

# 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.

Rev. A. H. BURWELL, Editor.]

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## SERMON ON THE DEATH OF HIS LATE MAJESTY GEORGE IV.

ISAIAH lix. 22, 23.

(Continued from p. 49. No. VII.)

IT is not simply as subjects of the empire that we mourn in a formal manner the death of the King. That which gives its particular propriety to these solemn tokens of our bereavement, is the connection of our Church with the State, and our recognition of the Monarch as the temporal Head of the Church.—As this is a subject upon which great varieties of opinion are found to prevail, I shall take this opportunity of submitting to your consideration what I humbly conceive to be a correct view of the subject: although I must not expect perhaps to be regarded as a perfectly impartial and disinterested judge.—Let it be premised, however, that our faith in Christ, and our attachment to the Church of which we are members, ought to be something wholly independent of the accidental circumstances in which the Christian Religion, in this its primitive form, may be placed by the ruling powers of a country. Our Faith in Christ ought to be something from which “neither life nor death” nor any object within the range of creation “shall be able to separate” our hearts.—And although it is desirable, of course in itself, that men, if they can in conscience do it, should conform to the established Religion of their country, our attachment to the church, ought to rest upon far higher grounds than simply upon this principle of conformity.—While we look with the kindest charity upon those who differ from us, and rejoice in all the good which they may effect; while we lament such faults among ourselves as may tend to impede their return, “let us hold fast the faithful word as we have been taught,” and “earnestly contend for the faith once delivered to the saints.” That faith is the Protestant faith as professed by the Reformed-National Churches, who were called out by the voice of GOD to restore His truth; and in those points of discipline or usage which are peculiar to our own, we are assuredly the nearest to the ancient and primitive standard. Let us not, therefore be “like children tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine,” “for it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace.”—Yes; while one party overturns the foundation by denying the godhead and atonement of Christ;—another, headed by one high in popularity and fame, blasphemously represents him as liable, in human nature, to sin, and a third carries away the crowd by the false excitement of the marvellous;—while one protests against the baptism of our little ones and the confirmation of our youth;—another, (and that within our own ranks,) would release us from the obligation of the Christian Sabbath, and another still would confound Episcopacy with papal rule;—while every day serves to verify the Apostolic prediction, “The time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but after their own lusts they shall heap to themselves teachers having itching ears”—let us apply the maxims of Scripture to “hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering”—to “hold fast the form of sound words.”—“Remove not the ancient landmark which thy fathers have set.”—“Stand ye in the ways and see—and ask for the old paths; where is the good way and ye shall find rest for your souls.”

But to proceed with the question of connection with the State. Persons who are untouched by the power of religion, and have no effectual belief nor any other than a very superficial knowledge upon the subject,—conceiving that this or that mode of worship or system of doctrine is a matter of absolute indifference, are apt to think it injurious and absurd that any one in particular should enjoy privilege and protection above the rest; and vent abroad a certain set of phrases, such as objections to a dominant Church and other current expressions, which are conceived to envelop the sum of political wisdom and enlightened liberality upon the subject. With such persons we can hardly argue the question. With them it must be our first business,—if God grant it, to persuade

them to become religious. Till they feel the importance of Religion, till their hearts acknowledge that it is, (as it must be if it be a reality at all,) the first concern of human life, far transcending all other cares and duties whether public or private, they cannot be judges of the manner and degree in which human Governments should provide for the maintenance and extension of the truth of God. But it is evident that among those who are impressed more deeply with a sense of Religion there are many, (I am not speaking, of course, of avowed Dissenters,) who either secretly favour the same views respecting an established Church, or at best, are cold in their attachment to it, and half-hearted in their support.—They conceive perhaps that the declaration of the Saviour, “My kingdom is not of this world,” and the circumstance that the Gospel was first planted, not by the aid of worldly resources nor in conjunction with established authority,—but in utter destitution of the one and in direct opposition to the other,—are strong presumptions against the expediency of an alliance of the Christian Religion with the civil power and an endowment of the Church from its munificence. But when the Son of God was himself upon earth, and in the days of miraculous intervention which immediately succeeded, the case was widely different from that of the ages which followed afterwards. The founder of the Gospel came to break the pride of man: he appeared, therefore in the humblest circumstances himself; and, in order that his Religion might evidently stand “not in the wisdom of men but the power of God,” he selected such instruments and left them in such circumstances as humanly speaking would have rendered their success impossible in the propagation of the faith. But this work was to be effected afterwards in a different manner.—“The Lord’s hand is not shortened” nor his presence with his Church withdrawn, but he does not go before them with a cloud by day and fire by night, neither does he convey instantaneously from heaven, the gift of new tongues to illiterate men, that they may proclaim to all kinds the tidings of salvation.—The agency is the same,—but it works by different means. The countenance of government, the protection of law, the settled institutions of authority, the bountiful foundations of public benefactors, the slow labours pursued in the halls of learning, have all, in conjunction with the zeal of piety, been the visible means of preserving and perpetuating the Religion of Christ; and it is by the operation of these means that the word of God which now falls like manna all around us, has been transfused every where into the language of the people.—Such is the ordinance of providence.—The kingdom of Christ is not of this world, because as he elsewhere says himself, “the kingdom of God is within” us;—it consists in the establishment of a spiritual influence in the hearts of men;—it prevails, if God please, not only without assistance from worldly power but in defiance of it;—it derives its efficacy directly from on high, and it points and prepares the way for a kingdom in the heavens. Yet as with respect to the ministry of the word of life, “we have this treasure in earthen vessels,”—it is dispensed to us by the hands of our frail fellow-men,—so with respect to other standing means for the propagation and support of the faith, it flows to us through earthly channels. “The kingdoms of this world,” it is declared in a prophetic passage which foretells a glorious era of the Church—observe—not the subjects, only of these kingdoms, but “the kingdoms of this world,” themselves, “are become the kingdoms of our God and of his Christ.”—The whole chapter from which our text is selected,—one of the most glowing and beautiful to be found in all Scripture, describes the calling of the Gentiles to be partakers in the covenant of mercy; and we see what is the declaration of the text itself, that the children of the Church of God should be folded in the protecting arms of power and fostered in the bosom of Royalty:—“Behold I will lift up my hand to the Gentiles, and set up my standard to the people; and they shall bring thy sons in their arms, and thy daughters shall be carried upon their shoulders; And kings shall be thy nursing fathers, and their queens thy nursing mothers.”