

THE
REVIEWER REVIEWED,

AND

THE COVENANTER

AND

TESTIMONY

OF THE

REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

VINDICATED,

FROM THE

PERVERSIONS AND GROUNDLESS ALLEGATIONS

OF THE

REV. JOHN PAUL,

IN A PAMPHLET, ENTITLED

"THE COVENANTER REVIEWED & PERSECUTION CONDEMNED."

BY THE

EDITOR OF "THE COVENANTER."

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P R E F A C E.

THE dispute relative to the suppression of gross heresy and idolatry by the civil magistrate, which has called forth the present pamphlet, did not properly originate with the conductors of *The Covenanter*. On their part, they taught nothing on this topic but what they conscientiously believed, and what they are yet fully persuaded is a part of the faith once delivered to the saints. When the doctrines which they hold and their characters were assailed, from a quarter whence they could least of all have expected it, the Editor applied to the Judiciaries of the Church, in the hope that thus a public collision of sentiment between brethren, who, from their profession, should be one in faith and affection, might be avoided. This appeal still lies before the courts, and we have no desire to remove it from their judicial determination. It was only when there appeared, on the part of opponents, a manifest indisposition to have the matter decided in this equitable way, and after repeated attacks upon our principles and conduct, that we could be induced to stand before the public as controversialists. Notwithstanding frequent solicitation to the contrary, we have carefully avoided seizing an advantage which lay fairly within our reach—that of taking up the controversy in the pages of *The Covenanter*. Had we adopted this course, we might have retaliated on our opponent in a manner greatly severer than he could have expected, and month after month we might have roused against him and his New Light doctrines the indignation of numerous friends and supporters, with whom the periodical still continues to be a favourite. The advancement of truth, however, and not the achievement of victory merely, has been all along our object. Whatever some may say or believe, we can, in all good conscience, declare that our great concern in the matter has always been to maintain the principles to which we believed ourselves pledged by the most solemn vows, and to refrain from every thing that might unnecessarily disturb the peace of the Church.

Controversies with brethren connected by the ties of public profession and private intercourse, whatever useful purpose they may in the end subserve, are far from being agreeable; and, if we know any thing of our own mind, most gladly would we have avoided an employment of this nature. Engaged, if not usefully, at least actively, in attending to various self-denying and arduous duties, we were unwilling to descend from the work to the arena of theological controversy; and least of all did we desire to have brethren in the ministry as our opponents. The claims of peace are, however, inferior to those of truth and duty to God. When, in addition to a reference to an ecclesiastical court, we have, as in the present instance, attempted to defend our principles and vindicate our conduct before the religious public, we have done it with the earnest desire that principles which we regard as important may be rescued from unmerited opprobrium, and that peace may be restored and established on its only stable footing—the foundation of truth and love.

Some individuals there may be who have conceived such a deep-rooted prejudice against the doctrine of magistratical coercion of the heretical and idolatrous, that to nothing which comes from us will they extend a patient hearing; but to many others, who are not ashamed of a Covenanted Testimony, we doubt not it will be an acceptable service to show that even those parts of it that are most vehemently opposed are susceptible of satisfactory vindication. In churches, the departure from principles which have long been embodied in public Standards, is like the letting in of waters. Most generally, on some point of minor importance, the attempt is made to shake the faith of the church; and, if this succeeds, other landmarks are afterwards removed, till at length the religious body is driven altogether from the ground which it formerly occupied.

Even were it admitted that the doctrine of magistratical coercion of heretics and idolaters is of little importance considered in itself, yet viewed as a part of the testimony which the Church has uniformly exhibited, it should be maintained with unwavering firmness. *Obsta principiis*—Resist the beginnings, is a salutary maxim, especially worthy of notice in times when error is spreading and a spirit of reckless innovation is at work. One novelty prepares the way for another; and it is a matter of notoriety, that when persons begin to depart from Standards which they have once maintained, in minute points, they generally wander farther from the faith formerly professed, till all that was distinctive in their profession is at length surrendered. Hence, whatever may be our view of

the comparative importance of the magistrate's coercive power in matters of religion, we should consider it highly criminal to permit any part of the Church's testimony to be wrested from us, without at least an effort made on our part to preserve it uninjured.

The object of the following publication is to vindicate the faith of our fathers on the article to which it principally refers—the Christian magistrate's power, *circa sacra*, and other collateral subjects. In discussing the point with such a writer as the author of *The Covenanter Reviewed*, we have found it difficult to present the reader with a view of his real opinions on various topics connected with the subject in dispute. Most persons who, like himself, raise objections against the received doctrines of the community wherewith they are connected, while at the same time they find it convenient to continue in the connexion, studiously observe silence on points on which it is desirable, if not required in common honesty, that they should declare their mind openly. They tell us what they do *not* believe, but leave us in the dark as to what they *do* believe; and they seek, by declamation, to overturn received truths, instead of declaring plainly the articles of their own creed. This has manifestly been the course adopted by our opponent. In attempting to vindicate our own sentiments, we have endeavoured to exhibit his perversions and misrepresentations, and to refute his tortuous reasonings.

With principles more than persons we have considered ourselves engaged in this controversy, and therefore we have very seldom mentioned the name of the writer, but have given him a title taken from the designation of his pamphlet. It may serve to render a person an object of public odium where he is not known, and his principles are misunderstood, to hold him up by name to the public in connexion with the most detestable principles; but it can go a very small length to settle properly a disputed question. To those who sincerely desire to know the truth, it is of very little consequence whether Mr. Paul or Mr. Houston is the Editor of *The Covenanter*, or the author of the pamphlets written on the one side or the other of this controversy. As we entirely disclaim all feeling of bitterness towards our opponents, so it has been our study to avoid personal invective, or appeals to popular opinion. If, in any instance, we have reproved with severity, or exposed erroneous principles and sophistical argumentation with apparent keenness, we have done so, not to gratify feeling, but to rebuke an erring brother for his good, and to guard others from being misled by his unscriptural novelties.

However frequently it may be obtruded upon the public, that the Editor of *The Covenanter* stands alone in his views of magistracy, and that in maintaining the propriety of the magistrate, in a reformed nation, coercing the heretical and idolatrous, he is opposed to the judgment of the judicatories of the Church with which he is connected, the public will not be misled by these assertions. The periodical numbers among its contributors several of the ablest and most venerable ministers of the Church, and to a very large degree it enjoys the support of her members, among whom it has still an extensive circulation; while the principles and spirit of the works that have appeared in opposition to it, are generally condemned throughout the community of Covenanters in this country. This fact sufficiently speaks the comparative esteem with which the respective systems—that maintained by the Editor of *The Covenanter*, and that of his opponents—are held by the adherents to the cause of the reformers and martyrs. Enjoying the countenance and encouragement of many who are much better qualified to vindicate the purity and integrity of the Church's testimony than himself, and fully prepared to make whatever sacrifice the defence of valuable truth may require at his hand, the author desires neither pity nor forbearance, should his sentiments be found different from those which have always formed the word of the Saviour's patience with the witnesses of the Lamb in these lands. Should he be called hereafter to engage in a similar service to the present, the interests of truth may require him to expose more fully the dangerous nature and tendency of the system which he has controverted, and the unchristian and disorderly conduct of those who maintain it, with special reference to the present controversy. Meanwhile, he commits this humble attempt to vindicate an important article of the faith once delivered to the saints, to the direction and superintendence of the King of Zion, trusting that, through his blessing, it may prove instrumental in silencing gainsayers, reclaiming those who have erred from the truth, and promoting the edification of the Church.

REPLY, &c.

CHAPTER I.

HISTORY OF THE CONTROVERSY.

Truth uniform and immutable—Error various—Revival of ancient heresies in modern times—Origin of Latitudinarian sentiments on magistracy—Their progress in Germany and Britain—Regarded as sectarian, and condemned by the leading Reformers, Calvinists in Holland, Westminster Assembly, &c., and the Judicatories of the Established Church of Scotland and Reformed Presbyterian Church—Declension of the Secession on this article—Origin of the present controversy on magistracy, in relation to the Conductors of *The Covenanters* and the Rev. John Paul—Summary of their views respectively, &c.

THE wisest of men has said that “there is no new thing under the sun,” Eccles. i. 9. This declaration is abundantly verified in the history of the errors that have sprang up at different periods in the Church, disturbing her peace, and marring her fellowship. Truth, it has been well observed, is uniform and immutable, while error assumes a countless variety of forms, that it may suit all times, and be palatable to all tastes. The Witnesses of the Lamb for a lengthened period possess the same character, hold one unvarying position, and exhibit the same testimony, accommodated in its form only to repel more effectually the different attacks by which the Saviour’s truth is assailed. On the other hand, the delusions of the Father of lies are endless. Frequently, by consummate artifice, when violent measures prove ineffectual to suppress truth, or to intimidate its friends, the poison of error is extensively diffused in secret; and that which in an age distinguished for piety and zeal met with the most marked opposition, is afterwards obtruded, perhaps under a specious mask, on the professors of religion, at a time when declension is visible, and the spirit of the age lends it countenance.

To this cause may be attributed the revival, in our day, of heresies which vexed the Church in former times, but which, having been stamped with open reprobation, had for centuries lain dormant. The dogmas of the school of Irving and Erskine respecting the Personal Reign, Universal Pardon, Assurance, and the Peccability of the Saviour’s humanity, find their prototypes in the writings of the early heresiarchs. Ancient error has assumed a new dress. If, in

some quarters, it has met with a better reception than it did at a former period, we are to ascribe it, not to any real change in the system, but to the wiles of the Prince of Darkness, operating upon the superstition and ignorance, the pride and fanaticism of men.

The controversies that have prevailed in the Christian Church, relative to the power of the civil magistrate in matters of religion, and the errors that have been broached on this subject, trace their commencement to an early period. The *Donatists*, in the fourth and fifth centuries, pleaded for liberty of conscience to the abettors of error, and denied the right of the civil magistrate to sustain by his authority the decisions of the Church. It deserves to be remarked, however, that from the time of Constantine, till very recently, the opinions that go to deny the doctrine of a national establishment of religion, and the duty of the Christian magistrate to foster and protect the Church, and to restrain and punish the open disturbers of her peace and purity, were uniformly regarded by the Church as heterodox and sectarian. At the memorable era of the Reformation in Germany, the *New Light* doctrines relating to toleration and liberty of conscience, were maintained by certain sects who separated from the great body of Protestants, as the Anabaptists, Socinians, and others, while abundant evidence can be produced to show that, however the leading Reformers differed on other subjects, there was almost complete unity of sentiment on the duty of the civil magistrate, in New Testament times, to promote the religion of Christ and restrain error. One fact, selected from the history of that period, in proof, may, for the present, suffice. Ecolampadius, writing to the Waldenses of Provence, and the neighbouring countries, who had applied to him for advice on various matters of doctrine and ecclesiastical order, speaking for himself and his brethren, the leading Reformers, says—"We do not think it contrary to the Divine law for the magistrate to punish with the sword.....We do not say that the judicial laws (of Moses) are abolished as far as the spirit of them goes."* Were it necessary, many similar declarations could be adduced from the writings of Wycliffe, Melancthon, Zwingle, Calvin, and Beza.

In the early part of the 17th century, while the disputes between the Calvinists and Arminians in Holland were keenly agitated, the latter, who were then generally designated *Remonstrants*, impugned the authority of the civil magistrate to interfere in religious matters, pleaded for a *boundless toleration*, and claimed exemption for themselves and all peaceable subjects equally from the authority of magistrates, and the acts of ecclesiastical judicatories in matters of conscience.† Towards the termination of the Westminster Assembly, and the conclusion of the civil war in England, the Sectaries who sprung up in opposition to the Covenanted Uniformity on the prin-

* Scott's Continuation of Milner's Church History, vol. i. p. 146.

† Almost all the arguments at present advanced against the magistrate's coercive power in the things of religion, as we may afterwards show, are to be found in the writings of the *Remonstrants*, and were triumphantly refuted by the Calvinistic writers of that period.

ciples of the Solemn League, and who involved all things civil and ecclesiastical in the three kingdoms in disorder and confusion, vented latitudinarian sentiments on the subject of magistracy in their discourses and writings, and insisted for a general toleration and liberty. After the Restoration, under the reigns of the infamous royal brothers, Charles II. and James, these sentiments were sometimes incautiously urged by some of the Dissenters who were smarting under persecution, though there is abundant evidence that they were not adopted by the great body of the non-conformists. The *Quakers* were the chief sectaries of this period who pleaded in behalf of the doctrine of unlimited religious toleration. Hence, their leader, Penn, became a favourite at the Court of the Papist James, and, shortly before the Revolution, his reasonings were employed as a specious pretext for the introduction of Popery.

Several philosophical and political writers, among the chief of whom may be reckoned Mr. Locke, in vindicating the liberties of the people against the encroachments of arbitrary power, did not in every point accurately state or properly explain the rights of rulers and subjects in reference to religion. The liberal views in politics which they advocated, their opposition to glaring abuses in Church and State, and their acknowledged abilities as political writers, gave plausibility to the loosest of their opinions. Free-thinkers, who secretly hated religion or openly opposed it, were glad to borrow support from their illustrious names; and pushed out the principles which had been unguardedly stated in their writings to a much greater length than their original propounders contemplated. In this way, the leaven of liberalism, in relation to the magistrate's concern with religion, to toleration and liberty of conscience, spread to a considerable extent among various classes of Dissenters in Britain and Ireland, and was generally found operating with greatest influence among those who diverged farthest from the Standards of the Reformed Churches, such as Socinians, Arians, and avowed Infidels.

In Scotland, *John Glass* and his followers, in the 18th century, adopted the opinions on magistracy maintained by the Dutch Remonstrants and the English Sectaries of the commonwealth. His opinions, however, were condemned both by the Judicatories of the Established and Secession Churches, and censures passed upon their abettors; and the ministers and people in connexion with the Reformed Covenanted Church publicly testified against them.* Towards the close of the last century, the two large branches of the Secession embraced these *new light* doctrines, by explaining away those parts of the Westminster Standards that speak on the subject of the magistrate's power in religion, and by expunging from the British Covenants those articles of the engagement which refer to things civil. It would, perhaps, be deemed invidious, were we to show how this notable defection from the original principles of the fathers of the Secession has been followed, in that section of the Church, by the relaxation of discipline, ceasing to witness against

* See Dr. M'Crie's Statement, pp. 15, 16; and Act and Testimony of the Reformed Presbyterian Church, p. 88.

prevailing evils, and the neglect of important religious duties; but it deserves notice, that it has been consummated by the renunciation of our Covenants at the union of the Burghers and Antiburghers in 1820, by the unmasked opposition against them manifested by many of their leading men, both in this country and in Scotland,* and by the present hostility of Seceders to the doctrine of a *national establishment* of true religion—an important principle of the Covenanted Reformation. Against this headlong course of defection, some of the minor branches of the Secession have borne a uniform and consistent testimony; and it is cheering to find such men as the venerable M'Crie, Stevenson and Paxton, the steady advocates of magistratical interference for the promotion of religion, and suppression of gross and destructive error.

The advancement of civil liberty, that has recently taken place throughout Christendom, has had a considerable influence in disseminating loose and unscriptural views relative to the province of the civil magistrate in the things of religion. However desirable the increase of civil liberty, it must be acknowledged that, in these late days, the instruments employed in effecting political changes have been very generally men destitute of practical religion, and deeply imbued with infidel principles. Hence it has happened, that in the political alterations of modern times, the interests of religion have not been consulted, and the venerable institutions of former ages have been consigned to neglect, while liberal sentiments, under the imposing names of *right of private judgment, freedom of inquiry, liberty of conscience, &c.* have gained extensive currency. How far the present opposition to a national establishment of Christianity, and to the collateral doctrines respecting the duty of Christian rulers to promote godliness and restrain error and vice, conducted as it is by the combined hosts of Seceders, Independents, and Infidels, may be traceable to this source, we wait not to determine.

The state of the Church of Christ must always be materially affected by the condition of the community amidst which she is placed. Especially in times of political excitement and change, there is danger of her members being led away from their steadfastness, and adopting more or less the sentiments and opinions that are afloat on the surface of society. There is but one way in which ministers and people can be preserved from such an evil—that of maintaining a holy separation from the strife of worldly politicians, and, as witnesses for the truth, delivering a faithful and unbending testimony against the erroneous maxims and corrupt practices that are found either in Church or State, whether they originate with men of despotic or liberal principles.

The *Reformed Covenanted Church* in these countries has hitherto

* A minister of the Secession, in full standing in this country, has declared the Solemn League and Covenant to be of a piece with the "murderous tithing system," or the Star Chamber; and a writer in the "Theological Magazine," a periodical which enjoyed the patronage and support of the Secession Church in Scotland, not only impugns the principles of the Covenants as intolerant and persecuting, but declares that the martyrs of the 17th century died the "victims of a creed common to them and their persecutors"!!—Tell it not in Gath.

adhered faithfully to the doctrine of her Standards on the subject of magistracy, and by *no public act* has she ever manifested the least disposition either to depart from the principles on this head held by the martyrs, or to soften them down so as to please the taste of a degenerate age. Whether there may not have been some admitted to her communion, who were ill-informed respecting the testimonies of our forefathers to a Scriptural magistracy—or others who have embraced the loose sentiments on magistracy, toleration, and the right of private judgment, maintained by the political partisans with whom they have associated, we will not pretend to determine. One thing, however, is certain, that, till very lately, no member of the Reformed Presbyterian Church ventured to insinuate, much less to assert publicly, that the Christian civil magistrate should not restrain and punish as civil offences, according to the Divine determination, gross violations of the first and second precepts of the Decalogue.

At its commencement, the conductors of the periodical, called *The Covenanter*, in opposition to the fashionable practice of even many religious journalists in our day, made a candid avowal of their determination to exhibit the principles of the Covenanted Reformation, vindicate the character of the martyrs, and give “a full delineation of the truths which were the nourishment in life, and the support in death, of men, of whom the world was not worthy.”* Acting on this principle, and with not the slightest design of attacking the person or offending the prejudices of any genuine Covenanter, they gave insertion to various articles on magistracy in the first volume of the work. They believed, as they still do, that during the continuance of the Antichristian apostacy, the witnesses of the Lamb are bound to apply the principles of the divine law to civil government, and that a scriptural magistracy is as much an article of their testimony as a faithful ministry.† Under this impression, and regarding the present period of political changes, as especially requiring the display of a banner for the truth, they hesitated not to put forward the doctrines taught on the article of civil magistracy in the Westminster Confession, and other subordinate standards of the Reformed Church, and to illustrate and defend them according to the ability and grace given them. The truths advanced on the head of magistracy in *The Covenanter* are, in substance—That civil magistracy is the ordinance of God, having its origin in his revealed will, and being placed in subjection to Messiah, the King of nations—that nations and their rulers are bound to promote and establish true religion, and to extend their fostering care and protection to the Church of Christ—that Christian magistrates, as the representatives and governors of a reformed people, are bound to consult the Divine glory in all their administration, and to repress by their authority the gross violations of the first as well as the second table of the Divine law—and that, in performing this main duty of their exalted office, they should take the moral law as the rule of their official conduct, and apply the judicial law in its spirit and general equity. As the subject was confessedly difficult, the writers in the periodical employed precisely the

* Prospectus, vol. i.

