



THE
CHRISTIAN MAGISTRATE:

A

DISCOURSE,

WITH AN APPENDIX.

BY

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CHRISTIAN MAGISTRATE,

§c.

ROMANS xiii. 4.

“ For he is the Minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the Minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil.”

IN writing to the Christians at Rome, the Apostle of the Gentiles had given them copious doctrinal instruction. With convincing power of reasoning, and with singular beauty and propriety of illustration, he had stated the great fundamental truths of the Gospel. The ruin and misery consequent upon the apostacy, and the degradation of the fallen estate, he had displayed in all their fearful extent, that “ every mouth might be stopped,” and the whole world be brought in “ guilty before God.” Then had he turned, with delighted eye, to the glorious remedy, and expatiated, with heartfelt satisfaction, on the wondrous provision of the Covenant of Grace. The surety-righteousness of the Redeemer; the method of a sinner’s justification; the glorious privileges of the accepted believer, having their foundation in the purpose of Sovereign Love, and reaching forward to an unending eternity; the present safety and security of the ransomed company, and its ultimate enlargement, by the conversion of the Gentiles and the restoration of Israel—these were the themes on which he had dwelt with admiration, and from which he

had opened up a plentiful source of light and consolation for the refreshment and edification of the Church in every age. The doctrines of our holy religion were designed by their Divine Author to be eminently practical—to act on all who would receive them as living and operative principles, rectifying the conscience and purifying the heart. Accordingly, in the closing chapters of this epistle, the Apostle makes a pointed and searching application of the great truths which he had delivered. In the twelfth chapter, the *personal* duties are chiefly detailed and their observance enforced. The thirteenth and subsequent chapters present a compend of *relative* duties and reciprocal obligations, and furnish much varied instruction and exhortation that “the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished to every good work.”

The immediate subject of the Apostle’s exhortation in the opening verses of this chapter, is the nature and character of Civil Government, and the proper subjection which Christians owe to those who are possessed of civil authority. I offer no apology for introducing such a topic for pulpit discussion. Independently of its own intrinsic importance, and of the peculiar circumstances of the Church at present, in relation to this part of her testimony, it is a sufficient warrant for the course I have taken, to have the example of an Apostle of the Lamb, who, in declaring the counsel of God, and writing for the benefit of the Church in every future age, did, by the Spirit’s inspiration, explicitly declare the character and qualifications of Civil Rulers, and the duties of subjects.

It is not needful to offer any lengthened comment on the context. Let it suffice to remark, that the “*higher powers*” to which the Apostle enjoins subjection, are the *ordinances* and *offices* which God has instituted for the benefit of society, and not *any rulers* who may happen, by providential permission, to possess power over the community. The original terms do not denote *rulers* personally and immediately; they might properly be rendered “*over-protecting*” or “*super-eminent authorities,*” and they most signifi-

cantly and expressively define the character of the power to which conscientious subjection is due, and exclude that to which it is criminal to yield it. God is declared to be the sole author of rightful power. "There is no power but of God"—"the powers that be are ordained of God." It is of *authority* or *moral power**—the right to rule, the capacity to govern, and lawful investiture with office, that the Apostle speaks throughout the entire passage. Now, God is declared to be the source from which this authority is derived, and it is unequivocally asserted, that no power which is not sanctioned by Divine approbation can have a proper claim on the conscientious obedience of the followers of Christ. The offices established for state purposes are "*over-protecting or excelling powers*," appointed by the Supreme Ruler, just as in the Church he has ordained *helps, governments, &c.* Submission to them is demanded because of their Divine ordination, and because they possess a moral character approved of God. Not only is the Magistrate's office the "ordinance of God," but the Magistrate himself is "a terror to evil-doers, and a praise to them that do well." It is completely evident, that the Apostle's command enjoining obedience on pain of "*damnation*," or *judgment*, as the original word might be better rendered, says nothing whatever of subjection to rulers who cannot make out their claim on these grounds—the Divine institution and sanction of the office which they hold, and a proper moral character. Prepos-

* "The text and context make it undeniably evident, that by *power* here, is understood, not a natural, but a moral power, consisting not only in ability, but in a right to command. Which power is said to be ordained of God, as importing, not merely the proceeding of the thing from God providentially, but such a being from God, as carrieth in it his instituting or appointing thereof, by the warrant of his word, law, or precept. So that that power, which is to be owned as of God, includeth these two particulars, without which no authority can be acknowledged as God's ordinance, viz. institution and constitution, so as to possess him, who is God's minister, with a moral power."—*Act and Testimony of the Reformed Presbyterian Church*—p. 98—*Belfast edit.*, 1832.

terous is it, in the highest degree, to wrest the luminous statements of this passage from their proper meaning, for the purpose of abetting the principles of *passive obedience*, and oppressive and unjust rule. Assuredly Divine revelation does not, either in this, or in any other place, afford the least countenance to a system so debasing.*

Having declared the nature and character of the authorities to which the subjection of Christians is claimed, and the grounds of submission, the great Doctrinal Apostle exhibits more particularly in the text the nature of Civil Magistracy—the character and qualifications of such as exercise it—and the grand objects about which it is to be employed. “For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain; for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil.” This statement represents Jehovah as the Fountain of power. Civil rule owes its institution to his holy and beneficent appointment; the person in whose hand it is lodged is God’s servant, and vicegerent; and his government, in order to command reverence, and ensure conscientious submission, must reflect the features of the Divine Government, and contemplate such ends as are ever before the eye of Him who wears the august title of the “Governor among the nations.” Such, brethren, is the testimony of Him that cannot lie, the Faithful and True Witness on this subject. On this ground I freely take my stand, in illustrating and defending an important article of the faith once delivered to the saints. Your renowned fathers testified to the necessity of a Scriptural Magistracy as well as a faithful Ministry. We would walk in their footsteps. May their mantle descend upon us, and the Holy Spirit, who animated them in their struggles, and rendered them valiant for the truth upon the earth, enable me to speak, and you to receive the word of

* See Appendix—Note A.

instruction, so that our souls may be refreshed, Christ honoured, and God in all things glorified! My text requires me to consider,

- I. The Nature of the Christian Magistrate's Office.
- II. His Character and Qualifications.
- III. The Objects of Christian Magistracy.
- IV. The Means whereby these objects may be attained.

I. The Nature of the Christian Magistrate's Office.

The text propounds in few, but perspicuous terms, the doctrine of Civil Government. The nature, the duty, and the ends of Magistracy are exhibited with a clearness and precision that we search for in vain in the writings of mere politicians,* and that could emanate from Him alone, who is the "Father of lights," and whose kingdom ruleth over all. By a singularly expressive term is the whole origin and nature of civil authority placed conspicuously before us. "He is the MINISTER of God." The original term,† the same which is applied to designate an officer in the New Testament Church, denotes a servant waiting upon his master—receiving his appointment from him—and entirely devoted to his service. Such is the nature of the Magistrate's office. His is a *ministry* ordained by God, and the man that holds it is the servant of the King of kings—"the minister of God, attending continually upon this very thing." That you may perceive more fully the origin and character of this *ministry*, I remark,

* "I never, in the course of my reading, met with so perfect a description of the nature, the duty, the province, and the design of Civil Government in so short a compass, as we find in the first six verses of this chapter. Without reference to any particular country, but with a perfect applicability to all, the Apostle lays down the doctrine of *Civil Sovereignty*, according to the Christian law; and he affords another evidence of a truth, which ought never to be forgotten, by those who consider man in his social character, that the revealed will of God embraces the true philosophy of government."—*M'Leod's Scriptural View*, &c.—p. 113.

† Διακονος.

1. *That Civil Magistracy is instituted by God as the Moral Governor of the Universe.*

Jehovah, the Ruler of the nations, is the God of order. Power appertains to him alone. All power exercised by his creatures is derived from him. To regulate the relations which he has established amongst the members of the human family, and assist in securing the beneficial ends of these relations, he instituted Civil Government. The Revealed Will of God not only declares the nature of magistratical authority, but traces it up to the original fountain of order and authority—the Infinite Mind. “By me Kings reign, and Princes decree justice.” “The powers that be are ordained of God.” “He is the minister of God to thee for good.”* These explicit and reiterated declarations of Sacred Writ, stamp Civil Magistracy with the character of a Divine institution, and stand as an immoveable bulwark, equally against the perversions of those who, divesting government of its moral character, claim for rulers a *Divine right* to their seats of power, whatever be the principles they profess, or the line of policy they pursue; and of such as assign it no higher an origin than the *social compact*, or the sovereign choice of the majority of the nation. The former opinion, which has been held by court parasites in every age, but which few will now have the hardihood openly to avow, merits no serious exposure. Pregnant with the grossest impiety, and leading to consequences the most absurd and pernicious, it cannot pretend to the shadow of support from the dictates of unerring truth. Destitute of moral excellence, no power can lay any claim to Divine institution, or have a proper right to dutiful obedience. The Spirit of God, in the Apocalypse, instructs us to consider the origin of corrupt and oppressive rule as referrible to the Author of evil. “The Dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great

* Prov. viii. 15. Rom. xiii. 1—4.

authority.”* The other opinion, that the *social compact*, or the *sovereign choice* of the people, is the origin of Civil Government, is equally opposed to the declarations of revelation, and the soundest maxims of right reason. Before the sword of the Spirit, neither the learning of Locke, nor the eloquence of Sydney, nor the noisy declamation of modern infidels, can furnish a sure defence for this theory, however plausible or inviting. That the *social compact* † is the origin of Civil Magistracy, is a mere gratuitous assumption—a fiction that never could have been invented or credited but by men wandering away from the oracles of Divine truth, and left to the bewildering lights of their own imaginations. The nature of the case at once renders it obvious that men, in an uncivilized state, are incapable of forming the compact supposed, and universal history proves that it never thus had an existence in any nation under heaven. The will of the people, let it be farther considered, can never be sovereign, while there is a Lord of the conscience, and a standard by which the acts of communities, as well as individuals, must be tried. The moral character of things cannot be changed by the voice of the majority; and though men may call

* Rev. xiii. 2.

† The *social compact*, as the phrase is employed by writers on political government, supposes men originally without any regular civil government; that in an absolute state of nature they entered into arrangements for framing laws and appointing rulers; and that individually they consented to submit to the will of the majority, and to surrender their former rights to those restraints that might be imposed on them. Antecedently to this agreement, it is supposed, in this theory, that men have no civil rights, obligations, or duties. This system, which received some countenance from the eloquent Algernon Sydney in his “Discourses on Government,” was fully developed by Locke in replying to Sir Robert Filmer’s work entitled *Patriarcha*, which expressly teaches *the Divine Right of the absolute power of Kings*. It is evident that it proceeds upon the supposition which various writers on language have plausibly advanced, that the primary condition of man was a state of savage rudeness, little differing from that of the inferior animals—an assumption this the most extravagant and groundless that can be imagined. The absurdity of the social compact as the origin of civil government, is ably shown by Dwight in his *Theology*, (vol. iv. p. 110); Paley, (*Works*, p. 103, &c.); and Brown in his *Lectures on the Philosophy of the Human Mind*, (Lect. xc. p. 608)

evil good, and good evil, their nature continues unaltered, and the estimate which Jehovah forms in the case is unaffected by such erring decisions. Far removed, then, from every vain subterfuge to which men have had recourse on this article, Civil Magistracy is declared, in the Bible, to be a Divine institution, based on the unalterable principles of the Divine law. The *ministry* of the Civil Ruler is of God's appointment; and all the authority which he possesses has its origin in the will of the Governor of Universe. Such is the Scriptural view of the matter, and such the uniform sentiments entertained by our venerable reforming forefathers on this subject—"God, the Supreme Lord and King of all the world, hath ordained Civil Magistrates to be under him, over the people, for his own glory, and the public good."* That "Magistracy is a Divine ordinance, flowing originally from Jehovah, the Supreme and Universal Sovereign of heaven and earth, as the ultimate fountain thereof, cannot be denied." †

2. *Magistracy is placed in subjection to Messiah as Mediator.*

As Mediator, the Lord Jesus Christ is advanced to the unlimited sovereignty of all worlds. The second person of the Adorable Trinity has, in common with the Father, an essential dominion, extending over all, and a right to govern, like his own glorious nature, supreme and unchangeable. His Divine perfection constitutes his moral fitness, as Mediator, to possess the throne of universal empire, and to conduct the lofty administration. Yet is it not alone as the eternal and only begotten Son of God, that the Lord the Saviour rules the nations. By Covenant stipulation, and as the reward of his meritorious obedience, Immanuel obtained the government of the universe, and sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in the Heavens. In the counsel of peace, he was set as King on the hill of Zion; and, by a sure decree, the kings and judges of the

* West. Conf. xxiii. art. i.

† Act and Test. p. 97.

earth were placed in subjection under him. Even when he was in the garb of humbled humanity, he himself declared, “All things are delivered unto me of my Father;” * and when he had finished his vast undertaking, before his ascension to glory, he proclaimed his royal authority—“All power is given to me in heaven and in earth.” † The Apostles of the Lamb speak of the exalted Mediator with delight, and ascribe to him boundless power and authority. “Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth.” He hath “set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come.” ‡ Ancient seers had dwelt with admiration on the same elevating views—“Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder. * * * Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice, from henceforth, even for ever.” “I saw in the night visions, and behold, one like the Son of Man, came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.” § As the object in whom these bright representations meet, the Mediator wears the most illustrious and glorious titles. He is the “Governor among the nations”—the “Head of the heathen”—Messiah, the “Prince of the kings of the earth”—and on his vesture and his thigh is inscribed the indelible

* Mat. xi. 27.

† Mat. xxviii. 18.

‡ Phil. ii. 9; Eph. i. 20.

§ Isa. ix. 6, 7; Dan. vii. 13, 14.

title, “ King of kings and Lord of lords.” It is evident the Headship and authority which these august titles import belong to Christ as Mediator, else they could not be said, as in the preceding declarations, to be *given* him, nor could the different ranks of created existences be exhibited as *put* in subjection under him. Considered as a Divine person merely, no accession could be made to his power, no increase to his glory. As the God-man Mediator, Jesus Christ, our Elder Brother, was capable of exaltation, and in this character all things are subjected to his dominion. The royal Headship of Messiah includes the sovereignty of all the nations of the earth, as well as dominion over myriads of angelic beings, and the whole material universe. *His kingdom ruleth over all.* “ Thou hast crowned him with glory and honour. Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands,” says the enraptured Psalmist, adoring the Father, and celebrating the honour of Immanuel; and he adds—“ *Thou hast put all things under his feet.*” * The enumeration is complete. Uncreated Deity alone is excepted;—over every creature in heaven and earth, from the throne of the Eternal to the utmost limits of Jehovah’s kingdom, the Mediator stretches a sceptre of absolute and uncontrollable power. Never do the Sacred Scriptures anywhere insinuate that Civil Magistracy forms an exception—never do they declare that it is not among the “ all things put under him.” On the contrary, there is express testimony that it is included in the donation. It is the Personal Wisdom of God, the Son in his Mediatorial character, that declares in the eighth chapter of Proverbs—“ By me kings reign, and princes decree justice.” “ Thrones and principalities and powers” † are distinctly mentioned among the objects over which Messiah extends his sceptre. True it is, we see them not yet put under him. To outward view, they appear in a state of rebellion against him, disowning his authority, and impiously endeavouring

* Ps. viii. 5, 6.

† Eph. i. 21. and Col. ii. 10.

to cast away from them his cords. Vain in the extreme is the attempt. The crown that Immanuel wears shall continue to flourish upon him, despite of all opposition. Every usurper, in whatever department of government, that will not yield him the homage of a willing submission, shall be broken to pieces, as the vessels of a potter. The word is gone out of his mouth in righteousness, and shall not return—"Unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear."* The Magistrate, to be acknowledged as the minister of God by Messiah's faithful subjects, must recognize his Headship, and render Him entire subjection in performing the functions of his ministry. The Ruler of the kings of the earth claims such submission. The claim has the sanction of Him from whom the Mediatorial appointment flows, and never are those who would maintain true allegiance to Messiah permitted to surrender it—"The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment to the Son; that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father." †

3. *The exercise of the Christian Magistrate's power is defined and regulated by the Divine Law.*

The ministry to which the Civil Magistrate is appointed presupposes a rule by which his political conduct should be regulated—a standard to which his civil actions must be conformed. Among men, definite instructions are considered indispensably requisite to the proper discharge of the functions of an office. The minister of an earthly potentate must have a constant regard to the will of his sovereign, and the fundamental laws of the country must form the rule of his administration, else he is unworthy the trust reposed in him, and an enemy to the best interests of the community. Can it be imagined, that the minister of God should be placed in a worse condition than the servant of a mere earthly ruler? Is it to be believed, that his appointment to office shall be directed, or his official conduct

measured by a rule less perfect than the law of Jehovah? There is not an individual of the vast family of mankind who is not under law to God;—even where the light of Divine revelation has never shone, “the Gentiles which have not the” written “law, are a law unto themselves.”* The whole deportment of the individual—his every thought and word and action must be brought to the measuring reed of the Divine Word; and just as he stands this scrutiny, is the degree of moral approbation or blame to which he is entitled. The rule is of more extensive application still. Jehovah’s law, declared from Heaven, takes cognizance of the *relations* of life, as well as of the hearts and actions of individuals. Parents and children, husbands and wives, masters and servants, rulers and subjects, are bound to reverence its dictates, and perform the respective duties of their stations with a single eye to its prescriptions. There is no evidence that Civil Magistracy is, as has been vainly pretended, thrown loose from the restraint of Jehovah’s law, and left to be established and regulated by the ambition or caprice, the perverted will or the blinded consciences of men.† Advanced to the honour

* Rom. ii. 14.

† “I have read,” remarks an able advocate of Scriptural Magistracy, “that when Luther had published a book in defence of the Civil Magistrate’s office, against the old German Anabaptists, who reviled and reproached it, and had proved it to be God’s ordinance, and very pleasing to him, Frederick, Duke of Saxony, having read it, for joy lifted up his hands to heaven, and gave thanks to God, that now he knew out of the Holy Scriptures that his calling was ordained of God, and that with a good conscience he might now perform the duties of it. And, indeed, if magistracy, or the magistrate’s office, be not of divine institution, no Christian can warrantably, or with a good conscience, meddle with it, or do the duties of it; nay, neither religion, nor the conscience of men, nor the Church of Christ, has any concern with it, or it with them. The denial of the divine institution of magistracy seems to lie at the foundation of all those many vague Sectarian tenets now so industriously spread and propagated, impugning and denying that now, under the New Testament, the Civil Magistrate has, or ought to have any power, care, or concern, *circa sacra*, about religion, godliness, or first table duties in general.”—*Humble Attempt in Defence of Reformation Principles, particularly on the Head of the Civil Magistrate—by Rev. John Fairley—p. 51—Edin. 1770.*

of a Divine institution, it is the subject of distinct specification in the revealed will of God, and much of the canon of Sacred Scripture is employed in exhibiting the character, defining the duties, and detailing the acts of Civil Rulers. It may be admitted, that in nations, destitute of Divine Revelation, the *law of nature* must, in a great degree, if not solely, be the standard of Civil Government.* But it is ever to be remembered, that the *law of nature* is the remains of the law of God inscribed on the fleshly tables of the heart, which coincides with the moral law, and that much of the dim light that shines obscurely throughout the darkness of the heathen world, in ancient or modern times, is the faint glimmerings of Divine Revelation. So, then, even in heathen countries, whatever is excellent in the institution, whatever is beneficial in the execution of Magistracy, may be fairly traced up to the same glorious original—the will of the Governor of Universe expressed in his holy and perfect law. On this topic, however, I am not called at present to enlarge. *Christian Magistracy* is the topic under discussion:—the very title implies that the inquiry is limited to the consideration of the office as it is exercised by and among men who possess the Bible, and acknowledge it to be the only infallible rule of faith and practice. With this limitation, can there be a doubt that the Scriptures declare the law of God to be a sufficient rule for the constitution of Magistracy, and for the exercise of Magistratical authority? Under the old dispensation, the Civil Ruler was required, on his exaltation to office, to transcribe a copy of the law, to retain it near him at all times, and to make it the basis of all his public acts. “*And it shall be, when he sitteth upon the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write him a copy of this law in a book, out of that which is before the priests the Levites: And it shall be with him, and he shall read therein all the days of his life; that he may learn to fear the Lord his God, to keep all the*

* See Thorburn's "*Indiciæ Magistratus*," p. 12, 13, &c.; "Fairley's Humble Attempt," p. 34, &c.

*words of this law, and these statutes, to do them.** The Magistrates, who were God's vicegerents, set over the people which he chose to be a peculiar treasure to himself, were thus required, in express terms, to respect the Divine law in all their official proceedings—in their councils, the measures which they executed, their domestic policy, and foreign intercourse. Thus was it with Moses and Joshua, the Judges, and the various rulers that afterwards presided over the kingdoms of Israel and Judah.† Often as the Jewish Magistrates attended to these requisitions, and walked in the path of obedience, is their example the subject of commendation by him whose Ministers they were; and blessings from Heaven, like the fertilizing dews, descended upon themselves and their people: and never do we hear of them forgetting the claims of the Divine law, and turning away their foot from obedience, without being told, at the same time, of fearful judgments inflicted by Him against whom they had lifted up the heel of rebellion. The *Judicial Law* was an express code specially given by the Divine Lawgiver himself, for the regulation of the civil affairs of the Hebrew commonwealth, and by it were the officers set over them required, undeviatingly to abide, in their awards and punishments, and in every other article of their administration. Numerous, besides, are the particular directions given to Civil Magistrates, in other parts of Old Testament Scripture, relative to their political conduct. Nor is it without an important design that several entire books of the Divine Word—as Joshua, Judges, the Two Books of Samuel, the Kings, and the Chronicles, are chiefly occupied with details of legislation, the examples of good and bad Magistrates, and the character and consequences of their administration. Far be it from me to affirm, that even these parts of the Sacred Word stand unconnected with the progressive developement of the scheme of redemp-

* Dent. xvii. 18, 19. As an instance of the strict regard which was afterwards shown to this precept, see David's charge to Solomon his son, 1 Kings ii. 1—4.

† See Exod. xviii. 19; Josh. i. 7, 8, &c.

tion ; but assuredly they were designed, at the same time, to declare the Divine mind on the subject of political government, and to teach rulers impressively that the law of Jehovah is the unalterable and sufficient standard, according to which they are in all things to exercise their official authority. The law of the Lord is immutable. “ ’Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.” Until the great ends of Magistracy among men be fulfilled, and the Mediator have put down all authority and rule, the law will remain unabrogated, and all its requisitions, relating to this office, will continue in full force. The typical system was done away in Christ. The regulations of the *Judicial* code, as far as they related to the peculiar circumstances of the descendants of Abraham, or sanctioned the ceremonial institutions, were abrogated when Israel ceased from being a nation, at the destruction of Jerusalem ; but whatever was moral in its provisions, whatever “ the general equity thereof requires,” as say our excellent Westminster Divines,* continues still a rule of duty to Civil Magistrates under the present dispensation ; and sooner shall heaven and earth pass away than one jot or tittle shall fail of its binding obligation.† In the hand of the glorious Mediator, the law is a rule of life for Magistrates in their political, as in their private capacity—the exalted standard on which their eyes must perpetually be fixed, while, as the servants of the Most High God, they perform their ministry. Obedience herein is the foundation of prosperity to themselves, and to the states over whose interests they preside—rejection of the Divine law will be inevitably followed by the

* Westminster Confession, xix. art. iv.

† The reasons why those judicial laws which guarded the Decalogue are held to be still obligatory are obvious. Such laws are moral in their nature—manifest at all times the wisdom and justice of the Glorious Lawgiver—proceed upon the principles of universal equity—are susceptible of application to all nations, as always necessary and beneficial—in their spirit and general principles they must, therefore, be considered unrepealed, and in full force under the New Testament dispensation, and are yet to be faithfully administered by the Christian Magistrate.

displeasure of heaven, and will prove the source of many evils both to rulers and people. To Magistrates is the voice of warning and exhortation addressed by the Great Lawgiver—"Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little." "The Lord will be with you, while you be with him; if ye seek him, he will be found of you; but, if ye forsake him, he will forsake you." *

4. Lastly, *The Civil Magistrate, as the minister of God, employed in human affairs, must be chosen by those over whom he presides.*

Christianity denudes its votaries of no just rights. It restrains the licentious, and curbs the sensual appetites and irregular passions of men, but it withholds not a single privilege, the enjoyment of which conduces to the glory of its exalted Author, or the best interests of human society. The Magistracy to which Christians owe conscientious subjection is, indeed, divine, having its institution in the unchangeable will of God, and being subordinated, in its constitution and management, to his glorious and perfect law. Never for a moment can we consent to lower its claims to be considered "the ordinance of God," to please the perverted taste of a degenerate age, or to sanction the imaginary and ill-founded rights of ambitious statesmen, or of a misguided people. We plead the rights of God as paramount to the rights of men. The two, however, are not inconsistent. With the Bible of truth as his guide, and the glory of the Redeemer as his end, the Christian is at no loss to adjust the question, and to determine what is divine and what is human in Civil Government. Magistrates are the ministers of God to men *for good*. There are not wanting instances on record in which God immediately and directly clothed men with magistratical power, and set them over his people. The appointment of such persons, however, was extraordinary, and never can their case be

stretched into a precedent. Jehovah, the God of order, employs means wisely adapted to the accomplishment of his benevolent purposes. In manifold condescension, he makes man the rational and accountable instrument for settling the order of government, and constituting civil governors. The office, it is true, is instituted by Jehovah, appointed in his word, and founded on moral principles, originally implanted by God himself in the human constitution; but Magistrates, in their official character, have an eminent concern in things pertaining to human society. Therefore are the choice of rulers, the determination of the kind and order of government, and the remedy of political evils, committed to the people as their sacred and inalienable rights.* Magistracy, in this view, is the “*ordinance of man*,”† whether the power be lodged in the hands of the king as supreme, or reside with subordinate rulers—“the governors sent by him, for the punishment of evil-doers, and the praise of them that do well.” Even under a government which possessed more of the character of a *Divine constitution* than any that ever existed on earth, the choice of their rulers was guaranteed by God to the Israelitish people. “*Take you wise men, and understanding, and known among your tribes, and I will make them rulers over you.*” “*Thou shalt in any wise set him king over thee whom the Lord thy God shall choose; one from among thy brethren shalt thou set king over thee; thou mayest not set a stranger over thee, which is not thy brother.*”‡ In the one precept the choice of rulers is referred directly to the

* I would not be understood, here, as absolutely maintaining the principle that an *elective* is the only rightful *monarchy*, and denying that, in any case, the *hereditary* succession of the First Magistrate is lawful; or as determining the question whether a monarchical, or mixed, or republican form of government is to be preferred. Such discussions belong to another place. It is sufficient for the design of the discourse to establish the point, that no rulers, supreme or subordinate, can be considered the “ordinance of God,” and a public “good” to men, who possess not, by the consent of the people over whom they rule, their official power, and who are destitute of proper Scriptural qualifications.

† 1 Pet. ii. 13.

‡ Deut. i. 13; xvii. 15.

people, in the other, the same thing is implied, and the investiture is placed in their hands, God's choice probably denoting nothing more than his conferring suitable qualifications. The practice, indeed, during the continuance of the Israelitish commonwealth illustrated the law. Subordinate officers were chosen and removed by the people—hereditary succession never obtained among them, by Divine approbation, without their consent; and frequently was its order interrupted, that it might be seen that the community had an intimate concern in the appointment of their rulers, and that in them the power of election was lodged.* The right of choice, by the people, supposes them judges of the qualifications of rulers, and implies, likewise, their right to remove from office, when dereliction of public duty has taken place, and the terms of investiture are violated.

