

THE CHRISTIAN SENTINEL.

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(Continued from p. 101. No. XIII.)

7. If the state were to extend its patronage to more communions than one, to be consistent on the scheme of equal rights and religious liberty, it should extend it to as many as the dictates of conscience might please to prescribe to it, even if it were ten thousand: For the principle of choice as unrestrained as in the selection of articles of dress being once admitted, (according to the doctrines now strenuously advocated;) and as there is no rule of limitation permitted to exist other than the *extension* of inventive genius, there is no human authority that may dare to set bounds to it—and no human government able to keep pace with its demands. This system of religious liberty and rights of conscience also, by erecting private individual fancy and choice into the supreme tribunal before which the inventors of Churches ought to prefer their claims, effectually roots out the principle of ecclesiastical allegiance to them that have the rule over us. The right of choice sets obligation at defiance. For then, what party can lawfully claim the obedience of any one individual? None at all. Neither can all parties hold in him each the fractional part of a claim; and a man balanced between doubts could hardly be equally divided between a dozen candidate parties. "What is every body's property is nobody's." In short, if the right of choice exists, the only proper limit to division and subdivision must be in the *love-term*; that is: that every individual may be his own Church establishment, and thus banish even the semblance of a Church out of the world. It is to be hoped, however, that the advocates of such absurd notions hold them "ignorantly and in unbelief," rather than in a disposition not to acknowledge "and obey the truth."

8. Hence it is evident, that if the state is bound, in duty to God, to acknowledge and support his Church among its children instead of human societies claiming to be Churches, it is equally bound to ascertain what the Church is, and which is the authentic ministry and government, and to refuse aid to all others whatever. It must not stop at certain *doctrines* as the word of God: but must also recognize a certain primitive and authentic ministry as of divine institution, and what particular persons are truly admitted into that ministry.

9. As all men are under obligation to pay a due obedience to the ministry which our Lord set over the Church whether they like or dislike it; so are they bound to support that ministry to the exclusion of all other claimants, their inclinations to the contrary notwithstanding. And the state, being appointed of God the temporal protector of the Church, has, under him, full authority to use compulsion in the premises as clearly as in any other matters of rightful jurisdiction—as clearly as the father of a family has power to tax his own household for such religious instruction as his station and means require and enable him to give. Being the arbiter of how it shall raise the means, the state is also the proper judge how much should be set apart for the service of religion, both as possessing temporal authority over the ministry, and as the guardian of the rights of the people. God has designated *one tenth*; and perhaps he is the most unexceptionable Judge. The state should also be bound to protect the people from the assumed claims of self-constituted teachers, who might be ambitious to "draw away disciples after them" from such motives as Paul mentions, Rom. xvi. 17, 18.—The fact that an unbeliever or any one might refuse to bear his own share towards the religious instruction of the people, could neither release him from his obligation to pay, nor the state from the obligation to compel him. For if his person and property are secured to him in peace and quietness by means of their religious instruction, it is as much a debt due from him to the public as his civil taxes are, and indeed more so. He owes it to God for the sake of the poor, who cannot provide for themselves; and his withholding it is robbing God of his "tithes and offerings," Mal. 3: 8. Yet strange to say, the pretended zeal of our modern reformers fiercely denounces "this unjust and oppressive policy" which com-

pels unjust and wicked men to discharge one of their first and most important duties.—We certainly should be on our guard against those who, under the Christian name, plead the cause of infidelity so feelingly; for it not unfrequently happens that blind bigot zeal is one of the most mischievous enemies of truth.

10. As every family is a perfect state in miniature, possessing every fundamental political principle of the most extended empire; and as an Epitome of Church and State as evidently exist together in it as it did in the patriarchal families, and in full "in Israel," while its powers are exercised in the authoritative education of children, the state has a rightful claim on every parent to receive his children at his hands educated in such manner as to be *wholly* consistent members of a Christian Commonwealth. But this he cannot do unless he educates them in the national religion, the same as the Jews were educated. But if there is moral liberty for an opposite course of religious education, the parent has a moral right to teach them *disobedience* to those whom God has placed over them. "It was never so seen in Israel," while the worship of God was maintained in the land.

11. The duty of the state over its national family is nothing but the duty of every parent on an extended scale. The parent is subject to the State, and the child to the parent for the State, and all alike subject to God in and by his Church. But God, we think, never intended that Christian parents should be under any moral necessity of training up their children in disobedience to a Christian State; which yet must be the case if it is right for the King to support one communion and the subject another. Where this is actually done, the principle of *disobedience* virtually becomes an article of the *religious Creed*; the unavoidable tendency of which is towards *political conflict for the mastery, and a continual effort to demolish the fabric of the government*. Yet, while toiling at this worldly policy, and maturing schemes of political revolution, the advocates of it are constantly crying out that the kingdom of Christ is not of this world!—While the Jews served God, "it was never so seen in Israel," that divine pattern of "good things to come," that model of a perfect moral government. A Christian King cannot, in strictness of speech, be the "father of his people," unless his family profess his religion, and obey the ministry that he obeys, and meet him at the same table of their Common Lord. How can Kings and their Queens be the NURSING FATHERS and the NURSING MOTHERS of their people in the bonds of the Gospel, when they are subject to one ministry, and their people running at large, and "heaping to themselves teachers, having itching ears"? 2 Tim. 4: 3. "The rich and the poor meet together, says Solomon: the Lord is the maker of them all;" and a national Church is the only means of bringing them together as the members of one family—the children of one common King and father of his people, set over them by God for their good in all things. In "a Psalm for Solomon," (the seventy-first,) David says: "Give the King thy judgments, O God, and thy righteousness unto the King's son. He shall judge thy people with righteousness, and thy poor with judgment. He shall judge the poor of the people, and shall save the children of the needy." But are there no "needy" besides the hungry and the naked of this world? What, when "my people perish for lack of knowledge," shall a Christian King's hands be so tied fast by the rights and dictates of his people's consciences, that if he attempts through the instrumentality of his own clergy to "recover" them "out of the snare of the devil," they are at liberty to "lift their hands against the Lord's anointed," and hurl him from his throne?—Were the principle here contended for, (of the prince and his people all being members of the same communion, and which is so beautifully illustrated in the Book which was given "for our learning," and which contains our faith,) only to be found in fiction and romance; and were it impossible to be put in practice in this world, no doubt but it would have sentimental admirers enough. But since it *can* be done, and *ought* to be done, and is *commanded* of God to be done—"this is a hard saying; who can hear it?"

12. There is a notion prevalent among vast numbers, that it is the "unalienable right" of every individual to choose his own mode of belief and worship, and to select the party to which he will attach himself according to his own fancy, or, as they say, "according to the dictates of his own conscience." There is an extract from the "Boston Commentator" now lying before us which says: "The difference of creed touches not our views of religion. Sincerity is