† See M'Leod's Lectures on the Revelation, p. 252.

same modes of statement and illustration as are found in the works of the reformers, and in the writings of the ablest advocates of the Covenanted Reformation of a former period; and passages were occasionally quoted to show that they were following the footsteps of the flock, and that they had not, in their statements, exceeded the limits which judicious writers had assigned to the subject. Pursuing this obvious course of public duty, and receiving the countenance and approbation of a large number of the most eminent living advocates of Reformation principles in their humble labours, it was to the conductors of *The Covenanter* a matter of the utmost surprise to find, in the columns of a newspaper, their sentiments on magistracy impugned by a minister of the Reformed Presbyterian Church, and afterwards in a pamphlet by the same author, entitled the "Covenanter Reviewed," &c., their characters as public journalists impeached, and several of the doctrines which they had ever regarded as parts of a covenanted testimony called in question. Passing for the present any notice of the bitterness against the periodical and its conductors; breathing through every page of the Review—of its constant aim to hold up the editor to public odium—of the disorderly course of impeaching a minister in full standing in the Church before the public, without process to the Ecclesiastical Judicatory, to which he is amenable, and of dragging into the columns of a newspaper a discussion affecting the peace and unity of the Church, without the least application to any other method of healing the difference, it will suffice merely to state the opinions which the Reviewer has once and again inculcated in his attack upon *The Covenanter*. Denying the right of the Christian civil magistrate, as such, to interfere for the promotion of religion and restraint of error, he has taught that gross heresy and idolatry have a right to unbounded toleration—that the punishment of heresy in any case is a matter too high for any earthly magistrate—that the laws given of old respecting the restraint of idolatry, blasphemy, &c., are wholly abrogated—that, owing to the change of dispensation, heresies under the New Testament should never be punished by civil pains and penalties—that men should be permitted to live as they list, propagating whatever errors, and practising whatever idolatries, however destructive to the souls of men, or detrimental to the peace of civil society, even under a magistrate who is God's minister, and who has full power to restrain them in their evil courses—and that, for a magistrate to interfere at all in the way of authority, in such a case, is monstrous persecution, destructive of liberty of conscience and the right of private judgment, and tending to convert the world into an Aceldama, a field of blood. The accordance of these opinions with right reason, the Divine Word, and the standards of the Reformed Church, will be shown in the sequel. That they are the deliberate sentiments of the Reviewer cannot be doubted, when we find several of them cautiously advanced in some of his former publications, as in "Creeds and Confessions Vindicated," &c., and in the "Review of Mr Montgomery's Speech." The candid reader is requested to compare the summary which we have given with the moral requirements of the Divine law, the approved examples of the godly princes recorded in Scripture, and the principles contained in the 20th and 23d chapters of the Westminster

Confession of Faith, the Solemn League and Covenant, and the Act and Testimony of the Reformed Presbyterian Church. The examination, we feel assured, will not be made in vain. Whilst we know from authentic history that the venerable compilers of these standards had to encounter the same latitudinarian sentiments that are exhibited in the Review, their writings, distinguished for clearness, and based on the solid principles of inspired truth, contain a pointed and satisfactory refutation of new-light doctrines; and their perusal, under the Divine blessing, will establish the wavering in the faith once delivered to the saints.

CHAPTER II.

STATEMENT OF THE QUESTION.

Importance of defining terms—Question respects not *private Christians*, but magistrates; not concerning the propagation of religion by compulsory measures, but the coercion of open and gross violations of God's law; not the extension of common, but special legal protection to the Church; not the suppression of heresy and idolatry *in the mind*, nor mere opinions, but of gross heresy and idolatry, openly avowed and propagated; not capital punishments, but the propriety of authoritative restraint and punishment—Question briefly stated.

IN the controversies that have, from time to time, arisen in the Church, much labour has been lost, owing to the misapprehension of terms; and, not unfrequently, disputes are protracted by the real point at issue being kept out of view, while other matters of minor importance are disproportionately magnified. We therefore deem it necessary to state explicitly the matters in dispute, and to define some of the terms employed, in order that the readers of *The Covenanter* and the *Review* may be enabled to form a right estimate of the truth and value of the views advanced on the one side and the other. This is the more requisite in entering upon the subject, as misconception to a considerable extent prevails, and whether intentionally or not on the part of the Reviewer, we wait not to decide, but so it is, that since the appearance of his pamphlet, views of *The Covenanter's* sentiments on magistracy have been industriously circulated, to which the statements of the work itself affords not the smallest countenance. Because, for instance, the figurative term *sword* has been employed, which yet is Scriptural,* and it has been affirmed in the periodical, that the magistrate's sword should be employed for the suppression of gross heresy, &c. occasion has been taken to represent us as the

* See Rom. xiii. 4, "He beareth not the sword in vain;" i. e. he exercises not his official power and authority, &c. "The civil power is called the power of the sword, and the other (the ecclesiastical) the power of the keys," (2d Book of Discip. c. 1.) Nobody thinks of understanding the latter *literally*, when applied to ministers, why should it pertinaciously be maintained that the former is to be so understood, when applied to the power of magistrates?

advocates of the application of *capital punishments*, in all cases, to get rid of such as differ from us in religion. Enough for us to deny that ought we have ever advanced is susceptible of such a construction, and to challenge our revilers to the proof. Till this is produced, we can regard the allegation as nothing else than a wilful perversion of language from its received meaning, and a contemptible artifice to excite odium against an opponent's reasoning. Such pitiful and disingenuous shifts *ad captandum vulgus*, we hold in utter contempt; and we should deem it an insult to the understandings of our readers to honour them with a serious exposure. However willing, we cannot exempt the Reviewer from giving countenance to such misapprehensions, for he has repeatedly used terms, in his attack on *The Covenanter*, in a sense far remote from their generally received meaning, and the point really at issue he has kept out of view, while representations have been given of *The Covenanters'* sentiments, and charges preferred against them, which we defy the Reviewer, with all his subtlety, to substantiate.

The question between *The Covenanter* and the Reviewer respects not the duty of *private Christians* in suppressing heresy or rooting out idolatry, nor that of the minority of a reformed nation destitute of civil power and authority. In these cases, we readily grant that prayer, Scriptural argument, and enlightened reason, are the weapons that must be employed for the subversion of error or false worship. Like the posterity of Abraham, who, while few in number, and sojourning in different countries, merely avoided all participation in the idolatrous rites of the heathen, but when they prospered into a kingdom, and obtained possession of Canaan, they were strictly charged to suppress idolatry, and to destroy all its monuments and incentives;* thus, private Christians, destitute of political power, are required, first of all, to keep their garments clean, and then to use such means for dispelling error as are competent to their station. The Reviewer, in some of the *extracts* which he has adduced, and throughout his pamphlet, has represented *The Covenanter* as teaching the duty of private Christians to suppress heresy and idolatry, whereas he could not but have known, that all that was advanced related to the province of the civil magistrate in this particular. Thus, when he quotes a passage from the *Causes of Thanksgiving* † of the Irish Reformed Synod, published in 1823, and adds in connexion the sentiment of *M^cGavin*, for which the Reviewer seems to have a peculiar fondness, about extirpating error by fire and sword, and punishing a man by a syllogism, he attempts to set up a counter-testimony to that of *The Covenanter*, when, in fact, neither the one extract nor the other has any thing whatever to do with the subject. Covenanters of the present day possess not magistratical power, and there was, therefore, no need to introduce such a topic in authorized Causes

* Knox's Discussion with the Secretary Maitland—M^cCrie's Life, vol. ii. p. 122.

† Mr. Paul, in his first attack on *The Covenanter*, in *The News-Letter*, styles this document *Causes of Fasting*, and afterwards, in his pamphlet, *Causes of Thanksgiving!* For the credit of his accuracy in such matters, and the information of his readers, he had better state, in the next edition of his *Review*, which he intends.

of Thanksgiving. The Synod merely vindicates the private members of the Church from an injurious aspersion cast upon them, and says nothing whatever of the subject of magistracy. That this is the case, is obvious, from the circumstance of their quoting with approbation the sentiments of M^rGavin on the subject. However respectable and deservedly esteemed that writer, he could not possibly be taken as an authority by any faithful Reformed Presbyterian Ecclesiastical Judicatory on the article of magistracy. He was an Independent, and every person at all acquainted with the history of the Reformation in Britain, knows, that since the days of the Westminster Assembly, the views of Independents on the subject of Christian magistracy have been essentially different from those of the adherents of the Covenanted Reformation. Our Irish Synod might properly quote him, as they have done, when speaking on the duty of private Christians in relation to the extirpation of error, but they could not sanction his views on magistracy at a less sacrifice than a compromise of their testimony. When the Reviewer here, and in many other places, applies what is said of magistrates to private Christians, and *vice versa*, he is to be reminded that he has shifted the ground, and that his argumentation, whatever effect it may have on minds that cannot make distinctions, is mere beating the air.

Neither does the question concern the *propagation* of religion by compulsory measures, nor does it apply to the means employed to make men change their opinions, but to the coercion of open and notorious violations of the Divine law. The propagation of religion, we willingly admit, cannot be accomplished by the coercive power of the civil magistrate. Against all attempts to promote religion by force we have protested, and we regard it as absurd as it is impolitic to attempt to compel men to cherish any religious principle, or practice any religious duty. It is the suppression of openly avowed and manifest error that we assign to the magistrate, and not the propagation of the truth by mere force. His punitive power respects not the compelling of men to change their opinions, but the restraint and punishment, as civil offences, of gross and overt acts of false worship. Coercion is not employed by him, because of mere difference in judgment, but on account of grievous error, openly avowed and propagated. The Reviewer has either lost sight of these obvious distinctions, or wilfully misled his readers, when he reasons as if *The Covenanter* pleaded for the propagation of the truth by external force and violence, and adduces the first extract from the Rev. Peter Macindoe's "*Vindication*," &c., in his letter,* setting it forth as opposed to our sentiments on magistracy. A "magistrate marching through his territories, with the Bible in his one hand and the sword in the other," may be a convenient bugbear to frighten persons of weak nerves from listening to the statement of a Scriptural magistracy, but it has not the least application to the subject in dispute. In nothing that we have said or written have we ever given the least countenance to the opinion, that religion is to be propagated by force.

Nor when we speak of the Christian civil magistrate protecting the

* *Covenanter Reviewed*, p. 4.

Church of Christ, do we mean the mere protection given to subjects in their civil relations—such a protection as is extended to civil or literary corporations. It will hardly be disputed by our opponent, that to such protection the Church of Christ has a claim in a Christian nation. The province of the Christian magistrate in establishing the true religion, and protecting the Church, we contend, extends much farther, even to the ratification, by civil sanctions, of the Church's creed, declaring it to be the creed of the nation, and to the fencing around by the shield of the law the Church's privileges, while no similar protection is ever to be afforded to error or false worship. This, it is presumed, on his own principles, the Reviewer will not concede; and the question here is plainly this—Ought the Church of Christ, or a pure system of religion, to be recognised by a Christian legislature, and to enjoy not only common protection, and indiscriminate toleration, but be positively countenanced and supported by government, and “the gross impieties, abuses and disorders, prevailing in corrupt societies, or among individuals, to be reformed or repressed by the authority and means competent to bodies politic, as well as by those which are purely spiritual or ecclesiastic, when the interests of both societies or the public good require?”* Should the magistrate uniformly act as a “nursing father” to the Church—not only nourishing her by the means which he officially furnishes, but protecting her from whatever would manifestly seem to injure her peace and purity, or mar her prosperity?

Again, in reference to the suppression by magistratical authority of heresy and idolatry, the question is not, as the Reviewer would insinuate, concerning the suppression of heresy or idolatry *in the mind*, or the restraint of mere opinions on the subject of religion. Error in the mind is evidently not an object of magistratical restraint, and men may HOLD *their opinions* without disturbance on the part of the civil ruler, so long as they keep them to themselves, and refrain from propagating them so as to disturb the welfare of a true reformed nation. We uniformly employ the term *heresy* according to the sense attached to it in the canon law. Professed Christians are *heretics* when “they pertinaciously propagate or follow opinions contrary to the received fundamental doctrine of the Church.”† It is not the entertaining of simple error, but the open avowal of it, pertinacious adherence thereto, and propagation of it, so as to disturb the peace of the Church, and injure the best interests of the nation, that, we affirm, demands the restraint and correction of the civil magistrate. Here, again, the Reviewer evidently shrinks from the discussion of the point at issue, and attempts to charge *The Covenanter* with sentiments to which it never gave expression. In several of the *extracts* introduced as condemnatory of our views, permitting men to “live unmolested, and hold their different opinions, without using external violence to make them change these,” is exhibited as the reverse of what we have maintained; and the “prosecuting a sanguinary crusade against every class of opinions” different from ours,

* M'Crie's Statement, p. 12.

† Compendium of Laws of the Church of Scotland, part 1, p. 333.

is represented as our doctrine, when the Reviewer well knows that we have advanced nothing inconsistent with the former sentiment, since the question was not about opinions in the mind at all, but about obstinate and pestilential heresy and gross idolatry, openly maintained and propagated; and we defy him to show wherein, in any sense, our sentiments are to be identified with the latter. The point in dispute relates to the restraint and punishment of gross, pertinacious and seditious* heretics; their errors being regarded as civil offences committed against the defined faith and established laws of a reformed nation, and their conduct destructive of its peace, and oversive of the foundations of its safety and prosperity. Should such be restrained and punished by the civil magistrate, God's vicegerent, and the guardian of the rights and liberties of the state over which he presides? Or ought he to permit blasphemers, idolaters and heretics, however notorious, to go on unrestrained, insulting the Majesty of Heaven, the Supreme Ruler of the nation, belying God's truth, and spreading noxious and pestilent errors throughout the community? These are the real questions in dispute between us and the Reviewer, regarding the civil magistrate's coercive and punitive power in matters of religion—we being the advocates of restriction and punishment in such cases, and he the abettor of unlimited toleration.

That we may not farther enlarge in this enumeration, the question relates not to the application of *capital punishments* in any case for the eradication of gross error. Though the Reviewer has laboured assiduously to fasten on *The Covenanter* and its conductors this sentiment, we unhesitatingly disavow it; and we tell him, that here again he has blinked the question, or wilfully perverted our reasoning. When, for instance, in one of the extracts which he has quoted, he sets up the "hellish principle of killing all who differ in judgment and persuasion" from ourselves, with the obvious design of holding this out to the public as our doctrine, and afterwards reasons as if we had maintained such a sentiment, he surely must know that he cannot make good such a charge from aught that we have published. The question is not about the *measure or degree of punishment* wherewith obstinate heretics and idolaters should be visited, but whether it is right, under the Gospel, to *coerce and punish them at all*. We maintain that there is a Divine warrant for such magistratical interference—the Reviewer holds the negative; and he is bound to produce Scriptural authority in attempting to overturn the principle. In vain will he shift the ground by holding up the magistrate's sword *in terrorem*, and by declaiming about the application of capital punishments for the excision of heresy and idolatry. The simple question is—Whether the Christian magistrate should employ his civil authority to punish gross heretics and idolaters, as evil-doers, or should he permit them to roam at large as beasts of prey, bringing on themselves and others swift destruction?

* However the Reviewer may ridicule the use of this epithet (p. 108) in such a connexion, it is thus used repeatedly by so able and accurate a disputant as Francis Turretin, (*De Polit. Gubern. Eccl. Quæst. xxxiv. Sect. 32*) and its meaning is sufficiently plain to all who wish not to deal in sophistical and fallacious reasoning.

The question, apart from foreign topics, between us and the Reviewer, may be circumscribed within narrow limits. Had we been called to reason the doctrine of magistratical interference, for the protection of true religion, with a genuine successor of the Remonstrants or Sectaries mentioned in the preceding chapter, the question would have simply been—Has the Christian civil magistrate, as such, in charge the first table of Divine law? And, in this case, we would have been called to maintain a leading maxim of the reformers, that the magistrate is “*custos utriusque tabulæ legis*,” guardian of both tables of the law. But from the sparing admissions which the Reviewer has made, respecting the duty of the Christian magistrate to punish *blasphemy and Sabbath profanation*, the subject in dispute is somewhat farther narrowed. The point to be discussed, it should now seem, is—Whether we have authority to assign to the civil magistrate the guardian care of the eight last precepts of the Decalogue, and exempt him altogether from any authoritative interference to prevent the violation of the two first? Are gross heresy and idolatry, in a nation professedly Christian, an object of magistratical coercion and punishment at all? Or, on account of certain pleas, invariably urged by errorists and infidels in every age, respecting liberty of conscience, toleration, and the right of private judgment, must the civil magistrate exempt these crimes alone from control and penal inflictions?

The matter in dispute, thus stated and limited, is easily understood by every person acquainted with the law and testimony of Jesus. Nor can we be justly charged with assigning it an undue degree of importance, when it holds a prominent place in the faithful contentings of the Witnesses of the Lamb, in several periods of their history. With perfect fairness might we inquire at those who think the matter unimportant, whether they are prepared to relinquish that part of the Church’s testimony which respects a Scriptural magistracy. Because, in the ages that are gone, impertinent and frivolous questions have given rise to protracted discussion:—because, in party disputes, men have often been more concerned about their own reputation than the cause of truth, and have sometimes, amid the tempest of human passions and prejudices, lost sight of the great ends of edification and the vindication of truth; therefore has all contending about doctrines or practical duties been reprobated, however interesting they may be to Christians, or important to Churches and civil communities. The principle thus avowed is frequently used as a mere cloak for error or indifference in religion; and, in its genuine tendency, would produce the most revolting scepticism and latitudinarianism, or lull men in the sleep of implicit faith. Whatever some may be disposed to think, the questions which we have stated intimately concern the integrity of the Church’s testimony and her faithfulness in maintaining it, and the peace and stability of Christian commonwealths. Our fervent desire is, that we may be enabled to discuss them in such a manner, and with such a spirit, as that God may be glorified, gainsayers convinced, and the truth as it is in Jesus greatly promoted.

CHAPTER III.

THE OBJECTION AGAINST MAGISTRICAL INTERFERENCE IN RELIGIOUS MATTERS AS CONSTITUTING THE CRIME OF PERSECUTION, REFUTED.

Abuse of the term *persecution*—Its Scriptural meaning—Application by the *Reviewer* contrary to Scriptural analogy—Consequences of such an application—Jewish Commonwealth—Conduct of magistrates in Christian States—*Conscience*, God's vicegerent in the soul; an improvable faculty—Salutary effect of magistral restraint in Old Testament times—The *Reviewer's* attempt to prove the doctrine of *The Covenanter* sanguinary, abortive—Insulated sentences, and parts of sentences, of *The Covenanter*, unfairly treated by the *Reviewer*, vindicated, &c.

INSTEAD of proceeding by direct arguments to illustrate and defend that side of the question which we maintain in this controversy, it should seem requisite, in the first instance, to refute some *Objections* against our view of the subject, which the *Reviewer*, and persons of his way, affect to consider weighty and unanswerable. We are fully aware, that the sentiments of our Covenantee forefathers, which we advocate, must be unpopular while Antichristianism prevails in Church and State. During this inauspicious period, the Witnesses of Jesus are represented as driven into the wilderness, where they carry on their appropriate work, disregarding the allurements of an evil world, despising the approbation of the wicked, and preferring the reproach of Christ to all perishing enjoyments. It is, therefore, evident, if such be a true exhibition of their state, that they may expect to have numerous objections urged against their principles and conduct, while attempts on their part to render their testimony popular, must, in a great measure, be preposterous and unsuccessful.

The objections most frequently urged against the doctrine which we maintain on magistracy, as stated in the preceding chapter, are those of *persecution*, invasion of the rights of *conscience*, *Erastianism*, &c. Though by no means new, having been brought against the advocates of a Scriptural magistracy in every preceding age, these objections are still advanced with a perseverance and pertinacity, and with a clamour of declamation, which, if not calculated to convince an opponent, may serve at least to take with the multitude, and to lead away their minds from the merits of the question at issue. In such a mode of polemical warfare, our friend the *Reviewer* seems intimately conversant. The charge of *persecution* against *The Covenanter* and its conductors, is so often repeated by him, that, if persons are at a loss to discover in the periodical the ground on which it rests, he seems resolved, notwithstanding, like some other agitators of the day, by its very repetition, to carry his point. His pamphlet is entitled, "THE COVENANTER REVIEWED, AND PERSECUTION CONDEMNED;"* holding out to the public that

* An esteemed friend has suggested that Mr. Paul's pamphlet should rather be termed "The Covenanter perverted, and PERSECUTION EXEMPLIFIED." Not

we are the professed advocates of persecution, and that our work has no other tendency than to teach and enforce the practice of this odious doctrine. Throughout his pamphlet, the Reviewer holds so steadily to his purpose of covering with odium *The Covenanter* and its Editor, and of bringing into disrepute its sentiments, as intolerant and persecuting, that were his declamation on this article alone abstracted from the work, little else would remain. As he has thus assigned a prominence to some leading objections, it is proper that we should consider them somewhat minutely. When we shall have nullified them, we shall be the better prepared to expose the errors, the inconsistencies, and the evils of the Reviewer's New Light system. We begin with his

OBJECTION RELATIVE TO PERSECUTION.

The popular meaning of many words in the English language may differ widely from that which their true etymology bears. Such deviations from strict rule, when sanctioned by common consent, are quite tolerable in the ordinary intercourse of society. Let the meaning of the terms employed be fixed conformably to any approved standard, and the end of language, as the medium of communicating our ideas, is gained—words being only arbitrary signs of the ideas which they express. Such liberties, however, must not be taken with the words of inspiration. The very writing of the Bible is given by inspiration of God, and its very words are the words which the Holy Ghost teacheth. The meaning of every word and phrase is unalterably determined by the Spirit of truth, and by Scripture analogy is that meaning to be ascertained. Now, it is notorious that a meaning is often imposed on Scripture phraseology, and at length becomes popular, which, according to this rule of interpretation, the terms will by no means bear. It is an unhallowed and presumptuous action to take such liberty with the Oracles of Jehovah. It constitutes the crime of which the ancient Israel of God were convicted by the Prophet, (Jer. xxiii. 36,) “Ye have perverted the words of the living God, the Lord of Hosts our God.” How awful, and yet how little regarded is the appalling charge! Were the deep awe which the charge is calculated to inspire, duly felt by theological disputants in our times, we would have been spared the trouble of this essay to rescue the word PERSECUTION from the popular but unscriptural meaning to which our redoubtable champion in the cause of liberalism would give currency.