The peculiar form of government, the choice of the persons who administer it, and the laws by which it is regulated, are from men—the people are, moreover, the judges how far their interests are promoted by such as are set over them, and when their removal from office may become a matter of obvious and indispensable necessity. If this view be correct, and we think it based on principles that are indubitable and unchangeable, then can we readily perceive the deception attempted to be practised, when the Christian Magistrate is represented as acting an oppressive and tyrannical part in *establishing* and *protecting* the Church of Christ, and in *restraining* the enemies of religion. We recognise no arbitrary, absolute oppressor, in a proper sense, either as the ordinance of God or man. The Christian Magistrate, as the “ordinance of man,” is the people's choice—his public acts are the acts of the nation exercising its power through him—and in the instance to which we have alluded, all the sup-

* This point is discussed with much ability by Dr. M'Leod, in his “Scriptu-

port given, or restraint imposed, is in accordance with the will of the community, expressed through its authorized functionaries—the power put forth is the moral authority of the nation, exercised for securing its own best interests. While I thus, brethren, declare to you the people’s imprescriptible rights, permit me to remind you of one limitation which must be steadfastly kept in view at every step of our reasoning. The order of Civil Government, the election of Magistrates, and all that is implied in the constitution of Magistracy,* among a Christian people, must be subordinated to Jehovah’s law. It is possible for a people to “*set up kings, but not by*” God, and to appoint “*princes*” whom he *knows* not.† If his mind is not sought, and his law not consulted in the whole affair, a deceived heart will turn the people aside, and they will appoint rulers destitute of the character which Divine Revelation represents as essential to those who have a righteous claim to be considered the ministers of God to men for good—“*a terror to evil-doers, and a praise to them that do well.*” You can never too firmly believe, or too strenuously maintain, that to the Divine law and testimony, in all cases, the ultimate reference should be made. To this glorious standard the people’s choice, and every part of their political conduct, should be brought; if they speak not, and act not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.‡ Inconceiv-

* For the *constitution* of Magistracy, or what might be more properly termed *investiture with office*, that it may be a *moral* or *divine* ordinance, it is required that the power wherewith the Magistrate is vested, be, in its *nature*, agreeable to the Divine law—that it be lawful in relation to its subject, or the person possessed of office—that its ends, and the conditions on which it is held, be moral—and that there be a lawful investiture with official authority. The advocates of a Scriptural Magistracy contend for the moral *constitution* as well as *institution* of Civil Magistracy. See an excellent work entitled, *Vindiciæ Magistratus*, by the Rev. John Thorburn—p. 46, &c.

† Hos. viii. 4.

‡ “*But then, while God has lodged this power in the people, of conveying the right of civil authority to their Magistrates, he has, at the same time, given them positive and unalterable laws, according to which they are to proceed, in setting*

ably awful will be the consequences of their rebellion. The decree is gone forth, the word is spoken in righteousness—“If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land; but if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword; for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.” “The nation and kingdom that will not serve thee, shall perish; yea, all those nations shall be utterly wasted.”*

Thus have we seen that Christian Civil Magistracy is instituted by God as the moral governor of universe—placed in subjection to Messiah as Mediator—defined and regulated by the Divine law—and that it flows from the intelligent choice of the people over whom the Magistrate exercises authority. Proceed we to consider,

II. The Christian Magistrate’s Character and Qualifications.

It is admitted, on all hands, that an approved character is of importance to all, especially to such as are raised above their fellows in society to stations of power and eminent influence. Persons, indeed, there have been, who, to cover over the most palpable irregularities of Civil Rulers, have taught that it is “measures, and not men,” with which we have to do; and you are, doubtless, aware that it was a principle for a time strenuously maintained by those who opposed the testimony of our fathers to a Scriptural Magistracy—a sentiment yet pertinaciously held in some quarters, that a “due measure of Scriptural qualifications belongs not to the being and validity of the Magistrate’s office.”* You, my brethren, have not so learned Christ. I require only to state such opinions, for you to perceive their opposition to the liberty of Christ’s freemen, and to the unerring decisions of Divine Inspiration. The balances

are expressly bound to act in agreeableness to these rules, without any variation, and that under pain of rebellion against Him, who is King of kings, and Lord of lords.”—Act and Test., p. 97.”

* Is. i. 19; Is. lx. 12.

† Answers by the Associate Presbytery to Nairn’s Reasons of Dissent, p. 87.

of the sanctuary must be employed in every case; and on *men*, equally as on their *measures*, when they stand not this trial, the follower of the Lamb is bound to inscribe “*Tekel*” —“thou art found wanting.” The principle that would set aside proper qualifications in the person invested with Civil Magistracy, pours contempt on the authority of God proclaimed in his word, and is hostile to the best interests of society. We never act on such a principle in the ordinary affairs of human life. Masters require the recommendation of a good character, and suitable abilities, in the servants they employ. Offices of power and trust are not committed to persons who are not deemed trust-worthy, and whose general conduct does not warrant the confidence reposed in them. Even under a constitution divinely prescribed—that of the Israelitish commonwealth—not only were the qualifications of rulers made by God the subject of specific and frequent announcement, but many of the blessings bestowed, or the punishments inflicted on that ancient people, are ascribed, by the Spirit of inspiration, to the virtues or the faults of the men that governed them. With such high authority before us, are we not bound to contend that integrity of character, and the possession of proper qualifications, are essential to the Magistrate’s office, and must be taken into the account in estimating the nature or the measure of the subjection to which he is entitled? The testimony of the Supreme Lawgiver, expressed in his word, is more than usually luminous and explicit on this subject. Wicked and oppressive rulers are likened to wild *beasts*,* having as little claim to conscientious submission as the depredator of the forest, or the ravenous beast of the desert. Might may, for a time, grasp power, but it cannot confer right. “As a roaring lion, and a ranging bear, so is a wicked ruler over the poor people.” † With inimitable beauty and surpassing solemnity, does God proclaim the character and qualifications of men in power whom he

* See Daniel vii.; Revelation xiii.

† Prov. xxviii. 15.

acknowledges as his own ordinance for man's good. "The God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spake by me—*He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God.*"* Is there room left here for diversity of sentiment? The Magistrate who rules over men, in whatever rank, whether supreme or subordinate, under whatever form of government, and whatever title he bears, whether a King, an Emperor, a President, or a First Consul, *must* be "just, ruling in the fear of the Lord." There is a moral necessity that he should possess these qualifications; without them his authority is at an end, and conscientious submission is not his due. If such be the case generally, much more may it be incontestably shown that Scriptural qualifications are indispensable to the character of Magistracy among a Christian people. The entire passage from which my text is taken, is clear and decisive on the subject. Christian Magistracy is declared to be the ordinance of God; the qualifications of rightful rulers are exhibited†—they are a terror to evil-doers, and a praise to them that do well—the ministers of God, set up for the benefit of men, attending continually on this very thing. The inference is unavoidable, that Christian states are imperatively bound to set over them only those who possess these qualifications, or such others as are prescribed in Divine Revelation. The connexion is established by the Ruler of Nations himself. Due qualifications are inseparable from the character of the Magistracy, which is God's ordinance. "What God hath joined, let not man put asunder."

The name by which the Christian Magistrate is designated in my text, proclaims at once his character, and the moral qualifications which he ought to possess. He is the "Minister of God." Does not this august title imply that, in his person, he should bear some resemblance to Him whose representative he is, and that, in his official conduct, he should brightly exhibit the principles of the Divine ad-

* 2 Sam. xxiii. 3.

† See Act and Testimony, p. 163.

ministration? We look for such a resemblance in the viceroy or the ambassador of an earthly monarch; and shall there be less homage rendered to the King of kings—less regard shown to his honour by those who are his deputies on earth? Beyond a doubt, the man who bears the sacred name of the *Minister of God*, should bring to the service adequate *abilities*—be *a man after God's own heart*—manifest *incorruptible integrity* in performing the functions of his office—and discover fervent *zeal* for the Divine honour and the welfare of society. Designing no minute or lengthened enumeration of the qualities that should enter into the character of the Christian Magistrate, I shall view him, as God's Minister, possessed of the attributes which I have just mentioned. He ought, first of all, to be possessed of

1. *Ability for government.*

By Divine direction, Jethro, the father-in-law of Moses, specified this qualification as requisite in those who should be clothed with official authority. “Moreover, thou shalt provide out of all the people *able men*.”* Afterwards the lawgiver renewed the command, and required the people to act upon it in the constitution of their magistracy. “Take ye wise men, and understanding, and known among your tribes, and I will make them rulers over you.”† When God himself appends the sanction of his approbation to the successor of Moses, once and again he speaks of him as a “man in whom *is the spirit*,”‡ evidently intending the spirit of government, the natural and acquired talents that constitute the ability to rule. These directions are based on the immutable principles of eternal truth—principles that lie at the foundation of civil society. Moral ability is essential to moral authority. A person notably deficient in intellectual endowments—in wisdom, prudence, and the art of government—however unanimous the choice that called him to office, however favourable the circumstances in

* Exod. xviii. 21.

† Deut. i. 13.

‡ Num. xxvii. 18; Deut. xxxiv. 9.

which he entered upon its duties, can never be a ruler ordained of God for good to men. The Divine government is pre-eminently distinguished for wisdom in counsel, and energy in execution. Similar should be the character of the ministry exercised by the Civil Magistrate. Knowledge of government, wisdom in counsel, and vigour in administration, will secure to him a moral ascendancy over the people whose affairs he has been appointed to manage; so that although he is their official servant, he will have over them a power vastly greater than mere physical force can ever confer. The mind of God has been clearly declared respecting the necessity of this qualification. The Scriptures represent it to be the sign of his displeasure against a nation, when children bear rule over them. When, for extraordinary purposes, God, immediately from himself, called persons to office, his method has uniformly been to set up men of known abilities. Moses, the King of Jeshurun, was endowed with the most eminent gifts ever bestowed upon man. The Seventy who were called to assist him, were gifted with the same spirit. And his successor, Joshua, had, as a principal part of his title to power, the like evidence of the Divine presence.* Is it not apparent, then, that those alone who are *able* men—men who “know the laws of God,”† and who are possessed of moral courage sufficient for their execution, can be regarded as ordained of God to the Magistrate’s office, and qualified aright to discharge its functions?

2. *Decided Piety.*

Throughout the Old Testament, the whole of vital religion is frequently summed up in one comprehensive phrase—the *fear* of the Lord. “Fear God, and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man.” “I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me.” ‡ Now, this principle is again and again declared to

* Sydney’s Discourses on Government, vol. I. p. 29.

† Ezra vii. 25.

‡ Eccl. xii. 13; Jer. xxxii. 40.

be indispensable to the character of a Civil Ruler. “ Moreover, thou shalt provide out of all the people able men, such as *fear God*; men of truth, hating covetousness.” “ He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in *the fear of God.*” * These Divine testimonies expressly declare that the person who fills the chair of Magistracy, to be acknowledged a rightful ruler by a Christian people, must be a *pious* man. In his heart, the leaven of vital godliness must be extensively diffused, and his conduct must bear evidence that over it there has been exerted a subduing and sanctifying influence. Beyond this, too, we are bound to consider him as a public functionary, and to declare that, as a Magistrate, in his official character and conduct, exalted piety should shine like a halo of light around him; and he should appear as a lovely city, set upon a hill, that cannot be hid. Never will you, I trust, my brethren, so far forget the faithfulness of your fathers, who contended that the “ Minister of God ” should be a holy man, as to agree with the impious maxim, that the *public* and *private* character of the Magistrate may be so far separated that the same individual may be the servant of sin, living in gross sensuality, while yet he may perform aright the functions of Civil Magistracy.† No, it cannot be. The man who lives without God in private, can never, with safety to the interests of a Christian state, be entrusted with any

* Exod xviii. 21; 2 Sam. xxiii. 3.

† Under the delusion of this deceptive maxim, which is a cardinal principle of the infidel philosophy, we have witnessed in our own land the repeated desecration of the Lord’s day by the highest Magistrates in the nation, by means of *Cabinet Councils*; and in the highest legislative assembly of the empire, contempt has been openly poured upon the God of nations, by despite done to his Word, by profane swearing, and a public refusal, on the part of several members of the House of Commons, to insert the name of Almighty God in the Bill relative to the Pestilence wherewith the nation has been visited. Is it not notorious, that the majority of those who aspire to seats in Parliament, have no pretensions to strictness in religious principle, and that many of them, in their public declarations, speak with contempt of a religious profession? How sincere Christians can consistently take part in electing such to bear rule over them, appears to us wholly inexplicable.

part of the public administration; and, on the other hand, it is morally impossible for an individual, possessed of official power, to be a man of religious principle, and at the same time to manage public affairs without any recognition of the Divine authority, and with as little concern, for the interests of religion among his people, as a heathen man or a publican. Piety, if it characterizes him at all, must pervade his whole conduct, and spread its benign influence over all his proceedings. The Christian Magistrate, as Heaven's vicegerent, ought surely to profess pure and undefiled religion himself, and by his example encourage the profession of it in others. Habitual reverence of God, and a jealous concern for his glory, he should constantly entertain in bearing the burden of government.* Like the Christian Bishop, he must be "a lover of good men," making them the men of his counsel, placing in them his delight, and esteeming them "the excellent ones of the earth." Equally essential for himself and for his people are the possession of the *graces* of true religion, and the diligent performance of its duties. Justice and mercy, veracity and temperance, will furnish to him the comfortable evidence of the possession of Divine grace; and will shed down a select and holy influence on the community. In the faithful discharge of religious duties, Divine strength will be imparted; and as was promised to Moses of old,† at the Mercy-seat, he will find an Almighty Friend, to whom he may disburden the cares of government, and a Counsellor, from whom he will receive direction to manage

* The *administration of oaths* by Magistrates is a case in point, to show the necessity of piety in those who hold the reins of Civil Government. It is preposterous, in the highest degree, for a man destitute of habitual reverence for God's great and dreadful name, and having no right views of the character of God as revealed in the Bible, to direct in any way this solemn act of religious worship. Need we wonder at the fearful multiplicity of unnecessary oaths in these countries, and at the continuance of the absurd and superstitious practice of swearing by *kissing a book*, as long as the Magistrates set up are not possessed of due Scriptural qualifications?

† Exod. xxv. 22.

its most intricate concerns. Such were the rulers of old, who are held forth by the Spirit of God as examples to all future Magistrates. David and Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah and Josiah, shed a lustre of attractive piety around them, and they stand displayed as public blessings of inestimable value to the people over whom they presided.* For the exaltation of such men to office in the state did our renowned forefathers strenuously contend, when they lifted up their hands in covenant; and Magistrates with their people bound themselves by oath, in every relation to seek God's glory and the advancement of the interests of vital godliness.† May the Lord soon restore us officers as at the first, and counsellors as at the beginning!

3. *Incorruptible integrity.*

“He that ruleth over men must be *just*.” Rulers must be men “hating covetousness.” Thus did God address the governors set over his ancient people—“Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgment; thou shalt not respect the person of the poor, nor honour the person of the mighty;

* The necessity of this qualification in a Christian Civil Ruler is well stated and illustrated by President Dwight, (Theology, vol. IV. p. 145, 146.)

† In the Acts of Parliament framed in the reforming period in Scotland, the most laudable concern was manifested for the elevation of men of piety to the office of rulers in the nation. In the 26th Act of Parliament, 1649, it is ordained, that none shall fill any place of public trust in the nation, but such as have the qualifications that God requires in his Word. The terms of the Act are these—“The Estates of Parliament taking into consideration, that the Lord our God requires that such as bear charge among his people should be able men, fearing God, hating covetousness, and dealing truly; and that many of the evils of sin and punishment under which the land groans have come to pass, because hitherto they have not been sufficiently provided and cared for—do therefore ordain, that all such as shall be employed in any place of power and trust in this kingdom, shall not only be able men, but men of known affection unto, and of approved fidelity and integrity in the cause of God, and of a blameless Christian conversation.” Many such Acts were passed in that period. Have we not just cause to admire the zeal and devotedness of our ancestors? Let those who reproach us with saying we want a *Covenanting King*, show us public men and public acts in connexion with the systems to which they are pledged, worthy for a moment to be compared with those to which we have alluded, and then, but not till then, will their ridicule have meaning.

but in righteousness shalt thou judge thy neighbour.”* These principles still form the immutable basis of all right civil government. The Christian Magistrate should be a just man, possessed of a sacred love to rectitude and truth in his heart, and surrendering himself to the influence of these heaven-born principles in all his public proceedings. He is the “minister” of Him of whom it is declared—“He is a Rock; his work is perfect; for all his ways are judgment; a God of truth and without iniquity; just and right is he.”† Always should he aim, as God’s deputy, to display these features in his administration. In his private and public conduct, he is equally bound with the meanest subject to conform to the laws of the state. The Ruler in Israel, as we have seen, was bound to write out a copy of the law for himself, and to have recourse to it daily; and this was the declared intention—“That he may learn to fear the Lord his God, to keep all the words of this law, and these statutes to do them: that his heart be not lifted up above his brethren, and that he turn not aside from the commandment, to the right hand or the left.”‡ Under every dispensation, indeed, the Magistracy which deserves to be acknowledged as the ordinance of God for good, must be “a government of laws.” Not only should the Magistrate, in his official conduct, set an example of strict regard to the laws, and unbending integrity in administering them, but he must provide, also, that the subordinate officers selected by him be men of like spirit.§ A person is justly held responsible for what is done in his name by others commissioned by him, and acting under his authority. The integrity of a faithful ruler will lead him to purge “the thrones of judgment,” and to exalt the “excellent of the earth” to places of power and trust. Uninfluenced by fear or favour, and far above the schemes

* Lev. xix. 15.

† Deut. xxxii. 4.

‡ Deut. xvii. 19, 20.

§ See, as examples of this care respecting inferior officers, the instances recorded in Deut. xvi. 18, and Ps. ci. 5.

of an ever-shifting and deceitful *expediency*,* he will study to know the rule of duty, and to walk continually by its direction. With his eye fixed upon the glorious properties of the Divine government, and remembering the character he is called to sustain and the end of his appointment, he will labour to shed abroad, from the high seat of authority, the influence of truth and justice. Of him it will be said as of David, or of Him whose illustrious character and royal authority the monarch of Israel dimly prefigured—"He fed them according to the *integrity of his heart*, and guided them by the skilfulness of his hands."† As the minister of God, he rules for Him who is "the blessed and only Potentate." What a motive to fidelity in the discharge of official duties is furnished him from the consideration of such a delegation! With this high appointment, the command of his King is laid upon him, claiming from him, at all times and in all circumstances, unlimited obedience—"Be thou for the people to *God-ward*." "Ye shall not respect persons in judgment, but ye shall hear the small as well as the great; *ye shall not be afraid of the face of man*; for the judgment is God's."‡

Lastly, *Zeal for the Divine honour, and the good of the people.*

The principle which I have now mentioned, as characteristic of the Civil Ruler, will supply to him all that is yet lacking of proper qualifications for the exercise of his office, and thoroughly furnish him for every good work. It is, indeed, the sum and centre of all necessary qualifications. Devoid of it, a man of estimable private character is unfit for the chair of Magistracy in a Christian land; and with it, even a Magistrate of inferior attainments will be a blessing to society. Devoted concern for God's glory, and for the best interests of the community, is, in fact, on the testi-

* This is the professed principle of the public measures of all European Governments at the present day.

† Ps. lxxviii. 72.

‡ Exod. xviii. 19; Deut. i. 17.

mony of the Spirit of truth, at once the prominent feature of the Magistracy which is of Divine institution, and the perfection of the Magistratical character. He is the *minister of God*, and should he not be “very jealous for the Lord God of Hosts?” He is appointed for *the good of men*, and ought he not so to act as to be a *public blessing*, employing his talents and influence for the nation’s good—“attending continually upon this very thing?” We can easily admit, that those who seek the magistracy in Christian lands, for private, selfish purposes, and who in stations of influence neglect the people’s interests, through love of ease or aggrandisement, abuse the trust reposed in them, and can have no righteous claim to conscientious support. But we must go farther, and declare that the man who discovers not a deep concern for the advancement of the Divine glory, and employs not whatever influence he possesses for this end, cannot be received by a Christian people as God’s *minister*, and his authority cannot be regarded as the ordinance of God. This is incomparably the highest object of magistracy among a Christian people. Rulers of every rank are to set the Lord always before them. “God standeth in the congregation of the mighty; he judgeth among the gods.”* *Gods* the rulers of the people are, “because to them the word of God came;”† the word that imperatively demands of them—“Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or *whatsoever ye do*, do all to the glory of God.”‡ Magistrates have mainly to do with the concerns of Jehovah’s glory. To God, whose vicegerents they are, they are primarily accountable. Let them propose his glory as the great end of their administration. Let them actively aim to advance it throughout the nation; and, dreading his fervent jealousy, let them, as having to do with Him who shall judge angels and men, fearlessly oppose and cast out of the state whatever is contrary to the Divine honour, and would obscure the manifestations of the

* Psalm lxxxii. 1.

† John x. 35.

‡ 1 Cor. x. 31.

Divine glory.* Thus shall a blessing from above, like the dew upon Zion's hill, abundantly rest upon their administration, and peace and prosperity shall increase like the waves of the sea.

Such are a few of the qualifications which the Christian Magistrate ought to possess, that he may appear in his true and proper character as the "minister of God," and that his authority may be willingly acknowledged by a Christian people as the "ordinance of God." Destitute of these, however excellent the form of government, whatever be the intellectual talents of the men who possess power, and the external benefits secured by their administration, the foundation of a claim to conscientious subjection is wanting.† As the faithful witnesses of Christ, you must always beware, my brethren, of appending the seal of your approbation to men or to principles that will not stand the admeasurement of God's Word. The great principle of Scriptural qualifications as essential to a rightly constituted Magistracy, is a precious part of the faith once delivered to the saints, and it is worthy of being contended for still, by all the lovers of Zion. Were men of the character we have described exalted to seats of authority throughout the nations, a powerful and happy influence would go forth to enlighten and purify every part of society. The prediction of one who well knew the science of government, and who himself eminently possessed the proper qualifications, would be realized—"He shall be as the light of the morning when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds; as the tender

* Memorable was the concern of Knox, the star of the Reformation in Scotland, on this subject. Addressing the Regent, he declared, that he dreaded "more *one mass* than ten thousand men;" and, in the First Book of Discipline, he and his renowned compeers thus warn the civil rulers of that day—"Let your honours assuredly be persuaded, that where idolatry is maintained or permitted, where it may be suppressed, that there shall God's wrath reigne, not onely upon the blind and obstinate idolaters, but also the negligent sufferers [of the same] especially if God have armed their hands with power to suppress such abomination."—First B. Discip. ch. iii.

† See Appendix, Note B.

grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain.”* Like the sun of the firmament, pouring his beams upon all objects in the lower creation, from the lofty mountains to the low vallies, the virtuous Magistrate will diffuse a high and holy influence throughout every department of society. And, as the rain that descends upon the earth, combined with the genial warmth of the sun, revives and fertilizes it, thus will the example and the influence of a righteous governor shed down refreshing blessings upon all classes of his subjects, so that the nation will bring forth abundantly the fruits of righteousness, appearing like a garden which the Lord hath blessed. I direct your attention, in the third place, to

III. The objects of Christian Magistracy.

These are so numerous and so important, that I can only propose a brief selection. In the specification, I shall aim to be comprehensive, so that *the objects* mentioned may embrace others of minor importance, and the great ends of civil government may be distinctly exhibited. A chief design of the institution of civil magistracy, and a principal object of the Magistrate’s care, is

1. *The good of the community.*

This may be termed the immediate and direct end of his appointment. “He is the minister of God to thee *for good.*” For this object did the beneficent King of nations appoint him to be his deputy and servant, that he might dispense his benefits to the sons of men, and, himself a public blessing, might display the riches of the Divine munificence. To subserve this valuable purpose, his fellow-subjects raised him to power, and invested him with the symbols of office. Henceforth he is not only to be to them as a head of honour and authority, but as an official *servant* working for their good, and directing all his measures so that their best interests may be promoted. If he consult

not this object, and act not in this manner, he becomes a curse instead of a blessing; the end of his appointment is frustrated, and manifestly opposing as he does the obvious intention of the Divine institution, he is unworthy to retain the keys of office, and justly may his subjects refuse him conscientious submission. No plea of a *Divine right*—no pretence of zeal for religion, can screen a Magistrate from condemnation, if he neglects the interests of the community. The public good is a primary concern of his government; over this he is to watch with paternal solicitude—he must labour for it industriously himself, and his public and private conduct should ever testify that he is “attending continually upon this very thing.” The promotion of the public good by the Civil Magistrate embraces a variety of duties, and requires diversified acts of administration. The *natural rights* of men of every class should be clearly defined and publicly declared. These he is to guard by wholesome laws, and to vindicate by a rigid administration of justice, and with all the weight of influence and authority which he possesses. The *peace* of the nation must be dear to him; and so should he act, that the lofty predictions of Sacred Writ may find their accomplishment in the character of his government. “I will also make thine officers peace, and thine exactors righteousness.” “The *mountains* shall bring peace to the people, and the little hills by righteousness.”* *Mountains* and *hills* are the chosen Scriptural emblems for authorities and dignities among men. Here the beautiful and expressive representation of a good government is, that magistrates of the highest rank and their counsellors, who are likened to *mountains*, and subordinate officers, who are compared to *little hills*, shall harmoniously concur in bringing in and maintaining peace, and promoting universal righteousness. It is not needful to enlarge on this topic—it may only be added, that *the moral and intellectual improvement of the people* should

* Isaiah lx. 17; Psalm lxxii. 3.

be a principal object of the Christian Magistrate's care. What is said of the government of Messiah—"Wisdom and knowledge shall be the stability of thy times,"* is true of every rightly constituted magistracy among men. A sense of moral obligation must always be in proportion to the knowledge possessed. Though the history of some states, both in ancient and modern times, † bears melancholy testimony that knowledge and sound morality may be dissociated, and the former may exist where there is a fearful prevalence of all that is noxious in principle and polluting in practice, yet this will never warrant the Magistrate to shut up the key of knowledge from the people, or to neglect their improvement. Let knowledge be assigned its appropriate place—let it be retained as the "handmaid of religion," and never permitted to usurp the seat of its mistress—let education be based on the revelation of Divine mercy, ‡ and let the culture of the moral principles and the affections keep pace with the improvement of the understanding, and then shall we behold the commonwealth at once adorned with sanctified knowledge, and with a pure and an elevated morality. Will it be questioned that *the morals* of the people should be a primary object of the Magistrate's care? His commission from heaven places this before him as a paramount duty. "He is a terror to evil-doers, and a praise to them that do well." As a *Christian*, the saints will be his delight, and wickedness will be held by him in abhorrence; and as a *Magistrate*, he will uniformly exercise his authority, so that pure morals may prevail, and all iniquity, as ashamed, stop the mouth.§ The example of the pious monarch of Israel, the "man after

* Isaiah xxxiii. 5.

† Witness Rome, France, and Britain.

‡ See Appendix, Note C.

