

In regard to Mr. Ure's third particular, that the word of God imposes new duties upon nations, we hold it to be a gratuitous assertion, founded on the mistaken view, already referred to, which has been adopted by the Free Church, of what is meant in scripture by Christ's being King of nations. But perhaps in speaking of new duties there is only between us a difference in words. Both Churches hold that the magistrate's duties are all civil. If so, what new duties do the scriptures impose? Mr. Ure does not specify, but he instances legislation respecting the Sabbath. But this cannot be for the sanctification of the Sabbath, for that is a spiritual duty, to which the Magistrate is incompetent. It is only to preserve that outward order which is necessary to enable the citizens to follow their spiritual duties without molestation. This is no new duty, but belongs to the same class with the preservation of outward order on every other necessary occasion. As long as the Free Church holds with us that the Magistrate's duties are all civil, it seems to be mere trifling to speak of new duties. There may be a greater variety of the same class of duties, but there is no new class. As well might we say, that new duties are imposed on the Magistrate, since Railway Cars have been set in motion, or Steamboat navigation employed. Our brethren may be assured, however, that we have as much freedom as themselves in petitioning Parliament for the formation or enforcement of salutary laws for external order on Sabbath, and for all other such matters which affect the moral and religious interests of the community. As is well known to all who are acquainted with the history of the United Presbyterian Church, it has been in the habit for generations of approaching the civil government in regard to matters of public interest."

#### UNION—LETTER FROM REV. R. URE.

MR. EDITOR:

My attention has been directed to a communication in the last number of the *United Presbyterian Magazine*, in reply to a letter of mine on the subject of Union, which appeared in your Journal some months ago; and as you may probably think it proper to transfer the communication alluded to, or at least the most of it, to the columns of the forthcoming number of the *Record*, I beg to offer for your acceptance, some few strictures upon it.

The tone which pervades some parts of the reply, and particularly the introductory portion of it, would not, I suspect, bear to be very closely criticised. Such terms as those of "haughtiness," "virulence," and "slander," which the writer applies to the conduct of former expositors of our distinctive principles, do not seem to be remarkable for their adaptedness to foster right feeling, or to help forward, in any degree, the good cause which he professes to have at heart. This, however, involves merely a question of taste, or an affair of style, in the discussion of which, we have no disposition to detain the reader.

The writer, I observe, is inclined to find some fault with me, for indicating what I conceived to be the amount of concession demanded of us, in order to a union between the churches. In my former letter, I ventured to express the opinion, that there would be no serious difficulty in the way of such union, provided our church were not asked to suppress its united testimony to other principles, in reference to the power or duties of the Civil Magistrate, besides those immediately connected with the question of ecclesiastical establishments; and in reply to this, we are told, that there was no asking on their part, that we should suppress our testimony on any principle in reference to the Magistrate's power. What does the writer wish us to understand by this statement? It is true there was no asking, on the part of our brethren, for the

surrender on our side, of any principle, viewed simply as a matter of individual opinion; but is it so, that we have been mistaken in supposing, that a distinction has been generally recognised as existing, between matters, left open to the varieties of private sentiment, and the principles which it may be judged necessary to include in the united testimony of a church? Or, have we been indulging a further error, in imagining, that the united testimony of a Church to any principle, may with propriety be said to be suppressed, when the principle ceases to appear in the series of articles which she recognises as her creed, and when it fails to be regarded by her as a point which any or all of her office bearers may repudiate at pleasure, without evoking on her part, either challenge or enquiry? It is, we think, obvious, either that the writer misapprehends the import of the language we employed to express our meaning on the point in question, or that he differs materially with us in the construction to be put upon the course pursued by the committee of his Synod, who had been, as we supposed, deterred from meeting with us, on the simple ground of our continuing to maintain as a portion of our creed, the principles referred to in our Synodical deliverance, and of which a summary was attempted to be given in my former letter.

Let us now examine the statement which the writer gives of his views in relation to the main question at issue between us.

We observe with satisfaction, the explicit admission he makes, as to his concurrence in the first particular announced in our former letter, in which we affirmed the subjection of nations as such to the moral sovereignty of the Almighty. He acknowledges his belief in such things as national sins and national duties; and he even goes the length, if we have not misconstrued the language employed, of recognising the divine word as the standard by which national sins and duties are to be determined. We are at a loss, however, to harmonise these preliminary admissions with the line of remark which the writer adopts, when he comes to discuss our second position, which had reference to the transfer of all authority and power to Christ, as Mediator.