With several misapplications of the term in common use, we shall not here meddle, as not lying immediately in our way, and shall only deal with that which makes the crime of persecution consist in penal inflictions, by the civil magistrate, for what every man's conscience approves, and dignifies with the name of religion. To persecute, in modern phrase, is to punish, not for true religion alone, but for any

withstanding the high sounding pretensions to liberality of its author, and his avowed detestation of all bigotry, the candid and discerning public will, perhaps, judge this title by no means inappropriate.

counterfeit too which usurps the name. To persecute for conscience' sake, is to harass not only for what an enlightened and sanctified conscience approves in matters of religious belief and worship, but for whatever also the most benighted and impure conscience decides on as such. The popular opinion would make suffering persecution to consist in the endurance of trouble, not for true religion alone, as approved by the verdict of a good conscience, but in the endurance of trouble also for the avowal of any form of religion, however false, in favour of which a verdict is brought by any conscience, however evil, defiled, and perverted. Let the demon of darkness and error be supposed to have erected his empire in it, and let it be supposed that it is judicially given over by God to strong delusion, to believe a lie—no matter, the law that would restrain the man's free agency in matters of doctrine and worship, is of a persecuting character, the magistrate who enforces it is a persecutor, and the sufferer endures persecution. Neither the etymology of the word in the New Testament, nor Scripture analogy, will sanction this construction.

In the original language of the New Testament, the active verb *διωκω*, to persecute, is applied to both persons and things. When applied to things, it simply expresses an eager desire to possess them, and cannot be taken in an evil sense. When applied to persons, it signifies to pursue with malignity, and is never taken in any other than in an evil sense. It signifies, not simply the infliction of punishment upon them, but also an eager desire of doing them injury. Thus, it marks very strikingly the diabolical attempt of the dragon upon the woman which brought forth the man child, (Rev. xii. 13,) and the diabolical spirit with which the Antichristian beast, to whom the dragon gave his power, is represented in New Testament prophecy, as cruelly harrassing the followers of the Lamb. And it is a fact, well attested by the faithful martyrologies of the Christian Church, that his beastly rage, so far from being satiated with killing the bodies of the saints of the Most High God, aimed often at the perdition of their souls at the same time. Now, we ask, is the existence of such malignant and diabolical feeling as the term fairly imports, inseparable from magisterial restraint upon heretics, idolaters, blasphemers, &c.? Certainly not. The existence of such feelings is never once supposed to influence the legislature of a nation in enacting, or its executive in carrying into effect, salutary penal laws against thieves, murderers, and other criminals. To punish such, according to law and justice, even when no compunction of conscience is felt, a case by no means unfrequent, is never identified with persecution; and why punishing gross acts of impiety, which the conscience of the agents may not condemn, should be held as identical, as very generally it is, is a matter above our comprehension. To punish treason against fellow-men is never, except, perhaps, by the traitor and his partisans, accounted persecution; and no more should punishing manifest and direct treason against Jehovah be regarded in such a light. Actuated by holy zeal for the honour of God, and feeling a deep interest in the safety of the true religion, the magistrate may restrain its daring enemies; and if free of malignity in so doing, he incurs not the guilt of a persecutor, according to the true import of the word.

Nor will the popular application of the word abide the test of Scripture analogy. A comparison of a few of its Scripture definitions will supply demonstration here. To suffer persecution, means in Scripture the voluntary and patient endurance of trouble, in person, reputation, estate, or privileges, for "righteousness sake," (Matt. v. 10, 11); "Because of the word," (Matt. xiii. 21); "For the word's sake," (Mark iv. 17); "For Christ's sake," (2 Cor. xii. 10); "For the name of Christ," (1 Pet. iv. 14.) Now, these definitions, though varying somewhat in terms, are, in substance and sense, precisely the same. Their collective meaning may be summarily expressed in one phrase thus—"The endurance of trouble for the *true Christian religion*, in doctrine and worship." It deserves to be particularly noticed, that as the single word has not different meanings in the New Testament, so neither do the different definitions admit of different constructions. In this we clearly perceive the finger of God, guarding the word from being perverted, and the sentiment from being misunderstood. The manifest bearing of every passage in which it occurs, and of all the passages together, is to show, that it is not the sufferings of Christians under those in power, but the *grounds and cause* of their sufferings, that constitute persecution. Their sufferings do not sanctify the cause; but it is the *cause, and the spirit which the cause inspires*, which sanctify the sufferings, and give them their appropriate character,—"persecution for righteousness sake." Our venerable fathers of the good old time were right in saying, "it is the *cause* which makes the martyr." Based on Scripture definition, the sentiment bids defiance to the whole machinery of liberal sophistry and criticism. The Christian martyr is one who suffers, like his Great Master, in the same spirit, and in the same glorious cause: but never in the cause of Antichrist, containing, as it does, both heresy and idolatry.

Again, the consequences with which it is pregnant, and the confusion to which it directly leads, sufficiently condemn the popular application of the word. By Christ's infallible appointment, all who live godly in him must suffer persecution. The motto which, by his spirit, he has devised for his Church is—"persecuted but not forsaken." But, according to the popular opinion, the Holy Spirit has been quite unhappy—egregiously mistaken, indeed, in his design, since the heretical Antichristian Church may urge the same claim. Is not the calendar of her canonized pretended saints filled with thousands of confessors and martyrs, who have suffered more or less for the abominations of Rome? Such Protestants as adopt the popular idea of persecution are, on that ground, obliged to recognise the justice of their claim to the high honour of martyrdom, in common with those who have suffered in the glorious cause of Protestantism and Bible religion.

Again, Christian States and Churches, the most reformed and pure, which have been either directly or indirectly concerned in enacting or executing penal statutes against any forms of religion however false, are, if the popular opinion is sustained, clearly convicted of a persecuting spirit. What a hideous character will thus be inscribed on many a reputed Reformed Church and State! The Jewish nation, in which the true religion first obtained a civil estab-

lishment, set the pernicious example. The inspired prophets of Israel taught persecution in the name of the Lord; and the princes of the people, most eminent for godliness, under their instructions, practised the horrible evil. Yes, the prophets, abetted by their counsel, and the magistrates obedient to it, perpetrated the identical crime which is now set down as persecution. How many Christian Churches and states have been inveigled into the snare, by walking in their footsteps! The first Christian state in the auspicious reign, as some think it, of the Emperor Constantine, being constituted on the model of the Jewish state, was thoroughly imbued with the persecuting spirit; and all the reformed states and churches of Europe had their political and ecclesiastic constitutions vitally fermented with the same leaven. The most enlightened of our reformers, too, whether churchmen or statesmen, and the most devoted and faithful martyrs to the Reformation cause, drank deeply into the same spirit, being avowed abettors, and zealous patrons of magistratical interference in favour of the reformed religion. Facts so stubborn, and so well attested, erring brethren, tolerably acquainted with historic truth, and possessing a moderate share of candour and modesty, have not always the daring to gainsay. Whilst they profess to follow their convictions in departing from the faith of their fathers, they freely admit, that in the article of the magistrate's power *circa sacra* "they erred—that they did not immediately reject this last relic of Popery—that they did not perfectly understand the rights of conscience and private judgment," &c. This is honest, and we like honesty, even when she errs. But to deny the facts above stated, as others do, that they may pass themselves with the age as the genuine inheritors of the ancient Covenanted faith, argues not a wilfulness only, but a boldness in error, that no charity can excuse but at the expense of truth. That honour to which even some knaves are not quite indifferent, should, in the absence of motives more laudible, impel such Covenanters to abandon their ground at once, and plead, as some have done, that they had been in error, but now they have got new light. They might say, "*humanum est errare*"—or, more sagely still, "Wise men change their mind sometimes, fools never."

Once more, if trouble for conscience' sake is persecution, according to the popular idea, while the Scripture defines it persecution for religion or righteousness' sake alone, it follows, that the dictates of every man's conscience, as to matters of religion, and the dictates of the Holy Ghost, must invariably have the same identical meaning, and never can be in opposition. Thus, conscience never can be in a state of rebellion against its God, or the authority of his holy Word. Heresy, blasphemy, and every form of religious worship, however false, must be inseparable from the religion and righteousness of the Bible. Conscience is paramount, and religion and righteousness nothing but what conscience makes them; and as the conscience of mankind differs as extensively in matters of religion as the hue of their skin, or the features of their faces, it follows, that religion and righteousness must differ to the same extent, which amounts to this, that they are absolutely undefinable, and never can be reduced to any fixed standard. When, therefore, there is an approving conscience, it is not an act of impiety to utter blasphemy against the

Holy Trinity; it is not an impious act to deny the Lord who bought us; it is nothing impious to worship God by images, or even to give religious worship to the spirits of canonized saints, or to vile relics. By consequence, these must be *righteous* acts, as many have suffered for them from conscience of duty. What is it connected with religion that the popular idea of persecution does not by native consequence confound? It confounds the Churches of Christ and Antichrist; it obliterates a main distinctive feature of Christ's genuine, and Rome's pretended martyrs; it identifies the persecutor with the persecuted, and reconciles righteousness and unrighteousness—Christ and Belial.

EXTRAVAGANT CLAIMS FOR CONSCIENCE EXPLODED.

The invalidity of the objection against magistral restraint in matters of religion, as constituting persecution, will be farther exposed, by showing the extravagance of the claim set up for conscience, to unlimited sovereignty in these matters. Let an observation or two to this effect here suffice.

1. Conscience is the *deputy of God in the soul of man*, the witness and arbiter of our thoughts, words and actions, as accountable beings. Its sovereignty in each department is limited by the perfect law of God, which, throughout christendom, is the Bible. To God alone, and to this law, is it in *direct* subjection. It is, however, in an indirect and subordinate sense, subject also to the laws of society not at variance with those of God. The supreme Lord of the universe has vested in civil society the power of self-government, which particular states, by their own deed, delegate for their own convenience, to certain individuals as the nation's representatives.

This order constitutes civil government as the ordinance of God, and the governors of the nations are both their representatives and the deputies of Jehovah, and therefore honoured with his name—"I said ye are *Gods*." As God's deputies and representatives, set up by their constituents, and exercising rule according to the same perfect law, they claim, in the name of Jehovah, universal subjection from the people, in soul as well as in body. "Let every *soul* be subject to the higher powers." Compared with individuals, with sects or factions in the state, they are, by the appointment of God, and by the voice of the people, the *higher powers*; and no claim of conscientious liberty or free agency, on the part of individuals, in any matters whatever, religious or civil, opposed to their just prerogative and authority, can be sustained as valid. If the prerogative of conscience be paramount in the individual, that of the civil magistrate is not less so in the body politic. If the individual sets up the plea of free agency in religious matters, based on the right of conscience and private judgment, the magistrate can set up the counter-plea, not only of his own conscience as a Christian man, but that also of the collective conscience of the nation, of which, under certain specified limitations, he is made the depository. If, then, any claim such liberty of conscience, as often they do in matters of religion, as proves them to have "no conscience at all," must the magistrate sacrifice his own conscience, and that of the nation entrusted with him, to such a

hollow pretence? In a reformed state, to which alone the matter in debate is referrible, when a competition of claims exists between individuals on the score of free agency in religion, and the magistrate's restraining power, as vested in him by Christian subjects, in adjusting the conflicting claims, by whose will, we ask, is he to be guided? By that of factious individuals, or that of the nation, including his own? By the latter, without all controversy. Whose consciences, whose good should he consult in such circumstances? Not, evidently, the conscience, and the good of factious and deluded individuals, but those of society at large, directed by the statute law of Heaven.

2. *Conscience is an improvable faculty.* To cultivate and form our conscience in subserviency to the ends designed by our Creator, is a most important duty, which we owe to him, to ourselves, and to society; and to God, the Judge of all, and also to society, we are accountable for neglecting this duty, for perverting the conscience, and all the evil consequences which ensue. Conscience is no mere mental instinct, nor are its testimonies and decisions involuntary impulses under no moral control. It ranks among the chief of our spiritual senses, by which we become, through habit, able to discern good and evil. Heb. v. 14. The apostle Paul acted on this principle, and accordingly says, "And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God and toward men." On this principle, too, every Christian will be anxious to adopt, on good grounds, his language to the same effect—"I trust I have a good conscience in all things, willing to live honestly:" "our rejoicing is this the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have our conversation in the world." This, with peace—the peace of God, that passeth all understanding, keeping the heart and mind, through Christ Jesus—is the precious fruit which a good conscience produces. On the other hand, if conscience be neglected, avarice, or ambition, or sensuality, with perhaps ignorance, and pride, and unbelief, will get easy possession of the soul; and thus will the very heart and conscience be defiled, become evil, be seared as with a hot iron, and be so totally perverted as to "call evil good and good evil; to put darkness for light and light for darkness; and put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter." Thus will the character be acquired of "men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith;" of being "led away by the error of the wicked, and falling from their own steadfastness;" of "hating the light;" of "loving darkness rather than light;" of "changing the truth of God into a lie;" of "believing lies, and speaking lies in hypocrisy." And for thus neglecting and putting away a good conscience, evinced in not receiving the love of the truth that they might be saved, men are frequently so abandoned by God in his justice, that they prostitute their conscience yet farther to Satan's devices, to his strongest delusions, and submit to be taken captive by him at his will, that they may finally be damned who obey not the truth, &c. Now, according to the doctrine of modern liberalism—a doctrine frequently taught in the Review—the Christian magistrate has no power to arrest, by any civil restraints, the progress of such infatuated men, in their headlong career to endless perdition, nor to prevent their most barefaced attempts to precipitate others in

the same destruction with themselves. To such evil-doers, and pests of all society, they must be no terror. They must not seek to save by fear either them or their other subjects, pulling them out of the fire.

Though the seasonable application of civil restraint were to produce the promised salutary effect of inducing "all Israel to hear and fear, and do no more such wickedness," forbearance they must extend, regardless of the temporal and the eternal good of their subjects. When any portion of the subjects have put away a good conscience, and, concerning the faith once professed, have made shipwreck, the Christian magistrate must bear and sympathise with them to the fullest extent of their wishes, and of all their sayings and doings, in reviling and subverting religion. He must not lay one rude hand upon them. All interests the most precious, and rights the most sacred—those of the Redeemer, of truth, of the Church and of the nation, and even his own, he must sacrifice to this imposing idol, this rival of Jehovah—the sovereignty of conscience. No coercive measures of prevention is it at all competent for him to employ, with crafty, interested seducers, to disenfranchise the consciences of the people over whom they have obtained an ascendancy. If leave conceded to designing or reckless seducers to take into their keeping the conscience of multitudes, to manufacture them into an approval of gross heresy and idolatry, and to hold them till death in the chains of mental darkness, without the light of the Word of God, which would undo the spell, be any thing akin to Christian liberty, or liberty of conscience, it will be difficult to make out what is licentiousness, or how Christian liberty can be used as an occasion to the flesh. It is, at least, an essential ingredient in licentiousness, and ought to be effectively interdicted in every reformed State. The conclusion from the whole is briefly this, that to have a conscience of the above character at all, still to retain it in its perverted state, and even to plead it as a reason of indulgence in the avowal of heresy, and practice of idolatry and blasphemy, is manifestly and wilfully to rebel against the light, which, if they do not aggravate the crimes in question, never, at least, can form an excuse with God or with society for them. These are the proper effects of a perverted conscience, and evil effects never can proceed from a good cause; if the fruit be evil, the tree must be evil also. After men have stifled the witness of conscience, to plead its silence, as to the criminality and general ruinous tendency of these evils, is equally idle as to plead drunkenness, and the destruction of reason in that state, as an excuse for theft, adultery, or murder. In either case, the circumstance on which the plea rests is itself a great evil.

We wish it to be distinctly understood, that our reasoning for magistral coercion does not apply to those dissenters from the true reformed religion, who, though erring in minor points, are found honestly, and humbly, and soberly, and in the spirit of peace and unity, employing the proper means to arrive at truth, and to form and guide their conscience to just decisions in religious matters. Thus, not rejecting, like the other class, but proving themselves open to, good instruction, they are entitled to the most indulgent consideration. To disabuse the public mind, we thus make our sentiment, once for all, so plain that he may run that readeth it; especially, as

of late we have been slanderously reported, and as some affirm that we say, 'All heretics or dissenters from the established religion should be punished, without exception, with like severity.' A grosser slander, or a more unmerited imputation was never recorded, than to affirm that any statement to that effect was ever made by *The Covenanter*, or that any premises have been advanced in that periodical, from which the illiberal conclusion is fairly inferrible. And, in sincerity, we pity the man who, ignorantly rash, or wilfully disingenuous, could descend to give it publicity.

THE REVIEWER'S ATTEMPT TO PROVE "THE COVENANTER'S" DOCTRINE SANGUINARY, ABORTIVE.

We now proceed to expose the Reviewer's abortive attempt to prove the doctrine of *The Covenanter* sanguinary.

The application of the principle which we advocate, it is alleged, would be productive of the most tragical results. Let us see what, in capital reviewing style, these might be. *Christendom a field of blood—oceans of human blood—cities reduced to ashes, to hideous heaps of repairless ruins—religious crusades—holy wars—interminable persecution—universal massacres—mutual extermination—depopulation over our globe, with blood, carnage, vengeance, death, et id genus omne.* How admirably delicate the touches of the Reviewer's pencil! How exquisitely chaste the style of his colouring! How conscientiously cautious, lest he abuse hyperbole! The contents of Pandora's box scarcely parallel this roll of curses! All these grounds of lamentations, and mournings, and wo, inseparable from the civil restraint of daring acts of impiety in enlightened and reformed Christian States! Christian States, legislating under the influence of religious principle, and their godly functionaries, executing their laws conformably to the law of God, against transgressors of either table of the Decalogue, with all the moderation and lenity not incompatible with the ends of public justice and the general good, such a curse to the people and scourge to the world! Let the public not be deceived—let them not suffer themselves to be misled. The application of the principle in debate respects exclusively the nations and governments of such character. It is on the ground of nations being thoroughly evangelized, and governed thus, that we rest and defend our statements, and on this ground must our opponents meet us. Let them not think they can escape detection, and carry the matter in debate by shifting the ground of the controversy, and arguing from the present state of the nations of Christendom, or their state at any other period, under totally different circumstances. But supposing most bloody tragedies, as bloody as some which are already past, say that of Waterloo, or others yet future, suppose that of Armageddon, were to follow the practical application of the principle, how does this affect the argument? Must the principle be condemned because certain lamentable, mournful, woful events accompany or follow its practical application? By no means. Consequences of a principle reduced to practice are of two kinds. Some are essential to its application, and inseparable from it—others are only casual, and may not necessarily result from it. Consequences

of the former character, when necessarily involving immorality, determine the character of the principle as criminal also—not so those which are casual, they leave the matter undetermined. What lamentable and bloody consequences have, by accident, often accompanied the exercise of the ordinance of the holy ministry, in consequence of the introduction of the Gospel of peace and reconciliation into Pagan States? The genius of the Gospel is “peace on earth, and good-will towards men;” and yet, not peace nor good-will, but bloody war and ill-will have often attended its march. The erection of the kingdom of Christ by the Gospel, the word of the kingdom, was the occasion of manifold evils and bloody revolutions in many ages and countries, a fact in which the prediction of Jesus has been verified, “Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I come not to send peace, but a sword; for I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; and a man’s foes shall be they of his own household.” Now, the history of primitive Christianity amply attests the accomplishment of this prediction. Was not division, from the city council to the family circle, often the consequences of preaching the Gospel? Did the Apostles and others refrain from preaching the Gospel from a spurious liberality, or a false delicacy, because of the divisions and bloodshed which it might, which it was even certain that in general it would occasion? No—their ministry they behoved to exercise at all events. To the requisitions of their Master they felt themselves obliged to hearken. The consequences of doing their duty, however tragical, had no place in their calculations—the disposal of events they committed to God. Christian magistrates should go and do likewise. They should so wield the sword of civil power, that true religion, the only true bond and solid foundation of all societies, be not destroyed—trusting in the God whom they serve, that He either will prevent the consequences imagined, or, if not, cause the conflicting passions of men thus excited, and the bloodshed which may be the result, to praise him.