§ How little regard is shown to the *morals of the community* by the Magistrates of the present day, is seen in their countenancing *theatres*, permitting the travelling of *Sabbath mails, steam-packets, &c.*, encouraging *horse-racing* and *regattas*, and in refraining from putting down *haunts of prostitution*. While such practices prevail, and the Magistrate interferes not to prevent them, does his conduct

God's own heart," will be the object of his constant imitation—"I hate the work of them that turn aside; it shall not cleave to me. Mine eyes shall be upon the faithful of the land, that they may dwell with me; he that walketh in a perfect way, he shall serve me."*

2. *The promotion of true religion.*

"Magistrates," says the excellent Matthew Henry, "must rule in the fear of God; that is, must themselves be possessed of the fear of God, by which they will be effectually restrained from all acts of injustice and oppression. They must also endeavour to promote the fear of God; that is, the practice of religion among those over whom they rule. The Magistrate is to be *the keeper of both tables*, and to promote both godliness and honesty."† The good of the community can never be consulted aright by the Magistrate, if he overlooks their spiritual good, and is unconcerned about the interests of religion. Independently of his concern with religion as the appointed means of advancing the Divine glory, he is bound to promote it, because of its intrinsic excellence, and because of its powerful influence in securing the peace and prosperity, the comfort and happiness of civil society. Far be it from me to plead the employment of religion as an engine of state-policy, or to advocate the promotion of false religion, or of Christianity under a corrupted form, by the rulers of the earth. Too long have the princes of Christendom maintained connexion with the mother of harlots, who makes all nations drunk with the wine of the cup of her fornications.‡ Too long have the monarchs of Europe, the *ten horns* of the Antichristian Beast, perverted religion for secular pur-

warrant the conclusion that he is God's minister to men for good? And is it to be wondered at, that a sense of moral obligation should gradually become weakened among the people, and that every year the calendar of crime should become more heavy throughout the nation?

* Psalm ci. 3, 6.

† Henry's Commentary—Note on 2 Sam. xxiii. 5.

‡ Rev. xviii. 3.

poses, and caused her to pander to their pride and their despotism. The day of retribution is approaching. God forbid that I should attempt to stay the time of vengeance; rather would I perform the office of the *living creature* before the throne, who delivers the vials of wrath into the hand of the angels, to pour them out on the Antichristian earth. "Arise, O Lord, and plead thine own cause." But, my brethren, while we willingly admit that much evil has been done by mere worldly politicians, under the guise of religion, we must not refrain from declaring that the civil ruler is indispensably bound by the law of heaven to promote true religion, as the best means of advancing the people's welfare. It is of the ends of *Christian Magistracy* that we speak, and of course we contend that the promotion of *the true religion*, and of none other, is his province. We advocate no abuses, we plead the cause of no corrupt systems. The holy religion of Jesus, and it alone, is the object of the Magistrate's care, and the promotion of this system, stamped with the features of Divinity in its origin and character, must be a chief object of his administration. He is bound himself, as God's minister and an example to others, to profess it; and to employ his influence to induce all classes of the community to do likewise. On the simple ground, that the welfare of the nation will be thereby effectually promoted, he should act in this manner. Without religion, sound morality cannot be maintained, and apart from its heavenly influence, civilization can make little progress, and peace and righteousness and prosperity, in any country, will make no permanent abode. It is the principles of religion that give the highest sanctions to human laws, and that render them of sufficient force to restrain the lawless and disobedient members of human society. Without the belief of a Supreme Being, the doctrine of Providence, and a future state of punishment, the most rigorous laws would be ropes of sand, and even capital punishments would impress little terror. And, can it for a moment be supposed, that that Magistrate is duly concerned

for the good of his subjects, who never provides for their spiritual interests, and who limits all his attentions to the fleeting concerns of their earthly duration? Reason, equally with religion, forbids the supposition. What should we think of the parent, the husband, and the master, who would act in this manner? While they lavish all their attention on the bodily estate of those who are tenderly related to them, and utterly neglect their spiritual and eternal destinies, would we hesitate to conclude that theirs was only the semblance and not the reality of genuine affection? Similar must be our inference respecting the conduct of the Magistrate who busies himself with schemes of mere state policy, and in his administration recognises not the commanding influence of genuine religion, and studies not continually to promote it. Be it far from you, brethren, ever to fall in with the infidel clamour of the day, and to say a confederacy with those who declare that Magistrates have nothing to do with religion,* but let it alone, and that they are under no obligation to advance its interests. In direct opposition to this latitudinarian principle, stand the whole conduct and testimonies of your fathers. Here we are “encompassed with a great cloud of witnesses.” Without exception, the renowned men, who were the instruments of advancing the Reformation in Britain, from Hamilton and Knox down to Cargill and Ren-

* The eminent Dr. Owen, in his sermon on “*Christ's Kingdom and the Magistrate's Power*,” (Works, vol. xv. p. 499,) uses the following language in addressing the civil rulers of his own day—language still applicable to those who bear rule in a Christian land—“If once it comes to that, that you shall say, you have nothing to do with religion as rulers of the nation, God will quickly manifest that he hath nothing to do with you as rulers of the nation. The great promise of Christ is, that in these latter days of the world, he will lay the nations in a subserviency to him, the kingdoms of the world shall become his; that is, act as kingdoms and governments no longer against him but for him. Surely those promises will scarcely be accomplished in bringing commonwealths of men professing his name to be of Gallio's frame, to take care for none of those things; or as the Turk, in an absolute indifferency what any profess; I mean that are not his own, for in respect of them he changes not his God.”

wick, maintained that Rulers in a Christian land had much to do with religion, and were under solemn obligations, from which they could never be relieved, to promote it. The *British Covenants* are a standing monument of their devoted zeal in this cause. In framing these venerable deeds, the rulers and the people with one accord vowed to make religion the GRAND CONCERN OF THE NATION, and publicly and solemnly expressed their settled conviction, that its safety and prosperity could only stand in avouching the Ruler of the nations to be their God, and in professing subjection to him, by preserving in purity genuine religion. Long as these covenants remain, and they will last when the proud boasting of the infidel, and the time-serving professor is brought down, the glorious truth contended for, and sealed by the blood of many valiant leaders in the Lord's host—the truth that the promotion of true and undefiled religion is a chief end of Civil Magistracy,* will

* A writer in the talented periodical, the "*Presbyterian Review*," (No. viii. p. 575,) makes the following sensible observations on this topic—"When the Reformation delivered Protestant states from the thralldom under which they had lain so long, no sooner did their rulers discover that the Bible unfolded the causes, nature and remedy of those moral disorders which, existing alike in the governors and governed, continually tended to weaken and disturb society, than their first and most obvious duty seemed to lie in diffusing its principles to the utmost limits of their jurisdiction, and making its influence co-extensive with that of criminal law. Judging of their office by what the Word of God itself declares it to be—a divine ordinance for the encouragement of well-doing, and the repression of evil-doing, what could, to minds thus conscientious and enlightened, be more manifest than that they were bound to promote those great ends by means at once the mildest, the cheapest, and the most efficient, and that the Bible itself was but a treasury of such means? Did they feel that to that blessed book they were, under God, indebted for a clearer knowledge of their own duties as governors, and for more powerful motives to their discharge, than they could possibly have had without the knowledge of it; how obviously were they then engaged to communicate the same advantage to their subjects, so that they, too, might have an infallible rule to guide them, and heavenly motives to animate them in their various callings and stations! With what impatience would they have listened to men who told them that their endeavours to effect this were in their very principle Antichristian and tyrannical—as if Christianity in a governor could consist in the steady pursuit of heathen maxims of government, and in the systematic exclusion of Christianity from all his public acts—as if it could be tyranny

continue a main article of the law bound up and the testimony sealed—the faith once delivered to the saints.

3. *The advancement of the interests of the Church of Christ.*

The Divine glory is the great and all-comprehensive end which men, whether in public or private stations, are required to set before them. To it the Moral Governor of Universe has unchangeable regard in his extended and powerful administration; and from all his intelligent creatures, the subjects of his dominion, he demands the homage of a paramount and unceasing concern for the advancement of his glory. Especially are those who fill stations of elevated rank and influence in society required to set the Lord continually before them, and to render their public proceedings subservient to the promotion of the Divine honour. Magistrates are God's *ministers*, ordained by him to display the glory and riches of his kingdom, and to dispense its treasures. Is it not expected of an ambassador that the honour of his sovereign should be dear to him? Should not the viceroy of royalty exercise a chief concern that the glory of his master should be preserved untarnished, and the benevolent purposes of his reign should be accomplished? We would hold the man in such a station a traitor, and his conduct deserving the highest reprobation, who would act otherwise. On similar grounds, we contend that God's glory is * the grand design to be subserved by the institu-

to woo men to the love and practice of virtue by the preaching of the Gospel, and the discipline of the Church of Christ, rather than to allow their natural corruption and ignorance to ripen into disorder and crime, and then address them for the first time, not in mercy, but in the stern voice of criminal law! Yet there are some professedly Christian men amongst us, who cannot forgive the heads of the Protestant states for having reasoned thus, and who would have preferred seeing parishes made mere civil divisions, each marked, like our ancient baronies, by their peculiar dungeon-keeps and gallow-trees, than have had the majesty of the king softened and made venerable in the eyes of the people, by being everywhere associated with an acknowledged Gospel, public Christian temples, and an endowed, and therefore doubly responsible, Christian ministry."

* The following remarks, by the excellent and judicious Dr. M'Crie, fully corroborate the sentiments which we have advanced—"The obligation which all are

tion of Civil Magistracy—an object this to which the good of the community is only subordinate, and in comparison of which all other objects sink into insignificance.

In aiming to accomplish this high end, the Christian Magistrate, we need scarcely say, is peculiarly called upon to exercise his authority and employ his influence for promoting the interests of the Redeemer's Church. Just in proportion as the Church of Christ is exalted upon the top of the hills, and her true interests are advanced, so will the light of the Divine glory be spread abroad, and the honour of the mighty King who dwells in Zion promoted. The obligation of nations as such, and of civil rulers who act as God's vicegerents on earth, to minister to the Church's welfare, and to direct all their concerns to the advancement of her prosperity, can never be evaded, without incurring the displeasure of Him who "ruleth in Jacob unto the ends of the earth," and becoming liable to the tremendous consequences—"The nation that will not serve thee (i. e. the Church) shall perish; yea, all those nations shall be utterly wasted."*

under individually to maintain the honour, and support the worship of God, attaches in an especial manner to nations and those who are in public authority over them. 'Let us begin with God,' is a maxim applicable to the formation of civil society and laws, as well as to other important undertakings. Men are not to herd together, like a number of cattle, making provision merely for their external protection, accommodation and order, forgetting the God that is above. A constitution which did not recognise religion, nor make any provision for its maintenance and defence, would be in so far an Atheistical constitution. As magistracy is an ordinance of God, and those invested with it, though chosen by men, are the 'ministers of God,' such persons must be under special obligations to maintain his honour. This they are bound to do, not merely by the preservation of justice and peace, but by promoting his worship in their official station, and by resenting open indignities and contempt offered to the Majesty of heaven, by whom they rule and decree justice."—(See an able pamphlet by Dr. M'Crie, entitled a "Statement of the Difference between the Profession of the Reformed Church of Scotland as adopted by Seceders, and the Profession contained in the New Testament and other Acts lately adopted by the General Associate Synod," p. 111. This masterly production advocates throughout, on the subject of the Magistrate's power *circa sacra*, the doctrines advanced in this discourse.)

* Isa. lx. 12.

Bright and cheering are the declarations which proclaim the concern of nations and the interest of civil rulers in this matter—"The nations of them that are saved shall walk in the light of it, (the city of the Lord,) and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and their honour into it." "The Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising."*

While we claim for the Redeemer's Church the countenance and support of the Christian Magistrate, you will not mistake our argument, brethren, as if we meant to assign to the civil ruler a lordship over the Church—an *Erastian supremacy* in things pertaining to the body of Christ. Most cheerfully do I admit, in the fullest sense that fair interpretation will bear, the truth that the Redeemer's "kingdom is not of this world;" and utterly do I disclaim, as a monstrous invasion of the exclusive prerogative of the Lord Jesus, the assumed right of the Magistrate to prescribe to the Church articles of faith, or to model for state purposes her policy. A *spiritual* or *ecclesiastical* supremacy in regard to doctrine or worship, discipline or government, he has not; authority to administer any religious ordinance, or to direct or control its administration, he may not claim; and there pertains to him no power whatever over the ministers or private members of the Church, except in a civil respect, and as they are his subjects. Against all such claims as, in these articles, have been arrogantly made by the princes of the earth, and impiously admitted by time-serving sycophants, and men unconcerned about the Redeemer's glory, the fearful denunciations of Jehovah's word, and the melancholy examples of disobedience therein exhibited, stand on record. The kingdom of Israel was rent from Saul and his house, because, in a case of emergency, he presumed to offer sacrifice, and exercise the functions of the priest's office. And when another monarch, in the pride of his heart, went into the temple to burn in-

cense, Azariah and eighty priests of the Lord reproved his presumption, and denounced against him the vengeance of heaven—"It appertaineth not unto thee, Uzziah, to burn incense unto the Lord, but unto the priests the sons of Aaron, that are consecrated to burn incense: go out of the sanctuary; for thou hast trespassed: neither shall it be for thine honour from the Lord God."* The God of Zion approved of the zeal of his servants, and by an immediate infliction of wrath, he rebuked the madness of the monarch, and set up a monument of his displeasure against Erastian interference with things sacred, to stand throughout all generations. But though it is incompetent for the Christian Magistrate, as such, to interfere in the Church's internal policy, there remains much for him to do about religious matters, towards securing the peace and prosperity of Zion.

That you may see clearly his duty in this particular, be it remarked that, as the minister of God, and the civil head and representative of the nation, he is bound to provide for the *authoritative establishment* of the religion of Christ, and to maintain it, when established, against all who seek its subversion. The nation, as being in subjection to the Mediator, is bound to submit to his laws, and to profess adherence to his doctrine and worship. And the Civil Magistrate, as the nation's servant, is under obligation, to present the offering of the state's homage to Zion, and by his authority to lengthen the Church's cords, and to strengthen her stakes.

Three things are implied in a *National Establishment of Christianity*, which serve to define the province, and exhibit the duty of a Christian Magistrate in relation to the Church of Christ. These are, *the ratification, by civil sanctions, of the Church's creed—public provision* made for the efficient administration of her ordinances—and the extension towards her of *legal protection* in her privileges and immunities. Beyond a few words of explanation on each of these

articles, it is not needful that I should enlarge. The friends of the Covenanted Reformation, who jeopardated their lives in the cause of civil and religious liberty, strenuously maintained these principles, and contended for them even unto blood. By the *Magistrate's sanction* given to the Church's creed, is not intended a power claimed and exercised by him to prescribe to the Church a confession of faith or a form of worship. It is the prerogative of Christ alone to appoint articles of faith, and to settle the order of the sanctuary. But should we suppose the body of a nation to agree on the profession of the true religion, and, by their ecclesiastical rulers, to whom the work properly belongs, to have drawn from the Scriptures a particular confession of faith and form of worship as the basis of church-fellowship, then is it the duty of the Civil Magistrate, by his public act, to add to such deeds his authoritative sanction. This gives them no spiritual authority, nor does it even increase their obligation as ecclesiastical deeds; and yet it serves valuable and important purposes. The sanction of the Magistrate renders the Church's confession a national deed—declares the faith of the nation—and pledges the honour and authority of the state to the public profession and support of the cause of Christ and the Church's testimony. On this principle, the *Covenants* of our fathers have a proper claim for recognition as national deeds by the rulers and people of the British empire at the present day.* As agreed upon by the representatives of the Church, they had only the force of ecclesiastical deeds, and could only serve to exhibit the Church's faith, or to admit to fellowship or exclude therefrom; but as afterwards adopted by the nation's representatives, and receiving their sanction, they became in the strictest sense national deeds, and however men may please themselves in rejecting them, they still have a descending obligation on the nation to the latest posterity.†

* This point is satisfactorily proved and ably illustrated by Brown of Haddington, in his *Second Letter on Toleration*.

† See Appendix, Note D.

The necessity and expediency of a *public provision* for the due administration of the Church's ordinances, as another part of the Magistrate's duty in establishing the true religion, are capable of the strictest and most satisfactory demonstration. We condemn the *tithe system* of these countries, and we hold it to be as impolitic as it is unscriptural :* equally do we protest against any provision for the functionaries of religion that interferes with the independence of the Redeemer's Church, or that binds the ministers of religion to an approval of a corrupt and immoral government; and gladly would we see the contributions of voluntary Christian benevolence for the support of the Gospel so multiplied, that the necessity of a public provision might be in a great measure superseded. But we are constrained to declare, at the same time, our decided conviction, that the resources of private Christian benevolence alone, are

* The *tithe system* of Britain and Ireland is objectionable on various grounds, and should be abolished. The Jews, among whom God ordained that the *tenth* of the produce of the soil should be dedicated to the purposes of religion, were an *agricultural* people; the case is very different in these countries, and it cannot but be considered most unjust to lay the burden on the landholder, while the manufacturer and merchant are in a great measure exempted. Besides, the *Prelatical Establishment* is unscriptural and oppressive, and a public tax for its support must therefore be viewed as a grievance by such as conscientiously dissent from it. The mode of distribution of tithe is likewise most unjust—the working clergy being left to subsist on a scanty pittance, whilst haughty lordlings are maintained in pomp and affluence. On these and similar grounds, we enter our protest against the present tithe system, and contend for its extinction. At the same time, we would not be understood as objecting against the principle of a *public national support* being supplied to the ministers of religion, and for the maintenance of religious ordinances; nor, as even insinuating that *a tenth part* of the products of industry is too large a share to be devoted to the purposes of religion. Such a support, we are entirely persuaded from Scripture and reason, the rulers of a Christian land are bound to furnish;—all the objections that can be brought against it, have equal force against a provision made for *National Education*, or indeed against any tax levied for preserving the morals, and protecting the lives and properties of the subjects. Let the true religion be established, and the tax be levied and distributed on equitable principles, and then will it be found that religion is indeed the cheap defence of the nation; and that the money applied for maintaining its ministrations, secures objects greatly more valuable to the community than the sums now expended for promoting mere literary education, or for supporting police establishments, gaol and workhouses.

inadequate to furnish sufficient support to the Church in her attempt to diffuse the blessings of true religion over the whole land; and, in addition to all that is supplied in this way, except something be ministered out of the national treasury for this purpose, the great mass of irreligion and vice will continue, and the pale of the Church will be limited to comparatively a narrow part of the community. On the ground of the clearest and most justifiable expediency, the Christian Magistrate should yield such a support. His duty in this particular is largely exhibited in the examples of the godly princes of Israel and Judah, who “*consecrated their service*”* to the Lord; and fully is the assurance given, that in the day when the Lord shall bring again Zion, and “the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ,” the magistrates of the nations shall appropriate a public support towards maintaining the Church’s ministrations. Kings, in their kingly capacity, will bring “gold and incense,”—“for brass they will bring gold, and for iron silver, and for wood brass, and for stones iron.”† The Magistrate’s duty of affording *legal protection* to the Church in the possession of her privileges, will be more largely considered afterwards. Suffice it for the present to say, that the Christian Magistrate is declared to be a “*nursing-father*” to the Church.‡ Does not this expressive designation imply, in the fullest manner, that the Church, as the nursling committed to his care, should ever be the object of tender and watchful concern—that around her he should always extend the shield of his authority, and by all the power of law, and the weight of his influence, minister to her constant and effectual protection?

Here, my brethren, I might rest the plea for the Magistrate’s duty to afford a *national and legal establishment* to the Church of Christ. To you, I feel persuaded, the mere statement of what the phrase imports is enough. Knowing the testimonies and sufferings of your Presbyterian forefathers,

* 1 Chron. xxix. 5.

† Isa. lx. 6, 17.

‡ Isa. xlix. 23.

you will at once recognise the duty, and be prepared to contend earnestly for this article of the faith once delivered to the saints. But the principle, however obvious, has been opposed, and the obligation of the duty has been denied. Amid the sweeping liberality of an infidel age, legal protection has been refused to the Church of Christ, and an outcry has been raised against the nation, or the Magistrate, the nation's representative, establishing religion in any form. It were well if, on this article, the friends of truth had maintained their steadfastness, and continued to walk in the footsteps of the reformers and martyrs. In some quarters the enemy has come in like a flood; it is therefore our duty, without delay, to "lift up a standard against him." We fear not the result. The truth is mighty, and it must prevail. Some there may be, who, fixing their eye on the corrupt establishments of religion that have existed, or that do yet exist in the nations, and anticipating their speedy downfall, confound the abuse of the thing with the nature of the thing itself. A calm consideration of the case will dissipate this delusion. The light of the Inspired Oracles is sufficient to dispel the artificial obscurity which the prejudices, or the interested feelings of men, may have cast around the subject. We invite your respectful attention to this ultimate arbiter, when we briefly state the *Scriptural arguments*, on the authority of which we are bound to assert the duty of the Christian Magistrate to *establish and protect* the true religion in the community over which he presides. "Walk about Zion, and go round about her; tell the towers thereof. Mark ye well her bulwarks, consider her palaces." I might, indeed, argue the question on the ground of *Christian expediency* and general utility, and show that, on this foundation, a solid and durable bulwark might be raised in defence of a rightly constituted national establishment of religion. I might appeal to the law of nature, and prove that even in nations destitute of Divine Revelation, the remains of nature's light, and the traces of the original law inscribed on the heart, have testified to the value of the principle which I advocate, and

led in some sort to its adoption. I pass over, however, this ground of proof, and refer you at once to the dictates of the revealed will of Heaven—"to the law and to the testimony" is my chief appeal.

First, *A civil establishment of religion once existed by express and immediate appointment of God.*

Under the former economy, the God of Israel openly and explicitly declared his mind in relation to all things pertaining to his worship and ordinances. The Church, which was then as much the Church of Christ as it is now, was, by Divine direction, rendered a chief object of the Magistrate's care. To him pertained the care of its external order and safety; a liberal provision he was bound to make for the support of its worship and public functionaries—by wholesome laws was he required to guard its liberties—and the promotion of its welfare was to be a primary object of his government. All this, be it remembered, was by express enactment of heaven. The *nature* of the Jewish establishment is not now the point under consideration; we have simply to do with the *fact of its existence*. That this constitution had its origin in the declared will of God, is direct and conclusive proof that the principle of a national establishment of religion cannot be wrong in itself—cannot be oppressive or unjust. God can do no iniquity, and, in reference to this very matter, he himself declares, that he gave to Israel "right judgments and true laws, good statutes and commandments." In the Israelitish commonwealth, we have an instance of a system of legislation, devised by Jehovah, adapted to the state of a people favoured with the true religion.* Amid all that was peculiar in that system, beyond doubt, there was much in it worthy the attention, and deserving the imitation of civil rulers in every age.† Apart, however, from this and

* See "M'Crie's Statement," p. 124.

† The duty of a Christian nation, in this particular, is clearly stated by a celebrated writer of the Secession—(See "Gib's Display," vol. i. p. 280.) "As it was once a peculiar duty of the *Jewish* nation, so it is peculiarly incumbent upon

every other consideration, we insist at present upon the simple fact, that a civil establishment of the true religion once had attached to it the seal of Divine institution, as a powerful presumptive argument in favour of the principle for which we contend, and to vindicate it from the charge of injustice.

Secondly, *The approved examples of Civil Rulers mentioned in the Bible, show it to be the duty of the Civil Magistrate to establish the true religion.*

The rulers of the Israelitish nation felt and acknowledged their obligation to act as the "ministers of God," in protecting and cherishing the Church. Official support they extended to revealed religion, and never did they hesitate to interfere, when it was found necessary, to purge the sanctuary, and to protect the Church from injury or aggression. David and Solomon, Asa and Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah and Josiah, stand pre-eminent among the civil rulers of old, who brought their glory to Zion, and consecrated their power and influence to the service of the Redeemer's Church. Their interference on behalf of true religion met the Divine approbation, and a blessing descended upon their persons and their thrones, proportioned to the activity and zeal which they manifested in the concerns of religion. On the other hand, when their successors in office departed from their ways, and withheld their fostering care from the Church, religion declined throughout the nation, immorality prevailed, and a long train of Divine judgments proclaimed the displeasure of Him whose honour had been affronted, and whose Church neglected. It is worthy of special remark, that *every extensive revival of religion that took place during the continuance of the Jewish commonwealth, was pro-*

every civil state whereinto Christianity is introduced, to study and bring to pass—that civil government among them, in all the appurtenances of its constitution and administration, run in an agreeableness to the *Word of God*; be subservient unto the spiritual kingdom of *Jesus Christ*, and to the interests of the true religion and reformation of the church: as, otherwise, they cannot truly prosper in their civil concerns, nor be enriched by the blessings of the Gospel."

duced by such magisterial interference. It is vain to urge that the Jewish government was a *Theocracy*,* and that this circumstance of itself forbids us to plead the official conduct of the Jewish kings as an example to Christian Magistrates. In the time of Samuel, the Theocracy in a great measure ceased; the people “chose them a king” like the surrounding nations, and God, though he still owned them as his peculiar heritage, thenceforward to the close of the dispensation, administered his government towards them much in the manner that he still does towards nations blessed with the light of Divine Revelation. Nor will it avail to allege that the office of the Israelitish kings was solely *typical*,† and that the exercise of their authority about religion was done away in Christ. Then would it follow, that the political duties of their office have ceased too, by the coming of Messiah the Prince, and of course that no example for the performance of any of them is deducible from the Old Testament. But it is not so. Some of the Israelitish Kings were personal types of Him that was to come, but the kingly office which they sustained did not terminate at his appearance; and their concern about religion rested upon *moral principles*, which are of perpetual obligation. Besides, it is not Jewish rulers alone that are displayed for our ensamples, employing their authority for the encouragement of religion, and the promotion of the church’s interests. Nebuchadnezzar and Cyrus, Darius and Artaxerxes, pub-

* A *Theocracy*, it is generally maintained by sound writers, consists in two things—“a system of laws immediately given to a people from heaven—and the exercise of a peculiar providence in supporting and sanctioning that system, by conferring national mercies and inflicting national judgments, often in an immediate and extraordinary way.” In the former respect, the state of the Jewish nation was altogether peculiar—in the latter, Christian nations may still be regarded, in some measure, as being under a Theocracy.

† Some excellent arguments in opposition to this opinion, which was maintained by Glass and his followers in Scotland nearly a century ago, and which now seems a favourite sentiment of the opponents of Ecclesiastical Establishments, are to be found in Muirhead’s *Dissertations on the Federal Transactions between God and his Church*—Dissert. VIII. p. 405, 406, &c.

lished decrees, commanding the worship of the true God, and securing legal protection to the visible church in rebuilding the temple and maintaining her privileges.* That their conduct in these instances had the Divine approbation, we know assuredly, not only from the circumstance that God promised and actually bestowed blessings upon them on account of such interference, but, also, that God himself is said to have put the thing in their hearts. Here, then, we have a numerous collection of instances, both of Jewish and Heathen rulers, exercising their authority in establishing true religion, and ministering to the church. Does not the Spirit thus powerfully teach, that Magistrates are still bound to follow such an example, and are they not hereby encouraged to expect blessings from above, in the way of advancing the interests of the Mediator's kingdom?