He states, indeed, that though not prepared to assent "unqualifiedly" to our "theory" on this point, he is not unwilling to accept the "practical results" we affirm to be founded upon it. And what were these results, as we endeavoured briefly to define them, under this head in our former letter? They were simply these:—In the first place, an obligation, on the part of nations favoured with the light of inspiration, to recognise openly, or officially, the authoritative character of the divine word; and secondly the consequent obligation, devolving upon them, to frame their legislature and administrative acts in harmony with the directions of this divine statute-book, the authority of which they had recognised. If the writer really acquiesces in these "practical results" our controversy with him is at an end; for in this case he has admitted to the fullest extent, the principles for which we contend, unless indeed, he chooses to deny the existence of any connection between the authority of Christ, and the authority of the word of Christ, a thing, we presume, which he will not feel inclined to do. We are afraid, however, that the subsequent statements and reasonings of the writer, will be found, on examination, to be quite as much at variance with these practical results of the principle in question, as they are with the principle itself. If we have succeeded in apprehending correctly the view he advances in relation to the leadership of Christ over nations, it amounts to this,—that the moral authority of Christ, or his right to exact obedience to his word, extends only to that portion of the nation and that section of its rulers, who are really converted men, or who are at least professors of Christianity, and in good standing with the Christian church; and hence it follows, in accor-

dance with this view, that as "civil rulers," for the most part, and nations always, are mixed companies" there can be no such thing as a national obligation to yield submission to the authority of the Mediator, until at least the arrival of "that blessed period when the people shall be all righteous."

"Christian Magistrates," he tells us, "are his (Christ's) servants, and are to discharge their civil duties in accordance with his laws." "They are in their official capacity, to judge and enact for the honour of Christ, and do all in their power to have the laws of the land conformed to the principles of God's word." "Whilst every Christian Magistrate is in his official capacity to act as a Christian, he is only bound for himself; and although doubtless obligations lie on those who are not professors to embrace Christianity and to act for Christ, yet till they believe for their own salvation, they neither can, nor are they required to yield any obedience to Christ." Let attention be given to the last clause of the above sentence, which we have taken the liberty of placing in italics, and it will be at once observed, to what extent the doctrine of the writer, is really in harmony with his professed acceptance of the "practical results" of our principles. Until a ruler believes for his own salvation, he is not, we are told, required, as a ruler, to obey Christ, i. e. he is not required, like the Christian Magistrate, "to discharge his civil duties in accordance with Christ's laws," nor "to do all in his power to have the laws of the land conformed to the principles of God's word."

Let us look back for a little at the two-fold ground, upon which this strange abridgment of the moral dominion of Christ, is attempted to be based.

In the first place, "no such service," he remarks, that is no such service as that which he has described, as obligatory on the Christian Magistrate, "is required or could be accepted from men in an unregenerate state, or if attempted, it would be formal, not real, and an act of gross presumption and hypocrisy." Does the author of this statement, really desire us to believe, that unless we can feel assured that an individual is in a regenerate state, it is wrong to tell him that he is bound to obey the precepts of the divine word? Must we insist on obtaining a reliable guarantee as to the reality of a man's conversion, or must we even wait until he chooses to make a profession of Christianity, before we venture to tell him that he is required on the authority of the God of the Bible to perform such and such relative duties? The writer we apprehend, has fallen into the mistake of confounding two questions, widely distinct from each other—the question, namely, as to the quality of man's obedience, and the measure of his moral qualifications; and the question as to the obligations which devolve upon the man, independently altogether of the nature of his state, or the complexion of his character in the sight of God.

This is a serious mistake, and it would be no difficult task to show, that the theory on the subject of moral obligation, which grows out of it, is alike erroneous in principle, and mischievous in its practical consequences, if consistently carried out. Let us suppose, that the writer who propounds this doctrine, is a minister of the gospel, and that in the course of events, and in the discharge of his ministerial work, he is called upon to address a congregation, in which there happens to be a goodly sprinkling of our Provincial Senators and other civil functionaries, and that he is anxious not to let the opportunity pass without giving this latter class of his auditors, the benefit of his views on the duties of the Magistracy. He tells them accordingly, that they are bound to make the law of the Bible, or the requirements of Christ, the standard of their official conduct; that they would be chargeable with guilt, if, for instance, they should lend their assent to any relaxation