Thus we have proved, by analogy, that calamitous consequences, which are only accidental, are not to be charged to the account of our principle. As to such consequences as it may lead to through abuse, by Antichristian persecutors stretching it into precedent, by way of imitation or retaliation on the friends of true religion, let them see to that who, on quite different and most unjust grounds, resort to such measures. Christian nations and magistrates must not decline an important service to the cause of Christ and society at large, lest those in the interests of Antichrist convert it into an occasion of crime. If, on this principle, magistrates should not coerce heretics, idolaters, and blasphemers, on the same principle the ministers of Jesus should not reject them, though they are commanded to do so. “A man that is an heretic, after the first and second admonition, reject.” Thus we have examined, in all its various bearings, and think we have sufficiently exposed the inconclusiveness of the Reviewer’s objection, as involving consequences revolting to humanity. We forbear declamation—we make no violent appeals to the feelings of the public, as the Reviewer has frequently done. Feelings, we

think, are not the most competent arbitrators in disputes of this kind. To the understanding of the intelligent and candid public, we submit the refutation for their serious and dispassionate consideration.

SENTENCES AND CLAUSES OF SENTENCES IN "THE COVENANTER,"
MISINTERPRETED BY THE REVIEWER, VINDICATED.

It just now occurs to us, that there is another piece of service which we owe to truth, to the public, and ourselves, and which properly claims attention here. It is to bring to the test of fair criticism a few insulated clauses to be found in *The Covenanter*, on which the Reviewer has irefully pounced, and which, clutching in his merciless talons, he ever and anon exhibits, to provoke the odium and execration of the public against the editor and his coadjutors. The quotations are these:—"The civil magistrate should punish an heretic or an idolater, as well as a thief, a murderer, or a traitor." "The laws against heresy and idolatry are no more repealed than those against robbery or murder." "Gross and pestilent heresies should be suppressed by the sword of the civil magistrate." At the mouth of these three witnesses chiefly he would convict *The Covenanter* of maintaining, that every erroneous sentiment in matters of religion, and every act of idolatry, must be visited by the civil magistrate with the same punishment, and that the punishment must be death. The following brief *critique* on these expressions will fairly show the total falsity and failure of the evidence:—"The civil magistrate should punish an heretic, or an idolater, as well as a thief, a murderer, or a traitor." Does this sentiment establish the charge? By no means. All that can fairly be inferred from the expression is simply this, that heresy and idolatry are punishable by the civil magistrate; whatever, in addition, it is made to express, is manifestly at the expense of wresting it. That the phrase, "as well as," on which the assumption rests, does not always imply equality in all respects, every schoolboy knows. In this connexion it expresses, not an equality, but a reality of punishment. It asserts, indeed, the magistrate's *equal right* and *obligation* to punish criminals of either description, whilst it leaves completely undetermined the proportion of the punishment to be inflicted. To demonstrate this, it is only necessary to expunge the words heresy and idolatry, and supply the word thief, thus, "the magistrate should punish the thief as well as the murderer or the traitor." Does the expression imply, that the thief deserves to be punished with equal severity as the murderer or the traitor? It implies no such thing. It implies no more than that it is as much the magistrate's duty to punish theft, according to its demerit, as to punish the other crimes according to their demerit.* Thus, on the cross-

* The authority of the celebrated Joseph Butler, LL.D., who uses the phrase in a sense exactly coincident with that above given, we beg here to produce. "There are secondary uses for our faculties; they administer to delight *as well as* to necessity; and as they are equally adapted to both, there is no doubt but He intended them for our gratification, *as well as* for the support and continuance of our being." In this sentence the phrase occurs twice, and it cannot be fairly

examination, the truth is elicited, and the Reviewer's accusation found to be unfounded and false.

The next witness is, "the laws against heresy and idolatry are no more repealed than against murder," &c. And the inference it is supposed to involve is, that *The Covenanter* would have them executed on all hapless heretics and idolaters in all their original rigour, as if those, or any other general laws, could not be modified in their application, according to circumstances, while remaining still unrepealed. If common equity be invariably the same thing, and if the regard which God essentially bears to holiness, into which that equity, as its source, is to be resolved, is invariably the same also, whatever particular Divine laws are founded in it, never can, on this admission, be repealed, as to their substance, though certainly, as to their circumstances, they may be considerably modified. That the law in question is founded in common equity must be admitted, it being designed by God for keeping pure and entire the ordinances of religion, unless it can be proved that religion and equity are things which may be entirely dissociated, which, so far as we know, is not affirmed by the Reviewer. Two other examples will sufficiently corroborate this. The law of *a competent provision for the ministers of true religion*, as given originally to the Jewish nation, is founded in common equity. "For the labourer is worthy of his hire. Even so hath the Lord ordained, that they who minister about holy things should live of the things of the temple, and they who wait at the altar should be partakers with the altar." But that law, though in its substance and spirit still unrepealed, is so modified, that tithes and other perquisites due to God's ministers of old, cannot now be claimed by the ministers of the sanctuary as formerly. The law of *hospitality*, which is a branch of charity, is another of the same description, and is, therefore, unrepealed. "Use hospitality without grudging. Be not forgetful to entertain strangers." But in using hospitality, and entertaining strangers, several circumstances, with which the original law was invested, may now be omitted. For instance, the host is not now required to use unguents, or wash the feet of his guests, as formerly, these being only circumstantial matters. Just so, the laws against heresy and idolatry, for the same reason, remain unrepealed; whilst in all circumstantial matters they admit of being extensively modified.

Christian magistrates should still execute the same law in its true spirit and design, modifying it in accommodation to the great variety of circumstances with which the crimes in question may be clothed, and in deciding accordingly, as the collective wisdom of the nation will be necessary, so will it be "profitable to direct." Able men, fearing God and hating covetousness, will still be competent to the task. The Reviewer's demand, therefore, on *The Covenanter*, previously to determining the limits and modifications of the penal laws in question, is manifestly as unreasonable as the thing is unnecessary and impossible. When the Lord shall revive his work, and restore our judges

made, in either case, to signify equality in *degree*, of the primary and secondary use and end of our faculties. The equality it expresses is only that of *reality*, otherwise the learned Bishop's sentiment is self-contradictory.

as at the first, and our counsellors as at the beginning, *then*, no doubt, but not before, will the wisdom necessary for the adjustment be supplied. In the mean time, let this be our fervent prayer, and, waiting on our God, expect an answer in due time. Thus, the wisdom of the second witness fails as completely as that of the first; and it shall presently be found, that the third will be as little favourable as the other. But let us hear, and then judge.

“Pestilent heresies are to be suppressed by the sword of the civil magistrate.” From this sentiment it is also inferred, in connexion with the rest, that the Christian magistrate, according to *The Covenanter*, must execute the penal laws of the Jews, or persecute, at least, with equal vigour, as did their magistrates. The Reviewer and his abettors affect to be mightily startled at mentioning the magistrate’s sword. In their imagination, blood and oceans of blood are ever associated with the sword of the civil magistrate. They figure to themselves “the frightful picture of his march through his territories, with the sword in the one hand, and the Bible in the other, prosecuting a sanguinary crusade.” What an alarming and revolting spectacle! So thinks *The Covenanter* also. No such spectacle has ever yet been exhibited in any state where the true religion has prevailed, whether Jewish or Christian, nor is any such spectacle ever to be apprehended in any reformed Christian state, on the principle which we advocate. Our sentiment bears no such illiberal construction as that unfairly forced upon it. The sword of the civil magistrate is the emblem of his civil power, and that power may be employed various ways and lengths, without cutting off men’s heads, or hewing them down. The *ense recidendum* is the last thing to be resorted to, if at all necessary, and so says the proviso, with which the sentiment of *The Covenanter* is fenced—“If no gentler means prove effectual.” By this clause it is distinctly provided, that he shall never resort to the use of steel, or fire, or lead, or hemp, in any form, or to any extent, except when it shall appear strikingly evident, that the safety of the community would be endangered by forbearance. Thus, after all, when *The Covenanter* is permitted to speak for himself, he will not appear quite so devoid of humanity as the Reviewer would represent him. It is not bold, unfounded assertion, without the semblance of proof, in which it is quite usual for the Reviewer to deal largely, that will be sufficient to fasten on *The Covenanter* the deep stain of blood and cruelty. It is not by any process of reasoning, founded on sound principles of philology and criticism, but by the summary method of bold, unblushing assertion, and gratuitous assumption, that the expressions of *The Covenanter* are convicted of breathing out blood, slaughter, and massacre.

CHAPTER IV.

THE OBJECTION TAKEN FROM THE CHARACTER OF THE GOSPEL DISPENSATION ANSWERED.

The Reviewer's argument stated—Its fallacy—Character of both the legal and Gospel dispensation misrepresented by the Reviewer—Reasoning of the Apostle Paul in Galatians 3d and 4th rescued from his perversions—The Reviewer's argument for magistratical forbearance being extended to heretics and idolaters, in consequence of God changing the plan of his providence, illogical and unscriptural—Apostle's views of Christian liberty in the Epistle to the Galatians stated and illustrated—Reviewer's account of the mildness of the Gospel dispensation far-fetched and contrary to facts, &c.

WE shall now proceed to present the public with another specimen or two of the Reviewer's sophistical reasoning, while we refute his objection taken from the new and mild dispensation of the Gospel.

His argument, if it deserves the name, is founded on this position—“ There is no other feature of the Christian dispensation, by which it is so strikingly distinguished from the legal, as its mildness and clemency.” Hence the inference, that Christian states must not invent penal statutes, nor magistrates at all enforce them, for repressing error and idolatry. Evil doers of this stamp will have no reason to be “ afraid of the power ” in Christian states, until their impious rage against true religion drives them to attack its friends with the sword ;— then, and not till then, must the magistrate unsheath *his* sword in its defence.” As long as “ it is attacked only by argument, it is to be defended only by argument.” Now, admitting the *general principle* of the premises, which to any great extent we do not, his inference as to the particular matter in debate is sufficiently wide and forced. The main force of his reasoning is by himself concentrated in one brief argument, thus—“ God has changed his plan of government, the magistrate, therefore, should change his also !” Now, we deny the fact of such a total change in the Divine government as is affirmed, and we deny the legitimacy of the conclusion, even were the fact to be admitted. One circumstance of difference in the plan of the Divine government we freely admit, but it no way affects the argument. We admit that more frequent execution of the judgments of God, by his own immediate power, of old marked his government than now ; but that they were upon the whole marked with greater severity than latterly, we are confident cannot be proved, and unless this is proved, nothing is proved to the purpose.

On this part of the subject, another discreditable, disingenuous, but shallow artifice of the Reviewer, is easily detected. The picture he professes to draw of the old dispensation is, in reality, a vile caricature. The Old Testament dispensation he most indecorously abuses. It resembles more the burlesque of an infidel than the sober view of a Christian divine. He does not draw a faithful picture of it, by exhibiting its lights as well as its shadows. He exhibits all its harsh, and not one of its mild features. He suppresses truth when it serves his purpose to make out a bad case. To finish the distorted picture,

he misplaces altogether one important fact; he places the extermination of the nations of Canaan under the Jewish dispensation, confounding thus the merciful dispensation of God's providence to his Church with the dispensation of his wrath to the world lying in the wicked one. He pursues again the same line of procedure respecting the new dispensation. He as artfully suppresses or throws into shade every harsh feature of it, as he had before every mild feature of the other. Thus, no liberty ever dared by poets or painters has he declined, in order to exhibit a monstrously disgusting picture of the one, and a most deceitful and flattering picture of the other. We must follow and expose him yet a little farther.

To prove the character of the new dispensation to be one of almost unmixed mildness and clemency, in subserviency to his main drift, viz., that magistrates should not molest heretics, &c., the Reviewer gives full play to his fancy, and drags in the Apostle Paul's allegory in the 3d and 4th chapters of his epistle to the Galatians to give legitimacy to his conclusions. That it is the legal and Christian dispensation which the Apostle compares in this allegory all are agreed. That it is God's plan of discipline to his Church, under the two dispensations, that is represented by the discipline of a father to an heir under age, and one arrived at full age, is quite clear; but to limit the rigorous discipline to which, according to the Apostle, the Jewish church was subjected, or to apply it chiefly to the penal sanctions of the judicial law, as fencing the first table of the Decalogue, as the Reviewer, according to his manner, assumes, is straining it far beyond what the Apostle ever contemplated. We dispute, therefore, with him the justness of the application of the Apostle's allegory to the matter in debate at all. We dispute the application, and, still more, the limitation of the severe tutelage of the Jewish church to the discipline of the judicial law. We call for his proof, for none has he condescended to give, that the law, which the Apostle designates a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ, was merely, if at all, the judicial sanctions of the first table of the Decalogue. We demand his proof, that the tutors and governors the church was under while a minor, mean chiefly, or at all, the civil governors of the Jews. We call upon him to demonstrate, that it is not the ceremonial law, with *its* sanctions, or that it is any other with it, from which the church, as arrived at full age, is set free. The fact of the change of the Levitical priesthood supposes, without dispute, the change of the Jewish ritual, and the reasons are known to every one. And when reasons equally urgent are produced for proving the repeal of the judicial law, as far as regards the general equity of it, then, and not till then, will we believe the fact, but not on the bare *dictum* of any Reviewer. The only thing discoverable by us in the shape of a reason, which he advances in proof of the repeal of the judicial sanctions, is the adequateness of the moral sanctions of the Divine law—the menaces and the fears which they inspire—of the violaters being eternally disinherited. But why, we ask, should the civil fences of the one table be done away, but not those of the other? Are not moral restraints equally efficient for guarding the one table as the other—the second as the first? And why, we ask, are the civil sanctions of the first table, or any part of it, regarded unnecessary now, and moral sanctions alone regarded

sufficient, when formerly both were deemed necessary? Heretics, and idolaters, and blasphemers, were then, in addition to their subjection to civil punishment, disinherited by God also. This is a fact the Reviewer does not think it proper to mention. We, however, deem it right to remind him of it, and call upon him to solve the difficulty which his view presents. We call upon him either to deny, that under the law the heretical and idolatrous Jews were disinherited, or, if he admits the fact, to assign a satisfactory reason, why both civil and moral sanctions were no more than sufficient to restrain from the crimes in question then, while moral sanctions alone are deemed sufficient at present; especially, seeing he himself admits that crimes are now exceedingly aggravated, striking with greater malignity against God, more destructive to the souls of men, and more ruinous to states and empires. Having dexterously solved this knot, one little barrier, as yet standing in the way of *The Covenanter* and his coadjutors' conversion to his faith, will be displaced.

Again, admitting the premises, the unmixed mildness and clemency of the Christian dispensation, in consequence of God's changing his plan, the inference is both illogical and unscriptural. It is bad logic to reason from the vicissitudes of Divine providence to a correspondent change in human conduct, whether in private or in public life. Is the course of Divine providence designed for our imitation, beside, or in preference to God's revealed law? Admit the conclusion, and the ministers of religion must extend their clemency and forbearance to heretics and idolaters also, on the same principle, and to molest them by Church censure is persecution in like manner. The difference is only circumstantial; the one is Church, the other is State persecution. No ecclesiastical anathema must be pronounced against them. The fact is, that the doings of Providence are not the rule of our duty. The rule of God's providence is his secret will, according to the counsel of which, in the most sovereign manner, he worketh all things. His will, revealed in his word, is the rule of our duty. "He giveth not account of any of his matters." Submission to Providence, amid all vicissitudes, becomes us, and is a prescribed duty. The law and the testimony is the most sure word of prophecy, unto which magistrates, as well as others, will do well to take heed, and leave events to God.

Indifferent as the Reviewer's logic is, his theology is still worse, as the following specimen will farther show.

As the charge of misapplying the Apostle's allegory, above preferred against the Reviewer, is a serious one, both from the nature of the crime alleged, and the length of time that his writings prove him to have continued in error, we would deem it unfriendly to dismiss the subject without supplying a few additional remarks for his conviction. If we do not quite mistake the main scope of the Apostle in his Epistle to the Galatians, on which the allegory directly bears, he is clearly convicted by it of gross misapplication. We shall submit whether the Reviewer or we have mistaken the Apostle. Three times his conceit has been imposed on the public: our view shall now be submitted. For this purpose, we observe, that the dangerous error of legal justification was early introduced into the Church of Galatia, by certain false teachers, formerly of the Jewish religion.

They insisted, that to be justified before God, it was necessary, together with faith in Christ, strictly to observe Mosaic ceremonies, as a part of man's righteousness appointed by the law. The Apostle's reasoning throughout, goes to prove, that the law to which they and their partisans were so unalterably attached, is now abrogated; and that having no claim to be observed, it has still less to the merit of being the condition of justification before God. And to confirm this conclusion, he affirms, that their partial observance of the moral law, the permanent rule of righteousness, under the curse of which every sinner lies, is equally unavailing for this end. The law, then, which the Apostle chiefly introduces in his refutation, is that which the false teachers laboured so hard to magnify. The question at issue between the Apostle and them, as it regarded the moral law and its sanctions, was not, is it repealed, but is the obedience yielded to it our justifying righteousness; and, as it regarded the ceremonial law, the question was, is it necessary to observe it at all, and to both he gives a most decided negative. As to the moral law, with its civil sanctions, there is not the most distant hint given of its repeal, or of any *substantial* change whatever, as a complete directory either for subjects or magistrates. A question which was not at all agitated, the Apostle had no instructions to settle.

Never could subjection to the moral law, with its equitable civil sanctions, be regarded by the Apostle as a state of bondage. Salutory restraint is not opposed, but most essential to true liberty. Deliverance, therefore, from the moral law and its sanctions, otherwise than in the light of a covenant of life, could form no part of the liberty of the sons of God under the Gospel. The only law which Jesus, the great legislator of his Church, blotted out, was, in our Apostle's phrase elsewhere, "the hand-writing of ordinances." The law which alone he abolished, was "the enmity, the law of commandments contained in ordinances;" consisting of regulations as to meats and drinks and divers washings—respecting fasts and festivals, days, and months, and years, new moons and sabbaths, including abstinence from things indifferent; in a word, all the positive and carnal rites of external worship, "imposed until the times of reformation." Subjection to these alone constituted the rigorous tutelage of the Church's minority. This formed the burden which neither the fathers of the Apostles nor themselves were able to bear; and the felt impossibility of yielding perfect obedience to God in them, in common with the requisitions of the moral law, did tend, according to the rigorous terms of the covenant of works demanding complete obedience in order to justification, to extinguish in the breast of every sinner, Jew or Pagan, every hope from that quarter, and from his desperate state, irresistibly to urge him to flee for refuge to lay hold on Christ, the only hope set before him. From this vassalage has Jesus made every believer free, according to the Apostle; and in this freedom he earnestly exhorts the Church in Galatia to stand fast, and not be entangled again in the yoke of bondage. We only further observe, on this subject, that none of all the New Testament writers, not all of them together, descant so fully on the topic of Christian liberty, as the Apostle Paul; nor do they all, so fully as he, describe the nature and ends of the ordinance of civil magistracy,

or define, with such clearness and precision, the duties and liberties of subjects, with the extent and limits of the magistrate's prerogative. Let any judicious individual prescribe to himself a course of reading through the Apostle's epistles, and compare him diligently with himself, and he will retire from the task fully satisfied that freedom from the salutary restraints of civil law, in matters of religion, is no part of that liberty which, according to him, belongs to Christian men in the times of the Gospel.

Having, by the animadversions advanced above, showed that the Reviewer's inference in favour of toleration is far-fetched, unsupported, and forced, even grant him his premises—the different character of the old and new dispensations—we might dismiss the subject without farther investigation. We owe it, however, to truth, to show that the mildness of character which he attributes to the new dispensation, and the change affirmed of God's plan of government, is visionary—a mere conceit. Is it a fact supported by authentic history, that the judgments of God are less severe and fatal throughout Christendom now, than formerly they were during the Jewish church-state? We believe not. The annals of Christendom, we believe, will not bear the Reviewer out in either part of the assertion. In addition to manifold desolating judgments, how was the Church of Christ wasted during the first three centuries of the Christian era, by cruel persecution!

The Reviewer talks plausibly about the miracles of the New Testament being miracles of mercy, as a reason why magistrates should not coerce or punish gross heretics and idolaters. Has he forgot the summary vengeance inflicted by God himself on Ananias and Sapphira? If the Divine procedure is, as he alleges, a rule for the official conduct of magistrates in reference to idolaters and blasphemers, then would this instance prove the duty of doing that against which he so violently declaims—subjecting such persons to *capital punishment*. Waiving this point, however, we desire to know how he can reconcile the fearful desolations sent upon the Jewish nation, at the setting up of the New Testament dispensation—the dispersion of the Jews, and their oppression in every country where they have been scattered—the judgments inflicted by Saracens, Turks, &c., on the Asiatic churches, for their heresies and declensions—the vials of Divine wrath poured out on the kingdom and seat of the Beast—and the tremendous devastation that shall take place at the battle of Armageddon—how can he reconcile all this with the fancied picture of the mildness of the Christian dispensation? We know, from infallible testimony, that these judgments are sent as the punishment of practising or suffering error, will-worship, or idolatry; and they record, in marked characters, the holy indignation of the moral Governor of universe against them that do such wickedness.