Thirdly, *The predictions of the inspired Word assure us that, in New Testament times, Civil Rulers shall employ their official power in the establishment and maintenance of true religion.*

As true religion is substantially the same in every age, and the church is essentially one, it may reasonably be expected that similar encouragement, protection, and countenance, should be extended to her under every dispensation. Accordingly, the page of inspired Prophecy teems with bright and glorious announcements, foretelling the intense concern that should be taken by Civil Rulers in the peace and prosperity of Zion. I can only wait for a hasty glance at a few prominent passages that refer to this subject. In Ps. ii. 10, the Father, as he declares the decree, appointing his Son King upon his holy hill of Zion, lays the injunction upon judges and rulers, to yield affectionate and unreserved submission to the Mediator, and the command is enforced by the intimation of vengeance in case of disobedience. The homage required must be rendered by Magistrates in their *official* character, for in that character they rebelled,

* See Dan. iii.; Ezra i. vi. vii.

and impiously sought to break the bands and cast away the cords of the Lord's Anointed. Their *wisdom* it is to dedicate their willing service to the Lord the Saviour, and knowing that he wears the august title, the King of Zion, the grand evidence of their obedience to the mandate of Heaven will be found in the willing surrender of their power and influence to promote the efficient administration of the Church's ordinances, and the abundant enlargement of her privileges.* Again, in the Seventy-Second Psalm, (ver. 10, 11,) it is predicted that to the exalted Mediator the rulers of distant nations shall profess subjection, and the nations in their national capacity shall consecrate their wealth for the furtherance of his cause. "The kings of Tarshish and the isles shall bring presents; the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts. Yea, all kings shall fall down before him; all nations shall serve him." Inspired prophecy brightens as we proceed, and clearer and yet more explicit are its announcements, as we approach the times of the Messiah. The evangelical prophet, speaking by the Spirit of Jesus, and referring directly to the New Testament Church, declares, Isa. xlix. 23—"Kings shall be thy nursing-fathers, and their queens thy nursing-mothers." The announcement is the promise of singular favour to be bestowed upon the church by her exalted Head. It expressly foretels that civil rulers shall exercise towards her a special care, and an affectionate, constant concern—such a tutelage and guardianship as a nursing-father employs towards the helpless orphan. Can such a declaration ever be reconciled with the opinion, that Magistrates have

* "It is the unanimous opinion of Divines," says *Wallæus*, "that the declaration of the royal prophet (Ps. ii.) is applicable to kings under the New Testament; 'now, therefore, kings, be wise,' &c.; that is, yield obedience, and that not merely as other members of the church, but *chiefly* as kings and supreme judges."—(*Wallæi, Oper. tom. ii. p. 35.*) Thus also speaks Dr. Owen on the passage—"Judges and rulers, as such, must 'Kiss the Son,' and own his sceptre and advance his ways. Some think, if you were well settled, you ought not, *as rulers of the nation*, to put forth your *power* for the interest of Christ. The good Lord keep your hearts from that apprehension!"—(*Owen's Works, vol. xv.*)

nothing to do with the church, and should not employ their authority for the advancement of religion? I can only advert farther at present to the very full and explicit prophecy in Isa. lx. 1—17. Here it is distinctly predicted, that the kings of the Gentiles “shall minister” to the church, and that she shall “suck the breast of kings.” Do not these expressions plainly proclaim the employment of official authority on her behalf, and the cheerful and liberal appropriation of money for her services? The “kingdom that will not serve” her, it is declared, “will utterly perish.” What is this but saying, that if nations, in their national capacity, neglect religion, and refuse the church aid, their doom is inevitable? The comment of *Vitringa* on the passage is full to the point—“Such as are princes and nobles,” says that learned and eminent expositor, “shall protect and promote religion; shall honour and cherish her ministers; procure necessary support for her schools and seminaries; defend and agent the cause of the church, and, without offering violence to consciences, shall, according to the rule of the Gospel, employ their authority and means for the increase and enlargement of the church.”* These bright and glorious predictions proclaim the doctrine of magistratical interference for the establishment of true religion, and for the support and protection of the church in New Testament times. They declare this to be a precious part of her future hopes, and a peculiar part of the inheritance that shall hereafter be given her.

It will not do, to allege that the doctrine for which we plead has no sanction in the precepts or examples of the New Testament. Even were this conceded, still the argument would stand with undiminished force and conclusiveness. The Old Testament is a rule of faith and practice as well as the New. The duty of the Civil Magistrate to establish true religion is therein repeatedly declared both by precept and example. It rests upon moral principles

* *Vitringa in loco.*

of immutable obligation, and until the opponents of ecclesiastical establishments can produce proof that the law is abrogated or has ceased, we must regard it as remaining in full force, claiming the subjection of rulers and of nations, until the consummation of all things. But I go farther, and affirm, that the New Testament does furnish a warrant for the civil establishment of the religion of Christ. My text declares that Magistrates are a “terror to evil-doers;” and who will dare to limit the term “evil-doers” to offenders against the requirements of the second table of the Decalogue? During the former economy, the care of the Civil Magistrate extended to both tables—of both was he the appointed guardian. The person who will confine his power now to the second table, and say that *evil-doers* are the violators of *its* precepts only, is bound to prove his assertion. Till this is done, we are warranted to regard the expression as attributing to the Christian Civil Magistrate precisely the same power about religion, as was claimed and exercised, with Divine approbation, under the former dispensation. Christians are, farther, commanded to pray “for kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all *godliness and honesty*.”* Does not this imply that rulers, in their official capacity, are to be concerned for the advancement of *godliness* as well as for the preservation of *honesty*? And the canon of New Testament Scripture does not close till the promises that secure the Magistrate’s official establishment and support of religion are renewed. “The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ.”† “And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it; and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it.”‡ Bright and consoling are these predictions. They direct away the mind from the present depressed state of the interest of Christ, and the prevailing Antichristianism of the nations, and fix it on a period

rapidly approaching, when the rulers of the earth shall submit to Christ's yoke, and shall publicly confess that he is Lord to the glory of God the Father;—and when “whatever is eminent, beautiful, splendid, or praiseworthy among the nations, shall be consecrated to the use of the Church of Christ”* The full and express Scripture testimonies to which I have adverted, respond to the glorious truth, that “*all things have been put under the authority of the Mediator for the benefit of his Church.*”† The thrones and the sceptres of earth form no exception. On the contrary, from “the principalities and powers” among men, special submission is demanded. Though the demand is now generally disregarded, these bright announcements cheer our hopes; and assure us, that the period of the Church's continuance on earth will not come to a close, till Zion shall appear most beautiful, the joy of the whole earth—till the religion of Christ be universally established, and all the power and influence of the civil state be willingly consecrated to its promotion and service. Such is our argument for the obligation of the Christian Magistrate to promote by a rational establishment of religion the kingdom of Christ. As another object of Civil Magistracy among a Christian people, I notice

4. *The restraint and correction of whatever is manifestly opposed to the Church's interests.*

The doctrine which I have endeavoured to establish respecting the duty of the Civil Magistrate to advance the true religion, teaches, by immediate inference, that it is equally his duty to restrain and repress by his authority, and whatever means are competent to him, all that endangers the Church's peace or safety, or is opposed to the power of godliness. If there is the weightiest obligation upon a nation enjoying Divine Revelation to profess the

* *Vitringa in loco.*

† See an excellent work, lately published, by the Rev. Peter Macindoe, entitled, “*The Application of Scriptural Principles to Political Government,*” p. 271, where this point is ably illustrated.

religion of Christ, and submit to his laws, then the nation, or, which in this case is the same thing, the Civil Magistrate, the nation's representative, must have power to remove hinderances, restrain abuses, and punish with civil penalties those who oppose just authority, and who attempt to burst asunder the cords of the Lord's Anointed. Laws without a penal sanction annexed in case of disobedience, are but of little avail; authority without a power of punishment to enforce it when resistance is offered, is a mere empty name. All the examples of godly rulers of old, to which I have alluded, as worthy the imitation of Christian Magistrates still, are decisive on the question. Not only did they establish and cherish the true religion, but oft, as occasion required, they interposed their authority for the destruction of idolatry, and the removal of all impediments to the universal acknowledgment of the truth. We have no warrant to dissever the two parts of the exercise of their magistratical authority—the establishment of revealed religion, and its protection from injury. Both are equally the subjects of Divine approbation, and both are recorded as examples for future imitation. Indeed, in the nature of things they cannot be disjoined. The establishment of Christianity implies fencing it round with laws that have a penal sanction; the fostering care of the Civil Ruler involves in it the idea of power to protect and a right to punish. Kings cannot be “nursing-fathers,” neither their queens “nursing-mothers” to the Church, if they employ not their authority to preserve her from evil and danger of every kind, as well as to nourish and cherish her.

But we are furnished with more direct and decisive evidence still, that the Christian Civil Magistrate has a true and proper right to exercise his power for the correction and restraint of whatsoever is *openly* derogatory to the Divine honour, and opposed to the interests of godliness. My text bears unequivocal testimony to the right of the Magistrate, ruling over a Christian people, to punish offences against both tables of the Divine law. As the “minister of

God," he is set for a terror to them that do evil. He "bears not the sword in vain;" he is a "revenger to execute wrath upon them that do evil." Words could not declare more plainly, that the Magistrate's province is the suppression of evil, as well as the promotion of good; nor could language more explicitly teach, that, in suppressing evil, the national sovereignty in the Magistrate's hands is armed with vengeance. There is no limitation expressed or implied in the passage—not the most remote intimation that the cases of punishment are to be referred to crimes committed against the precepts of the second table of the Decalogue, and are not only applicable to violations of those of the first. Heresy is elsewhere enumerated among the works of the flesh,* and schismatics and heretics are called evil-workers.† By what perverted ingenuity can they be excluded from "the doers of evil" to whom the Magistrate is declared to be "a terror," and for whose punishment he is said to be armed with the civil sword? If he "bears not the sword *in vain*," he must use it. He is a "revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil;" the vicegerent of Him who hath said—"Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord."‡ The end of punishment is not alone, as infidels have said, the reformation of the offender—it is revengeful, marking the connexion divinely established between crime and pain, and declaring the award of guilt in its subject, and not his capacity of future improvement.§ The original word applied in the text to describe the Magistrate's character when he employs his power for punishment, strongly expresses the idea of vengeance. Εκδικος, *a revenger*, or more properly an *avenger*, is the term uniformly employed in the Septuagint to designate the person who, under the former economy, avenged

* Gal. v. 20.

† 2 Cor. xi. 13.

‡ Rom. xii. 19.

§ See some very excellent remarks on this subject by Dr. M'Leod, in his "Scriptural View," p. 114.

the blood of his kinsman.* On the principle of eternal justice that “whoso sheddeth man’s blood, by man shall his blood be shed,” and by the appointment of Jehovah’s law, the kinsman-avenger had a *legal right* to cut off the manslayer—nay, he was imperatively required not to spare him, if he found him anywhere but in the city of refuge. By applying the same epithet to the Civil Magistrate, the Spirit, in effect, tells us that he has a similar right to take vengeance on those who insult the Divine Majesty, and to execute wrath on such as do evil.

Ere I proceed to a more lengthened statement of the argument for this part of magistral interference, it is needful to make *two* preliminary observations, which you will carry along with you in all your future investigations on the subject. Our views on this article have been grievously misrepresented; you will indulge me therefore while I attempt to narrow the field of discussion, and to manifest the truth to every man’s conscience in the sight of God.

In the *first place*—The Christian Magistrate takes cognizance of offences against the first table, and punishes them as crimes against the state, not merely as breaches of the Divine law, and not at all as ecclesiastical scandals.

To church-officers alone belongs the exercise of spiritual censures—to the civil ruler it is competent to judge and punish offences, as they affect the peace and safety of the civil commonwealth. If the nation professes the true religion, and publicly declares by the sanction of the Civil Magistrate its approbation of the Church’s creed, then it is abundantly evident that whatever tends to tarnish the Divine glory, and is manifestly detrimental to the interests of the truth professed, becomes *a civil offence*, and is justly entitled to be visited with penal inflictions. The nation has avouched the Lord to be their God, and the Magistrate is God’s minister while he is civil head of the state, and therefore is he bound to vindicate the Divine honour, and to

* See Num. xxxv. 19—37. Josh. xx. 5, 9.

promote the Church's welfare. It is in this view—in relation to a nation and a magistracy thus constituted alone and considered as *civil offences*, that idolatry and blasphemy, heresy and Sabbath profanation, should be subjected to outward punishment.*

Secondly, The crimes that are punishable by the Civil Magistrate, are those which are clearly declared to be such by the Divine law.

We plead for the execution of wrath in no doubtful cases. The Magistrate whose duty we declare is a Christian man. As a Christian, he will be gentle to all men, instructing the ignorant, “if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth;” and as a Magistrate possessed of the *qualifications* which we have represented as essential to his character, when he unsheathes the sword of justice, and employs his authority for the suppression of vice and irreligion, he will see that the crime be clearly exhibited in the law of Heaven, and that the punishment applied be sanctioned by Divine approbation. The decision rests not alone with the Magistrate's will—it is written in the law of the Lord, and the Magistrate, as a revenger, has only to execute the wrath recorded against them that do evil. It is not heresy or idolatry *in the mind*, but heresy or idolatry *publicly avowed, propagated, and obstinately persevered in*, that calls for punishment. Men may *hold* what opinions they please, and the Christian Magistrate may safely suffer them *to live unmolested*; but should they presume to disseminate such as tend to tarnish God's glory, and thereby injure the interests of the Church

* This statement, which is intended to lie at the foundation of all our reasonings on the subject of magistratical interference for the suppression of gross heresy, blasphemy, &c. it will be readily seen, removes many of the futile, though plausible objections that are advanced against our doctrine. It is the duty of a *Christian Magistrate*, possessed of due Scriptural qualifications, and ruling over a *reformed nation*, that we have attempted to exhibit throughout the discourse. If any choose to make a different application of our arguments, they do it at the hazard of putting upon our language a construction which it will by no means bear, and of perverting reasoning which they are unable to refute.

of Christ, and of the state professing the truth, they are justly liable to restraint and punishment. Occasional difficulty may be felt in determining the precise demerit of the offence, and the proper degree of punishment; but the same thing may be said of the scandals that come under the inspection of ecclesiastical officers, and even of the Magistrate's duty in punishing breaches of the second table of the moral law. I have already said that, in all doubtful cases, the Christian Magistrate should let mercy rejoice against judgment; but he must not forget, at the same time, that, being a revenger appointed to execute wrath upon them that do evil, he is to abide by the clear and explicit decisions of the Divine law,*

* The principle that the Civil Magistrate should restrain and punish open blasphemy, &c. has been more or less acted upon by almost all governments, both in ancient and modern times. The law of nature establishes it, and therefore even Heathen nations have adopted it in their codes of legislation. In Greece and Rome, the blasphemer of the gods was reckoned the worst enemy of the state. The most excellent parts of the British constitution are those which provide for the promotion of religion, and the suppression of such flagrant offences as are directly committed against God's honour and truth. Till a recent period, the Romish idolatry throughout the British empire, was regarded as calling for *civil penalties*; even yet there are some offices in the state, from which the professor of it is excluded. Deism openly avowed and propagated, is, in the eye of the British law, illegal. Eminent statesmen in America have declared, that the principle of the Magistrate's coercive power in religious matters, ought to be adopted generally in the land of free institutions. A venerable American patriot and divine commends *Chancellor Kent*, of the State of New-York, for "ably vindicating," as he expresses it, "the Christian character of the commonwealth, in affirming the decision that '*blasphemy against the Saviour is a crime.*'" The Deed of the Constitution of the State of *New-York* declares that "*blasphemy against God, and contumelious reproaches, and profane ridicule of CHRIST, or the Holy Scriptures, are offences punishable at the common law, whether uttered by words or writings.*" *Pensylvania* has likewise decreed to "forbid or punish at common law, or by statute, blasphemy against the Christian religion, or any of the Persons of the Holy Trinity." At present, many persons of influence throughout the United States are making strenuous exertions to obtain a national enactment, to prevent the profanation of the Lord's day by *Sabbath mails*. Is not this another proof, that the principle for which we plead is considered essential to the safety and well-being even of communities, that make no national profession of the Christian religion? May we not conclude with the celebrated Dr. M'Crie,† when speaking on this subject—"It is good that public order and peace are not disturbed by every cry of those who are given to change; and

* Dr. M'Leod, "Scriptural View," note, p. 192.

† "Statement," p. 20.

remembering the command which God himself has given for direction in the case—"Ye shall not be afraid of the face of man; *for the judgment is God's.*"*

With these observations, I proceed to lay before you the proof that the Christian Civil Magistrate is bound to restrain and punish, as civil crimes, offences against the first table of the Divine law. Blasphemy and heresy, idolatry and Sabbath-profanation, when openly avowed and practised, provoke the judgments of Heaven, and the Civil Magistrate, as God's minister, is bound to be "a terror" to them that thus do evil. *The nature of his office—the character of the sins—express testimony of Scripture—and the sentiments and conduct of the Reformers and martyrs of Jesus,* justify him in such interference.

1. *The nature of the Magistrate's office, and the relation in which he stands to the state and the church, require this exercise of his authority.*

The faithful Magistrate is a "nursing-father" to the church, and a civil parent to the state. He is the shepherd of his people, the chosen guardian of their privileges, and the diligent protector of their rights. The relation declares his duties, and leaves him no liberty of choice whether he will faithfully perform them or not. The case admits of a simple and satisfactory illustration from the domestic constitution. A Christian father considers himself bound to establish the worship of God in his family, and to require reverential attendance upon it by all his household. Should any of his dependents entertain different views from those which he inculcates respecting the rule of faith and duty, he may bear with and instruct them in meekness, so long as they continue in silence to entertain their scruples, or to refrain from disturbing the worship or peace of the family. But should they act otherwise—should they set up an idol

that varying winds of doctrines and new laws, which produce hurtful effects in ecclesiastical society, do not operate directly in shaking the constitutions and peace of nations."

* Deut. i. 17.

in the house, and labour to turn away the hearts of the children or their fellow-servants from the ways of the Lord, then the head of the family is bound to restrain them in their evil courses, and, if resistance is offered to his commands, he is warranted to proceed to expulsion from the household, or to the infliction of such other punishment as by the Divine law is placed within the limits of his authority. How otherwise can he bear the responsibility of a Christian parent? How else can he merit the approbation which God gave concerning Abraham of old—"I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment"?* In like manner, the civil parent should employ his authority for the establishment of pure religion and its ordinances in the nation; and should his requirements be contravened, and open idolatry be practised, and gross heresy propagated, so as to endanger the church's safety, and to disturb the good order of the state, then has he a proper call to exercise his punitive power, and avenge by civil penalties the dishonour done to God, and the injury inflicted upon the community. His office as "the minister of God" to men "for good"—his character as a "nursing-father" to the church—his relation as a civil parent to the state—demand the application of such correction; and never can the Christian Magistrate fulfil the design of his appointment, if he does not execute wrath on them that do evil.

2. The character of the sins themselves declares the duty and propriety of the Christian Civil Magistrate exercising his authority for restraining and punishing them.

Heresy and idolatry, blasphemy and Sabbath-profana-
tion, are sins committed immediately against God—sins that openly insult and affront him, belie his truth, and daringly give to his grand adversary the worship that is his due, and the time that he specially claims as his own.

* Gen. xviii. 19.

Considered as opposing the church's testimony, and militating against her interests, they aim directly to overturn the glorious fabric which the Lord hath founded, and for which he ever manifests a watchful and jealous concern; and viewed as civil offences against the majesty and safety of a state professing the true religion, they tend most obviously to subvert the foundations of law and order, and their prevalence cannot but call down upon it the visitations of Divine displeasure. Can it for a moment be imagined, that the Christian Civil Magistrate will witness the commission of such sins unconcerned, and, having the power in his hands, that he will do nothing to repress them? How can he be the "minister of God," and manifest no regard for Jehovah's honour? How can he be for *universal good to men*, and limit the exercise of his official power to the preservation of their external property, or to the protection of their bodies? It were a contradiction in terms to call a man a *Christian Magistrate*, or to say that he is God's ordinance *to men for good*, and to declare that he may act in this manner. If the Magistrate has power to restrain and punish the petty thief, the false witness, or the murderer, has he no power to restrain and punish crimes openly practised, that kindle God's wrath against the nation, and, by destroying men's souls, do more real injury to society than the grossest violations of those precepts which only respect the bodily estate and the outward property? He cannot but consider idolatry and blasphemy, heresy and Sabbath-breaking, crimes of fearful demerit—he cannot but be concerned to put away from the land such great wickedness.* He rules for God, and therefore he must not suffer his name to be dishonoured.

* It has been alleged by some who deny the right of the Civil Magistrate to restrain and punish gross heresy and idolatry, that the greatness of these crimes is a reason why those who are chargeable with them should not be punished in this way; and it has been asked, with the obvious design of making out this conclusion, "May they not be too great for man to punish—and may not God reserve the punishment of them to himself?" To all this, it is sufficient to reply, that our concern is not with what God *may* do, but with what he has revealed as our rule of duty. The same inquiry might have been put, and the

His office imperatively requires him to be a *public blessing* to the community, and therefore he must act so that the nation may be secured from Divine judgments.

3. *Express testimonies of Scripture, both in the Old and New Testament, warrant the Magistrate's restrictive and punitive power in matters of religion.*

In the Old Testament we have precepts, examples, and promises, sanctioning the exercise of magistratical power in punishing offences against the first table of the law. Thus, in Deut. xiii. 1—6, false prophets *teaching lies*, or propagating heresies openly in the name of the Lord, are declared punishable by the Civil Magistrate. The design of avenging such a breach of the first commandment, is declared (ver. 11) to be not the reformation of the offender, but a warning to others—“And all Israel shall hear, and fear, and shall do no more any such wickedness as this is among you.” The celebrated reformer, Calvin, expressly adduces the passage in support of the right of the Magistrate to punish such as would draw God's people into defection from the worship of the true God, and shows that the same power still belongs to the Civil Magistrate in like cases under the Gospel. The punishment of *idolatry* is enjoined in numerous places of the Old Testament;* and,

same unwarranted inference might have been attempted to be drawn under the former economy; yet the matter was not then left in this state. The crimes to which we have alluded were declared to be *very great*, while the punishment of them was expressly committed to the Civil Magistrate. The Divine appointment in this particular, in its spirit and principle, continues unaltered; of course the Magistrate's duty is clear, irrespective of the crude conjectures of men who substitute sophistry for argument. That the increased enormity of crimes removes them from the cognizance of the Civil Ruler, is a principle directly opposed to the practice of all well-regulated states. On this ground, French infidels have contended, that even murder should not be punished with death. Others, in our own country, who would perhaps take it highly amiss to be ranked with them, have, in part, adopted their views, in opposition to the express enactment, “Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed.” In this, and in the instance under consideration, the fallacy lies in substituting the reasonings of depraved human nature, or even vain conjectures, for the plain requirements of Divine Revelation.

* See Deut. xvii. 1—8. Levit. xvii. 2—8.

even before the Mosaic ritual was set up, the patriarch Job, who is generally supposed to have been contemporary with Abraham, declares it to be “*an iniquity to be punished by the judge.*”* The breach of the third commandment is frequently declared to come under the punitive power of the civil authority; † and the fourth commandment contains a requirement that directly refers the cognizance of Sabbath profanation to the Civil Magistrate—“*nor the stranger that is within thy gates.*” Who, it may be asked, shall prevent the violation of the Sabbath on the part of the stranger or sojourner, but he in whom is lodged the authority of the state—the Civil Magistrate? ‡ We have, besides, repeated declarations enjoining the sanctification of

* Job xxxi. 26—28.

† See Levit. xxiv. 16, 17.

‡ From this it would appear that the moral, as well as the judicial law, made express provision for the punishment, by the Magistrate, of offences against the first table. The admission that the Civil Magistrate should *restrain Sabbath-breaking*, which is made even by such as deny his right to suppress gross heresy and idolatry, cuts up by the roots their whole system. By what authority do they separate the fourth from the other precepts of the first table, and maintain that the Magistrate’s coercive power extends to *it*, while it ought not to be extended to *them*? Besides, there is not a single reason that can be advanced in favour of the punishment of Sabbath profanation, that may not be pleaded with equal, if not greater force for the suppression, by civil pains, of gross heresy and idolatry; nor a solitary objection that can be made against the latter instance of magistratical interference, that may not be urged against the former. Men will plead *conscience* and *private judgment*, and raise the outcry of *persecution* in the one case as well as the other; if the plea is held inadmissible in relation to breaches of the fourth commandment, why should it be allowed in reference to gross and repeated outward acts of violation of the first or second or third? To be consistent, the opponents of our doctrine should deny that the Christian Civil Magistrate has any right to punish Sabbath profanation; they should, on their own principles, admit the *conscientious* objections to Sabbath resting made by Jews, Separatists, and others, and at once become the advocates of a *passive toleration* being extended to all who in a Christian land choose to desecrate the Lord’s day. When they are thus *partial in themselves*, is there not room to infer that they have “*become judges of evil thoughts?*” Bad as the age is, the avowal that Sabbath profanation should not be authoritatively restrained, would not *take* among a Christian people; the unbounded toleration of gross and damnable heresy and blasphemy is better relished. Let it be well observed, however, that the cases are completely parallel; the suppression of Sabbath-breaking, and the punishment of gross heresy, blasphemy, or idolatry, stand or fall together.

the day of rest, and commanding the violation of it to be punished.

These directions, given by Jehovah to guard the precepts of the Decalogue, were carefully followed by the pious rulers of Israel, who were approved of God for their faithfulness, and on whose administration Divine blessings abundantly descended. Asa and Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah and Josiah, Ezra and Nehemiah, are commended for destroying monuments of idolatry, punishing the open contemners of God's law, and reforming abuses in the worship of the sanctuary. Even Heathen rulers receive Divine approbation for similar zeal. Artaxerxes employed his authority for punishing the impious contemners of God's law; and it is worthy of remark, that Ezra, endued with the Spirit, solemnly blesses God that he had put such a thing in the king's heart.* The conduct of these Civil Rulers in relation to the Church, and the interests of religion generally, is proposed as an object of imitation to Christian Magistrates in every nation, and why should their conduct in this particular be an exception? The Divine Spirit gives no intimation that here alone the example ceases; and the inference is unavoidable, that in thus guarding the honour of the Divine law, and punishing such as contemned it, they are still models for the imitation of Christian Civil Rulers.

Inspired *prophecy* assures us that, under the New Testament economy, the practice of Christian Magistrates in this particular shall correspond to that of their predecessors in office under the former dispensation. God promises, in declaring the conduct of such rulers as should possess the character of his *ministers*, that under their dominion "the *sons of Belial* shall be all of them as thorns thrust away;"† and it can be easily shown that the designation, "sons of Belial," is applied in Scripture to the worshippers of idols as well as to grossly immoral persons. Elsewhere,‡ it is pre-

* Ezra vii. 26. 27.

† 2 Sam. xxiii. 6.

‡ Amos ix. 11.

dicted that God will “raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen, and close up the breaches thereof,” that he “will raise up his ruins, and will build it as in the days of old.” In ancient times, the Church was raised up by the fostering care of the Civil Ruler, and its breaches were repaired by his commendable zeal in restraining and punishing idolaters and false prophets, and in reforming religion when it had been corrupted. The prophecy contains the assurance, that in the days of the Messiah the same means will be employed, and be crowned with abundant success. One other passage is more explicit still on this subject. In Zechariah xiii. 3, there is an express prediction declaring the duty of punishing, with civil pains, idolaters and obstinate heretical teachers under the dispensation of the Gospel. There can be no doubt that the passage refers to New Testament times. The “fountain opened,” of which the prophet speaks in the first verse, is the Mediator’s blood, shed for the remission of the sins of many. While it is gloriously exhibited under the Gospel as the means of the sinner’s pardon and purification, it is foretold that *idolaters* and the *false prophets*, or *heretical teachers*, shall be so restrained and punished, that they will cease out of the land, and be remembered no more. Amid the abundant light and privileges that will then prevail, should any still rebel against God, and speak lies in his name, it is predicted that he shall be subjected to punishment. “And it shall come to pass, that when any shall yet prophesy, then his father and his mother that begat him shall say unto him, Thou shalt not live; for thou speakest lies in the name of the Lord; and his father and his mother that begat him shall thrust him through when he prophesieth.” Let it not be pleaded from this, or from the other instances, that we advocate the punishment of heresy or idolatry by *capital punishments*. The sentence of Jehovah’s law declares that they who do such things are worthy of punishment, and the moral principle on which this decision is founded, must, in every condition of the Church on earth, remain immutable. We have already

disclaimed the exercise of magistratical power in order to force men to profess even the fundamental truths of religion, or to practice any religious duty; and we have, in the plainest terms, asserted the duty of the Magistrate to employ forbearance in all doubtful cases, or where there is hope of reformation. Even under the Jewish economy, it should appear that, with Divine approbation, the Magistrate did not in all cases proceed to extremities in the punishment of idolatry, &c. Asa only removed Maachah his mother from being queen, though she had been chargeable with flagrant idolatry,* while, at the same time, he utterly destroyed her idol. In the passage which has been just quoted, and which, we have seen, refers to the times of the Gospel, we have a similar instance of *a commutation of punishment*. The near relatives of the false prophet are represented as the instruments of bringing him to the Magistrate for punishment, but the "thrusting through" cannot denote passing him to death, for, in a subsequent part of the passage, (ver. 6.) he is brought in speaking of *the wounds* inflicted, as he exhibits the scars of the corporal punishment which he had received.

