

THE CHRISTIAN SENTINEL.

THREE RIVERS, FRIDAY 5th DECEMBER, 1830.

SOME OBJECTIONS TO THE UNION OF CHURCH AND STATE CONSIDERED.

It is the practice of many, in most things, to be ruled by the greatest body of evidence either for or against a proposition. But there are again those who, though there should be ninety-nine unanswerable reasons for a thing, and only the effigy of an objection remaining against it, if that be on the side of their prejudices and inclinations, would trample the evidence under their feet, and follow their own wills. This is particularly the case with moral truths, concerning which the question cannot be decided like one in simple addition where two and two undeniably are equal to four, or where chain and compass, or weights and scales cannot be the umpire. This is unfortunate: but the cause is, that men are fonder of their own inventions and arbitrary adoptions than of that which appears imposed on them by a superior power; let the quality be what it may. The "dictates of conscience" can overrule and put down almost any testimony.

The arguments adduced on this subject are, no doubt, of sufficient weight to satisfy and determine many minds. But since there are others that would hold out still, and seek refuge behind the least seeming objection, we shall consider such objections as occur, in order still further to cut off the means of retreat.

Obj. 1. The kingdom of God is not of this world: the connection therefore of Church and State converts the whole into a worldly concern, and turns religion into a State policy.

Ans. The kingdom of God, though not of this world, yet is in it and effected by it. The Jewish Church, though not the kingdom of "God manifest in the flesh," yet was the kingdom of God. But whether "was it from heaven, or of men?" Was it a mere worldly concern in consequence of the union of Church and State? And was not also the Jewish religion strictly a state policy? Undoubtedly. For what purpose? See Dent. xxvi. 16—19. "This day the Lord thy God hath commanded thee to do these statutes and judgments: thou shalt therefore keep and do them with all thy heart, and with all thy soul. Thou hast avouched the Lord this day to be thy God, and to walk in his ways, and to keep his statutes, and his commandments, and his judgments, and to hearken unto his voice: and the Lord hath avouched thee this day to be his peculiar people, as he hath promised thee, and that thou shouldst keep all his commandments; and to make thee high above all nations which he hath made, in praise, and in name, and in honor: and that thou mayst be a holy people unto the Lord thy God as he hath spoken."—And what is so worthy of being a state policy as the will of God? If the kingdoms of this world are to become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ, what must be their state policy? If it is not to be the support of the Gospel, and a religious care over their subjects, truly we cannot tell what it will be.

Obj. 2. Our Lord and his Apostles built up the Church without the aid, and even in defiance of, the civil power; and therefore she needs not that power for her support.

Ans. If the Gospel embraced nothing over which the jurisdiction of the civil power must unavoidably extend—that is to say; if it made no reference to human conduct as it stands towards human government, this objection would be unanswerable. But since there is not an action of a man's life which is not cognizable in some shape by the Gospel, it is just as reasonable in the nature of the thing, that civil law should support religion in a Christian country as that it did among the Jews. But it appears, 1. That our Lord and his followers did not act on the principle of defiance to the civil power in refusing to obey it when it interfered with their mission. On the contrary, since the Jewish nation had the offer of the Gospel, had the government been converted, and ordained that every assistance and facility in the power of human agency should be rendered to it, there is no sufficient ground for saying that it would have been rejected. The disciples for a long time, as Christians, worshipped in the Temple. And since one stone of it was not left upon another because she knew not the time of her visita-

tion, had the rulers indeed known that he was the very Christ, it is sufficiently evident that the Temple might have been standing as a Christian house of worship until this day. Had the nation acknowledged their king, it would also have acknowledged the new order of the ministry; and as "a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith," they all might have been as if they would, and kept their "place and nation," and made it the instrument of much good without ever separating the Church from the state at all. The Government was a Theocracy before that in its constitution, and it might have continued so still: for a whole nation converted to Christ would stand in the same relation to Christianity that the nation of the Jews did to Judaism; and it would be as worthy of it as a nation to be one compact Christian family and people of God, as it was of Israel to be so. These divisions "are from beneath" not "from above."

2. That since the Jews refused him, he took advantage of their unbelief more firmly to establish the proof of the Gospel. But had they submitted to be "gathered as a hen gathereth her brood under her wings," their "house," (a term in Scripture signifying not only a family, but a body politic or nation,) would not only not have been left "desolate," but he would have found other proof quite as strong.

3. One great object of the Gospel was, to revolutionize the whole world by the operation of truth and pure principles. To make Governments entirely new was impossible; because all governments must have something in common with the best that can be. Suffering for the truth under governments which did not acknowledge it, achieved greater victories in its favor than fighting for it could have done. But this by no means forbids Christian action, as such, to protect the truth against aggression by force of arms. Had not states defended the Reformation, the persecuting spirit of Rome would not have left a Protestant alive on the face of the earth. At this moment the people of the U. States of America are lamenting the spread of her power among them, while they are wilfully blind to the true cause of it. The General Government has LEFT GOD OUT OF ITS POLITICAL CREED, and manifests the same indifference to his religion that it might if he did not exist. It is a compact for worldly purposes only, by which it has left its people to their own ways, to grow up a moral wilderness if they pleased, as interminable as their forests; and no falsehood in religion—not even atheism, can mar the soundness of their political principles. But had the Government provided the means of planting and protecting the Gospel among its poor and destitute subjects and new settlements, as it ought to have done, if for nothing more than to make them virtuous citizens, they need not now have these complaints to make. It is to be feared that England is not clear in this matter also.

Obj. 3. It is a profanation of God's word for human Government to make it the subject of legislation.

Ans. So also it should be for any human association to treat it in the same manner; which is actually done by every society that makes the Gospel or any part of it a subject of enactment or adoption as bye laws. The difference is, national governments have a stronger arm to enforce it than self-constituted societies within those governments have. But if this objection were valid, it would go to prohibit human governments from restraining any crime forbidden by the Bible; for the commandments and injunctions forbidding any sins, are an indispensable part of the Gospel. Yet no one ever objected to legislating on such parts of the Gospel as are indispensable even to the rudest form of Society. Perhaps the reason is, that these things have the appearance of originating in human wisdom instead of the will of God, and being established on human authority instead of his. And very like the same reason ought to account for the readiness of self-originated societies to legislate on the Gospel, at the same time that they blame the government for doing only what they do themselves. Thus as God's word is, one way and another, made the subject of human legislation and adoption without dispute. But if separate parties and bodies may thus lawfully carve up the whole Bible among themselves, why may not one particular body, namely, a whole people as a civil state, establish "the whole counsel of God" as the law of the land? Every human government in existence must inevitably adopt as by authority some part of the Bible as public law. Who then shall draw a line of demarkation between what