Some of these judgments are already past, others, which are still to come, should likewise be taken into the account in a faithful comparative view of the character of the two dispensations. The details of past bloody tragedies already performed, and which, from Scripture prophecy, we conclude were only preludes to others still more bloody and revolting to humanity, will perhaps bear a comparison.

with any with which the Church has hitherto been visited. To this direful catastrophe, all the nations, with their governments, from East to West and from North to South, are this day progressing with ominous and irrecoverable speed. The other sweeping judgments too, which shall, we apprehend, accompany the sword in the work of death, should have prevented the vain boasting of the Reviewer on this topic. Of these, some are already put in actual commission—a commission which, it is more than probable, he will not revoke, until it shall have done “his work, his strange work; and have brought to pass his act, his strange act.” Let the Prophet’s subsequent caution, so earnestly addressed and impressively urged, be duly attended to by us all. “Now, therefore, be ye not mockers, lest your bands be made strong; for I have heard from the Lord God of Hosts, a consumption even determined upon the whole earth.”

If we argued on the Reviewer’s principle, then we would infer that heresy, idolatry and blasphemy, and even declension in a religious profession, should be visited with all severity by Christian rulers. But, denying, as we have done, the legitimacy of this mode of proof, we have adduced these instances for the purpose of showing the fallacy of his whole reasoning, and his incompetency, as a theologian, to discuss the question at issue, either by fair Scriptural interpretation, or by a proper view of the plan of God’s providence. All that he has advanced, with so much parade of argument and show of wisdom, on this topic, has little indeed to do with the subject. It may suffice that we have, we trust satisfactorily, exposed here the irrelevancy of his proof, and the unsoundness of his faith. The question of magistratical coercion, as applied to offenders against the first table of the Divine law, must still be decided by appealing to the law and testimony—“If they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.”

One question we here beg leave, in conclusion, to put to the Reviewer. When the vials of God’s unmixed wrath shall be poured out on the seat of the Beast, how should Christian magistrates then act? Is it, or is it not, conformably to the plan of Providence? God will then again change his plan from mildness and clemency to righteous severity and rigour. On the part of God, there will be no forbearance as formerly, and, on the principle of the Reviewer, “If God changes his plan, magistrates should change theirs also,” there must be as little on the part of the magistrate. For if a change of the Divine plan, from the severity of the old to the mildness of the new dispensation, as the Reviewer would persuade us, is to regulate the magistrate’s conduct towards heretics, &c., so, according to analogy, we think, should a change of his plans under any one dispensation; and if, under the Gospel dispensation, a change from severity to mildness is imitable by the magistrate, will the Reviewer have the courtesy to say, if contrary measures will not also be imitable by him; or, if not, will he have the goodness to favour us with the reasons? We insist not, however, on a categorical answer. He may take his own way. We prescribe no limits to him.

CHAPTER V.

ERASTIANISM—THE KING'S SUPREMACY—LIBERTY OF THE PRESS, &c.

The use of obnoxious epithets by polemical disputants—The Calvinists in Holland, and Reformers in Britain, charged with abetting Erastian Supremacy—*Erastianism* described—*The Covenanter* uniformly testifies against the system—Weak grounds of the Reviewer's charge—Extracts from the London ministers, and Ussher vindicated—Exhibition of the sentiments of our reforming ancestors respecting the king's authority—Distinctions stated and illustrated—Quotations from Rutherford, Gillespie, &c.—Testimony of James Guthrie and Livingstone in the preceding period—Liberty of the press—Private judgment, &c.

IT is no unusual trick of theological disputants to fasten an obnoxious epithet on the opinions of their opponents—a practice which often serves the purpose of condemning men and sentiments more effectually than the most conclusive reasoning. Of this we have many specimens in the pamphlet of our polemical friend the Reviewer. *The Covenanter* and its editor were to be held up to the unmeasured reprobation of the Christian public, and therefore are the principles which it teaches designated bloody, persecuting, exterminating, oppressive, and charged with all the infernal wickedness and violence of the Spanish Inquisition. In the eighth chapter of the Review, which contains so many fine specimens of Christian love and a brotherly spirit, the author displays his skill in controversy by such a mode of attack. No argument is therein employed to prove the erroneous character of *The Covenanter's* views, but the brand of maintaining the *king's supremacy* in the Church is attempted to be fixed upon it, and then we have a choice tirade of declamation, the justice of which we will afterwards consider, about the right of private judgment and the liberty of the press. Since the days of our persecuted forefathers, Presbyterians generally, and Covenanters especially, have been jealous of any invasion on the part of civil rulers of the liberties and independence of the Church, and therefore there are few things held by them in greater abhorrence than an *ecclesiastical* or *Erastian supremacy* over the Church. The Reviewer well knows, that the bandying about of this epithet, to which he has given countenance by his pamphlet, and which has been industriously done by his party since its publication, is, in some quarters, sufficient to excite odium against the periodical, and to condemn its sentiments without a hearing. Whether this be a fair or honourable mode of warfare, the religious public will determine.

One comfort we have in maintaining the doctrine of a Scriptural magistracy, amid these aspersions, is, that those who have gone before us, in contending for this article of the faith once delivered to the saints, have suffered the same things in their day. The Orthodox adherents of the Synod of Dort, in Holland, had the charge of persecution, tyranny over conscience, and civil supremacy in the Church, charged upon them by the Remonstrants in their writings, impugning the magistrate's restrictive and punitive power in the things of reli-

gion. The same charges were revived against the Presbyterians who adopted the doctrine and order of the Westminster Assembly, by the sectaries who overturned the Covenanted uniformity, plunged the nation in confusion, and supported the military despotism of Oliver Cromwell. And at a much later period, when the Secession body, in the end of the last century, gave up their former testimonies in favour of the covenant engagements of their forefathers, and modelled their profession to please the perverted taste of a degenerate age, it is a fact well known to those who are acquainted with the history of those transactions, that public odium was attempted to be fastened on the few who continued faithful, by charging them with holding intolerant and persecuting principles, and representing their sentiments on the magistrate's power *circa sacra* as Erastian.* As we are not ashamed to be found in the company of those renowned witnesses for the truth, who have had reproach heaped upon them for holding fast the precious truth of Christ, when men attempted to rob them of it, so we will find little difficulty in convincing any candid inquirer of the utter futility and groundlessness of the aspersions wherewith we have been assailed.

In considering the Reviewer's charge against *The Covenanter*, on the alleged ground of maintaining an Erastian supremacy of the civil magistrate over the church, it may be proper to exhibit a brief view of the leading principles of Erastianism, and then to inspect the grounds on which the attempt is made to identify the sentiments of the periodical with this exploded system. This will serve a double purpose—it will expose the ignorance of men wise in their own conceits, who love to talk of what they know not, and it will, at the same time, triumphantly vindicate the Scriptural view of the magistrate's power in religious matters from the most palpable misrepresentation.

Erastianism, as Dr. McLeod† remarks, derives its name from *Thomas Erastus*, a divine and physician, who was born at Baden, in Switzerland, 1624, and was afterwards a Professor in the University of Heidelberg. His sentiments on the subject of magistracy, which are developed in his book on *Excommunication*, are the following:—“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—and that the church of Christ is a department of the civil commonwealth.” Now, we ask any candid inquirer just to take these sentiments severally, and compare with them any thing that ever has been published in *The Covenanter*, from its commencement till the present time, and we confidently affirm, that he will be unable to discover not merely identity of views, but even any similarity. Have we not repeatedly testified against the system as a whole, and exhibited its evils as they are found in various sections of the church?

* See M'Crie's Statement, and Taylor's Preface to *Brown on Toleration*.

† Scriptural View of the American War, p. 78.

And in a day when compliance with popular opinion characterises so many watchmen and public journalists, we can, we trust, without arrogance or presumption, exhibit our humble efforts as vindicating faithfully the independence and liberties of Christ's church against the encroachments of civil domination. But the Reviewer, who has not been able to discern one redeeming quality in *The Covenanter*, or its editor, it should seem, has found out that we are the advocates of the king's supremacy, or, in other words, of an Erastian supremacy over the church; and, in the eighth chapter of his pamphlet, he labours to make good this serious charge.

It may be worth the curious reader's attention to inspect the grounds on which he attempts to establish it, as it will exhibit a tolerably fair specimen of the Reviewer's critical acumen, as well as his candour in rebutting the statements of *The Covenanter*. Does he pretend that the editor or his coadjutors have written any article on the subject, or introduced aught into articles on other subjects, that might lay them open to the charge of abetting the errors of Erastianism? However disposed to find fault, the Reviewer has not attempted this, and the reason is obvious—he could not, with all his perspicacity, discover such a statement. Neither the editor, then, nor his friends, have ever published a single sentence that would seem to countenance the doctrine of Erastian supremacy. *The Covenanter* has repeatedly disclaimed it, and protested against it; and even a keen-sighted opponent is entirely unable to find fault concerning this matter. What is the plain and obvious inference? Is it not that, notwithstanding all that the Reviewer and his party have insinuated, *The Covenanter* is the firm and uniform witness against Erastian supremacy over the church.

When this mode of plain and legitimate proof fails, the Reviewer tries another—certainly not among the least extraordinary resorted to by critics, who have sought for themselves inglorious fame by depreciating the works of others. At the end of one of the papers on magistracy, in the seventh number, the writer introduces several quotations from eminent divines of the reforming period in England and Scotland, with the design of showing that the views advanced were not opposed to the opinions held by the reformers on the same subject. The point discussed in the paper referred to in *The Covenanter* was the duty of the civil magistrate to suppress gross heresy and idolatry: the quotations adduced in confirmation of this topic were from the writings of such illustrious men as an *Assembly of Presbyterian Covenanted Ministers in London*, *Archbishop Ussher*, *Samuel Rutherford*, and *George Gillespie*. Besides teaching the doctrine of magistratical interference for the suppression of grievous error, they state other collateral doctrines. Here it is that the Reviewer imagines he has found sufficient cause to condemn the whole doctrine of the periodical on magistracy, as Erastian as well as persecuting. The London ministers, whose opinion we quoted, say, "*the magistrate is, in a civil notion, the supreme governor in all causes ecclesiastical, the keeper of both tables, the nursing father of the church,*" &c. And Ussher, in teaching the duty of the civil magistrate to restrain and punish gross heresy and idolatry, declares, that "*the power of the civil sword (the supreme managing whereof belongeth to the*

king alone) is not to be restrained to temporal causes only, but is, by God's ordinance, to be extended likewise to all spiritual ecclesiastical things and causes." Now, it will, first of all, be remembered, that these are the sentiments of divines of a former period, though the Reviewer, in his pamphlet, puts them before the public as if we had written them or taught them directly from ourselves. In his preface, and the beginning of the eighth chapter and elsewhere, he asserts — "The Covenanter declares, in general terms, that the power of the civil sword," &c. This is another specimen of his candour in stating an opponent's argument, and of his ability in distortion. But, further, the reader will bear it in mind, that the declared purpose for which the quotations were adduced, was merely to show, that our doctrine of magistral authority, employed in suppressing heresy and idolatry, is not at variance with the opinions of able advocates of Reformation principles who have preceded us. The Reviewer carefully keeps this out of view, though he well knew it materially affects the point in dispute. The quotations were brought forward to confirm this point alone, and, of course, we did not feel called upon to express either approbation or disapprobation of the other matters which they contained, or to qualify the statements that referred to collateral topics. Every person the least acquainted with periodical writing knows, that nothing is more common than such a method of quoting the opinions of other writers; and it is never for a moment imagined, that the editor is, in such cases, to be identified in opinion with every view advanced, or that he is to be regarded as approving of every mode that a writer may adopt in stating or illustrating his sentiments. We freely admit, once for all, that had we suspected falling into the hands of such a captious disputant as the Reviewer, or had we imagined that the statements made even in the quotations were likely to be distorted or misunderstood, we would have guarded them against misconception, and perhaps somewhat qualified the expressions, though they did not concern the point under discussion. As, however, we could not have anticipated such treatment, we deemed a labour of this kind unnecessary, persuaded that any well-informed reader of the periodical would at once perceive the general bearing of our article on magistracy, and the purpose for which the extracts were appended. The explanation which we judged uncalled for at a former period we will now give, with one preliminary remark. This, we doubt not, will wipe off an unjust aspersion from our views of magistracy, and exhibit at the same time the petulance and unfairness of those who have gainsayed them. Our remark is, that there is an obvious distinction between the sentiment propounded by a writer, and his way of illustrating and defending it. I may agree with him fully in the former particular, while I may not altogether approve of the latter. Thus, I hold the same sentiments as the Reviewer on the divinity of the Saviour, as expressed in his "*Refutation of Arianism*," though I think his method of illustration, in some instances, not the best that might be employed, and regret the personalities that pervade the work, which gives the controversy too much the appearance of a mere contest for victory, and must necessarily render the book ephemeral, and of local interest. And I may agree with the same author in the main, in his "*Review*

of *Mr Montgomery's Speech*," when I entirely dissent from him in his attempt to set aside, as he has done in that pamphlet, a principle embodied in the National Covenant, and the Solemn League and Covenant, namely, the employment of civil pains and penalties for the suppression of heresy, &c. In like manner, when quoting the sentiments of such renowned writers as Ussher, Rutherford, and Gillespie, while we maintain the doctrines which they taught on civil magistracy, as, on the whole, Scriptural, and accordant with the testimonies of the Reformers and best Reformed Churches, we are far from vindicating every particular expression which they employed in illustrating or defending the truth.

Craving such an allowance, which candour requires should be always granted in such a case, we will have little difficulty in showing, that even the expressions of the London Presbyterian Covenanting Ministers, and of Ussher, are by no means justly liable to the objections which the Reviewer brings against them—fairly interpreted, they teach neither a *spiritual* nor *Erastian* supremacy in the civil magistrate over the Church of Christ. By his *spiritual supremacy*, the man of sin, "who sits in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God," claims to declare what is truth, and what error, to exercise uncontrollable power over all persons and things in the Church, and to hold the consciences of his votaries in absolute thralldom. The *ecclesiastical* or *Erastian* supremacy of the king of Great Britain, and of most of the Protestant princes of Europe, secures to the chief magistrate, as his prerogative, the right to appoint from himself officers in the Church, decree ceremonies, convene and interdict at his pleasure meetings of the clergy, for deliberation or judicial procedure; and thus a power that is properly ecclesiastical, and even the supreme ecclesiastical power, is in his hands. Both views our forefathers held to be unscriptural and Antichristian; and, in opposition to them, they maintained, that it was in a *civil respect* alone, and not at all spiritually or ecclesiastically, that the Christian magistrate has any authority in relation to persons or things in the Church. The civil magistrate, ruling over a reformed nation, being God's minister to men for good, the civil head of the state, and a nursing-father to the Church, they held, may not of himself control the free deliberations of ecclesiastical assemblies, or interrupt their proceedings. He has no ecclesiastical power whatever to settle matters of faith or order, or to exercise the discipline of the Church. As a Christian and a member of the Church, he is himself amenable to the Church's laws, and to those who are appointed to execute them; and he can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth. His power about the Church is extrinsic or outward, and in no respect intrinsic or spiritual. The magistrate judges of ecclesiastical causes after a civil way, and with coercive power, and punishes heresy, as it is a civil offence, and troubles the commonwealth. The Church Assembly, on the other hand, judges of heresy after an ecclesiastical way, and with a spiritual power; condemns it as scandalous and infectious to the Church, and visits its abettors with ecclesiastical censures binding the conscience.*

* Rutherford's "Peaceable and Temperate Plea for Paul's Presbytery in Scotland," p. 304.

It is altogether plain, that a Christian magistrate, ruling over a reformed nation, and possessed of due scriptural qualifications, is, in a *civil notion*, that is, as regards civil society, and in relation to the outward man, "supreme governor in all ecclesiastical causes,"—for if these causes respect persons, he is over them as his subjects; if they refer to matters of faith, he is required to add to them his civil sanction; and if they relate to points of order, he is bound, like Nehemiah and the godly princes of Israel and Judah, to order "according to the commandment of the God of heaven," all things that pertain to the outward peace and prosperity of the house of the Lord. His *sword*, or official authority, cannot be restrained to temporal causes alone, for to assert this would be to take away from the magistrate any concern with the duties of the first table of the law, and to prohibit him from exercising his authority concerning the spiritual and eternal interests of his subjects. It extends to *persons*, for church officers are not exempted from civil jurisdiction by their being churchmen. As citizens, they are amenable to the laws of the State, and must be controlled by the punitive power of the magistrate when they offend against them. The things and causes of the Church, too, are the objects of the magistrate's care, and if he "bears not the sword in vain," (Rom. xiii. 5,) he must exercise it for the promotion of Zion's welfare, and the terror of her enemies. Does this, as the Reviewer alleges, invest the magistrate with ecclesiastical headship over the Church, or confer on him the same power in ecclesiastical concerns as is exercised by the British monarch at the present day? Does it make *capital punishments*, as he says—again using the term *sword in terroren*, not in its scriptural and figurative, but literal sense—the ultimate arbiter of all ecclesiastical causes and controversies? Nothing but the most obstinate ignorance and perverseness could warrant such allegations. William the Fourth, the Reviewer well knows, claims and exercises a power in the Church of England, which is strictly and properly *ecclesiastical*, and even, according to the constitution, in some cases *spiritual*. Wherein, we demand, do the views of the London Ministers, or even of Ussher, in the quotations under consideration, countenance such an invasion, when they expressly limit the magistrate's authority to things civil and outward, in relation to the Church? Are there not many ways of exercising magisterial authority, besides putting men to death? And will the Reviewer dare to deny that, according to the ordinary use of figurative terms, refusing to sanction Church deeds, punishing Church members or officers as subjects, and withholding men from places of power and trust, are instances of using the civil sword, though the life is not taken away? It is not needful to pursue this exposure farther. Every person not blinded by prejudice must perceive, that the Reviewer, in his zeal against *The Covenanter* and its editor, has, either ignorantly or wilfully, perverted the meaning of the language of the eminent divines of former times, who being dead yet speak, and has attempted to wring out of their words a sense which they will by no means bear. The London Covenanting Ministers, Samuel Rutherford and George Gillespie, were men whom we are not ashamed to follow. Their praise will be in the Churches, and their works will speak in the gate, when the

ephemeral productions of the Reviewer have been swept away, and latitudinarian sentiments have fled before the light of Divine truth. As these renowned worthies need not our feeble advocacy, we will allow them to speak for themselves, in explanation of their views on this article, and to show how far they were from abetting the doctrine of Erastian supremacy. Rutherford* says—

“ The king’s royal power in adding his sanction to the ecclesiastical constitutions, and in punishing such as are decreed to be heretics by the Church, is *regal*, and not *ministerial* and *servile*.”

1. “ Because the use of the sword at God’s commandment is a *kingly act*, commanded by God, and is service done to God, not to the Church.