The New Testament proceeds on the principle that specific directions had been before given relative to the Magistrate's duty on this article, and laws had been promulgated, which are never said to be repealed, and which must, therefore, be considered, on all fair construction, of continued obligation. It was not necessary to enact, a second time, a law which had been already declared. Christ and his Apostles came not to abrogate, but to establish the law. This were enough to account for the circumstance, that there are not found in the New Testament specific directions concerning the restraint and punishment of idolatry, blasphemy, &c., as in the former part of the revelation of mercy. But we are not left altogether to deduce the Magistrate's right to restrain and punish breaches of the *first*

* 2 Chron. xv. 16.

table, from established and unalterable principles, clearly propounded in the Old Testament. The New Testament does define the Christian Magistrate's province, and assigns him the very same power as was exercised by the "ministers of God," who presided over the commonwealth of Israel. My text proclaims him to be "a terror to evil doers." Who shall venture to affirm, that open idolaters, gross heretics, blasphemers, and Sabbath-breakers, are not persons of such a character; and how can the Magistrate be a terror to them, if he extends to them and their practices unlimited toleration? It declares him to be God's "minister, *for good*" to the Church, and to the civil community. Can he be a public good in a Christian nation, if he allows his authority to slumber, while men bring in damnable heresies, destroying men's souls, and exposing to Divine judgment the nation? In fine, it assigns to him a sword, which he is not to bear in vain, and with which he is to execute wrath, as an avenger for God, on him that doeth evil. Still the inquiry may be repeated—are not gross heretics and idolaters of them that do evil; and, if so, has not the Civil Magistrate a right, guaranteed to him by God himself, to employ his authority in restraining them, and executing wrath on them, as flagrant transgressors of his law? The same office is ascribed to the Civil Ruler by another Apostle of the Lamb—"Submit yourselves unto governors sent by him for the *punishment of evil doers*, and for the *praise of them that do well*."* Here Magistrates are said to have a special mission for the punishment of *evil doers*; and it is ever to be remembered, that the sacred oracles know no distinction, but uniformly apply the character equally to open violators of the first, as well as the second table of the Decalogue. This selection of Scripture passages, I feel convinced, my brethren, will amply suffice to array you with the armour of righteousness on the right hand and the left, to confirm your faith, and encourage your hopes, while

* 1 Peter ii. 13, 14.

you oppose gainsayers, and labour to overcome, by the blood of the Lamb, and the word of the Saviour's testimony. I direct you,

4. *Finally, to the testimonies of the Reformed Churches, and to the sentiments of the Reformers and Martyrs, and the eminent advocates of the Covenanted Reformation on this subject.*

On no subject has there been a more harmonious concurrence of sentiment among the Churches of the Reformation, and among eminent Divines, than this. Indeed, after a diligent and painful examination of the matter, I am free to avow, without hesitation, my belief that the doctrine of magistratical interference for the protection of the Church, and the suppression of gross violations of the first table, was embodied in the creeds of all the Orthodox Reformed Churches, maintained by the most distinguished reformers, and held especially by the advocates of the Covenanted Reformation, from Knox and Melville, down to the renowned Standard-bearers in our own age, who have recently entered into their rest. So general, indeed, was the consent of the Church on this topic, that the contrary opinions, which have received some countenance in this age of boasting liberality, were uniformly pronounced heterodox,* and referred to sectarians such as Socinians, Anabaptists, &c., and were traced to the ancient heretics the Novatians and Donatists. The principle universally contended for by all the Reformers that wrote on this article, was, that the Christian Civil Magistrate is "*Custos utriusque tabulæ legis*"—keeper of both tables of the law. Clear

* "Until late times," says an eminent writer, "the primary doctrines, that civil authority is applicable to religious matters, the propriety of a National Church, and of civil establishments of religion were unanimously admitted; or the opposition to them was confined to some obscure and turbulent sects, or to some more bold innovator, dogmatic heretic, or avowed libertine."—M'Crie's Statement, p. 13. For a historical sketch of the origin and progress of the opinions relative to Magistracy that go to deny the Magistrate's power *circa sacra*, see Appendix, Note E.

and decided is the language they employ, and numerous and striking are the arguments which they advance in support of the doctrine. Here, my brethren, I can only wait to present you with a hasty selection of testimonies, premising that many others might be advanced, equally cogent and explicit with those which are quoted. I begin with the testimony of the Reformers and Reformed Churches.

Already have we seen that Wallæus, and Calvin, and Vitringa, in explaining different passages of Scripture, teach the right of the Christian Civil Magistrate to foster and protect the Church, to establish the true religion, and to restrain whatever is opposed to the peace and purity of Christ's kingdom. The celebrated Francis Turretin, Professor of Theology in Geneva, expresses himself fully on this topic, and, by various arguments, shows the right of the Magistrate to punish, with civil pains, gross heretics, idolaters, and blasphemers. In endeavouring to establish this point, he lays down the position, that "Magistrates have the right to restrain contumacious and obstinate heretics, who cannot be cured of their errors, and who disturb the peace of the Church, and even to inflict upon them due punishment." "Since Magistrates," he adds, for confirmation, "are keepers of both tables, and the care of religion pertains to them, they ought to provide that it should suffer no injury, and should, in wisdom, oppose those who assail it, lest the poison insinuate itself more widely, and be diffused through the whole body. But Magistrates cannot protect religion, unless they restrain the obstinate and factious contemners thereof. Such interference, both the glory of God, of which they are the defenders, and the safety of the commonwealth, of which they are the guardians, demand. If less evils are restrained, by heavy penalties, this, which is the greatest, which injures the truth of God, which blasphemes his name, which rends the Church, which corrupts the faith, and brings into danger the safety of the faithful, should not be permitted to go unpunished. Rather is there frequently required, that a speedy and powerful remedy be applied; inasmuch, as from this quarter the de-

struction of the whole body is threatened, unless the application be quickly made.

“ For this purpose, the laws of Moses against apostates, blasphemers, false prophets, &c. were given, as in Deut. xiii. 5, and xvii. 12—Levit. xxiv. 16. With the same design, there are set before us, the *examples* of Moses, and of pious kings, in the Old Testament, who reformed religion, and restrained false prophets, heretics, and idolaters, and never hesitated, moreover, to inflict upon them various civil punishments; and also the examples of Christian princes in New Testament times, who passed several laws against heretics, and visited them not only with imprisonment and exile, but coerced them likewise with severer punishments.” Again, he asserts, that “ the Magistrate can restrain heretics, and punish them, and according to the nature of their crime—if, for instance, they are blasphemers, and factious, and seditious, he may inflict on them capital punishment.” And, afterwards, he advocates the application of capital punishments in such extreme cases, from, 1. The atrocity of the crime; and, 2. The authority of God, declared in his law.*

The *Confessions* of the Reformed Churches expressly assign to the Christian Civil Magistrate this coercive and punitive power in matters of religion. The *first* Confession of Helvetia declares, “ Seeing that every Magistrate is of God, his *chief* duty, except it please him to exercise tyranny, consisteth in this—to defend religion from all blasphemy, to

* See Turret. De Polit. Ecc. Gubern. Quæst. xxxiv. In giving this, or any subsequent quotation, I am not to be understood as entirely concurring with these celebrated writers in every view which they have advanced. I am disposed to think that, in some instances, they went too far in specifying the application of the doctrine. The kind of restraint and punishment, we allege, should be left to be determined by the Christian wisdom of the Magistrate, and by the circumstances of the case. In a nation, professing and establishing the true religion, it would be a question for the judges; but *the principle*, that it is the Christian Magistrate's duty to restrain and punish obstinate heretics and idolaters, is ever to be maintained apart from all consideration of its particular applications. I agree fully with the authorities quoted, in maintaining the principle, however I may differ with them in some minute points of the application.

promote it; and, as the prophet teacheth, out of the Word of the Lord, to see it put in practice, as far as lies in him." The *latter* Confession of Helvetia, which was expressly approved by the Church of Scotland, and other Reformed Churches, teaches, that "Magistracy, of whatever sort it be, is ordained of God himself, for the peace and tranquillity of mankind; so that the Magistracy ought to have the chief place in the world. If he be an adversary to the Church, he may greatly hinder and disturb it; but if he be a friend and member of the Church, he is a most profitable member, and may excellently aid and advance it. His principal duty is to procure and maintain peace and public tranquillity; which, doubtless, he will never do more happily than when he is seasoned with the fear of God and true religion, particularly when he shall, after the example of the most holy kings and princes of the people of the Lord, advance the preaching of the truth, and the pure unadulterated faith, shall *extirpate falsehood, and all superstition, impiety, and idolatry, and shall defend the Church of God*; for, indeed, we teach, that the care of religion doth *chiefly* appertain to the holy Magistrate." The Confession of *Saxony* declares, that "the Word of God doth, in general, teach this concerning the power of the Magistrate; first, that God wills that the Magistrates, without all doubt, should sound forth the voice of the moral law among men, according to the ten commandments, or law natural, by laws forbidding idolatry and blasphemies, as well as murders, theft, &c. For well has it been said of old—*the Magistrate is a keeper of the law*, i. e. of the first and second table, as concerning discipline and good order. This ought to be their special care (of kingdoms and their rulers) to hear and embrace the true doctrine of the Son of God, and to cherish the Churches, according to *Psal. ii. and xxiv. and Isaiah xlix.—And kings and queens shall be thy nurses*, i. e. let commonwealths be nurses of the Church; let them give entertainment to the Church, and to godly studies." The *Dutch* Confession teaches, that God "hath armed the Magistrate with a sword, to punish the bad, and defend the good. Furthermore,

it is their duty to be careful not only to preserve the civil polity, but also to endeavour that the ministry be preserved; *that all idolatry and counterfeit worship be abolished*; the kingdom of Antichrist brought down; and that the kingdom of Christ be enlarged; in fine, that it is their duty to bring it to pass, that the holy word of the gospel be preached everywhere, that all men may serve God, purely and freely, according to the prescribed will of his word." And the *French Confession* declares, "that God hath delivered the sword into the Magistrate's hand, that so sins committed against both tables of God's law, not only against the second, but the first also, may be suppressed."* Thus clearly testify the Doctrinal Standards of the purest Reformed Churches of the Continent, on the Magistrate's duty to establish and foster true religion, and to restrain and punish heresy, blasphemy, and idolatry.

Let us hear the still more full and explicit testimonies of the most eminent advocates of the *Covenanted Reformation*, and of the authorized documents that declare its fundamental principles, from its commencement till the present day.

Thus speaks Knox, the apostle of the Reformation in Britain—"Whatsoever God required of the Civil Magistrate in Israel and Judah, concerning the observation of true religion, during the time of the law, the same doth he require of lawful Magistrates, professing Christ Jesus, in the time of the Gospel." Afterwards he adds, in reply to the objection, that 'the Apostles did not punish the *idolatrous Gentiles*,'—"If Christ be not come to dissolve but to fulfil the law of his heavenly Father, shall the liberty of his Gospel be an occasion that the special glory of his Father be trodden under foot, and regarded of no man? God forbid; and therefore I fear not to affirm, that the Gentiles be bound by the same covenant that God made with his people Israel, in these words, '*Beware that thou make not any covenant with the inhabitants of the land, but thou shalt*

* See *Confessions*, quoted in *M'Crie's Statement*, p. 86, 87, 88; and the *Divine Right of Church Government by Presbyterian Ministers in London*, p. 67, 70.

destroy their altars, &c. When, therefore, the Lord putteth the sword in the hand of a people, they are no less bound to purge their cities and countries from idolatry, than were the Israelites what time they received the possession of the land of Canaan.* In the Confession of the *English Congregation of Geneva*, which was used in Scotland before the establishment of the Reformation, it is said, "As Moses, Ezechias, Josias, and other godly rulers, purged the Church of God from superstition and idolatry, so the defence of Christ's Church appertaineth to the Christian Magistrates, against all idolaters and heretics, as Papists, Anabaptists, with such like limmes of Antichrist."† The *Scots Confession*, (which was the Confession of the Reformed Church of Scotland, and was in use till the time of the Westminster Assembly,) teaches—"Mairover, to kings, princes, rulers and magistrates, wee affirme, that chieffie and most principallie the conservation and purgation of the religioun apperteinis; so that not onlie they are appointed for civill policie, but also for maintenance of the trew religion, and for suppressing of idolatrie and superstition whatsoever; as in David, Josaphat, Ezechias, Josias and utheris highlie commended for their zeale in that caise, may be espied."‡ The *Second Book of Discipline* declares, that "*chiefly* Christian princes and other magistrates are holden to advance, as far as lieth in their power, the kingdom of Jesus Christ. For they are called in the Scriptures *nourishers of the kirk*, for so much as by them it is, or at least ought to be maintained, fostered, upholden, and defended against all that would procure the hurt thereof. So it pertains to the office of a Christian Magistrate—to make laws and constitutions agreeable to God's word, for advancement of the kirk, and policy thereof, without usurping any thing that pertains not to the civil sword, but belongs to the offices that are merely ecclesiastical, as is the ministry

* Knox, quoted in the *Hind Let Loose*, p. 22.

† Quoted by M'Cric, *Statement*, p. 89.

‡ Scots Confession, c. xxiv.

of the word and sacraments, using of ecclesiastical discipline, and the spiritual execution thereof, or any part of the power of the spiritual keys, which our Master gave to the Apostles and their true successors." Again—"The Magistrates neither ought to preach, minister the sacraments, or execute the censures of the kirk, nor yet prescribe any rule how it should be done; but command the ministers to observe the rule commanded in the word, and *punish the transgressors by civil means.*"*

The *Westminster Confession of Faith* is very full and explicit on this subject. In chap. xx., art. 3 and 4, it is declared, "They who, upon pretence of Christian liberty, do practise any sin, or cherish any lust, do thereby destroy the end of Christian liberty; which is, that, being delivered out of the hands of our enemies, we might serve the Lord without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life."

"And because the powers which God hath ordained, and the liberty which Christ hath purchased, are not intended by God to destroy, but mutually to uphold and preserve one another, they who, upon pretence of Christian liberty, shall oppose any lawful power, or the lawful exercise of it, whether it be civil or ecclesiastical, resist the ordinance of God. And for their publishing of such opinions, or maintaining of such practices, as are contrary to the light of nature, or to the known principles of Chris-

* Second Book of Discipline, c. x. Ib. c. i. sect. 14. The Second Book of Discipline was sanctioned by a free General Assembly in the reforming period, and is, in consequence, to be regarded as an *authoritative standard* by the adherents of the Covenanted Reformation. The *First Book of Discipline*, compiled by Knox and others, is in accordance with all the other testimonies of the Reformers on this subject. "We require," say the compilers, "Christ Jesus to be truly preached, and his holy sacraments rightly ministered; so we cannot cease to require idolatry, with all monuments and places of the same. . . . to be suppressed in all bounds and places of this realm; for, let your honours be persuaded, that where idolatry is maintained or permitted, when it may be suppressed, that there shall God's wrath reign, not only upon the blind and obstinate idolaters, but also the negligent sufferers of the same, especially if God hath armed their hands with power to suppress such abomination."—(First Book of Discip. c. iii. sect. 1, 2.)

tianity, whether concerning faith, worship or conversation ; or to the power of godliness ; or such erroneous opinions or practices as, either in their own nature, or in the manner of publishing or maintaining them, are destructive to the external peace and order which Christ hath established in the Church ; they may be lawfully called to account, and proceeded against by the censures of the Church, and *by the power of the Civil Magistrate.*” Again, in c. xxiii., it is asserted that Magistrates “ ought especially *to maintain piety ;*” and their duty in protecting true religion, and suppressing heresy and blasphemy, is thus clearly declared—“ The Civil Magistrate may not assume to himself the administration of the word and sacraments, or the power of the keys of the kingdom of heaven ; yet *he hath authority,* and *it is his duty* to take order, that unity and peace be preserved in the Church, that the truth of God be kept pure and entire, *that all blasphemies and heresies be suppressed, all abuses in worship and discipline prevented and reformed,* and all the ordinances of God duly settled, administered and observed.”

To the same effect, in the *Larger Catechism*, Quest. 108, the *duties required in the second commandment* are declared to be, “ the detesting, disapproving, opposing, all false worship, and, *according to each one’s place and calling, removing it and all monuments of idolatry.*”

In the *National Covenant*, persons, according to their stations, and by the means competent thereto, are held bound to “ *defend the TRUE RELIGION, and resist all contrary errors and corruptions, according to their vocation, and to the uttermost of that power that God hath put into their hands, all the days of their life.*”* In the *Solemn*

* In the *National Covenant* it is further declared, that the design of the bond is, that “ Papistry and superstition may be utterly suppressed ;” and Magistrates expressly swear, that they “ shall abolish and gainstand all false religion, contrary” to the true religion of Christ Jesus, and “ *that they shall be careful to root out of their empire ALL HERETICS, AND ENEMIES TO THE TRUE WORSHIP OF GOD, who shall be convicted by the true kirk of God of the foresaid crimes.*” It is wor-

League and Covenant, the application of *civil pains* for the restraint and punishment of open and contumacious abettors of error, and disturbers of the Church's peace or order, is an article of the engagement. The persons entering into the League solemnly engage, for themselves and posterity, that they shall, *in their several places and callings*, "without respect of persons, endeavour the extirpation of Popery, prelacy, superstition, heresy, schism, profaneness, and whatsoever shall be found to be contrary to sound doctrine, and the power of godliness."*

The Acts of the General Assembly† of the Church of Scotland, that adopted and sanctioned the *Westminster Standards*, repeatedly declare the Christian Magistrate's duty, and assign to him a coercive and punitive power for the suppression of heresy, blasphemy, and idolatry. Thus in the Act, Aug. 1647, entitled, "Declaration and Brotherly Exhortation to the Brethren in England," the Assembly declares, "We are sensible of the great and imminent dangers into which this common cause

thy of remark, that in both the National Covenant, and the Solemn League and Covenant, the engagement to extirpate heresy, profaneness, and false worship, is entered into by persons, "*according to their vocation*," and "*in their several places and callings*." Do not these expressions, which repeatedly occur, most obviously imply, that private Christians, by prayer and argument, Ministers, by the word, and ecclesiastical censures, and Magistrates, by their official authority, which, in figurative language, is termed "the power of the sword," are severally to labour for the suppression of all error and false worship? Who does not know that Magistrates, supreme and subordinate in these lands, once willingly covenanted with God for this purpose? What genuine friend of the Covenanted Reformation does not regard these vows obligatory on the Magistracy that now exists, even though their obligation is not confessed? Magistrates engage in the National Covenant, "*to the uttermost of their power*," to defend the true religion, and to resist "all contrary errors and corruptions." How will this comport with the principle, that they should extend an indiscriminate toleration to all, and employ only reason and argument to restrain the openly heretical and profane? Is this acting as Ministers of God, according to *the uttermost of their power*?

* Solemn League and Covenant, Art 2.

† Adherence to the Acts of Assembly, from 1638 to 1649, forms a part of the solemn vow of every Minister of the Reformed Presbyterian Church, at his ordination to the office to the Ministry.

of religion is brought by spreading of most dangerous errors and that which is called, by abuse of the word, liberty of conscience, being indeed liberty of error, scandal, schism, heresy, dishonouring to God. So it cannot be denied, that upon these passages and proceedings, hath followed the interruption of the so much longed for reformation of religion, of the settling of Presbyterian Church Government, and of the *suppressing of heresies and dangerous errors.*" In the Act of Sept. 1, 1647, concerning the CXI Propositions, they say in the eighth general head, "That notwithstanding hereof, the Civil Magistrate *may and ought to suppress, by corporal or civil punishments, such as by spreading error or heresy, or by fomenting schism greatly dishonour God, dangerously hurt religion, and disturb the peace of the kirk;*" this opinion they declare to be "solid, true, orthodox, grounded on the word of God," and agreeable to the sentiments of the "best reformed kirks."

The principle thus prominently embodied in the doctrinal standards of the Reformed Church of Scotland, formed an article in the grounds of suffering of the martyrs of the subsequent period.

In the "*Informatory Vindication,*" which was prepared by the illustrious James Renwick,* the last minister who suffered unto death in the persecuting period, and was designed to state the grounds of the testimony and sufferings of the faithful adherents of the covenanted cause, the doctrine of magistratical interference for suppressing false religion, is expressly stated. This truth, as well as others recorded in this document, Renwick afterwards sealed with his blood. The persecuted Covenanters of that period declare—"We own he may, and ought to preserve both tables of the law, and punish by corporal and temporal punishment, whether church officers or members, such as openly dishonour God by gross offences, either against the first or second table; but

* *Alexander Shields*, the author of the "*Hind Let Loose,*" co-operated with Mr. Renwick in drawing up this admirable document.

this he may not do every way, but after his own manner, not intrinsically but extrinsically, not under the consideration of a scandal but of a crime." "In sum, we grant this to be the full extent of the Magistrate's supremacy in the Church affairs, to order whatsoever is commanded by the God of heaven, that it be diligently done for the house of the God of heaven. And what further he may usurp, we disown and detest."* At the same period, the *Societies*, as they were called, who waited on Renwick's ministry, and who alone, amid numerous aggravated privations, maintained steadfast adherence to the entire principles of the Reformation, declare their belief in the doctrine which we advocate.† Twenty-four years after the martyrdom of Renwick, the scattered adherents of the covenanted cause assembled, in 1712, at *Auchinsaugh*,‡ near Douglas, in Lanarkshire, and publickly, and with much solemnity, renewed the British Covenants, from which others had made defection. The transaction embraced a public avowal of all the glorious principles which their forefathers had sealed with their blood;—the document which records it, leaves the matter beyond dispute, that the Covenanters of that day held the

* Informatory Vindication, p. 174, 175.

† Faithful Contendings—Letter to Friends in Ireland, 1688, p. 301.

‡ Auchinsaugh Renovation, p. 56, 60, 64. "In the *Acknowledgment of Sins*, the persons who engaged in the Renovation of the Covenants on that memorable occasion, lament the boundless *passive toleration* shown to Popish idolaters and sectaries of different names; and they expressly declare the Civil Magistrate's not punishing grievous idolaters and heretics to be a contravention of the Covenants, which are of perpetual binding obligation on the inhabitants of these lands. Thus they speak—"And not only then, but even to this day, there is too much conniving at Papists; the laws are not put in execution against them in their full extent and latitude: and albeit this land, yea whole Britain and Ireland, were purged of Popery, yet cannot we be said to have made conscience of performing this part of the oath of God, while there is a confederating with Papists abroad, and fighting in their quarrel, and that whilst in the mean time they are persecuting, with the height of rigour and severity, all such as profess anything of the reformed religion in their dominions." The published document which records the transaction at Auchinsaugh, contains in other places much to the same effect.

principle, that the Civil Magistrate in a Christian land was bound to protect the true religion, and to restrain and punish openly wicked heretics, blasphemers, and idolaters.

Nearly half a century afterwards, when the Reformed Presbytery emitted the “*Judicial Act, Declaration, and Testimony*,” which was designed to exhibit all the former attainments of the witnesses for the truth in Britain, and to complete the subordinate and explanatory standards of the Church, there is evidence not to be gainsayed that the duty of the Civil Magistrate to foster religion, and suppress error, was maintained as firmly as at any former period. “Inasmuch,” asserts the Act and Testimony, “as conscience is the rule ruled, not the rule ruling, none can, without manifest sin, upon pretence of conscience or Christian liberty, cherish any forbidden lust in their souls, nor are they left at freedom to reject any of the Divine ordinances instituted in the word, nor to change or corrupt their Scriptural institution, by mixing human inventions therewith, or in the least deviating from the purity thereof. And, therefore, that all who vent or maintain tenets or opinions contrary to the established principles of Christianity, whether in the matter of doctrine, divine worship, or practice of life, which are contrary to, and inconsistent with the analogy of faith, and the power of true godliness, or destructive of that pure peace and good order established by Christ in his Church, are accountable unto the Church; and, upon proper conviction, ought to be proceeded against, by inflicting ecclesiastical censures, or *civil pains*, in a way agreeable to the Divine determination, in the word concerning such offences.” Again, “In like manner, they assert and maintain, that God Almighty, the Sovereign Lord of all things, and the special protector and preserver of his professed subjects in this lower world, hath, for his own glory and the public good, authorized and instituted in his Word the office and ordinance of civil government and governors, for the preservation of external peace and concord, administration of justice, defence and

encouragement of such as are, and do good, and the punishment of evil doers, *who transgress either table of the moral law*; for all which ends, subordinate unto that of his own glory, God, the alone fountain of all power, hath instituted and appointed this ordinance." And, further, it is said, "which power (i. e. their official) Magistrates are especially to exert for the outward defence of the Church of God, against *all her external enemies, restraining, or otherwise punishing, as the case may require, all open blasphemers, idolaters, false worshippers, obstinate heretics, with all avowed contemners of the worship and discipline of the house of God,* and, by his civil sanction, to corroborate all the laws and ordinances of Christ's house, providing and enjoining that every thing in the house of the God of heaven be done according to the law of the God of heaven."* To show that, as a Church, the religious body which adopted this as their testimony, has never departed therefrom on the article of the Magistrate's right to punish breaches of the first table of the Divine law, the declaration of a still later *authorized* publication may be adduced. "They consider it also to be the Magistrate's province," says the Reformed Church in Scotland, by her representatives, "formally and openly to declare his approbation of the Church's righteous decisions, and his resolution to employ the authority and influence attaching unto his exalted station, for carrying these into effect. We are likewise of opinion, *that the Magistrate may warrantably punish gross outward acts of vice and immorality in general, whether they be transgressions of THE FIRST OR OF THE SECOND TABLE OF THE MORAL LAW.*"†

From this ample collection of testimonies,‡ it will be apparent to you, my brethren, that in pleading the right of the Christian Civil Magistrate to interpose his authority

* Act and Testimony of the Reformed Presbyterian Church, p. 160, 163, 164.

† Explanation and Defence of Terms of Communion, p. 22. Third Edition Glasgow, 1824.

‡ For other authorities on this article, see Appendix, note F.

for the restraint and punishment of gross breakers of God's law, I advance no novel opinion—I teach you no new doctrine. The truth for which I contend has been sealed by the blood of the martyrs of the Lamb—it is embodied in the ecclesiastical formulas of the purest Reformed Churches; and your fathers, through successive generations, maintained it, amid the obloquy and reproach of a world lying in wickedness. Encompassed by so great a cloud of witnesses, I invite you to hold fast your profession without wavering.

