighty years, and which he had filled up with honour to himself, to the edification of his Christian brethren, and the glory of his Divine Master. It only remained for him now to seal his testimony with his blood. The eminence of his station marked him out as the victim of popular fury. The cry of the multitude against Polycarp was, “This is the Doctor of Asia, the father of the Christians, the subverter of our gods, who teaches many that they must not perform the sacred rights, nor worship our deities. *Away with these atheists.*” The philosophy of the emperor could not teach him that this pretended atheism was a real virtue, which deserved to be encouraged and propagated among mankind. Here reason and Philosophy failed him, and his blind attachment to the gods of his country caused him to shed much blood, and to become the destroyer of the saints of the living God.

The friends of Polycarp, anxious for his safety, prevailed on him to withdraw himself from public view, and retire to a neighbouring village, which he did, continuing with a few of his brethren, day and night, in prayer to God for the tranquillity of all the churches. The most diligent search was in the mean time made for him without effect. But when his enemies proceeded to put some of his brethren to the torture, with the view of compelling them to betray him, he could no longer be prevailed on to remain concealed. “The will of the Lord be done!” was his pious ejaculation. On uttering which he made a voluntary surrender of himself to his persecutors, saluted them with a cheerful countenance, and invited them to refresh themselves at his table, only soliciting from them on his own behalf one hour for prayer. They granted his request, and his devotions were prolonged to double the period with such sweetness and savour, that all who heard him were struck with admiration, several of the soldiers repenting that they were employed against so venerable an old man. His prayer being ended, they set him on an ass, and conveyed him towards the city, being met on the road by Herod the Irenarch (a kind of justice of the peace) and his father Nicetes, who were chief agents in this persecution. Many efforts were tried to shake his constancy, and induce him to abjure his profession. At one time he was threatened by