2. “ *Neither is the king so to execute the Church’s will, as he should judge only of the fact, and of the assumption; yea, he is to judge of the law, and of the major proposition. For we see not in the Word of God where a judge is a judge to punish a fault, and is not to know judicially that it is a fault. A judge as a judge should know such a thing to be heresy, and not take it upon the word of an assembly of churchmen. Deut. xvii. 18. 19. He is expressly to read and know the law, and to know and remember the decree. Prov. xxxi. 5. And the cause which he knoweth not he is to search out. Job xxix. 16. All which is meant of a knowledge, not of private discretion, which is required of all private Christians; but as I take the places, of a knowledge judicial and authoritative, which agreeth to a judge as a judge. “ If a Synod err, and decree that man to be an heretic who is sound in the faith, the king is not obliged to err with the Synod, and to punish the innocent; he is to decree righteous judgment, and so the king is to judge of heresy, but after a regal and civil way, and with coercive power, as the Synod or Church assembly is to judge of heresy after an ecclesiastical way, and with a spiritual power. 2. The king punishes heresy, as it troubleth the commonwealth, and the Synod, as it is scandalous and infectious in the Church.*

“ Yea, and the *Christian king* ruleth over men as men, and also as *Christian men*; he ruleth over them as men, with a dominion over their bodies, lives, and goods, by his civil laws; he hath also dominion, as king, over men, as Christians and members of Christ’s kingdom and Church, not over their consciences, (for that is proper only to the *Father of Spirits*,) but he hath a coercive power over all men, even pastors, as to cause them to do their *Christian duties*; he hath a power to *compel churchmen in assemblies* to determine truth, and to use the keys right, and to preach and use the sacraments according as Christ hath commanded in his word, and to PUNISH THEM when they do otherwise. What, then, if the king discern that to be truth, and absolve the man whom the Church assembly doth condemn as heretic; who shall judge betwixt them? I answer, the infallible rule of judging for both is the Word of God, which speaketh home impartially to both, if they will hear; but certainly the king’s civil, kingly, coercive power, to compel men to do their duty, remaineth THE HIGHEST AND MOST SUPREME POWER ON EARTH, in *genere potestatis politicæ*, in the kind of political power; and pastors and all men may, by this power, be compelled to do right. As for the abuse of the power, it is no part of the power; and in this kind the king hath both a *negative, politic, and kingly suffrage* and voice in all Church assemblies. No ecclesiastical constitution hath the force of a law, without the politic suffrage of the civil judge.”†

Gillespie speaks of the magistrate’s power in similar terms—

“ It is far from our meaning that the Christian magistrate should not meddle with matters of religion, or things and causes ecclesiastical. Certainly there is *much power and authority* which, by the Word of God, by the confessions of faith of the Reformed Churches, doth belong to the Christian magistrate in matters of religion. If the magistrate be offended at the sentence given, or censure inflicted, by a Presbytery or a Synod, they ought to be ready, in all humility and respect, to give him an account and reason of such their proceedings, and by all means to

* “ Peaceable and Temperate Plea for Paul’s Presbytery in Scotland,” p. 302.

† Rutherford referred in all this to a nation in which the true reformed religion is established, and the exercise of the magistrate’s power in the extent for which he pleads, he intended to be applied in an outward and civil sense.

endeavour the satisfaction of the magistrate's conscience, or otherwise to be warned and rectified if themselves have erred. Though the case be *merely spiritual and ecclesiastical*, the Christian magistrate (by himself, and immediately) may not only examine, by the judgment of discretion, the sentence of the ecclesiastical court, but also when he seeth cause, (either upon the *complaint of the party*, or scandal given to himself,) interpose by letters, messages, exhortations, and sharp admonitions, to the Presbytery or Synod, who, in that case, are bound in *conscience, with all respect and honour to the magistrate, to give him a reason of what they have done*, and to declare the grounds of their proceedings, till, by the blessing of God, upon this free and equal dealing, they either give a rational account to the magistrate, or be themselves convinced of their mal-administration of discipline. Yea, also as Church officers, they are to be kept within the limits of their calling, and compelled, if need be, by the magistrate, to do those duties which, by the clear Word of God, and received principles of Christian religion, or by the received ecclesiastical constitutions of the Church, they ought to do. It is asked, what remedy shall there be against the abuse of Church discipline by Church officers, except there be appeals from the ecclesiastical courts to the civil magistrate? *Answer*—Look what remedy there is for abuses in the preaching of the Word, and administration of the sacraments; the like remedy, then, is for abuses in Church discipline. Now, when the Word is not truly preached, nor the sacraments duly administered, by any minister or ministers, the magistrate seeketh the redress of those things, in a constituted Church, by the convocating of Synods, for examining, discovering, and judging of such errors and abuses as are found in particular Churches. But if the Synod should connive at, or comply with, that same error, yet the magistrate taketh not upon him the supreme authoritative decision of a controversy of faith, but still endeavoureth to help all this by other *ecclesiastical remedies*, as another Synod, and yet another, till the evil be removed. The like, we say, concerning abuses in Church discipline—the magistrate may COMMAND a resuming and re-examination of the case in another Synod.”*

It will not be pretended that these views favour Erastian supremacy, however some might be disposed to cavil at them, since it is well known that their authors were mainly instrumental in obtaining the rejection of Erastianism in the Westminster Assembly.

That our martyred forefathers maintained the same sentiment respecting the extent of the civil magistrate's authority in ecclesiastical affairs, as was held by their predecessors, and as is substantially exhibited in the quotations in *The Covenanter*, must be completely evident to any person at all acquainted with the history of their contendings and sufferings. Two instances will suffice to make good this assertion. The *Rev. James Guthrie*, the first minister who suffered martyrdom in the persecuting period, in his *Defences* before the Justiciary who tried and condemned him, declares that “his majesty's royal power and authority extends to all things civil, and that, as civil magistrate, the conservation and purgation of religion, as is asserted in the Confession of Faith of this Church, doth belong unto him, or that, as it was said of the first Christian emperor, he is *Episcopus ad extra*.” Again, he asserts, “the magistrate's power is

* Gillespie's *Aaron's Rod Blossoming*, b. 2, c. 3, p. 182, 183; c. 8, p. 253; c. 3, p. 176. *Kirkpatrick*, in his “Loyalty of Presbyterians,” adduces these passages, and others of similar import, from other celebrated writers, to show, that our Presbyterian ancestors held precisely the same opinions on this point with the first and purest Christian councils, and with eminent advocates of Reformation principles in former times, and also that they well understood, and clearly stated, the separate provinces of civil and ecclesiastical authority, and that, in contending for the Church's liberties, and the Divine institution of civil magistracy, they were not of *antigovernment* principles.

† Bishop in things outward.

not spiritual and ecclesiastic, but civil only, and what is most consistent with, and consonant to his majesty's royal prerogative, as it is established by the 1st Act, Parl. 18, Jas. VI.,"—and further, before his judges, and in the immediate view of sealing his testimony with his blood, he expressly declares, "his majesty has *the sovereign authority over all estates, persons or causes*, which does no way take away, nor exclude the proper jurisdictions of the several judicatories established by the laws of the kingdom."* In like manner, the *Rev. John Livingstone*, sometime minister of Killinchy, who was known in his day by the appellation of the "*godly Livingstone*," and who was a noted opposer of Prelatical domination and Erastian authority in the Church, gave a clear and unambiguous testimony in favour of the very sentiment on magistracy, which the Reviewer has attempted to hold up to public odium. When cited before the Council in Edinburgh, and required to take the oath of allegiance to the reigning monarch, he thus answered his judges—"I do acknowledge the king's majesty to be the only lawful supreme governor of this and all other his majesty's dominions, and that *his majesty is the supreme civil governor over all persons, and in all causes, as well ecclesiastic as civil*; but for the oath, as it stands *in terminis*, I am not free to take it." On the Chancellor saying, "I think you and I agree as to the oath," the Lord Advocate said, "My Lord Chancellor, your lordship doth not observe that he useth a distinction, 'That the king is the supreme civil governor,' that he may make way for the co-ordinate power of Presbytery," Mr. Livingstone then added, by way of explanation, "My Lord, I do indeed believe and confess that Jesus Christ is the only Head of his Church, and that he only hath power to appoint a government and discipline for removing of offences in his house, which is not dependent on civil powers, and no ways wrongs civil powers; but withal I do acknowledge his majesty hath a cumulative power and inspection in the house of God, for seeing both the tables of the law kept, and that his majesty hath all the ordinary power that was in the kings of Israel and Judah, and in the Christian emperors and kings since the primitive times, for reforming, according to the word, what was amiss."†

These clear statements need no comment or elucidation from us. Accompanied by the explanation of the terms employed, which we have already given, they exhibit a summary of the consistent and oft reiterated testimonies of our martyred forefathers, for the very truths against which the Reviewer has directed his hostility. While they supply an effectual antidote against the poison of his *New-light* opinions, they furnish incontrovertible evidence that *The Covenanter* uniformly speaks the sentiments of the great cloud of witnesses who sealed their testimony with their blood, and that the Reviewer, in attacking us, has in reality attacked such venerated men as Rutherford and Gillespie, Guthrie and Livingstone. Will Covenanters suffer the memories of their

* See James Guthrie's "Defences," as given in Wodrow, vol. 1. p. 183.

† Wodrow, vol. 1. p. 311.

renowned ancestors to be thus loaded with reproach? We trust the Reviewer has in this instance erred through ignorance. If it is otherwise, we ask, will he dare to repeat his cavils against the doctrine of the most eminent lights of the Scottish Reformation? Will he again pronounce the testimony which *James Guthrie* sealed with his blood, and *Livingstone* maintained at the peril of his life, an “*evil notion*,” or, in a still lower style of detestable punning, an “*uncivil and unchristian notion?*” Towards a brother who can deliberately take such a course, we can entertain no feeling but that of unmingled sorrow. *Tell it not in Gath; publish it not in the streets of Ashkelon.*

But perhaps we will be told, as the Reviewer has already done, in a note, p. 62, that these sentiments are among the “*weak statements, or over-statements, or rash statements, made by our reforming forefathers.*” The Reviewer expresses his “*deep regret*” that *The Covenanter* seems anxious to preserve “*any statement of this character,*” to bring it forward, and hold it up to public view, as if it were a precious jewel, destined to ornament the Church of God, and represents this as “*the most effectual method the editor could take, if he were determined to blast the character of the Covenanting Church.*” To this serious charge we plead *not guilty*; and, repressing our indignation, we spurn it back on the person who has had the temerity to advance it. Let him produce proof; let him mention the instances of the *weak statements, over-statements, &c.*, which we have brought forward from the writings of our reforming forefathers, and we hold ourselves prepared to prove, that these very statements express principles that are *important parts of their testimony*, that formed *the grounds of their sufferings*, and *yet stand prominently forth in the authoritative standards of the Reformed Presbyterian Church.* The Reviewer had need beware of flinging stones at others, while he himself inhabits a house of glass; for, ere he gets out of a controversy which he unprovokedly excited, he may find it proved to irresistible demonstration, that between him and our reforming forefathers, in some of the leading articles of their testimony, there is all the diversity of sentiment that there can be between those who hold respectively the affirmative and the negative sides of the same question.

LIBERTY OF THE PRESS—RIGHT OF PRIVATE JUDGMENT, &c.

In connexion with the charge of Erastian supremacy against *The Covenanter*, the Reviewer represents us as enemies to free inquiry, the right of private judgment, and the liberty of the press. It had been asserted in the periodical that “*no individual has a right to set up his own opinion in opposition to the established sentiments of society.*” This expression occurs in vol. 1, p. 271, and the connexion in which it is found deserves to be noticed. The writer is speaking of the magistrate’s duty as a nursing-father to the Church, to protect by his guardian care his children from being poisoned by error, and he adds, not as a general principle, but as applicable to this particular case, that there is no reason of complaining of oppression or injustice, “*since no individual has a right,*” &c. To the most desultory reader it must be obvious, that the complainant is supposed to be the here-

tic and blasphemous, who objects against magistratical coercion, even when applied in a way consonant to the Divine law, and accordant with the predictions of sacred writ.

Now, if such persons have a right to set up their opinions, and to claim exemption from restraint, we demand on what basis is this right founded, and whence is it derived? Assuredly not in that law which imperatively requires the Christian magistrate to be a terror to evil-doers, who offend against the precepts either of its first or second table. It may be in the dictates of a perverted conscience, or in the deductions of depraved reason, exalted above the Divine Lawgiver, but we search for the foundation in vain in the records of eternal truth. The liberty of the press, right of private judgment, &c., may be very convenient phrases for popular declamation in the mouths of infidels and self-named liberals. The liberty, however, which has degenerated into licentiousness, and the free inquiry which leads to scepticism, are at variance with the unerring standard, which uniformly requires us to do nothing against the truth, but for the truth. The Reviewer's comment on the expression of *The Covenanter*, which we have given, affords a choice specimen of his skill in the art of perversion, and his power in cant declamation. Taking what was evidently designed to have a particular and specific application as a general maxim, he raises the outcry of bigotry and illiberality against the editor of *The Covenanter*, and represents Prophets, Apostles, Reformers, Martyrs, all condemned by the periodical. Jews, Heathens, Mahometans, and Roman Catholics, he would have it, are delivered over to everlasting darkness and spiritual thralldom, by its unfeeling and hard-hearted editor, whom he exhibits as resembling the Inquisitor General, who doomed Galileo to a dungeon, prowling for his victims, and exulting in the extinction of the lights of human science! Dark, indeed, is the picture; and were its delineations true as they are gloomy, we might justly apply to this same barbarian personage the well-known description of the poet—

“*Monstrum horrendum informe, ingens cui lumen ademptum*”—

And claim his utter distinction as a signal benefit conferred on society. Happily the colouring has so bespattered the piece, that the art of the painter is so visible as to strike the most casual observer; and, notwithstanding all his labour, the public will condemn this piece as a mere daub, or perhaps class the artist with those who, in order to rouse the Kings of France to persecute their subjects, used to represent the Hugonots as cloven-footed, having tails, and devouring their own children! But we would not indulge in this style of rebuke, however deserved by the writer.

The Reviewer, besides detaching the expression from its proper bearing and connexion, has adduced instances which have no relation to the case in hand, and has perverted even Scripture history, in order to excite odium against *The Covenanter*. What resemblance, it may be asked, is there between Elijah, the Prophets and Apostles, the Confessors and Martyrs, testifying to the truth, and opposing ungodly rulers, and an obstinate heretic and blasphemer, impiously claiming liberty to spread his soul-destroying abominations under

exemption from magistratical restraint? Did Noah only "set up his own opinion," as the Reviewer asserts, in preaching righteousness, when the Scriptures expressly tell us, that Christ himself, by his instrumentality, went and preached to the imprisoned spirits of the Antediluvians. 1 Peter iii. 18. We cannot regard it as less than impious to compare the *two witnesses* testifying against the corruptions and wickedness of Antichrist, to the deluded and perverse heretic and blasphemer, who attempts to break asunder, and cast from him the cords of lawful authority. Such are the excesses into which virulence against an opponent will betray even good men. For our part, we can, in perfect sincerity, declare, that we pity the person who has suffered his judgment to be so misled as to pen the perversions which it has been our painful task to expose. We have no inclination to indulge in triumph, or in declamation such as that which has been employed against us. To the satisfaction of all candid persons we have, we trust, sufficiently vindicated our sentiments from the charge of Erastianism, and ourselves from aiming at the office of inquisitor-general, lord of the conscience, or censor of the press. The Reviewer we leave to his own master, earnestly desiring that he may be disentangled from prejudices, and led to the acknowledgment of the truth as it is in Jesus.

CHAPTER VI.

DIRECT ARGUMENTS.

Westminster Confession, chapter xxiii.—Acts of Parliament of the Reforming Period—Doctrine stated—Summary of Scriptural arguments—Judicial laws obligatory still in respect of the precepts of the first as well as the second table—Law of the Sabbath—The Reviewer's admission with regard to it, &c.

FROM the statement of the question already exhibited, it will be readily perceived that the controversy respecting the magistrate's power, *circa sacra*, is not properly between the Reviewer and the Editor of *The Covenanter*, but between the Reviewer and the Authoritative Standards of the Reformed Church. To any person, acquainted in the slightest degree with the writings and contendings of the men who compiled these standards, it must be apparent that they were uniformly the advocates of magistratical interference for the establishment and protection of true religion, and the suppression of error and false worship. Instead of carrying the principles which they held on this article to their utmost limits, *The Covenanter* has not even gone the length that they have done in maintaining the duty of the Christian civil magistrate to suppress heresy and idolatry. Two instances may suffice in confirmation of this position. In the West-

minster Confession, (chapter xxiii.)* it is asserted, that the civil magistrate "hath authority, and it is his duty to take order that*all* blasphemies and heresies be suppressed." Here the venerable compilers assert, without limitation, that the magistrate's province in rooting out heresy from the State over which he presides, extends to all kinds of heresy and blasphemy, whereas *The Covenanter* has in general claimed the extension of his authority to the suppression of "*gross and pestilent heresies.*"

To show that the sentiment quoted from the Confession was not regarded by our venerable ancestors as a mere abstract principle, it deserves to be noted that, when the reformed religion was established throughout the realm, the Acts of Parliament sanctioning it, that were passed at a former period, were embodied in the National Covenant as renewed in 1638; and others of a similar character were passed before the termination of the reforming period. By these, the precise measure of punishment affixed to idolatry and blasphemy was determined. As in Parl. 1, James VI., it is enacted—"That no manner of persons say mass, nor yet hear mass, nor be present thereat under the pain of confiscation of their goods moveable and unmoveable, and punishing their bodies at the discretion of the magistrate within whose jurisdiction such persons happen to be apprehended for the first fault; banishment of the realm for the second fault; and justifying to the death for the third fault." And in Parl. 2, Act 28, 1649, it is ordained that "Whosoever hereafter shall rail upon or curse God, or any of the persons of the blessed Trinity, shall be processed before the Chief Justice, and being found guilty, shall be punished with death;" and again, "that whosoever hereafter shall deny God, or any of the persons of the blessed Trinity, and obstinately continue therein, shall, after the declaring of the said obstinacy by the kirk, be processed before the Chief Justice, and being found guilty, shall be punished with death." In these, and other laws of that period, idolatry, heresy, and blasphemy are not only declared to be worthy of punishment, but *capital punishment* is awarded to them. *The Covenanter* has only maintained the gen-

* The Reviewer seems mightily offended with *The Covenanter*, because in that periodical the same passage from the Westminster Confession has been frequently quoted, (See Letter III., p. 14 and 35.)—because we have referred to it, when the enemies of Covenanters have, as he says, attempted hence to prove that we hold persecuting principles. We have yet to learn that there can be any valid objection to the repeated use of a quotation, if it be pertinent and conclusive. The same objection would overturn the authority of Scripture itself, since the preacher of righteousness may have occasion, frequently in the same discourse, to refer to the same passage of Sacred Writ, thus giving line upon line. And if it be so that the enemies of Covenanters bring the objection of *persecution* against the Westminster Confession, because of what it teaches on magistracy—the objection which the Reviewer urges with so much vehemence against *The Covenanter*—does not this furnish a strong presumption that the Confession and *The Covenanter* speak the same things? The Reviewer had need beware lest there be more than mere casual coincidence between himself and the enemies of Covenanters, in their opposition to the doctrine of Scriptural magistracy. If this displeases him, we tell him that we will quote, if it be necessary, not three or four, but a thousand times, the lucid statements of the Confession on the subject; entrenched behind this firm breastwork, he must break down the carved work of our Standards, before he can hope for a victory over *The Covenanter*.

eral principle that gross heresy and idolatry should be suppressed by the magistrate's authority, leaving the nature or degree of punishment in particular cases to be afterwards determined by the judges. Is it not manifest, therefore, that the Reviewer might to much better purpose have directed his weapons against the British Reformers, and the Standards to which he himself had vowed adherence, than against *The Covenanter* or its conductors?

As we are not ashamed, even in this degenerate age, to take our stand with our renowned forefathers, "men of whom the world was not worthy," we cannot hesitate to vindicate their principles, and be apologists for their conduct when gainsayed and vilified by open enemies, or pretended friends. On the subject of the magistrate's duty to promote true religion and suppress error, the Reviewer is completely at issue with the Covenants and the Westminster Standards, and with the whole host of reformers from Knox to Renwick. They declare, in their reiterated testimonies, that the magistrate in a Christian land, armed with authority, should establish and protect the Church of Christ, and should, according to his station and the means competent thereto, "suppress heresy, schism, and profaneness," (Sol. League and Covenant);—the Reviewer, on the contrary, asserts that idolaters and heretics, of whatever stamp, should be permitted to live unmolested in the practice of their false worship, and propagation of their errors—that the Christian magistrate, as such, has nothing to do with the extirpation of heresy and idolatry—and that the only weapons to be employed for the extirpation of heresy, are, not the magistrate's authority, but Scripture and rational argument.

In attempting to vindicate our admirable Standards, and expose this latitudinarian scheme, it is somewhat difficult to come to close contact with the reasonings of the Reviewer, from the course which he has chosen to adopt in his attack on *The Covenanter*. He has throughout dealt in conjecture, and in endeavouring to deduce *consequences* from our doctrine, which yet have no place but in his own imagination. Thus, in arguing that the *judicial laws* respecting heresy and idolatry are repealed under the New Testament, when it was incumbent on him, having made the assertion, to exhibit proof, he pretends not the shadow of authority from any declaration of the word, or from the analogy of faith, but treats us to a fancied picture of *the comparative mildness of the New Testament dispensation*, which we have already shown is opposed to the truth of revelation. And in the case now under consideration, when impugning the sentiments of *The Covenanter* concerning the punishment of heresy, &c., he offers no other proof, if proof it may be called, than by attempting to fasten upon our doctrine *consequences* to which it by no means leads, such as the cruel effusion of human blood, breaking the bonds of human society, spreading the evil designed to be suppressed, &c. Whether it was for "lack of better argument," or because it had been too glaring an opposition to the articles of the reformed creed, which he was solemnly bound to maintain, to exhibit his views more clearly, that a person of the logical acuteness of the Reviewer adopted this course, we will not wait to inquire: but it must be completely evident that, on the same plan of argumentation, any principle of our

holy religion may be easily disproved. Who does not know that *Anti-trinitarians*, by attempting to deduce alleged revolting consequences from the doctrine of their opponents, have sought to overturn the fundamental doctrine of the scheme of revelation—a God in Trinity, and to reduce the Son of God to the rank of a creature? Will not the Reviewer himself admit, that such a mode of argumentation is altogether unfair? It is enough for us at present to say, that the consequences which he has charged upon our doctrine we entirely disavow; and we hold this sufficient to set aside much of his declamation, until he can show, that the exercise of magistratical authority, in the hands of a Christian man, ruling in a reformed nation, and acting as God's minister, and the people's representative, for the suppression of gross breaches of the first table of the Decalogue necessarily leads to them.