As another object of Christian Magistracy, I mention,

Lastly, *The universal subjection of the nations to the yoke of Messiah.*

Long have the nations withheld their allegiance from their rightful Sovereign, and their princes and judges have rebelled against him. The god of this world has usurped the dominion of a large portion of the world's population. "Spiritual wickedness" has taken possession of the high places, and the principalities and powers of the earth continue in rebellion against the Lord's anointed. Magistrates, supreme and subordinate, even in lands nominally Christian, have refused to kiss the Son. Their seats of office are established on the Antichristian foundation. The governments which they administer are radically immoral and Antiscriptural, impiously contemning the law of the Lord, and exalting human *expediency*, "the wisdom of the world that cometh to nought," to the throne of the Ruler of the nations. The civil authorities themselves give their power to the Beast. The opposition of the rulers of the earth, however, cannot hinder or delay the accomplishment of the design of everlasting love, in the subjugation of the nations to the sceptre of Messiah. The *means* whereby this glorious design shall be fulfilled, are plainly declared in the volume of inspiration. Among these, not the least important is the homage which the Civil Magistrate shall yield to the Saviour, by employing his extensive power and influence for the establishment of

his kingdom. Nations are bound to submit to Christ the Mediator as their rightful sovereign, and having pledged their allegiance to him by a national deed, they are thenceforth called to the high and honourable work of making known his light and saving health, and of leading other nations into submission to his yoke. Abundantly should the Christian Magistrate rejoice to be thus a co-worker with God. Sublime and interesting would be the spectacle of a state, first subordinating all its concerns to the Redeemer's glory, and then calling into requisition all its resources for obtaining a ready submission to Christ the Lord by every surrounding nation. How exalted the character of a Christian Ruler while thus occupied! Clothed with the symbols of authority as Heaven's vicegerent he stands pre-eminent among his fellows, while he follows the train and speeds on the conquest of Him whose vesture is "dipped in blood." And then does he truly become a public blessing, when he regulates all the affairs of the state, and directs its moral energies, so that the nations of the earth may be universally brought to serve the Lord, and to dread his glory. The blessed effects resulting from such a dedication, are matter of distinct prophetic announcement. They form the subject of the believer's prayers, and the delightful anticipations of the faithful witnesses of the Lamb. When the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven shall be given to "the people of the saints of the Most High," then it is predicted, "*all dominions shall serve and obey him.*"* Soon as the Gentiles shall come to Zion's light, and kings to the brightness of her rising, Antichristian darkness will flee away. The thrones of the nations shall be purged—the enemies of Christ and his cause shall experience their final overthrow—and the joy-inspiring declarations of Divine faithfulness will receive their amplest fulfilment—"He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the

* Dan. vii. 27.

ends of the earth. They that dwell in the wilderness shall bow down before him; and his enemies shall lick the dust; yea, all kings shall bow down before him; all nations shall serve him.”* The proclamation resounds through the wide concave of heaven—“Babylon the Great is fallen,”—“The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever;”—and the shout of delighted triumph ascends from the innumerable happy subjects of the everlasting King—“Hallelujah, for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth.” To hasten such a blissful consummation, you should daily pray—extolling the Saviour as Head of all principality and power, and claiming from Magistrates unreserved submission to his authority, and devoted exertions for the advancement of his glory. I direct you finally to consider,

IV. The means by which these objects may be attained.

Already have I in part anticipated the observations which I had intended to make on this division of the subject, and therefore will the discussion of it be conducted with all brevity. Among the chief means whereby the Christian Magistrate may promote the Divine glory, and secure the universal good of the nation, may be mentioned *his example—his official power and influence—the encouragement of the pious and the virtuous—devising and executing wholesome laws—and frequent and fervent prayers for a blessing upon his administration.*

1. *His own example.*

The conduct of the Magistrate, occupying, as he does, an elevated station in society, is productive of benefit or injury proportionate to the height to which he is raised. Therefore should he have his hand first in every good work, and from the seat of authority which he fills should his example shine forth conspicuously, shedding an attractive lustre upon the whole community. In all the

* Ps. lxxii. 8, 9, 11.

instances of good rulers recorded in Scripture, the Magistrate's example had the most benign and salutary effect in promoting piety, and, as the happy consequence, establishing good order and virtue and prosperity. How mightily grew the word of God and prevailed in the days of our fathers, when the *Lords of the Congregation* encouraged the people to zeal and steadfastness in maintaining the truth; and how greatly did piety flourish, even in the troublous times of the Westminster Assembly, when the halls of legislation were filled by men fearing God, and setting an example of devotedness to his cause! Such should still be the Christian Magistrate's conduct. Instead of spreading, by his example, as too many magistrates are now doing, a malignant and blighting influence around him—instead of profaning the Sabbath of the Lord by transacting upon it the business of the state—instead of giving countenance to error or immorality, by his neglect of religion and by disorderly living, let him carry religion with him into every department of his official duties, and encourage, by his own example, the practice of godliness:—thus will he promote the great objects of the Christian Magistracy—and peace and piety, righteousness and prosperity, will flourish under his administration.

2. *His official power and influence.*

The Magistrate has more than the force of example, however excellent, to accomplish the objects contemplated by his office. Argument, advice, and example, are means competent to private Christians for advancing the Divine glory, and counteracting the influence of error. Authority and adequate power, to enforce submission, are essential to official responsibility. When, therefore, we plead for the right of interference by the Christian Magistrate on behalf of religion, and for the repression of offences against the Divine law, it is necessarily supposed that his authority and influence are to be employed for these purposes. In the hands of the rightful civil ruler is lodged the *national sovereignty*, and with the deposit there are committed to him suitable means by which his authority may be supported,

and his righteous decisions carried into effect. The trust, besides, implies the execution of vengeance on occasions when lawful authority is contemned, and contumacious opposition is manifested. Deprived of such a right, the person ceases to occupy an official station, and sinks into the rank of a mere citizen of the commonwealth. If it is urged, as it has been, that religion is to be protected, and the Church's rights vindicated, and error opposed only by moral means—by spiritual weapons or rational arguments—we object not to the plea as applicable to spiritual persons as ministers of the Gospel, or to private Christians. The weapons of their warfare are not carnal, but spiritual; assiduously are they to labour with the two-edged sword of the Word, and the power of sanctified reason, to commend the truth to every man's conscience as in the sight of the Lord. But the Magistrate is possessed of other means to enforce submission; and to confine him to these alone, and to say that *argument, advice, and example*, are the only instruments allowed him for supporting the Church, and suppressing heresy and idolatry, is just directly to deny the right of the Civil Magistrate to do anything, in his official capacity, in favour of religion at all. The text represents him armed with a sword, and declares that he bears it not in vain. Well do I know the cunning craftiness of men lying in wait to deceive, and it behoves me to guard you on this point against their delusions. When we speak of the Magistrate's *sword*, we mean not the sword of war, but simply his authority and the means with which he is furnished to maintain and defend it. The "sword" is used to express civil authority, just as "the keys" is the designation of the authority which is ecclesiastical. "The civil power is called the power of *the sword*, and the other (the ecclesiastical) the power of *the keys*."* Let this obvious explanation be held in view, and then will it be readily perceived what is intended, when we affirm that the Magistrate is bound to employ the *sword* in

* Second Book of Discipline, c. i.

suppressing gross blasphemy and error, and in reforming corruptions and abuses in the worship and discipline of the Church. The *sword* intends simply his authority, and surely there are many ways of exercising it besides the infliction of capital punishments. Is not keeping men from places of power in the state regarded in the light of *civil penalties*? If the Magistrate may not use the sword for this purpose, then would it follow, that over a Christian people there may be lawfully set up those who blaspheme God, and are the enemies of true religion. Unless the Magistrate be denuded of his authority, and the sword of his office be taken away—unless, in direct opposition to the declaration of revealed truth, it be in his hands for show and not for use, and he bear it therefore in vain, his official power and influence will be employed in advancing actively the Divine glory, promoting Zion's welfare, and restraining and punishing such as blaspheme God and attempt to withdraw men from his service.

3. *The encouragement of the pious and the virtuous.*

The Magistrate who rules in the fear of God, cannot but set a high esteem upon men possessed of piety and virtue. If he would see piety flourish, and the nation's best interests promoted, ever should he look for his official servants and coadjutors to the ranks of the virtuous and the good. Every subordinate situation he should labour to have filled with the fearers of the Lord—men themselves well-affected to the cause of truth—men whose example will have a happy influence upon others. Thus will he find, that, as in the case of Laban, whose house was blessed because of Jacob, encouragement to the saints of the Most High God, will draw down the blessing of Heaven upon himself and the nation. Surrounded by the pious and the virtuous, he will appear as “the light of the morning when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds;” himself, like a central luminary, diffusing light and vital warmth around him, and those whom he has called into notice, and exalted to power, like so many stars reflecting his radiance, and by

their influence causing righteousness that exalteth a nation to prevail.

4. *Devising and executing wholesome laws.*

Just laws are themselves effective and powerful instruments for promoting the peace and prosperity, the present and future welfare of a community. The Christian Magistrate, by the authority of law, will seek to compass the objects of his appointment, and fulfil the responsibility attached to his office. The protection he extends to the Church must be *legal* protection. No such sanction must he ever give to the idolater, or to him who teaches lies in the name of the Lord. One eminent advantage the Magistrate, who takes the Divine law as the basis of his government, and who thus acts as *God's minister*, possesses over worldly politicians, who are guided by mere human prudence or expediency in their measures. He has an unerring *standard* to which he can refer—an immutable and solid foundation, on which he may build with perfect safety. On this ground we plead, that the Christian Civil Magistrate should make the *Divine law* the grand instrument for advancing the interests of religion, and reaching the other high ends of his appointment. Were it required, I might insist farther on what has been elsewhere advanced*—that the *Judicial law*, in those parts of it that were not peculiar to the Jewish polity, forms the grand directory to the Christian Magistrate in the exercise of that part of his authority that respects the establishment of true religion, and its defence against the inroads of idolatry, blasphemy, and heresy. The moral law defines and declares the crime, but says nothing of the punishment. The Judicial law is the fence that God himself set round the precepts of the Decalogue, which are of universal obligation. It is the *penal code* of heaven—the rule by which alone, as far as human society is concerned, we can measure the magnitude of the crime committed,

* See above p. 17.

and the proper award of punishment which it merits. Consider it entirely abrogated, and then, as far as relates to the Civil Magistrate, the sanction of the Decalogue is removed. He has a sword still, but he is without directions how he may use it. Like a mariner without a compass, he is afloat on a sea of uncertainties, ready at every moment to be swallowed up by the tempestuous billows, or to be dashed to pieces on the rocks and quicksands that threaten his destruction. But the Christian Magistrate is not appointed God's minister, and left thus without directions in performing the functions of his arduous office. His duty is clearly and minutely declared in the words of Him who is without variableness and shadow of turning, and whose law, like himself, is unchangeable. With this divine instrument in his hand, he has nothing to fear. Let him apply it faithfully, and leave the consequences with God. Then will his administration be crowned with success, and God's glory and man's good will be extensively promoted.*

Lastly, *Frequent and fervent prayers to God for a blessing upon the measures devised and executed, and for the bestowment of the good promised.*

To nations, not less than to individuals, to persons in office equally as to those who act in a private capacity, the command and promise are given—"Knock and it shall be opened; seek and ye shall find." With the direction to repose unreserved confidence in Jehovah, the promise of support and guidance is graciously connected—"In all thy ways ac-

* The power of laws to advance religion, and banish error and vice, was duly appreciated by our renowned forefathers of the reforming period in Britain. To them are we indebted for almost all the excellent regulations that yet remain, respecting the observance of the Sabbath, and the correction of blasphemy and notorious infidelity. The remark illustrated above proves the utility and necessity of the various *Acts of Parliament* by which the Reformation was established and fenced, many of which are referred to in the *National Covenant*. These acts exhibit the civil sanction given to the true reformed religion, and manifest, farther, the laudable desire of the reformed ministers, and civil rulers of that day, that nothing should be done by the Christian Magistrate, towards advancing truth, and eradicating error and false worship, that was not in accordance with the openly declared laws of the realm.

knowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths.”* Peculiarly important are these directions to the Magistrate who bears the burden of government, and who must frequently experience the pressure of the difficulties of his station. The “ shields that defend the earth” belong to God. With Him are counsel and might ; and his it is to bestow on nations, as on individuals, prosperity, or to visit them with adversity. The spirit of dependence on God, and of prayer, will eminently qualify the Magistrate for the active discharge of every official duty. And mightily will the interests of Zion be advanced, when, encouraged by the godly example of those who bear rule over them, the people shall acknowledge God in all their ways, and stir themselves up to call upon his name.

It is needless to enlarge on the illustration of this topic. The annals of nations concur with the declarations of the Divine Word, and uniformly attest that Divine favour and prosperity never have been enjoyed by any people who removed their confidence from God, and sought help in other saviours. On the other hand, there is the amplest assurance, that in seeking God, nations and their rulers will be blessed. This is, indeed, one of the mightiest and most effective means for compassing the two great ends of the Christian Magistracy—God’s glory and man’s good. Respecting all that the Magistrate can do to effect these objects, Jehovah himself declares—“ For this will I be inquired of by the house of Israel.”† The universal display of the Divine glory, and the subjection of the nations to Messiah, await the ascent of the believing prayers of magistrates and people ; and when the volume of their petitions shall have covered the mercy-seat above, then the grant of the Heathen to the Son will be finally confirmed—“ Ask of me, and I will give thee the Heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession.”‡

It only remains, my brethren, that I should attempt to

* Prov. iii. 6.

† Ezekiel xxxvi. 37.

‡ Ps. ii. 8.

remove a few of the *objections* that are frequently urged against the doctrine which I have advocated in this discourse—the right of the Christian Civil Magistrate to establish the true religion, and by his authority to restrain and punish the noted transgressors of the first table of Jehovah’s law. Evidence more than enough has been produced, to satisfy every candid inquirer that this is a doctrine of Scripture, and a part of the testimony of Christ’s faithful witnesses in every age. In refuting objections, my design is rather to remove the scruples of the weak, and to preserve them from the influence of deceptive reasonings, than to convince gainsayers.

Objection 1.—“ Christians are now under a milder dispensation—the laws respecting the restraint and punishment of heresy, blasphemy, and idolatry, were peculiar to the Jewish economy—Christ and his Apostles never acted according to this principle.”

The change of dispensation makes no change in the Divine law, the unalterable rule of faith and practice. Whatever was ceremonial was done away in Christ, whatever is moral is of perpetual obligation. Of the latter kind most evidently are the laws that guard the honour of both tables of the Decalogue. The case of our Lord and his Apostles is not in point. They were not in the circumstances in which they could exercise the power for which we plead. It is in a nation professing revealed religion, we have seen that magistracy should be regulated according to the Divine law, and the Magistrate’s power should be employed for the protection of religion, and the suppression of error. Our Lord was no magistrate. The Apostles of the Lamb were neither magistrates, nor placed in a state of society such as we have supposed. They were without political power or influence, and went forth simply as heralds of the Cross, to proclaim the Gospel of the kingdom throughout the nations. While we contend that they never gave their sanction to the evils that existed in the civil order established, they laid down maxims which were designed to

mould in due time the whole frame of civil society, and which might serve as a directory to Christians when they should become magistrates, or possess political power. Of this our text is sufficient evidence. Whatever may be the character of the dispensation, the character of the magistracy, as exhibited in both Testaments, is precisely the same. It was an "ordinance of God" of old. God himself was the Supreme Governor of the nation—the Jewish Magistrates were God's deputies—the Divine law was the rule of their conduct—the crimes of which they were to take cognizance were declared to be acts of rebellion against God, for whose honour they were to be specially concerned. Are not all these embodied in the constitution and objects of Christian Magistracy still? Of course the plea founded on a change of dispensation,* is of no avail in settling the question.

Objection 2.—"These principles lead to persecution, and would deluge the world in blood."

Persecution is oppression for righteousness' sake—it consists in injury done to men in their persons, property, or characters, for their steadfast adherence to the Divine commandments. It cannot consist, therefore, in restraining and punishing men for gross violations of the law of Heaven. Our fathers, who maintained these principles, suffered persecution, but they never persecuted. It is a most groundless insinuation to say that we would *force* men to profess religion, or to practice holiness. Is there no difference between forcing men to a profession, and punishing them for publicly insulting and undermining the true religion, producing disorders in churches and nations, and drawing down upon them the righteous vengeance of God? Even under the former economy, the exercise of the Magistrate's care about religion did not deluge the world in blood—if it

* For a fuller consideration of this, and some other objections, see Appendix, Note G.

did, it had been unworthy of God. The Judicial Laws were worthy of their Divine Author; the application of them could not, therefore, have been followed by the horrible consequences alleged in the grand objection to our doctrine. How, then, can these consequences follow upon the application of those laws now *in their spirit and general equity only*? Does the objection strike against our doctrine more than against the laws of Heaven? These laws should never have been, if their nature and effects are such as the objection implies. A Magistrate duly qualified to rule in a Christian land, will be a man of a merciful disposition—he is only a “terror to evil-doers.” By no proper mode of reasoning, can the right of a Christian Magistrate to restrain and punish positive violations of the Divine law, be stretched into a precedent for wicked rulers, whether in a Heathen or a Christian land, to rule with rigour, or to oppress men who profess the truth and walk in the way of duty. The argument, that a Christian Magistrate should establish the *true religion*, therefore a Heathen or Antichristian Magistrate should establish false religion—that a Christian Magistrate should not employ force to bring men to profess the truth, therefore he should not restrain or punish what is glaringly opposed to and manifestly subversive of the truth, is surely too absurd to require exposure.

Objection 3.—“This doctrine violates liberty of conscience, and the right of private judgment.”

God is Lord of the conscience—it has no rights which are contrary to his law. The same plea might have been set up against Magistratical interference of old, and may still be equally pleaded against restraining and punishing men for Sabbath-breaking, and violations of the second table of the law. Men may plead conscience for high treason, theft, murder. Should this exempt them from punishment? The plea of conscience, in the case of gross and obstinate heresy and idolatry, is an aggravation of the sin—it is the evidence that men are given over to a *seared conscience*, and to strong delusions, and their criminality is thereby fearfully

aggravated in the sight of God.* We interfere not at all with private judgment—men may entertain what opinions they please. It is the open and pertinacious avowal of erroneous opinions, accompanied with practices dishonouring to God, and ruinous to the interests of the Church and the nation, that we plead demands retributive vengeance.

Objection 4.—“ God in his Providence permits heretics and idolaters to exist, and punishes them not, so should we—may not these crimes be so great, that God will reserve the punishment of them to himself, and to the future state ?”

The fact may at once be denied. God is continually pouring out judgments upon heathen nations for their idolatry. During the whole period of Antichrist’s reign, the blasphemy, heresy, and idolatry of that system are bringing down manifold vengeance upon the nations that countenance it. At its downfall God will pour out on it the vials of his fury. God’s Providence is not the rule of our conduct, but the plain requirements of his law. The same objection might be brought, as it has been, against the use of ecclesiastical discipline for the expulsion of heretics and unworthy persons from Church fellowship. Nations, as such, exist only in this present life—Magistrates, as their representatives, have a duty, clearly defined in the Divine law, to perform in the present state—what God may do in future is no rule to them. It is not conjecture, but a positive declaration in the Word, that is sufficient to prove that God has wholly reserved the punishment of obstinate heresy and blasphemy for himself in the eternal world. Was not the doctrine of

* “ Know that ERROR and FALSEHOOD have no *right or title*, either from God or men, *unto any privilege, protection, advantage, liberty, or any good thing* you are entrusted withal. To dispose that unto a LIE, which is *the right of, and due to truth, is to deal treacherously with Him* by whom you are employed. Know that in things of practice, so of persuasion, that are *impious and wicked*, either in themselves or natural consequences, the *plea of conscience is an aggravation of the crime*. If men’s *conscience be seared*, and themselves given up to a *reprobate mind* to do those things that are not convenient, there is no doubt but they ought to suffer such things as are assigned and appointed by God to such practices.”—Dr. Owen.

future punishments known and believed under the Jewish economy? A single intimation from Scripture cannot be produced in favour of this crude conjecture.

Objection 5.—“ We cannot see these principles reduced to practice, and, therefore, it is imprudent and unwise to insist on them.”

The same might be declared concerning many other truths, the importance of which all acknowledge. God commands—“ Be ye holy, for I am holy.” None are perfectly holy here, neither, indeed, can be; yet it is the duty of every person to press on to perfection. The principle of Magistratical interference for the protection of true religion, is a precious part of the faith once delivered to the saints, and therefore we are bound to contend for it earnestly. It has been departed from in some quarters, and hence it comes to possess a relative importance, greater than that of some other principles, and is properly regarded as a part of the *present* truth. A Scriptural Magistracy is a main article of the testimony of Christ’s faithful witnesses. It will never be reduced to practice if the friends of truth do not exhibit and vindicate it—if they do not continually say, by their testimonies to kings—“ Be wise—kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him.”

CONCLUSION.

THE subject which has been discussed, admonishes the professed Witnesses of Christ of various important duties, which are specially incumbent upon them at the present time. It calls to

1. *Steadfastness* in maintaining the doctrine of a Scriptural Magistracy.

The times in which we live are distinguished for change. Nations are convulsed to their centre. The waves of agitation affect the external condition, and even the internal state of the Church. At such a period, there is no little danger of being carried headlong by the popular current—

of departing from former attainments—and of giving up valuable principles amid the distractions that prevail, and the obloquy to which adherents to them are exposed. More especially is there such danger in relation to the truths which we advocate. The doctrines of Messiah's Headship over the nations—a Scriptural Magistracy—and the Magistrate's duty to establish and protect the religion of Christ, are not popular. They demand too much homage to the Saviour, and advance too high the claims of true religion, to be relished by infidel Statesmen, or by a people impatient of the restraints of Jehovah's law. It is not improbable that they may yet form a ground of suffering of the witnesses of the Lamb. But should their abandonment, therefore, in whole or in part, be contemplated for a moment by the sincere follower of the Redeemer? On the other hand, in times given to change, he should cast his anchor within the vail, and endeavour to weather out the storm. By the solemn vows of your forefathers, and by your own voluntary engagements, you are pledged to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints. The least departure from this faith can be regarded in no other light than covenant violation. Be warned, brethren, against apostacy, from whatever quarter the temptation may arise. Continue to maintain faithfully a testimony for the Divine ordinance of Civil Government; contrast it with the enormous abuses that have long prevailed; assert fearlessly Messiah's claim to rule the nations; urge the duty of a Christian people and Christian Magistrates to render all their concerns subservient to the interests of the Redeemer's Church. "*Whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule—let us mind the same thing.*" Hold fast your profession without wavering, for he is faithful who has promised. Lo, the assurance of the Father secures in the end a great recompense of reward. "Be thou faithful unto the death, and I will give thee a crown of life."

2. Christians are instructed in their duties towards such rulers as are appointed over them.

Mutual obligations rest upon Magistrates and people.

Revelation, which exalts Civil Government to the rank of an ordinance of Heaven, and declares the duties of Civil Rulers, at the same time teaches most explicitly the duties of subjects. If the Christian Magistrate be the “minister of God”—a public *good* to society—a “terror to evil-doers and a praise to them that do well,” then are the people over whom he presides bound by the law of Heaven to reverence, obey, and support him. “Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work.”* It is at their peril if they withhold any part of this homage from a rightly constituted magistracy. “They that resist receive to themselves damnation.” Earnestly should you seek to obtain magistrates qualified to bear rule according to the prescriptions of the Divine Word. The Lord, in times past, granted them in answer to the prayers of his people. Nehemiah was sent to build the Lord’s house, as the return of the supplications of the captives who waited for the restoration of Israel. Divine promises warrant the assured hope, that a similar blessing will be bestowed upon the Church in like manner in the latter day. Let us give the Lord no rest: let his servants plead the accomplishment of his promises;—and the Glorious One who hears prayer, will, in due time, restore counsellors as at the first, and judges as at the beginning. He will pour out his Spirit upon the high places of the earth, and the “people of the saints of the Most High shall take the kingdom, and possess it.” Should God in his Providence order your lot in places where constitutions are framed, and men are exalted to office in the state that possess not a Scriptural character, you are to submit to the dispensation in meekness and patience; but never are you to countenance any immorality, either in rulers, or their systems of government. With the thrones of the Antichristian earth you can have no fellowship. Diametrically opposed to Christ and his cause, they are marked for vengeance. They make war

* Tit. iii. 1.

with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them. To the faithful is the command given—Come out from among them, and be ye separate—partake not in their sins, that ye share not in their plagues. The 1260 prophetic days are not expired. The witnesses must yet prophecy in sackcloth and ashes. The true Church must abide in her hiding place in the wilderness till the designs of sovereign love be accomplished. Faithful to their profession, her members must dwell alone, and not be reckoned among the nations. Prayers, indeed, they will offer for “kings, and all that are in authority”—not the *venal* prayers of a hireling priesthood, nor the *prescribed forms* of men in power, who defile the sanctuary, and degrade religion, to minister to their pride or their ambition. They will pray for them *as men*, for thus alone, and not as kings, are they subjects of salvation. They will seek that the counsels and actions of wicked Magistrates may be over-ruled, so that religion may be promoted, and the peace and comfort of the Lord’s people secured. The injunction cannot be misunderstood. We are commanded to pray for kings, and all that are in authority, “that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life, in all godliness, and honesty.”* The peace and prosperity of the Church, the safety of her members, and their increase in godliness, must always be materially affected by the state of the nations in which she has the place of her habitation. “The king’s heart is in the Lord’s hand, and he turneth it whithersoever he will.” The saints should earnestly seek that the counsels of the ungodly should be defeated, and the wrath of the persecutor so restrained, that the interests of godliness may prosper, and Zion may be a peaceable habitation. And never should they cease to supplicate, that sceptres of wickedness may be broken, and the time may speedily come, when “righteousness that exalteth a nation” shall universally prevail.

Submission to a rightly constituted Magistracy should

* 1 Tim. ii. 2.

be rendered for conscience' sake, and the Lord's sake. It is the homage of the heart, given because the Lord of the conscience has enjoined it, and because the authority, as a Divine ordinance, is entitled to it. The obedience rendered to oppressive or unjust rulers, by the subjects of Christ, can only be constrained. It may be yielded for *wrath's sake*, as we submit to the arbitrary claims of the lawless robber, or the pirate, who has by force reduced us under his power. The law of self-preservation renders it allowable, in such circumstances, to submit; but who would, for a moment, confound such obedience with that which is due to a rightful sovereign? A blind, indiscriminate submission to rulers, of whatever character, is dishonourable alike to those who receive, and to those who render it. This is the *worship of the Beast*, by which the nations of Christendom are characterized during the continuance of the Antichristian apostacy. As followers of the Lamb, it is required of you that you should never symbolize with such idolatry. Tell Magistrates, that so soon as they shall forsake the gain of oppression, and submit themselves to Messiah, you will obey them from the heart, as a solemn service rendered to the supreme King. Should they continue to rebel against Him, bow with submission to the afflictive dispensations of Providence, obey his laws, conform to the general order of society, so far as it is in accordance with those laws, and, as much as lies in you, cultivate peace with all men; but beware of yielding a conscientious approval to powers established in iniquity, lest ye be found fighting against God, and be consumed in the day of his awful displeasure.

3. Zeal and devotedness in the dissemination of correct principles, relative to Christian Magistracy, are required from the advocates of truth.

In an age of unexampled effort, the good soldier of Jesus Christ should aim to be in the van in every generous and philanthropic enterprise. You must not, however, forget, my brethren, as many appear to do, the value and importance of a consistent testimony, against all existing evils, and in favour of all revealed truths. The principles which I have

taught you are the fundamental principles of social order, eminently fitted to advance the Mediator's glory, and the best interests of the Church and the civil community. Did I not believe them to be of vital importance, they had never become with me a subject of pulpit discussion. Few, perhaps none of you, will ever possess political power or influence. The duties of the Magistrate relative to the establishment of religion, and the restraint of error, belong not, therefore, properly to you. Scripture, and reason, prayer, and the influence of holy lives, are *your* appropriate weapons for the extirpation of falsehood, and the propagation of truth. Employ these with all diligence, and let your lives constantly present a refutation of the calumny that you are the enemies of social order, or that you would, by violent means, compel any to the profession of religion, or the performance of religious duties. "Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on those things." In general, it has been found hitherto, that those who have most steadfastly maintained the testimony of Jesus have not been behind others—in many instances have excelled them, in all the tender charities of life—in ardent attachment to the ordinances of the sanctuary, and in vigorous exertions for the evangelization of the world. Such would we have you to be. You are "our epistle, seen and read of all men." Live so as to "preserve a good conscience; that whereas they speak evil of you, as of evil doers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ." By your profession and calling, you are "the light of the world," and the "salt of the earth." Does not this character require you to be very zealous for the advancement of the truth upon the earth? Throughout the nations, God is breaking up the fallow ground. Even now he is giving the forest to the fire and the axe. Take the seed of the Reformation corn, and scatter it in the field prepared for the labours of the husbandman. Your success in the end is

certain. For a time you may bear precious seed, going forth weeping; but the promise of the Eternal assures you, that your labour shall not be in vain in the Lord. Doubtless, you shall return, bringing back, with joy, plentiful sheaves. "There shall be an handful of corn in the earth, upon the top of the mountains; the fruit thereof shall shake like Lebanon; and they of the city shall flourish like grass of the earth."

Lastly, The *signs of the times*, as well as the declarations of the Word, encourage the expectation of a certain and speedy triumph to the principles which we advocate.

The things that are shaken are about to be removed. The nations that have rebelled against the Lord and his Anointed must be punished with overwhelming judgments. Even now the harvest of the earth is ripe, and the Son of Man who sits on the cloud, and who wears a golden crown, goes forth to thrust in his sharp sickle and reap the harvest. Princes that have refused the Saviour homage, must abide the wrath of the Lamb—thrones dyed with the blood of the saints shall be overthrown. Great Babylon has come into remembrance, and all that have partaken in her abominations are doomed to share in her plagues. The revolutionary principle is at work every where. Ancient dynasties are tottering to their fall. Already the storm of Divine Judgments begins to beat on the kingdom of the Beast. Its fierceness and desolation will be felt more or less in every country where Messiah has not been acknowledged as Supreme Lord, and his law has not been taken as the basis of civil rule. Fearful is the day of recompense for the wrongs of Zion. When the harvest of the earth is fully come, men's hearts shall fail them for fear; and the princes and mighty men shall flee to the rocks to hide them, and to the mountains to cover them from the wrath of the Lamb—"Who may abide the day of his coming?" Tremendous though the judgments be that are preparing for the Antichristian earth, and awful as will be the destruction of thrones of iniquity, the daughters of Judah have reason to rejoice. The day of vengeance is the

year of the Lord's redeemed. Already the testimony of the Witnesses begins to be better understood. Clouds that had long rested upon the principles and conduct of the martyrs, have been vanishing away. Dreadful as will be the tempest yet to come, the King of Zion directs its movements, and presides over it; the rainbow of the Covenant is round about the throne, and in righteousness doth he judge and make war. Pregnant as the times are with revolution, their whole aspect indicates the intention of the moral Governor of universe to overturn thrones of iniquity, and to make a glorious display of his own ordinance of civil magistracy, purified from all abuses, and blessing the nations with peace and prosperity. Cheering to the Christian are the prospects of the future. The Witnesses may be slain, and their dead bodies may lie dishonoured in the streets of mystical Babylon. But their resurrection is infallibly certain. The spirit of life from God shall enter into them. In the sight of their enemies, they shall ascend in glory to heaven, and thenceforth, during a thousand years, they shall possess the seats of power and authority throughout the nations. An earthquake divinely commissioned shall shake the great city—the metropolis of the Antichristian empire; the remnant shall be affrighted and give glory to God. Then the kingdom that cannot be moved shall be permanently established. The nations shall bring their glory to Zion. The Lord cometh in power and majesty to put down all opposing authority and rule, and to claim as his inheritance all the nations—“ Even so come, Lord Jesus.”
Amen.

A P P E N D I X.

NOTE A.—PAGE 6.

Sentiments of Eminent Writers on Romans xiii. 1—6.

THE following ingenious observations on this passage, by an acute and caustic writer, *Murray of Newcastle*, in his Lectures upon Revelation, (vol. ii. p. 281,) merit special attention—“There is a passage, which has been much improved by those that imagine that believers of the Gospel are, by the Apostle, enjoined to yield a passive obedience, and that is in Romans xiii. 1. which version reads, ‘Let every soul be subject to the higher powers,’ &c., to the beginning of the seventh verse. With all due respect to our translators, and other learned men, I will affirm, that this is rather a paraphrase of the translators, than a translation of the text. From the very genius of the Greek language, it is manifest that *ἐξουσιαὶς ὑπερεχουσιαὶς* do not signify all sorts of authority, but only such as protect men in the enjoyment of their just rights and privileges; and these words ought to be read literally, *protecting authorities*, or *excellent authorities*. *Ἐξουσία*, in its first signification, signifies *just and lawful power or authority*, and can never be applied to tyrants and oppressors without abuse: *ὑπερεχω* signifies to protect, or to be eminent, and is here understood in that sense, as in other Greek authors. Homer makes use of *this* word in *this* sense, when he describes Agamemnon addressing the Greeks, when the Trojans were advancing against them, (Iliad. iv. l. 249.)—‘Will ye tarry,’ says he, ‘till the Trojans advance, to know whether Jupiter will protect you?’ *Ὀφρα ἰδῆται αἰκ ὑμῖν ὑπερσχη χεῖρα Κρονίων*. This Apostle makes use of this word, (Phil. iv. 7,) to point out the excellency of the peace of God. *Καὶ εἰρηνη τοῦ Θεοῦ ἡ ὑπερεχουσα πάντα νοῦν*; and *the peace of God which passeth all understanding shall keep your hearts*.’ This same Apostle, in the second chapter of this Epistle, makes use of the same word to signify excellency, or what is more excellent, or better; *ἀλλήλους ἡγούμενοι ὑπερεχοντας*, ‘let each esteem others better than themselves.’ It does not appear from this passage that there is any command to be subject to any powers, except such as excel, and protect their subjects. But let us read the whole paragraph, without any paraphrase in the translation, and see how it will prove non-resistance. ‘Let every soul be subordinate to the authorities protecting them; for it is not authority, if not from God. But these that are authorities under God, are appointed.

Therefore, he that resisteth the authority resisteth the appointment of God, and they that resist, shall receive judgment to themselves. For rulers are not a terror of good works, but of evil. Will you not fear authority? do good, and you shall have praise from it; for he is the servant of God for good. But if you do evil, fear, for he beareth not the sword in vain; for he is the servant of God, a revenger for wrath to him that doeth evil. Therefore, it is necessary to obey, not only for *wrath*, but for *conscience* sake. For this cause pay you tribute also, for they are the servants of God, waiting continually for this very thing. Render therefore to all their due, tribute to whom tribute, custom to whom custom, fear to whom fear, honour to whom honour.' Can any words make the subject more plain, that it is the appointment of God, and the ruler answering the character here given him, that lays the obligation upon Christians to obey him? If the people who bring Romans xiii. 1. as a proof of mere passive obedience to all sorts of superiors, will please to read the text carefully, the arguments they use will vanish, whether they will or not. It is plain to a demonstration that as the Apostle does not here appoint any particular form of government, so he says nothing of the present rulers, but recommends subjection to governors in general; and that from the consideration of the Divine institution of their office, and the advantage thereof to mankind, when right administered. To resist such governors as answer the end of their office, and the Apostle's representation, is, no doubt, a great crime, and deserves a proportionable punishment, called here *κριμα* (*judgment*), both in this life, and that which is to come. But the resisting of tyranny and tyrants, falls not under the sentence of the Apostle. The text says nothing to the case of tyrants, but really excludes them as being another sort of creatures from what he describes, and the very reverse of that character which he gives the minister of God, to whom he requires subjection. To put this matter beyond dispute, let us suppose *Nero* here understood, as the advocates of this doctrine must mean, if they mean any thing, and try how nicely the text runs when thus applied:—

“ ‘I enjoin that every soul (Christian as well as others) be subject to the higher powers, for the powers that be are ordained of God. *Nero* (particularly as the head of the Roman empire) is so; and whosoever resists him, shall receive damnation; for he is not a terror to good works (murdering and persecuting the good) only to evil. Do well, and you have nothing to fear from *Nero*, for he is the minister of God for good, a revenger to execute wrath upon evil-doers; so that it is your duty to be subject to *Nero*, not only for fear of punishment, but from conscience, and the fear of God. You ought to support him in all his power and dignity (which he so well employs) paying him such tribute as he demands, as is due to him; for he is God's minister, continually attending on this very thing, carefully and watchfully discharging the duties of his office, protecting all his subjects, restraining the injurious, defending the innocent, in every way promoting the good of the community.' This must be the sense of the Apostle, else the arguments on the other side are void of all meaning, and are nonsense. Now, I leave it to any person of common sense to determine, what a reflection it is upon the Apostle to make him speak in this manner. What would the Romans think of the Christians, when they heard them propagating so zealously a doctrine, upon the pain of damnation, which they condemned in the senate of Rome, when, by an act of the same, they condemned *Nero* as a tyrant,

for his murders and barbarities? Could they have said any other thing than that Paul had espoused the cause of a murderer, whom they had by the Roman laws condemned, not only as unworthy of rule, but as unworthy to live. I must truly say that it is contrary, both to the reading and interpretation of the Apostle's words, to father upon him the doctrine of non-resistance; for, as to passive obedience, it is an absurdity, there can be no such thing existing in the rational world. It belongs to *stocks* and *stones* to obey passively; for no minds can yield obedience but from the heart. When a man is passive, he yields no obedience. But I think it may, with better reason, be concluded from the Apostle's words, that neither Christians nor any persons else, are bound to submit to unjust or tyrannical rulers, but on the contrary, if they do, they are doing all that is in their power to prostitute the ordinance of God, and giving the Apostle openly the lie.

“ They are not at all authorities of God, according to the Apostle, if they are a terror to good works, and a praise to evil; for the authorities appointed by God are appointed for this end. And the authority that does not answer this end, is not an authority that it is lawful to obey. In such a case, the threatening should be read backwards, namely, ‘ he that resisteth not the power shall receive (*κριμα*) judgment.’ If any persons were to read a Greek Classic, as these advocates for passive obedience read the New Testament, they would be posted up as enemies to true literature and common sense, by all the literati in the three kingdoms. The Apostles have nowhere affirmed, that Christians, at the pleasure of despots, were to surrender their liberties more than others, who were fellow-citizens with them, in the same country. If both the rulers and the rest of the subjects differ with them, they have no other shift but to remonstrate against their oppression, suffer or forsake the country.”

Many other eminent writers explain and apply the passage in the same way. Thus Milton, in reply to *Salmasius*, says—“ The words immediately after, make it as clear as the sun, that the Apostle speaks only of a lawful power; for he gives us in them a definition of magistrates, and thereby explains to us who are the persons thus authorized, and upon what account we are to yield obedience, lest we should be apt to mistake, and ground extravagant notions upon his discourse. ‘ *Magistrates,*’ says he, ‘ *are not a terror to good works, but to evil. Wilt thou, then, not be afraid of the power? Do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: for he is the minister of God to thee for good: he beareth not the sword in vain; for he is the minister of God, a revenger, to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil.*’ What honest man would not willingly submit to such a magistracy as is here described, and that not only to avoid wrath, and for fear of punishment, but *for conscience sake*? Whatever power enables a man, or whatsoever magistrate takes upon him to act contrary to what Paul makes the duty of those that are in authority, neither is that power nor that magistrate ordained of God; and, consequently, to such a magistrate no subjection is commanded, nor is any due; nor are the people forbidden to resist such authority; for in so doing, they do not resist the power nor the magistracy, as they are here excellently well described; but they resist a robber, a tyrant, an enemy, who, if he may notwithstanding, in some sense, be called a magistrate upon this account only, because he has power in his hands—by the same reason, the *devil* may be called a magistrate.”

To the same effect Sydney comments on the words—(Disc. on Government,

vol. ii. p. 80.)—"He, therefore, is only the minister of God who is not a terror to good works, but to evil; who executes wrath upon those that do evil, and is a praise to those that do well. And he who doeth well ought not to be afraid of the power, for he shall receive praise. Now, if our author * were alive..... I would ask him, whether in his conscience he believed that Tiberius, Caligula, Claudius, Nero, and the rabble of succeeding monsters, were a praise to those that did well, and a terror to those that did evil; and not, on the contrary, a praise to the worst, and a terror to the best men of the world?.....The worst men had no need to fear them, but the best had, because they were the best. All princes, therefore, that have power, are not to be esteemed equally the ministers of God. They that are so, must receive their dignity from a title that is not common to all, even from a just employment of their power, to the encouragement of virtue, and to the discouragement of vice. He that pretends to the veneration and obedience due to the ministers of God, must, by his actions, manifest that he is so."

NOTE B.—PAGE 33.

Scriptural Qualifications essential to the Christian Magistracy.

IN opposition to what has been taught in the Discourse on the head of *Scriptural Qualifications* in the Christian Civil Magistrate, it has been maintained, that such qualifications are *desirable*, but by no means *essential*—that conscientious subjection is due to every magistracy that exists by providential permission, or that is set up by the majority of the people; and the attempt has been more than once made to draw over the venerable *Westminster Divines* to support such views, by adducing the declaration in the *Confession*, (ch. xxiii. art. iv.)—"Infidelity, or difference in religion, doth not make void the Magistrate's just and legal authority, nor free the people from their due obedience to him." There is abundant evidence that the compilers of our Standards, and those who succeeded them in testifying to the death for the principles which they espoused, understood this assertion in a limited sense—as referrible solely to the case of a people in darkness, or only partially reformed. In the *Sanguhar Declaration*, published May 28th, 1685, Mr. Renwick and the persecuted Presbyterians say—"It is inconsistent with the safety of the faith, conscience, and Christian liberty of a Christian people, to choose a subject of Antichrist to be their magistrate; and so it is that we understand that part of the 4th sect. chap. xxiii. of our Confession—'Infidelity or difference of religion,' &c. We acknowledge it to be true, indeed, that infidels, and those of a different religion, are not (chiefly because such) presently to be declared no magistrates; for *magistratus non est magistratus qua Christianus, sed qua homo*. So that the magistratical power considered *generaliter*, given for the good of human society, may be in the person of an infidel, or one of a different religion; but considered *specialiter*, given for the good of the church, it is only in the person of a professor of the true religion. Hence in travelling

or trafficking in foreign lands, be the persons in whom the power is, infidels, or of a different religion, we cannot refuse subjection to their laws, so far as they are consistent with the written Word of God, and our true Christian liberty. Howbeit, our Covenants and Acts of Parliament have put a bar upon the admission of any, either infidels or of a different religion, while such, to govern in Scotland.”

To the same effect, the Supreme Judicatory of the Reformed Presbyterian Church declare,* that they understand this article “as principally relating to the condition of a people emerging out of the darkness and superstition of Paganism or Popery, &c., before that religion has obtained the sanction of civil authority; when although the major part or bulk of a nation should embrace the true religion, yet that does not dissolve or loose the relation subsisting between them and their civil rulers, prior to their conversion, agreeable to, and founded upon the just and reasonable laws of the realm. In this case only, it is granted, that an infidel, or one of a different religion, may have authority just and legal over a people partly converted to the knowledge and gospel of Christ. Thus it was with the primitive Christians, and thus it was particularly with our ancestors in Scotland, at the beginning of the reformation; and this perfectly well agrees to the apostolical precept and determination in a case similar to the above, 1 Cor. vii. 12, 13 and 39, and 2 Cor. vi. 14.” Simple infidelity will not render the authority unjust, either in a Heathen country, or in one emerging from Pagan darkness; neither will simple difference in religion make it void, when the nation has not by its public act made conformity an essential article of the constitution.† In the case, however, of a people professing the true religion, and taking the Bible as a rule of faith and manners, the matter is quite different. Infidelity and irreligion among such a people must either disqualify for the magistracy, or all those commands in Scripture which speak of magistrates being men *fearing God*, &c., must lose their obligation; and the duty to cherish true religion and promote it cannot any longer be binding, for it would be absurd to expect such care from one who denies the faith, or who acknowledges not the obligations of genuine religion. It is by the *preceptive* will of God, and not by the conduct of Providence, that the Christian’s duties towards civil rulers, as well as the character of these rulers themselves, must be determined. The *legitimacy* of authority exercised over a Christian people is clearly determined by its agreement or disagreement with the rule of God’s Word. Deny this, and then the vilest and most cruel oppressors and persecutors possessing power by providential permission—and even the Devil himself, the “god of this world,” may be acknowledged as rulers ordained by God, and submission may be rendered them for conscience’ sake! There is no alternative between adopting this absurd and monstrous opinion, and maintaining the principle for which we contend—that *a due measure of Scriptural qualifications is indispensable to the being and validity of Civil Magistracy in a Christian land.*

* Act and Test. p. 174.

† See Wylie’s *Sons of Oil*, p. 87.

New System of National Education in Ireland.

AMONG a professedly Christian people, one should think it a plain and obvious principle that *the instruction of the rising generation should be based on the Scriptures of truth.* It is not, indeed, maintained that the Bible will teach our youth all that may be needful to be known of the arts and sciences; but if it was communicated, as it professes to be, as a revelation from Heaven, to teach men their *duties* at every period and in every relation of life, then should its maxims be made the groundwork of all education. Whatever is opposed to the principles which it inculcates should be discarded, and at every stage of instruction reference should be made to its unerring decisions. “That the Bible is the religion of Protestants,” is a maxim that should be held fundamental in every case where the government of a reformed nation legislates on the business of education. That it is the duty of the rulers of such a nation to provide a *national system* of instruction, and to furnish the requisite support out of the national treasury, we fully admit. Every principle that requires them to consult and act for the public good, shows this to be their duty; and though some may object, yet are they bound to carry into execution measures for improving the intellectual and moral condition of the community, despite of all opposition. But if it is the duty of a government to promote education, it is equally the duty of a Protestant government to make the revelation of Heaven the foundation of all their legislation on the subject. Even here, we would not by the force of law compel any to read the Scriptures, or to practise any other religious duty. The government being professedly Protestant ought to say, by all its public acts, that submission to the authority of God’s word by the people is the rock of their safety—let this be once withheld, and it loses this character, and its existence as such ceases. It may not, indeed, compel Roman Catholics to embrace the truth, or force infidels to recognise the obligations of Christian duties—but surely it should make no law to countenance or extend the idolatry of the one, or to encourage the dangerous schemes of the other. The moment such a course of legislation is adopted, there may be inscribed upon the counsels of the nation—*ICHABOD, the glory is departed.*

On these grounds, we cannot but regard the *System of education*, recently devised by the rulers of Britain for the poor of Ireland, as a great iniquity. Because the Romish priesthood will not allow the unrestricted use of God’s Word to the people, it decrees to exclude it from the schools; and not only does this exclusion extend to schools where the pupils are of the Romish communion, but even Protestants will not be allowed the free use of the Scriptures for their children, in schools which are taken into connexion with the Board of Commissioners, appointed to carry into effect the provisions of the new system. We might notice various other evils of the plan—such as the absolute power over the schools vested in a Board composed of Popish Priests, Episcopalians, Socinians, and Presbyterians, and the *Extracts* which are to supplant the Bible—but we regard the *authoritative exclusion* of the Scriptures as the crowning iniquity, and we cannot but hold it up to decided reprobation. However specious the pre-

texts put forward to justify this measure, it can be viewed in no other light by any genuine witness for truth, than a fearful dereliction of duty by Christian rulers, and pregnant with the worst consequences to a Christian people. We know of no similar instance of legislating in open opposition to the Bible, ever having before occurred in any Protestant government. Believing, as we do, that mere education apart from a knowledge of the Scriptures is at least a doubtful advantage, as the cases of France and the South of Ireland abundantly testify, we hold that government should insist upon the admission of the Scriptures into all the schools which it patronises, and afterwards leave it to persons whether they will send their children or not—should they refuse, they are at liberty to provide for their education as they please. When they not only act not in this way, but dare, at the instigation of the devotees of Popery, to banish the Scriptures from the seminaries of youth, it is painfully evident that the conscience of the rulers is seared, and the nation is ripening for a scourge. We consider it a point now completely established, that, but for the unhappy interference of government in the case, Roman Catholics in Ireland would have continued to send their children to Scriptural schools, in spite of the anathemas of their Priests. The rulers of Britain must, therefore, answer for it that they have excluded the light from a people groaning under spiritual oppression, and, as far as in them lies, have delivered them over to hopeless thralldom.

An exposure of the evils of the *New System of National Education*, and an illustration of the principle that *the Scriptures should be the basis of all education*, will be found in various numbers of *The Covenanter*, vol. ii. Much valuable information on this subject is also contained in *The Orthodox Presbyterian*, vol. iii.—and in *The Edinburgh Christian Instructor*, and *Dublin Christian Examiner* for the present year; also in *The Presbyterian Review*, vol. ii.

NOTE D.—PAGE 45.

Obligation of the British Covenants.

THAT the *National Covenant* of Scotland, and the *Solemn League and Covenant* of the three kingdoms are still binding upon the inhabitants of the British empire, and upon their descendants in other parts of the world, is capable of the most irrefragable proofs. Public religious covenanting is a *moral duty*, having its foundation in the law of nature, and clearly taught in God's written law. Wherever there has been found the belief of a God, even in Heathen countries, vowing has been practised, as an expression of man's obligation to him and dependence upon him. The Divine law issues the command—"Vow and pay to the Lord your God;" inculcating a duty which is equally incumbent upon communities as upon individuals. And the different precepts of the Decalogue imply solemn religious covenanting. The first requires us to avow our allegiance to God with all possible solemnity; the second, to embody in our vows the whole of God's revealed will, as it respects the laws and ordinances of his worship; and the third, to "swear the Lord liveth in truth, in righteousness, and in judgment." Now, all these commands, addressed to associations of men, as well as to indivi-

duals, imply confederation in the support of the cause of religion, and the ratification of such a confederacy by an oath.

The *example* of the Church and nation of old that God chose to be a "peculiar treasure" to himself, furnishes a warrant for the practice of religious national covenanting in every future age. Israel covenanted at Horeb, three months after their departure from Egypt—(Exod. xix. xx. Deut. v. 28.)—again, nearly forty years afterwards, in the plains of Moab, over against Jericho—(Deut. xxvi. xxix.)—and frequently in subsequent periods of their history, as in the days of Joshua, (Josh. xxiv.), under Asa, (2 Chron. xv.), at the return from the Babylonish captivity, under Ezra and Nehemiah, (Ezra ix. Neh. ix.), &c. In these transactions, there were enjoyed manifest tokens of Divine approbation; posterity were expressly included, (See Deut. v. 2, 3, and xxix. 14, 15.); and many generations after, God mentions the violation of these federal deeds as the main ground of his controversy with the Israelitish people, (Jer. ii. 2, xi. 10, 11.) There was obviously nothing ceremonial or typical in the duty of covenanting as practised of old, nor was there in it any thing peculiar to Israel as a nation, that should necessarily terminate with their national existence; of course, the duty is equally obligatory upon churches or nations still, even till the consummation of all things.

Society, civil or ecclesiastical, is subject to the Divine government as well as individuals—it has a continued identity; and, consequently, the national deeds of one generation must be regarded as involving in their obligation or consequences their successors, as long as the society lasts. On this principle, the visible Church under the Old and New Testament is one, and the *Abrahamic Covenant*, made 430 years before the promulgation of the law, is the charter of her privileges. In like manner, guilt descends from generation to generation, as the Amorites were cut off in the time of Joshua for crimes that had been accumulating from the days of Abraham; and Jerusalem was destroyed, and the nation of Israel dispersed, for a cup of iniquity that had been filling up from the time that they came out of Egypt, (Matth. xxiii. 31.) The *two Witnesses* are the same throughout the long period of their prophesying, and the Antichristian body for 1260 years is one, not merely in name, but in moral obligation to God's law, as a subject of blame and punishment. From such a consideration, it is easy to see how covenants entered into by public bodies have a descending obligation—the society being one, notwithstanding every change of incidental circumstances, the engagements under which it comes must continue in force, and the duties to which they bind being moral, must be obligatory throughout all generations. Indeed, the common sense of mankind, and the usages of nations, corroborate the doctrine of the perpetual obligation of covenants. Covenants, expressed or implied, are the very bonds of human society, without which it could not continue to exist. A person never hesitates to include his heirs and executors in a civil deed as well as himself, and his posterity will not fail to claim advantages secured to them by the transactions of their ancestors, or to perform services, even when the condition may be troublesome. The *Magna Charta*, though the covenant was entered into between the people and their rulers 600 years ago, is still considered the great bulwark of English liberty; the *National Debt*, which was first contracted in the reign of William III., attaches to the nation at this day, though not one of the original contractors, or of those who then constituted the nation is now alive; and acts of Parliament passed several

hundred years ago, are still regarded as the laws of the realm. *Prophecies*, expressly referring to the New Testament dispensation, as in Jer. xxxi. 31. Isaiah xix. 18. Isaiah xlv. 5, &c., assure us that the practice of public covenanting should be followed in the times of the Gospel; and the instance of the churches of Macedonia, recorded 2 Cor. viii. 5, shows clearly that the primitive Christians recognized the duty, and were early found in its performance. From all this evidence, it is abundantly manifest that our pious forefathers had the fullest warrant for framing the *British Covenants*, as an important means of promoting the Divine glory, and securing the blessings of civil and religious liberty; and that these covenants have a continued obligation upon the inhabitants of Britain, whether they choose to acknowledge it or not. They were, in the strictest sense of the expression, *national deeds*; they engaged to the performance of duties as important at present as at any former period; and they have been a means, under God, of transmitting to us invaluable privileges. From these considerations, we are bound to maintain the perpetual moral obligation of the federal deeds of our ancestors; and we fear not to affirm, that if the futile objections that are usually advanced against them were admitted, we might then affirm that no compacts among men, civil or religious, oblige, beyond the parties who immediately enter into them, and even that there never was, nor will be, any deed binding upon the nation at large.

The doctrine of the perpetual obligation of the British Covenants, has an important bearing upon the question of the Magistrate's interference in behalf of religion. What was the *National Covenant* but just the national establishment of true religion in Scotland? Both in it and the *Solemn League and Covenant*, men of all ranks and conditions solemnly pledged themselves publicly to avouch the Lord to be their God, to cherish the Church, and to restrain and repress whatsoever was prejudicial to the interests of truth and the power of godliness. The celebrated *Brown of Haddington*, in his second letter on *Toleration*, clearly establishes the perpetual obligation of the Covenants of Britain, and thence demonstrably shows the right of the Magistrate in these lands to restrain and punish gross heretics, idolaters and blasphemers. It deserves to be remarked, that the strenuous opponents of *Ecclesiastical Establishments* of the present day deny the doctrine of the obligation of our covenants, and even the morality of national covenanting in New Testament times. Consistency requires that they should act thus. Well are we convinced that the opinion that Civil Magistrates in Christian lands should do nothing, in their official capacity, to support the Church of Christ, and to restrain the open enemies of her peace and prosperity, necessarily leads to similar consequences. The plea about a *change of dispensation* is equally valid in the one case as the other; and all the objections against this part of magistratical interference, relative to *liberty of conscience, persecution, &c.*, have been frequently advanced by those who deny the obligation of the federal deeds of our forefathers, and have been as frequently met by the advocates of the Covenanted Reformation.

[See "*Observations on the Public Covenants betwixt God and the Church*," by Rev. A. Mason, Wishawtown;—Muirhead's "*Dissertations on the Federal Transactions between God and his Church*;"—"The Obligation of the Covenants," by Rev. Sam. B. Wylie, D.D., Philadelphia;—Stevenson's "*Plea for the Covenanted Reformation in Britain and Ireland*," and *Brown on Toleration*.]