But as the Reviewer has avowed himself utterly opposed to the employment of coercive measures by the Christian civil magistrate for the suppression of heresy and idolatry, and the advocate for unlimited passive toleration being extended to heretics and idolaters, and as in doing so he evidently gainsays the doctrine of the reformers and compilers of our subordinate Standards, we shall offer a few leading Scriptural arguments in opposition to his sectarian and anarchical scheme, and in vindication of the Church's testimony. Were the writings of our renowned forefathers on the subject of magistracy generally accessible, this labour might be spared; but this is not the case. Walking in the good old way, and following the footsteps of the flock, we present some *direct* arguments in favour of the sentiments on magistracy advanced in *The Covenanters*, which the Reviewer has laboured to overturn, premising, that if these be found legitimate, they tend directly to overthrow the fair fabric of our opponent's reasoning, and that if they are Scriptural, the consequences which fancy or a diseased imagination may deduce from them, must be wholly insufficient to set aside the doctrine which they support.

DOCTRINE OF MAGISTRICAL COERCION STATED.

The doctrine for which we contend, in relation to Christian magistracy, is simply—that the person endued with Scriptural qualifications, who possesses magistratical authority among a people professing the true religion, is under a primary and indispensable obligation to advance God's glory; and, as conducive to this end, that he should give an *official sanction* and *establishment* to the true religion, foster the Church of Christ, and restrain and suppress by his authority whatever manifestly tends to disturb her peace, or corrupt her purity, and is detrimental to the spiritual interests of a reformed nation. The two leading positions in this sentiment are the duty of magistratical interference in the circumstances which we have supposed for establishing the truth, and for suppressing error and false worship. In our apprehension, these two parts of the magistrate's power *circa sacra* are inseparable. He cannot sanction the establishment of genuine Christianity, and at the same time connive at idolatry; nor is it possible that he should act as God's minister, for universal good to men, and be at the same time, Gallio-like, inattentive to the

concerns of God's glory, or employ not his official power for the repression of whatever is manifestly opposed to it. Unquestionably the Christian magistrate acts not as a "*nursing-father*" to the Church, agreeably to the terms of the sacred prediction, (Isa. xlix. 23,) if he *protects* her not against the attempts of such enemies as heretics and idolaters, as well as extends to her nourishment from the breasts of his authority and power. Whether the Reviewer denies altogether the doctrine of a national establishment of true religion, it is difficult to say, as he has maintained a studied silence on the subject, though, were we to imitate his mode of argument, it were easy to show that the principles he has advanced would lead to such a consequence. Believing as we do that the legal establishment of true religion, on the part of a nation, or of the civil magistrate, the nation's representative, implies the coercion and suppression of gross heresy and false worship, we shall endeavour to exhibit the warrant which both these parts of magisterial concern have in the Divine Word.

ARGUMENTS FROM THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENT.

A civil establishment of true religion existed by Divine appointment under the Old Testament dispensation, and it cannot, therefore, be founded in injustice, as some have alleged, or be opposed to God's revealed will. During the former economy, many approved *examples* are recorded in the Bible of the godly princes of Israel and Judah employing their authority and influence for the establishment of the true religion;* and even some Heathen rulers were made, in Divine providence, to subserve the same end. *Inspired predictions* declare that such an exercise of magistratical power shall obtain under the New Testament dispensation, (see Ps. ii. 10; lxxviii. lxxii.; Isa. xlix. 23, lx. 1—17, &c.) And the writings of the New Testament expressly recognise the duty, and fully assure us of its lasting obligation—(See, among other passages that might be quoted in proof, Rom. xiii. 4, 6; 1 Tim. ii. 2; Rev. xi. 15, xxi. 24, &c.) If these Scriptural arguments establish the point, that it is the Christian magistrate's duty to add his authoritative sanction to the Church's creed, and to protect her in the enjoyment of her privileges by the weight of his authority, they do at the same time, in our apprehension, completely prove the other position, that in like manner he is bound to restrain and punish whatever is clearly condemned in the Divine law, either in the first or second table, as everative of the peace and parity of the Church, and injurious to the welfare of civil society. The *examples* of the godly rulers of old, who employed their authority in purifying and enlarging the Church, are commended by God himself, and proposed for imitation, as well in their official conduct in punishing idolaters and false teachers, as in establishing true religion. Is not the Christian civil magistrate represented as the "minister of God" to men "for good," not bearing "the sword in vain," a "revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil," Rom. xiii.

f * Such are the cases of David, Solomon, Jehoshaphat, Asa, Hezekiah, Josiah, and of Nebuchadnezzar, Cyrus, Darius, and Artaxerxes.

4. Every expression of this beautiful and impressive description inculcates the principle that the magistrate's duty extends to the restraint and punishment of gross violations of either table of the Divine law. He is "God's minister," and so should have a first concern in his administration to repress whatever is opposed to the Divine glory; he is appointed for universal "good" to men, and the very terms imply that the spiritual as well as bodily interests of the people are objects of his care, and that he must by his authority ward off injury from the one as well as the other; he is declared to be "a terror to evil-doers," and the phrase surely refers to gross and contumacious heretics and idolaters, as well as to thieves and murderers. The "sword" of his authority, which he "beareth not in vain," he is to employ in vindicating the honour of the Divine law, and punishing the disobedient. The immediate end of this official exercise of authority, we are taught, is not reformation, but punishment; for "he is a revenger" to execute God's wrath upon them that do evil, whether they offend against the first or second table of God's law. Besides, the magistrate's office being that of a civil parent of the State, and a nursing-father to the Church, requires him to punish the common enemies of both, when they disseminate gross error, blaspheme God's name, or corrupt his worship. The *character* of the sins of heresy, idolatry, blasphemy, and Sabbath profanation, as daring insults against God, most provocative of his displeasure, and tending manifestly to bring down judgments on society, would seem specially to call for magisterial interference to suppress them. Scripture *examples, prophecies*, and plain declarations, therefore, both in the Old and New Testaments, exhibit the magistrate's duty in this particular, and leave it by no means doubtful that Christian magistrates have it in charge under the most solemn responsibility to vindicate the honour and authority of every precept of the Divine law, and to restrain and punish by civil pains open contemners and opposers thereof.*

One should think it exceedingly plain, that, in a Christian commonwealth, every person is bound, according to his place and station, to promote true religion, and to employ his authority and influence for the correction of abuses, and the destruction of whatever is opposed to the form and power of godliness. All judicious expositors explain the fourth and fifth precepts of the Decalogue as requiring magistrates, as well as parents, to see to the proper observance of the Sabbath, and to use coactive power, when necessary, in order to accomplish the great ends of their office—the advancement of the Divine glory, and the promotion of the spiritual as well as the temporal good of the people. Nehemiah, with Divine approbation, threatened to punish the profaners of the Sabbath. Nehemiah xiii. 19. Eli, a father and a judge, despised God in not correcting his sons when they abused their priestly power, (1 Sam. ii. 30,) and was severely punished by God for conniving at their wickedness.

* For a full exhibition of the arguments, of which we have here given only a condensed summary, see "*The Christian Magistrate*," a Discourse, by the Editor of *The Covenanter*.

And it is very plain that, according to the spirit of the moral law, which is exceeding broad, extending to every relation, and being of perpetual obligation, every man, whether a prince or subordinate ruler, is to take care, like Joshua, that he and his house serve the Lord, (ch. xxiv. 15.) Kings should bring their honour and glory to the New Jerusalem, (Rev. xxi. 24,) and should minister to the Church, (Is. lx. 10); and surely it will not be pretended that none of this honour or glory, and no part of the ministry which they owe to the Church, are found in vindicating the first table of Jehovah's law, and in protecting the Lord's vineyard against the incursions of heretics and idolaters. What the head of a Christian family may do, the magistrate, the civil father of the state, may likewise do, in his official station. But the master of a family is commanded by the authority of God himself, to deny an act of humanity or hospitality to strangers that are false teachers, (2 John 10) whom they must neither lodge nor bid God speed. Such an act of kindness he may not withhold from a Pagan, or a man not known to him, (Heb. xiii. 1, 2; Job xxxi. 32; Gen. xviii. 1, 2, 3, 4; and xix. 1, 2, 3;) but he must not extend it to one who brings another Gospel, lest he be partaker in his evil deeds. If this is a duty resting upon every head of a household, in a Christian nation, even under the mild dispensation of the New Testament, is not the magistrate required to perform it himself as well as others, and ought he not to employ his civil authority to carry into execution the Divine command? On this principle, David declares his own resolution, in the 101st psalm, to "cut off all liars and wicked persons out of his house," and "to destroy early from the Church (the city of God) all evil-doers." As the psalm is not of any private interpretation, but was composed for the benefit of the Church in every age, it follows, that this example, recorded with Divine approbation, is meet for the imitation of civil rulers in the times of the Gospel, as well as under the economy of the law.

If this reasoning has any weight, it goes directly to cut up by the roots the Reviewer's scheme, that idolaters and heretics, of whatever stamp, should enjoy, in a reformed nation, unrestrained toleration, and that their punishment by civil pains and penalties is never allowed under the New Testament. He attempts to show that the restraint and punishment of heretics and idolaters by the magistrate was peculiar to the former economy. This gratuitous assumption is overturned by the consideration, that the civil correction of crimes against the first table is based *on moral principles*, which are of immutable obligation; that the *prophecies* which refer to New Testament times, as we have shown, distinctly declare, that this duty will be performed by Christian civil rulers; and that the *precepts* of the New Testament (as in Rom. xiii. 4) authorize the Christian magistrate to exercise the same corrective and punitive power against *evil-doers in general*, as was exercised by the Jewish civil rulers of old. If the Reviewer still alleges that the *laws* given to the Jewish magistrates and judges, enjoining the restraint and punishment of heresy* and

* The Reviewer charges us with gross blundering in affirming that there were laws under the Old Testament for the punishment of heretics, whereas, according

false worship, have no longer any obligation on Christian rulers, then it is incumbent on him to draw the line of distinction, and show what laws are repealed, and what remain obligatory. To be consistent with himself, he should at once declare, that the judicial laws, which refer to the duties of the second table, likewise are no longer of force; —that the thief, the man-stealer, and murderer, are exempted from punishment; and even, as some in this enlightened liberal age have dared to affirm, that the person who sheds man's blood should, in a Christian community, be freed from retributive vengeance. In exhibiting the iniquity of *slavery*, in claiming the *punishment of the murderer by death*, and in pleading the *lawfulness of defensive war*, the Reviewer will not hesitate to draw his arguments from the precepts and approved examples of the Old Testament. Yet these particular commands are as much *judicial* as those which refer to the punishment of false teachers and idolaters. The law of nature, rightly understood, warrants the application of retributive vengeance in the one case as well as the other, and the purpose is the same—that the Divine honour may be vindicated, and the Lord's people may “fear, and do no more such wickedness.” We repeat it, that if, as the Reviewer asserts, the judicial laws relative to the punishment of heresy and idolatry are entirely abrogated, on the same principle it may be pleaded, that those which fence second table duties are also repealed, and the murderer, adulterer, false swearer, &c., may be allowed by the magistrate, with impunity, to outrage the peace of society—at least he has no Scriptural warrant for punishing them, since this must be taken from the judicial regulations of the Old Testament, which, on the assumption of the Reviewer, are no longer obligatory.

The Reviewer, it should seem, is afraid to go all the length that his latitudinarian scheme would lead him. He admits that the violations of some precepts of the first table may be properly punished by the Christian civil magistrate. Thus, in p. 107, 108, he asserts, that “*profane oaths and imprecations, as well as the violations of the fourth commandment, ought to be punished by the civil magistrate.*” This admission is certainly extraordinary from a person entertaining

to him, no such laws ever existed. (See Pamphlet, p. 20.) His objection here can be considered in no other light than a disingenuous catch. The term heresy is not found condemned in the judicial laws, but the thing is. According to Dr. Johnson, “heresy is a fundamental error in religion.” Now, it is quite apparent, that all those false teachers of old who aimed to withdraw the Israelites from the worship of the true God, and to cause them to go after other gods, were regarded by the law as heretics. Such is the interpretation given to the laws recorded in Deut. xiii. by Calvin, and the most eminent expositors of former times, and Scott, of more modern days. (Scotton Deut. xiii. 1—6—Practical Observations.) It deserves to be remarked, that our Westminster Divines refer to these very passages (Deut. xiii. 5, 6, 12,) in proof of the position which they advance, that it is the magistrate's duty to “take order” that “*all heresies*” “*should be suppressed.*” (Westminster Confession, ch. xxiii.—Scripture proofs.) The *infinite absurdity*, then, which the Reviewer would fasten upon *The Covenanter*, lies equally against the Westminster Divines, and all the most eminent Reformers and Commentators that ever have written upon this subject! We leave him to make out his charge against them as he is able. On the principle of this futile objection, the *profanation* of the sacrament, and many other flagrant evils in the church, should be exempted from ecclesiastical censure, because they are not mentioned by name in the Sacred Scriptures.

the liberal sentiments on magistracy of the Reviewer, and by no means to be accounted for from his published views on this article. Was it that *The Covenanter*, against which he has manifested so much virulence, has, after all, made him a better Covenanter? Or, did the admission result from the conscious feeling, that even the liberalism of this degenerate age would not bear the advocacy of the doctrine, that blasphemy and Sabbath profanation should be permitted to spread, without any exercise of authority by the civil magistrate to suppress them? However this be, the Reviewer's admission in this instance is fatal to his cause. By what authority does he disjoin, not the first from the second table alone, and assert, in opposition to all the reformers, that the civil magistrate is not the "guardian of both tables of the law,"* but separate also the precepts of the first table from each other, in defiance of the solemn command—"What God hath joined, let not man put asunder?" One thing is certain, that every reason which the Reviewer can show why blasphemy and Sabbath profanation should be punished by the Christian civil magistrate, applies with equal, if not superior, force to the magistratical restraint and punishment of gross heresy and idolatry; and every objection that can be urged against the use of civil pains and penalties for the suppression of heresy and false worship, may be brought directly to bear against the punishment of breaches of the third and fourth commandments in a similar manner. Where is the Scripture warrant to be found for the latter exercise of magistratical coercive authority? Is it not in the Old Testament, and among the regulations given to God's ancient people the Jews? Then why refer to these regulations in the one case, and deny the propriety of such a reference in the other? Such a mode of reasoning discovers at once the crudity of the Reviewer's opinions, and the absurdity and Antiscriptural nature of his system. Beyond dispute, the admission which he has reluctantly made, that blasphemy and Sabbath profanation should be punished by the civil magistrate, cuts up by the roots his whole system. All the warrant that he is able to show why breaches of the first and second commandments should be exempted from punishment by the civil magistrate, and those of the third and fourth visited thereby, is his own *ipse dixit*. This sentiment, on the authority of the candid critic, and good-natured and modest Reviewer, Covenanters, and the religious public in general, are required to receive in preference to the numerous, weighty, and unambiguous testimonies of the reformers, who have maintained the doctrine which we advocate, and the solid Scriptural arguments by which it is supported.

In words similar to those of one of the Reviewer's choice pieces of declamation (p. 31) we say—"Covenanters, pause before you adopt principles" in utter opposition to those which your fathers maintained, and which they sealed with their blood. Christians, pause, before you embrace a scheme unscriptural, latitudinarian, and eversive of the just principles of civil government. Bring it to the test of the Divine Word; and, instead of the mere gratuitous assertions, crude conjec-

* Custos utriusque tabulæ legis.

tures, and empty declamation of the Reviewer, search the Scriptures, to see whether these things are so. Go forth by the footsteps of the flock. The testimony of the witnesses of the Lamb, opposed as it is to every New-light innovation, claims, as its advocate, sanctified reason, and a scripturally-enlightened conscience. You have no need to shrink from the duty of giving to all a reason of the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear; for Scripture, reason, and the confessors and martyrs of Jesus are on your side, while New-light sentiments on magistracy are only supported by the fancies, passions, and prejudices of those who are infected with the liberalism of the age, or who dislike the wholesome restraints of pure and undefiled religion. "*Magna est veritas, et prevalibit.*"

CHAPTER VII.

COMPARISON OF BOTH SYSTEMS IN REGARD OF CONSEQUENCES RESPECTIVELY.

Proper mode of reasoning from consequences—The Reviewer's admission on this subject—Beneficial consequences of magistratical interference under the Old Testament—Destruction of the Canaanitish nations misapplied by the Reviewer—Salutary effects of magistratical restraint in the period of the Westminster Assembly—Good consequences enumerated—Consequences of the New-light scheme exemplified in France and the United States—Doctrinal consequences of the Reviewer's scheme.

WE have already seen that the Reviewer's favourite mode of reasoning is to deduce *consequences* from the system which he attacks, and we have shown, that in his way of procedure, such a method is unjust and fallacious. By the title prefixed to this chapter, it will be seen, that we mean to try the merits of the cause which he advocates on his own ground, with this important difference, however, that we shall bring to the same test *our own* sentiments as well as his, and shall endeavour to charge no consequences upon the principles which he has advanced that cannot be shown, from historical facts, or plain and necessary inference, to flow from them. When such a course is impartially followed, the delineation will not be destitute of interest or value. The Saviour's rule is susceptible of application to principles as well as persons—" *By their fruits ye shall know them.*" If it can be fairly proved that salutary effects uniformly proceed from the proper application of certain doctrinal sentiments, this certainly forms a strong presumptive argument in their favour; whereas, if, on the other hand, baleful consequences generally follow certain other speculative views, this should warrant diligent inquiry into their nature, and may justly lead to their rejection.

To this "*experimentum crucis,*" we are perfectly willing to subject our doctrine relative to the interference of the Christian civil magistrate for the promotion of religion, and the suppression of error, and the latitudinarian scheme of our opponent, who claims for heresy and

idolatry unlimited toleration, and denies the duty of the civil magistrate to establish and protect true religion. The reader is requested to bear in mind, that when we speak of the civil magistrate's power *circa sacra*, either in *The Covenanter* or in this Reply, we uniformly understand, as we have frequently declared, a Christian magistrate ruling over a people by their choice and consent, who professes the true religion, and that we have always affirmed, that it is genuine Christianity, and not error or false worship, which he should foster and encourage, and that in all his concern about religion, he is to be influenced by Christian character, and directed by the law of God, and by wholesome human laws founded thereon. This is our leading position: if any choose to apply what we have advanced, under these limitations, to a magistracy not having this character, they do it at the hazard of entirely disregarding the foundation on which our reasoning is based, and of wilfully perverting it. There is no alternative between this and manifesting incapacity to understand the simplest process of ratiocination. We have no desire to find the Reviewer guilty of one count or other of this indictment; yet do we fear on examination it will be found, that in attacking *The Covenanter*, prejudice has run away with his better judgment. His Pamphlet is full of the most horrid consequences, which he has attempted to charge upon our sentiments on magistracy; yet never, in a single instance, does he even pretend that a solitary consequence which he has exhibited natively flows from the exercise of the authority of a magistrate constituted as we have described. In one passage, he even makes an admission which nullifies his whole attempt to overthrow *The Covenanter's* system. Thus, in p. 29, he says—“ I admit also, that were it granted that those who hold the truth have a right to punish by the civil sword those who are erroneous, it would not follow that those who are in error have a right to punish those who hold the truth;” and, again, “ The reader will observe, that I am not treating of what men have a *right* to do, but what they *would* do. I am stating not what *should* be the consequence of the principles laid down by *The Covenanter*, but what *would* be the consequence.” Now, even this reluctant admission is passing strange from our disputant, after the course of argumentation which he has adopted. How does he endeavour to set aside our plea for magistral interference in repressing gross heresy and idolatry? Why, just thus, that, granted that the Christian civil magistrate has a right, founded in the Word of God, to act in this manner, therefore a Popish, Mahometan, or Heathen ruler will act in the same way, and, consequently, a universal massacre will take place, and the world become a field of blood! Before arriving at this startling conclusion, it was incumbent on the *Reviewer* to show, in opposition to his own admission, that “ those who are in error have a right to punish those who hold the truth.” As he is evidently, in this instance, inconsistent with himself, we leave him to settle the matter as he can, and proceed to a fuller statement of the consequences which we conceive natively flow from the adoption of our doctrine and that of the Reviewer respectively. Here it will not be necessary to advert to our opponent's hair-spun distinction between what *would* be and what *should* be the consequence of espousing the one principle or the

other.* We shall be able, from authentic history, to appeal to the stubborn testimony of facts, and to show what *has been* the result of the doctrine which we advocate, and of the latitudinarian scheme of our opponent, and we shall see the genuine tendency of both sets of opinions in the present age.