NOTE E.—PAGE 71.

History of Opinions denying the Magistrate's Power circa sacra.

THE following account of the rise and progress of the sentiments that impugn the doctrine of the *Westminster Standards* on the subject of the Christian Magistrate's coercive and punitive power employed in protecting the Church and true religion, from the pen of the historian of Knox and Melville, is in itself interesting, and may serve to confirm some in the faith once delivered to the saints. When the abettors of these tenets are placed in contrast with the venerable names that we have referred to as maintaining the doctrine which we advocate, the friend of truth will feel little disposed to envy the company which the person chooses who denies the Magistrate's coercive and punitive power in matters of religion:—

“ At an early period of the Reformation on the Continent, certain sects of separatists from the body of Protestants appeared, who began to propagate peculiar opinions about the nature and exercise of the office of civil magistrates among Christians, the nature of the kingdom of Christ, and Christian liberty, especially in reference to religion, as to which every person and sect were to be left to their own humour or liking, without respect to public authority. Among these, the Anabaptists, Socinians, and those denominated Libertines, were distinguished; by whom commotions were excited in various places, both in civil and ecclesiastical society. In Holland, during the first part of the 17th century, after the difference between the Calvinists and Arminians came to a height, the latter, (though they had formerly carried the magistrate's power *circa sacra* higher than was allowed by the reformed churches,) finding the States-General and greater part of the inferior magistrates unfriendly to their cause, began to impugn their authority to interfere with causes of a religious nature, and pleaded for an almost boundless toleration, and the exemption of all peaceable subjects from the acts of synods and magistrates in matters of conscience. In England, during the sitting of the Westminster Assembly, after some progress had been made for settling religion by authority, according to the Solemn League, a number of sectaries appeared, who, in order to hinder a new national establishment, vented these tenets in their discourses and writings, and insisted for a general toleration and liberty; and rested not, until those who favoured their scheme wrested the sword out of the hands of the Presbyterians, and seized on every part of the government, which they employed for their own purposes, involving all the three kingdoms again in bloody wars, and restricting considerably the due freedom of the ministry and ecclesiastical courts; though under the republic and the usurpation of Cromwell, for political reasons, the laws that had been made for settling religion were never repealed, but only restricted and new-modelled.

“ Under the tyranny of the two brothers, Charles II. and James, when all classes of Dissenters were suffering under the severity of the laws against non-conformity, some of these principles were occasionally urged to expose the injustice of persecution, especially in the disputes occasioned by the acts of indulgence and toleration. In these the Quakers took an active part, and carried the doctrine of toleration to the greatest latitude; on which account their leader,

Pen, became a favourite at court, and a tool for the introduction of Popery, under that specious pretext, immediately before the Revolution in Britain. About this time, some philosophical writers and political defenders of the rights of subjects, against the encroachments of arbitrary power and the system of persecution which had long prevailed, among whom Mr. Locke was the most eminent and successful, while they laid down and defended the juster principles of free government, did not always observe the due limits, nor in every point accurately explain or warily balance the rights of rulers and subjects, particularly in reference to religion: though they did not go to the extreme into which those who succeeded them have gone. The affinity that appeared in some points between the maxims of government adopted at the Revolution and the tenets of the sectaries, gave to the latter greater credit and currency. Their apparent tendency to rid the world of the infernal monster, Persecution, disposed many to entertain a favourable opinion of them, and they were embraced by numbers, especially among Dissenters in England and Ireland, and among the warm advocates for the Whig interest of different religious creeds; among whom were a number of free-thinkers, who by their writings began to disseminate these principles, as some of the same character abroad had artfully and successfully done. These principles were introduced into Scotland more lately than into the neighbouring nation, and did not spread so rapidly here. During the course of the 18th century, after they were vented by Mr. Glass, they were condemned, and censures passed upon their abettors, both by the National Church and by the judicatories of the Secession. Of late, however, they have been circulated very extensively, being not only warmly cherished and patronised by the various classes of Anabaptists and Independents, but having also leavened Presbyterian churches, and, among the rest, two large bodies of Seceders.

“ These opinions, being gradually combined with the principles of civil liberty, began to be extolled as essential to it, under the imposing names of freedom of inquiry, right of private judgment, rights of men, &c. But the scheme, in all its extent, and as avowed in modern times, goes beyond the genuine principles of Protestant and British liberty, civil or religious, is incompatible with the spirit of the laws and the established system of government still subsisting in free states and kingdoms, and even exceeds the bounds to which the abettors of it, who had any regard to religion, ventured to carry it in former times. Indeed, the modern theory which teaches the total disunion of civil polity and religion, and that matters of religion pertain not to the province of civil rulers, has not yet been adopted into the constitution or code of any civil legislature. Attempts were made to reduce it to practice in two modern republics, whose revolutions have made such noise in the world;* but even in these the theory has not been fully realized, and the experiments that have been tried are very far from exhibiting, by their process and effects, a proof of its wisdom and utility.

“ The scheme was not, however, carried to its most dangerous height, until it was adopted, and refined from the adhesion of religious fanaticism, by sceptical writers, philosophical infidels, and modern pretended illuminati, who employed it artfully and covertly to undermine and shake all established systems of religion, and to deprive them of the support of government; partly out of hatred of all

church power, partly from pride and fondness to oppose common sentiments ; sometimes to humour the spirit of irreligion, and libertinism among the great and fashionable, or the propensity to licentiousness among the populace, and at the same time to accommodate themselves to unprincipled rulers and politicians, who wished to be free from the restraints of religion, and the burden of caring for it, and whose sole aim and end were the advancement of their secular interests and policy. To some of these writers we owe the warm defence of the doctrines of the absolute sovereignty and uncontrollable empire of conscience, of a moral sense, taste or feeling, the infallible test of truth, the independent arbiter of right and wrong in morals and religion. And, as Archimedes demanded but one point on which to stand to fix his lever, and he would move the world, so if they could but once firmly establish this one position, upon which to rest their apparatus, they know it might be possible to heave up and remove the whole incumbent weight of government, civil or ecclesiastical. No authority would be left in these matters to interfere, but what would suffer every man to do what was right in his own eyes, as in those days (happy days surely!) when there was no king in Israel.

“Sectarian principles are opposed to unity and uniformity in religion, and to the proper means for promoting these, whether by civil or ecclesiastical society. In the present controversy they are considered chiefly with reference to civil authority, and are so called, not only because they have been commonly held by sects that had separated from the great body in Protestant churches, but also on account of their tendency to produce and foster endless sects, by patronizing, instead of checking all sorts of religious opinions and different forms of worship. Though they are sometimes denominated a new scheme, or new principles, and sometimes new light, because they are recommended, in our times, as the effect of further light and improvements than our fathers were blessed with, yet it will be evident to any acquainted with modern church history and literature, that, from whatever source they may have been immediately drawn, whether from the religious sectaries above-mentioned, the sentiments of latitudinarian and socinizing divines, or the schools of more modern philosophers, they are far from being new. Every proposition and favourite phrase, the very modes of expression used in argument, explication, or declamation, are but a repetition of what may be found almost *verbatim*, in a variety of productions left by their worthy predecessors. They may indeed be allowed to be new in the mouths and creeds of Scots Presbyterians and Seceders ; and to try to incorporate them with their former profession, and render them consistent with their former subscriptions, is certainly a new and very barefaced attempt.”*

NOTE F.—PAGE 83.

Additional Testimonies relative to the Magistrate's Punitive Power in matters of religion.

In addition to the authorities quoted in the Discourse, may be subjoined a few extracts from the writings of eminent divines, some of whom were in connexion

with the Reformed Covenanted Church, and others belonged to different communions—but all of whom speak decidedly in favour of the Civil Magistrate's right to punish for gross outward transgressions of the first table of the Divine law.

Thus writes the godly Rutherford*—“ If the Magistrate, also, in the New Testament have the sword given to him of God, for the punishment of evil-doers, as Rom. xiii. 4, 5, that same law (i. e. the judicial law for punishing heretics, idolaters,) must now also have force.” “ Except God was too rigorous and cruel in the Old Testament, (God avert such blasphemous thoughts!) whatever punishment was inflicted upon heretics, seducing prophets, idolaters, apostates, these same *stand yet in the plenitude of moral obligation* against such as offend in the New Testament, if the magistrate bears the Lord's sword, as he doth in the New Testament.” Again, he says—“ That the king's end intrinsical, as king, is more than external or natural peace, is clear, because ill-doing against which he is *the minister of God*, is to execute vengeance and wrath, (Rom. xiii. 3, 4,) is not only that which is contrary to external quietness of the commonwealth, and the natural happiness of civil societies, but also that which is contrary to the happiness supernatural of the Church as believers in the way to life eternal, for he is to take vengeance upon blasphemy, idolatry, professed unbelief, &c. The magistrate, as the magistrate, is to execute vengeance upon all external ill-doing, as blasphemy, adoring of idols.”

Durham, the learned expositor of the Revelations, and a distinguished minister, and member of the General Assembly, in his treatise on *Scandal*, states at large the magistrate's province in restraining heresy and blasphemy. He says—“ Magistrates have this for a special part of their task, to keep his ordinances pure, and to restrain the corrupters of them;” and he argues, that the magistrate should not *tolerate* the spreading of dangerous errors and delusions, and that he ought to punish those who are engaged in such a work—“ For,” says he, “ such errors are *ill deeds*, and such spreaders are *ill-doers*, bringing great prejudice to people, Gal. v. 20; 2 John v. 11. 2. Magistrates ought to be a terror to evil-doers indefinitely, and I suppose if the sword be borne in vain in reference to them, the conscience will not have ground of quietness in the day of judgment, upon a distinction of evil-doers, when the Lord hath made none such in their commission. 3. They ought to be zealous of his honour who is their superior, and that his name be not blasphemed; and can such be tolerate without this construction upon the matter, that men have liberty to blaspheme the name of God, to abuse his truth, reproach his ordinances, and to take his name in vain as they will. 4. Are they not to seek the people's good? And is there any such good as their spiritual good? Or are there any such enemies to that as seducers?” In reply to the plea of *conscience*, Durham cogently inquires—“ What if, under pretext of conscience, magistracy should be denied to be an ordinance of God, and be put therefrom, upon that account, that the people thought it unlawful to obey him? Would not readily his conscience say, that seeing he restrained not others from casting at these ordinances, in which the honour of God and good of souls were so much concerned, that it was just with God to permit them to cast at that ordinance also, wherein he is so mainly concerned? And, indeed,

* Rutherford's *Divine Right of Presbytery*, p. 357, 391.

this hath not been unfrequently seen, that those who have begun to cast at Church ordinances, have come at length, as if they had been thereto disposed by the former, to cast at civil ordinances (to speak so) also; and what wonder is it, seeing there is no more clear warrant from God for the one than for the other?"* *Thorburn*, in his "*Vindiciæ Magistratus*," repeatedly asserts the principle for which we contend—"And thus," says he, "I think, the civil suppression, restraint and discouragement of manifest idolatry and superstition, open blasphemy and heresy, which the Divine law makes to be one particular part of the magistrate's work, can by no means be a detriment, but must be a benefit to religious society?"† To this list of eminent writers of the Reformed Church, I may only add the *Rev. Thomas Henderson*, who, in various valuable pieces, maintains and vindicates the magistrate's coercive and punitive power in the matters of religion. "Where," asks he, "would be the tyranny of God's public minister, appointed to be the keeper of both tables of the law, restraining false modes of worship, positively forbidden by the Supreme Lawgiver? Is it any tyranny for a master to oblige his servants, by his authority, to observe the Sabbath, and to restrain them from evil company and immoral actions thereon, to reward the more faithful, and to encourage them, by example and precept, to abstain from evil and to do good? May not a Magistrate, as God's public deputy, who is favoured with the true knowledge of the Divine law, and set up by a nation, which has adopted the profession of the true religion into its civil establishment, as Britain has done, suppress every thing by his authority, which is contrary to that establishment, and give his sanction only to what is agreeable thereto? And if heretics will corrupt the morals of men, by introducing and propagating idolatry and superstition, which are procurative of God's judgements, and subversive of the good of civil society, why may not God's minister punish the same according to his own holy law?" Elsewhere he adds—"It has never yet been proved that the Reformed Presbytery ever required the Civil Magistrate to punish any, either by capital or corporal punishment, who had not subjected themselves thereto by the open violation of God's law; this law requiring them to be so punished. But if idolatry be as inimical to the interests of civil society as theft, forgery, or robbery, why may not God's minister punish the former as well as the latter, according to his own law?"‡

Dr. Samuel B. Wylie, of Philadelphia, in his discourse entitled "The Two Sons of Oil," &c. teaches at large the magistrate's power *circa sacra*, as we have stated it. One of his positions (p. 62) is, that "He (the civil magistrate) ought, by his civil power, to remove all external impediments to the true religion and worship of God, whether they be persons or things; such as persecution, profaneness, heresy, idolatry, and their abettors, as did Asa, Hezekiah, Josiah, and other

* *Durham on Scandal*—Part III. c. 12. p. 220, Edin. 1680.

† *Vindiciæ Magistratus*, p. 97. To the same effect is the sentiment of Fairley—See his Answer to Goodlet, pp. 81, 84, 268, 274.

‡ Henderson's Preface to *Testimony Bearing Exemplified*, pp. 13, 17. Mr. H. adds in the latter passage, showing the source whence the liberal opinions respecting the magistracy have sprung—"It is truly mournful that a professed Presbyterian should have copied after the sectarian distinctions between the ancient Israelitish commonwealth and the evangelical kingdom, as Mr. H. (his opponent) has evidently done, after that noted Independent, John Glass, who renounced Presbyterianism both in name and thing."

pious kings." This point he illustrates by various striking examples; and afterwards, (p. 88,) in replying to the objection respecting *persecution*, he says—"Whatsoever the law of God commands to be punished, ought to be punished, with the penalties therein made and provided; but God has commanded gross heretics, blasphemers and idolaters, to be punished with certain specified penalties: therefore, such ought to be punished.

"These commands could not belong to the ceremonial law, for, then, they would have flowed entirely from the arbitrary will of God, and been mere signs betwixt him and Israel. Who would dare to think so of gross heresy? &c. Neither could they belong to that part of the judicial law which respected the Jews peculiarly. Who would dare to say, that none but the Jews were or are under obligation to worship God in purity, or abstain from blaspheming his nature and dignity? They must, therefore, belong to the moral law, and flow from the moral nature of Jehovah, who has declared he will not give his glory to another, nor his praise to graven images."

Rev. James R. Willson, D.D., Albany, in his "*History of Opinions respecting the Atonement*," likewise explicitly declares—"It was a maxim universal among Christians at that time, that as God once gave commandment to punish gross blasphemers, and as they could not discover that he had ever repealed the law, it was still in force, and magistrates were bound to execute it at their peril.

"If Jesus Christ is God, he who opposes this truth, and endeavours to propagate his opinions, is as guilty as he who would contend that God, the eternal Father, is a mere man. Will they maintain, that rebellion against Jehovah is less criminal than rebellion against an earthly monarch?"—*Historical Sketch of Opinions on the Atonement*—*Dr. James R. Willson—Note, p. 29.*

To close this list of writers in the Reformed Church, which could readily be still farther extended, we may mention, that an eminent Father, who recently entered into his rest, and whose praise is in all the churches, the *Rev. William Stavely*, in the conclusion of a work against *Deism*, entitled "*An Appeal to Light*," when proposing several methods for preventing the progress of *Deism*—which, he says, cannot "convey the *least idea of persecution*, or unfair treatment, or unbrotherly conduct towards *Deists*"—gives it as his deliberate judgment, that "*every Magistrate*" should, "*in his distinct sphere*," "*endeavour to prevent, or bring to deserved punishment, all persons who encourage Deistical principles, as the same are destructive to both religious and civil society.*"

The advocacy of the Christian magistrate's right to punish gross heretics, blasphemers, and idolaters, has not been confined to those who were in immediate connexion with the Reformed Covenanted Church. In reviewing the past history of Presbyterianism in Britain, we are irresistibly led to the conclusion that the principle which we have seen was embodied in the doctrinal standards of all the churches of the reformation, and maintained by many renowned martyrs and confessors in an earlier day, has been firmly held by a succession of eminent divines in other sections of the church, even till the present time. At present, I can only wait to quote the testimony of two illustrious men in the Secession, in proof of this statement—these are, Brown of Haddington, and Dr. M'Crie, the Biographer of Knox, and yet a living renowned advocate of reformation principles.*

* Without an exception, the fathers of the Secession Church held precisely the same prin-

The former, in his work on "*Toleration*," brings forward a mass of Scripture evidence in support of the principle which he defends—that of the magistrate's interference for the suppression of heresy, blasphemy, and idolatry. One passage may suffice to show his opinion on the subject. "It (the law of nature) plainly teacheth that if God graciously grant us a *supernatural revelation*, directive of our faith, profession, and practice, we ought thankfully to receive, believe, profess, and obey it—that if magistrates ought to restrain and punish gross immoralities, they ought to restrain that error or worship, which, being a manifestly damning work of the flesh, natively leads men into such immoralities—and that if heresy, blasphemy, and idolatry, hinder the progress of virtue, or the increase of good men, who are the principal support and blessings of a society, they ought to be restrained. If heresy, blasphemy, and idolatry established, or authoritatively tolerated, eminently and notoriously provoke God to punish nations with sword, famine, pestilence, poverty, decay of trade, desolation, captivity, or the like, as they have often done, even among Heathens, common sense requires that every magistrate, from regard to the welfare of his subjects, ought to restrain them as far as his circumstances can prudently permit; instead of giving them as much liberty, encouragement, or protection as he gives to the religion of Jesus Christ, which hath the promises of this life, and of that which is to come." * Dr. M'Crie thus declares the magistrate's duty—"It is his duty to watch over its (the church's) external interests, and to exert himself, in his station, to preserve upon the minds of his subjects an impression of its obligations and sanctions, and to suppress *irreligion, impiety, profanity, and blasphemy*." † In the *Act and Testimony of the Associate Synod* of original Seceders, recently published, in the compilation of which the same distinguished man had a principal share, the same doctrine is declared; and it is added, "It cannot be accounted persecution to restrain or punish the grosser violations of even the first table of the Divine law, such as blasphemy, profane swearing, and the open violation of the Sabbath, by amusements or secular employments." ‡

Stevenson, in his "*Plca for the Covenanted Reformation*," &c. teaches the same doctrine. Remarking, that the Westminster Confession does not warrant the Magistrate to "employ civil pains for promoting" supernatural religion, he proceeds to observe—"This limitation must not be extended, however, to the more flagrant breaches even of the first table of the moral law, such as blasphemy, profane swearing, and even Sabbath-breaking. These crimes are opposed, not only to supernatural religion, but also to natural law, and sap the very foundations of public morals. They come, therefore, under the direct cognizance of civil rulers. In punishing these crimes, however, by civil pains, civil rulers are to do so with a sole relation to the ends of their office, or as offences against the state, and not as scandals against religious society. Still, in the faithful discharge of their duty in this respect, they contribute in no small degree to the advancement of pure and undefiled religion. *The laws of the State for suppressing these*

ciples on the article of the magistrate's power *circa sacra*, as are advanced in this discourse. In his Dictionary of the Bible, on the word *Rule*, Brown strongly asserts similar truths as are quoted above.

* Brown on Toleration, p. 36.

† Statement, p. 80.

‡ Act and Testimony, p. 62, 65.

*and similar crimes, constitute one principal part of the Civil Reformation under the reforming periods, and they afford one instance in which the State may cooperate with the Church, in promoting the public reformation of a country, without encroaching upon her jurisdiction.”—*Plca, &c. p. 18, 19.

NOTE G.—PAGE 94.

NEXT to the Objection against the doctrine taught in the discourse, relative to *persecution*, those which seem to demand special notice are taken from the change of dispensation—the countenance that might be taken from our principles to establish a false religion and oppress the righteous—and the supposed necessity of an infallible declaration respecting what constitutes heresy, idolatry, &c. Each of these demands a passing notice.

1. It is argued, that the Jewish economy was adapted for the Church in a state of childhood—the Antediluvian age being the Church’s infancy, and the Gospel dispensation her mature state. God, it is said, dealt with his people according to the different design of each condition, applying temporal punishments to keep men in subjection of old, but applying only spiritual correction under the New Testament;—from all this it is inferred, that the Christian Civil Magistrate should now allow heretics, blasphemers, and idolaters, however notorious, to remain without any restraints or punishment.

To this it may be replied, that the comparison by no means holds good. If the Antediluvian age was the state of infancy, then men were, by the very terms of the supposition, unfit subjects of discipline or punishment; and yet the Divine testimony concerning them is—“*And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart. And the Lord said, I will destroy man whom I have created, from the face of the earth.*”—(Gen. vi. 5—7.) The event corresponded to this fearful denunciation: the human family, eight only excepted, were destroyed by the flood, as notorious and incorrigible transgressors. Was this dealing with them as innocent, unoffending infants? The Old Testament Church, under the Mosaic economy, was “under tutors and governors,” *in relation to ceremonial hedges, laws and times alone*, for this is the Apostle’s allusion, (Gal. iv. 1, 2, &c.); but there is no evidence that the discipline was rigorous. The legal economy, as far as the correction and punishment of sin were concerned, was distinguished for forbearance rather than severity. Witness the repeated remissions of punishment at the intercession of Moses—the permission of concubinage, polygamy—the deliverances wrought for Israel after flagrant national idolatry—the commutation of crimes for pecuniary mulcts, &c.—and, if this gratuitous assumption will still be held to, we might ask what was all the bloodshed that accompanied the introduction or continuance of the legal dispensation in comparison of the wars, persecutions, &c., that were occasioned by the setting up of Christianity, or of the judgments which Jehovah has been inflicting continually upon guilty Christian nations? The grand fallacy, however, of this specious objection lies *in confounding the interpositions of Divine Providence in the government of mankind and the Church, with the defined and commanded duties of the civil magistrate,*

whether Jewish or Christian. God may punish or dispense with punishment as he pleases. With men in power the case is far otherwise. The Jewish magistrate was simply to abide by the instructions contained in the Divine law, irrespective of the consideration, whether God in his providence spared the blasphemers or idolaters, or not. In a similar way, the official conduct of the Christian magistrate should still be regulated. The laws respecting the restraint and punishment of heresy, idolatry, &c., as far as they were founded in common equity, were expressly given by God; they are no where said to be repealed; of consequence they remain in the plenitude of moral obligation, the Christian magistrate's directory, and are to be applied by him, with suitable modifications, under the Gospel. The case of the change of the Sabbath from the seventh to the first day of the week, is most obviously not in point. The Sabbath rest is not abrogated, and even the change from one day to another is not made without numerous examples, which are equivalent to express precept, in the New Testament. No such sanction can be pleaded in favour of the unbounded toleration of gross heresy and idolatry by the Christian magistrate under the Gospel. The whole authority for such an assumption is therefore mere unfounded conjecture. If the plea, that the dispensation is milder, be sufficient to exempt the magistrate from employing his coercive and punitive power in matters of religion, why may it not serve to free murderers, adulterers, and false-witnesses from restraint and punishment, as well as openly gross heretics, idolaters and blasphemers, that vex and destroy Christian societies?

2. The principle that the Christian Magistrate should establish the true religion, and repress error, it has been contended is of dangerous tendency, as it might afford a sanction for the establishment of false worship, and the oppression of the saints. Every man will think his own way right: even the atrocities of the Inquisition, it has been alleged, might be justified on this ground. This argument hardly merits serious consideration. It might be stated thus—it is the duty of the head of a Christian family to establish the true worship of God in his house, therefore has a Mahometan a Divine right to command his household to worship the false Prophet, or a Pagan or an apostate to offer seed to Moloch. Again, a Christian Magistrate should manifest his concern for the Divine glory by becoming a “nursing father to the Church,” therefore the “kings of the earth” have the same right to “give their power to the beast,” and to commit fornication with the mother of harlots. And the ministers of God were enjoined to be a terror to *evil-doers*, such as notorious blasphemers, heretics and idolaters—therefore wicked rulers have equally the command of Heaven to oppress the saints. Such reasoning is too absurd to need confutation. Let it be borne in mind that it is the true religion and the true Church, the faithful spouse of Christ, whose establishment we plead; and the idolatries and heresies, whose repression we inculcate as the duty of the Christian Civil Magistrate, are such as are openly and obstinately avowed and propagated—such as are clearly declared in God's Word, and can be proven by two or more witnesses—and such as are manifestly detrimental to the peace and welfare of a reformed nation. When such a case can be made out for the conduct of wicked rulers in establishing false worship and persecuting the saints, then, but not sooner, will the objection have weight!

3. But it is finally said, that in order to a Christian Magistrate acting as we require in repressing heresy and idolatry, there is need for an *infallible* tribunal,

and an *infallible* decision in every case—otherwise the truth, and not heresy, may be oppressed, and the righteous may suffer instead of the wicked.

This argument is more plausible than cogent. It proceeds on the infidel sentiment, that in matters of religion, truth and error are indistinguishable, and that there is no certainty in articles to be believed. On this ground, there could be no such thing as a heretic or an idolater in the world. Of course, the Apostle Paul greatly erred when he enjoined not to eat with an *idolater*, and to reject an *heretic*; and the Apostle John when he commanded, by the Spirit, not to receive into the house a *false teacher*, or to extend to him the common rites of hospitality.—(1 Cor. v. 11; Tit. iii. 10; 2 John 10.) The persons, it may as well be argued in these cases as in the other, are not *infallible*, and therefore they would egregiously err in acting on these directions, as they might be mistaking truth for error, and confounding the righteous with the wicked. By the same reason, parents should not give religious instruction to their children, nor ministers of the Gospel teach fundamental doctrines to their flocks, or exercise discipline to the exclusion of the erroneous or unworthy. In neither case are they infallible, and their responsibility is even greater than that of the magistrate in exercising his official power for restraining the heretical and idolatrous, inasmuch as their instructions and censures concern the inner man, and affect the condition for eternity. The objection that leads to such consequences has evidently little weight. Let it always be remembered, that the Christian Magistrate has the infallible rule of God's word to direct him, and that it is *overt acts of gross idolatry and heresy*, which can be proved by many witnesses, that call for his interference to suppress them—and it loses all force. No more *infallibility* is required in such a case, than in restraining and punishing other common offences, according to the received laws of the State.

The following note should be inserted at page 43.

* As persons are liable to be misled by names, and there are some who find it more convenient to stamp an opprobrious epithet on the opinions of an opponent than to confute his reasoning, the following epitome of the principles of *Erastianism*, by Dr. M'Leod, in his "*Scriptural View*," (p. 78,) may not be out of place. Having remarked that these doctrines have their name from *Thomas Erastus*, a divine and physician, who was born at Baden, in Switzerland, in 1624, and was afterwards a professor in the University of Heidelberg, and that they are chiefly developed in his book on *Excommunication*, he adds—"That Christ and his Apostles prescribed no forms of discipline for the Church—that the supreme ecclesiastical power belongs to the civil magistrate—that ministers are only teachers possessed of the right of public persuasion—that to the government of the state belongs the right of admitting members into the Church, and excluding them from it—that the Church of Christ is a department of the civil commonwealth, are the sentiments of Erastus." It may serve a purpose, in some quarters, to stigmatise the sentiments that maintain the duty of the civil magistrate to foster and protect the Church, as Erastian; but the candid in-

quirer will not be misled by such puny attempts. We regard, with abhorrence, the *ecclesiastical* supremacy of the King of Great Britain over the English Church, and his *Erastian* power in the Church of Scotland ; and we view both as essentially Antichristian, as well as the *spiritual* supremacy of the Pope of Rome. Nothing that is advanced in the discourse, we are persuaded, affords the least countenance or support to the one or the other.

FINIS.