The primary doctrine of the duty of *nations as such*, and of civil rulers in their official capacity, to acknowledge the supremacy, and submit to the authority of Messiah, has been long ago put to the test of experiment, and the fullest opportunity that could be devised has been afforded, for observing the working of the system, and marking its genuine effects. Under the Old Testament dispensation, from the days of Moses till Israel ceased from being a nation, the principle was in full operation—the civil magistrate, by Divine appointment and direction, fostered the true religion, and by his authority restrained and punished open idolaters, blasphemers, and false teachers. In New Testament times, the first Christian Emperors uniformly adopted the maxim, that civil rulers are under a primary obligation to promote the interests of the Church, and to restrain, by their official influence, her enemies. It is so notorious, that at the period of the Reformation, the Reformers and Reformed Churches held the principle of magistratical care about religion, and that the Protestant powers, such as the Senate of Geneva, the Elector of Saxony, and others who favoured the Reformation, carried this principle into execution, that the advocates of the New-light doctrine generally represent them as but partially enlightened on this article; and if they go not the length of condemning them as bigots, they represent them as not fully emancipated from the shackles of Antichrist. The Reforming period in Britain is justly referred to as an era in the history of modern nations, in which the principles for which we contend, relative to the Christian magistrate's duty to establish and protect genuine religion, were adopted, by national consent, by the rulers and people of a great empire, and in which, for a season, they exerted a preponderating influence in the counsels and administration of the nation. The *British Covenants* are a standing monument of the concern entertained by the men who framed and swore them, whether in public or private stations, whether in Church or State, to render all their measures conducive to the promotion of true religion, and to the eradication of whatever might militate against its prevalence and power. The *Penal Statutes* enacted in various reforming Parlia-

* As it may still be alleged that the Reviewer has himself admitted, in the passage alluded to, that the consequences charged upon our doctrine are such only as *would*, not such as *should*, follow from it, it may be necessary, to prevent misrepresentation, to remark—1. That the distinction thus made is of no importance, inasmuch, as throughout his pamphlet he reasons as if the shocking consequences which he has detailed legitimately flow from the principles of *The Covenant*. 2. If these consequences *should* not result from these principles, but only *would* follow from them, through their glaring and horrible abuse by wicked rulers, we have nothing to do with them, since *Ab abusu ad usum non valet consequentia*. *It is not just reasoning to argue from the abuse of any thing against its use*. 3. Nor *would* these shocking consequences follow, since our principle is not the suppression of what any class of men may call heresy and idolatry, but what is explicitly determined to be so in the Divine Word.

ments against idolaters and heretics prove incontestibly that, at that time at least, and by those men whom we are accustomed to venerate as valiant witnesses for the truth, the suppression of idolatry and heresy by the authority and power of the civil magistrate was regarded as an indispensable duty. Since the overthrow of the Covenanted Reformation in these countries, the principle of magistratical interference in favour of religion on the reformed scheme has been partially acted upon. Both in Britain and the United States of America, open blasphemy against God is a civil crime; and, in the former, gross idolaters are still subjected to some civil disabilities, which are regarded in the eye of the law as penal restrictions. It were no difficult task to show, that much that is excellent in the civil institutions of these lands is traceable to the pious care of our reforming ancestors about religion, and to the partial adoption of the cardinal principle which they universally held—that Christian rulers are bound to foster the Church, and to check vice and irreligion.

Here, then, we have ample materials for coming to a decision on the merits of this doctrine, and for judging of its effects. At different periods in the history of the Church, both in the times of inspiration and afterwards, both in ancient and modern states, our principle has formed the groundwork of national policy; and though in most instances it had not time to bring all its fruits to maturity, it did operate so as to discover pretty clearly its genuine tendency. What, then, are the fruits which the doctrine of magistratical interference in behalf of religion at these periods produced? To the testimony of impartial history we triumphantly appeal for a solution of this inquiry, as affording the clearest and most satisfactory refutation of the oft-repeated allegations of the Reviewer, that the principle which we advocate is productive of the most ruinous consequences to civil society.

At first sight, we are persuaded, most persons who admit the inspiration and authority of the Scriptures, and whose minds are not blinded by prejudice, will, like ourselves, be utterly at a loss to discover wherein the pernicious tendency of the sentiments on magistracy, exhibited in the Westminster Standards, and maintained in *The Covenanter*, lies. If the magistracy be constituted, as we have supposed, on the foundation of God's revealed will, placed in subjection to the Mediator, as King of nations, and established by the consent and choice of the people—if the magistrate be, as we have claimed, a man of Christian principles and character; and if the rule of his official conduct, from which he may not swerve, be the Divine law, then, we ask, where is there room left for his exercising all the savage and ferocious oppression, and perpetrating all the deeds of blood which the Reviewer has represented him committing, as he would have it, on the principles of *The Covenanter*? Is not his Christian character a sufficient guarantee that he will not be unjust or unmerciful? How can he be an absolute despot, or tyrannical oppressor, when he is the people's representative—when, in fact, all that he does for the promotion or protection of religion is just the nation exercising its sovereign authority through him as its civil head and servant? And if the Divine law be in all cases his rule of administration, it is plain, the allegation that he is guilty of oppression or persecution in restraining and punishing what is prohibited, is nothing

less than an impeachment of its immutable rectitude, or of the character of the glorious Lawgiver himself. Moreover, it must never be forgotten, that over nations and rulers walking in accordance with God's law, there is extended the shield of special providential protection, and that, in this way, they have reason to expect the Divine blessing to rest upon their administration, defeating the machinations and attempts of enemies, sustaining the vigour of their counsels, and prospering their way before them. Such in reality has been the consequence of making true religion a national concern in times past, and of checking and banishing by magisterial influence and authority whatever is dishonouring to God, and prejudicial either to the temporal or eternal welfare of the people.

Even the Reviewer will admit that, under the Mosaic economy, our principle was acted upon, and that by Divine direction. The nation of Israel, when settled in Canaan, did by God's appointment establish true religion; their rulers yielded their official power and influence to build up and purify the Church; and the princes, whose conduct is held up for imitation, destroyed monuments of idolatry, cut off idolaters, and punished apostates and contemners of God's worship. Now, we demand of the Reviewer, or of such as advocate his sentiments, when they object against Christian rulers interfering for the restraint and punishment of idolatry, error, &c., on the ground of its cruelty and injustice, to show wherein it was right in God to sanction with his command and approbation a principle at one period, which is utterly wrong in itself at another, and this when there is no reason declared by Him why it should cease to be obligatory. Till this inquiry is satisfactorily answered, we cannot but regard the allegations of blood, and cruelty, and persecution, advanced against the civil magistrate interposing his authority for the restraint of heresy and idolatry, as a direct impeachment of the wisdom and goodness of him, who once, by solemn and explicit precept, required the rulers of his ancient people thus to exercise their official authority.

If it is inquired, what was the consequence of the godly magistrates of Israel and Judah discovering zeal to reform the Church, and to root out idolaters and apostates—let the times of David and Solomon, Asa and Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah and Josiah, Nehemiah and Zerubbabel, bear witness. The Reviewer continually urges against the doctrine of magistratical interference in behalf of religion the plea that it is productive of the most awful consequences—leading to universal massacres—arming every man's hand against his brother—and converting a nation into a field of blood; and ever and anon, he represents our doctrine to be the propriety of inflicting *capital punishments* on all who would differ from us in opinion. Now, even while the judicial laws were confessedly in full force under the former economy, and were faithfully executed by the princes to whom we have alluded, we ask him to show wherein such revolting consequences followed the special exercise of magistratical authority against which he so loudly protests? The* destruction of the *Canaanitish*

* This seems to be a favourite point of reference when the Reviewer labours to prove the *sanguinary* character of the legal dispensation. See "Covenanter Reviewed," p. 48—Review of Mr. Montgomery's Speech, p. 28.

nations by the Israelites, under Joshua, is clearly not a case that has any application to the subject in question. That summary infliction of vengeance was an extraordinary Divine judgment poured out upon a people, the cup of whose iniquities was filled up, and had nothing whatever to do with the commands respecting the punishment of idolatry and apostacy enjoined in the judicial laws. (See Deut. xiii. Levit. xvii. &c.) These laws are expressly limited to Israelites turning aside to false gods, to blasphemers, or to idolaters who might remain in the land, when God's chosen people had obtained all civil authority in it. Such were not the Canaanites whom Joshua and his companions rooted out. Their extermination was enjoined by a special and immediate Divine injunction, which had clearly been unnecessary, if their case had fallen under the settled requirements of the law. Besides, at the period of the conquest of Canaan, the descendants of Abraham had yet obtained no national establishment for the true religion, and they possessed no regularly established magistratical authority over the people of the land. From these considerations, the Reviewer ought to be aware that the destruction of the Canaanites has nothing whatever to do with the punishment of obstinate heretics and idolaters in a reformed nation. Its introduction in his pamphlet may serve to obscure or distort *The Covenanter's* sentiments, and to excite popular indignation against them, but it is totally irrelevant, and can do nothing at all in settling the question.

In the last days of the Israelitish commonwealth, when the government was fully settled according to Divine appointment, and the rulers were men possessed of the prescribed qualifications, it deserves particular notice, that *no disastrous consequences followed the exercise of magistratical authority in extirpating error and false worship, and purging the sanctuary.* Even in the case of magistrates who assumed the reins of administration after a time of great apostacy, we hear of no such evil result, not even in a single instance. David rooted out the idolatrous Canaanites that remained in the land, and the Lord blessed him with singular prosperity in his undertakings. Asa broke down the high places, removed his mother from being queen, and destroyed her idol, and made a covenant that "whosoever would not seek the Lord God of Israel should be put to death, whether small or great, whether man or woman, (2 Chron. xv. 13 ;) and we are expressly informed, that the Lord was found of him and his people, and gave them "rest round about." Jehoshaphat sent teachers throughout all the cities of Judah to instruct the people, and took other steps to root out error. Hezekiah, Nehemiah, and even Manasseh, who had, before, himself led the way in national apostacy and idolatry, all employed their official authority in suppressing idolatry and blasphemy, according to the requirements of the judicial law; and we have the reiterated testimony of the Spirit that, in these steps, the Lord prospered their way, and shed down an abundant blessing upon their administration. It is most probable, indeed, that the effect of magistratical authority as it was then exercised for restraining vice and irreligion, and promoting godliness, combined with their example, was just what might still be expected to be the result of a similar course of conduct on the part of Christian civil rulers. Many were led to forsake the evil of their ways and turn to the Lord. The fear

of God fell upon the Church's enemies. If some remained obstinate, the God of Jacob, approving of the zeal and devotedness of his servants, sent forth his rebuke, and turned their counsels into foolishness, so that they slept their sleep, and the men of might could not find their hands; and the punishment of offenders deterred others, as it had been declared in the law—"all Israel shall hear and fear, and shall do no more any such wickedness as this is among you." (Deut. xiii. 11.) Who can fail to recognise in the prosperity enjoyed by good magistrates of old, in the way of restraining error and idolatry, and punishing evil-doers, the finger of God; and who shall dare to affirm that similar prosperity might not still be enjoyed by nations and their rulers, were they to act in the same manner? The rule of the Divine procedure, proclaimed by Azariah, the son of Oded, to Asa and all Benjamin and Judah, has, doubtless, a direct application to the conduct of civil governors in every age—"The Lord is with you while you be with him; and if ye seek him, he will be found of you; but if ye forsake him, he will forsake you." (2 Chron. xv. 2.)

SALUTARY EFFECTS OF MAGISTRICAL RESTRAINT AT THE PERIOD OF THE WESTMINSTER ASSEMBLY.

The Reviewer's direful consequences of the Christian civil magistrate exercising his authority in restraining and punishing heretics and idolaters will appear still more manifestly to be a chimera of his own brain, utterly inconsistent with the testimony of authentic history, if we briefly advert to the period of the *Westminster Assembly* in Britain, as furnishing decisive evidence in opposition to the allegations of our opponents. At that memorable time, the principle that the civil magistrate should establish and promote true religion, and restrain and suppress by his authority atheism, heresy, blasphemy, and idolatry, was not only advanced in theory, but was acted upon by those who had the management of public affairs. The article of the Westminster Confession, (ch. xxiii.) which asserts, that "*all blasphemies and heresies should be suppressed*" by the magistrate's authority; and the *Solemn League and Covenant*—a deed which was sanctioned by the highest legislative council in the nation, and cheerfully taken by persons of all ranks and conditions at that day, in which the swearers bind themselves, each "according to his station, and the means competent thereto," to extirpate "superstition, heresy, schism, profaneness," &c., exhibit with a clearness not to be misunderstood the doctrine which they maintained on this subject. The care of the English Parliament to remove erroneous and inefficient ministers, to purge the army of sectaries and heretics, and to bring about uniformity on the footing of the Solemn League; and the *penal statutes* against idolaters, blasphemers, and heretics, ratified in Scotland at the same period, prove beyond dispute that the rulers of the nation *then* acted on the principle for which we contend. During the whole period of the civil wars in England till the death of Charles I., and from the setting up of the Reformation in Scotland till its subversion at the restoration of Charles II., magistrates, with few exceptions, and with a few intervals, in which prelacy struggled for the

ascendency, governed as keepers of both tables of the Divine law, and as bound to restrain and punish the gross and open contemners of the precepts equally of the first as of the second. Now, it may be inquired, what was the effect of such magistratical interference at that day? Here the Reviewer has a fair opportunity of discovering his historical research, and illustrating his argument. The question between him and us is brought to the test of experiment: our doctrine in this instance is seen reduced to practice. We challenge him to show, from the authentic histories of that period, wherein the doctrine of the magistrate's power *circa sacra*, which he has gainsayed, was then productive of the pernicious consequences wherewith he has charged it. Notwithstanding the colouring of infidel writers, and the gratuitous assertion of pretended liberals, ever and anon put forth, that all religions have persecuted when in power, we are convinced his ingenuity will fail him in this case, and he will be completely unable to show, that the doctrine of magistratical interference for suppressing error and idolatry, as reduced to practice in the days of the Solemn League, produced any consequences but such as were in the highest degree salutary, both as it respected the morals and religion and the outward prosperity of the nation. It will be borne in mind, that the period of British history to which we refer was one full of troubles and perplexities. A civil war ravaged the nation; the enemies of the Covenanted Reformation, at the head of whom was the perfidious Charles, were numerous, and the Papists in Ireland and France lent their aid to oppose and overthrow the civil and religious reformation contemplated by the Parliament. Besides, the sectaries who abetted the cause of liberty of conscience and toleration, both in the Westminster Assembly and the counsels of the nation, were men of learning and address, and possessed of extensive influence. Notwithstanding these powerful obstacles, the good hand of the Lord was visibly upon his servants. While the Church faithfully condemned latitudinarian sentiments, and testified for the truth; and civil magistrates, as men fearing God, supported her decisions, and restrained and punished false worship, we can find no instance on record in which they can justly be charged with oppression, nor did their authority employed in this way lead to any of the tremendous consequences on which the Reviewer has spent so much declamation. On the contrary, so long as the Parliament adhered steadfastly to the principles of the Solemn League and Covenant, success crowned their measures, and it was only when they departed from them, and when the sectaries, who were the noisy declaimers of that day for toleration, obtained the ascendency, that irreligion and immorality again stalked abroad through the land, and all things were thrown into disorder and confusion. The testimony of an old historian,* and one by no means favourable to the Covenanted Reformation, will fully confirm these statements.

“ At the king's return, every parish had a minister, every village had a school, every family almost had a Bible; yea, in most of the

(Continued)

* Kirkton. His history was written to bring into discredit Wodrow and the Presbyterians.

country, all the children of age could read the Scriptures, and were provided of Bibles, either by the parents, or by their ministers. Every minister was a very full professor of the reformed religion, according to the Large Confession of Faith framed at Westminster by the divines of both nations. Every minister was obliged to preach thrice a-week, to lecture and catechise once, besides other private duties in which they abounded, according to their proportion of faithfulness and abilities. None of them might be scandalous in their conversation, or negligent in their office, so long as a presbytery stood; and among them were many holy in conversation, and eminent in gifts; nor did a minister satisfy himself except his ministry had the seal of a Divine approbation, as might witness him to be really sent from God. Indeed, in many places the Spirit seemed to be poured out with the word, both by the multitudes of sincere converts, and also by the common work of reformation upon many who never came the length of communion. There were no fewer than sixty aged people, men and women, who went to school, that even then they might be able to read the Scriptures with their own eyes. I have lived many years in a parish where I never heard an oath, and you might have rid many miles before you had heard any; also, you could not for a great part of the country have lodged in a family where the Lord was not worshipped by reading, singing, and public prayer. Nobody complained more of our church government than our taverners, whose ordinary lamentation was, that trade was broke, people were become so sober. The great blemish of our church was the division betwixt protesters and resolution-men, (as they were called;) but as this was inconsiderable upon the matter, so was it also pretty well composed by express agreement among brethren, even while the English continued our governors."

It were easy to show, that in periods subsequent to that to which we have alluded, wherever magistrates have, in any degree, been possessed of a proper character, and their official power has been exercised even partially for repressing crimes condemned in the first table of the Divine law, the most salutary effects to society have followed. We repeat it, in whatever country and in whatever circumstances, a magistrate, scripturally qualified, would faithfully take the Divine law as the basis of his legislation and government, and fearlessly apply it for the terror of evil-doers against either table, and the praise of them that do well, the consequences could not but be good. As in the case of ecclesiastical discipline, when revived after lengthened neglect, though some may murmur, and others offer opposition, the Church is purified and even increased; so has it ever been, and so might it still be expected to be with communities, when magistrates faithfully execute the Divine law for purging out of the State the evils which dishonour God, and injure the present and eternal interests of the people. From a careful inspection of the testimony of impartial history, at different periods, wherein magistrates acted as we have described, we are free to admit that the following happy consequences were the result:—

1. *Religion prospered.*

In the days of the pious princes of Israel and Judah, who fostered the Church and destroyed monuments of idolatry, the Lord's work

throughout the nation was greatly revived. Even the enemies of the Covenanted Reformation are compelled to admit that the days of the Solemn League and Covenant were eminently distinguished for the increase of genuine godliness. What hinders that the practical recognition of our principle by men in power should be still productive of the same benign effects? Assuredly the repression of vice and irreligion by godly civil rulers, concurring with their example, will purify the various departments of civil society, and diffuse the renovating influence of genuine piety through every class of the community. When they that trouble the Church are cut off, then shall Zion put on her beautiful garments, and cover herself with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and a bride adorneth herself with her jewels.

2. Error and vice were discouraged.

Principle influences practice. Erroneous views on the fundamentals of religion never fail to lead first into the adoption of a lower standard of morality, and then to vicious practice. The truth is, the basis of all that is holy in character, and lovely, and of good report in the outward deportment;—on the other hand, the fountain of the evil streams that pollute society is found in the error that is entertained, cherished, and openly avowed. On this ground, it is clearly the duty of the magistrate, by the means competent to his office, to make the tree good, and then the fruit shall be good. Should he check the progress of error, the sources of vicious and immoral conduct will be dried up, and more will be done to render the State free from vice and immorality, and a habitation of holiness, than all that can be effected by police and gaols and workhouses, and the whole apparatus of civil restraint usually employed by the rulers of our day.

3. The hands of faithful ministers have been strengthened.

When the abettors of error are restrained by the civil magistrate, and when he acts in every respect as a true nursing-father to the Church, faithful ministers will be encouraged in their labours, and the difficulties that now oppose their success in the ministry will in a great measure be removed. Who does not know that pure ecclesiastical discipline has never been maintained generally in any nation, save when the civil power has concurred with the ecclesiastical in restraining or discouraging evil-doers? Let magistrates in Christian lands command, as our forefathers required, ministers to do their duty, and encourage them in performing it, by sanctioning their judicial acts and by restraining such as oppose them, and the Christian ministry will prove a mighty means of extending the blessings of true religion over the whole land.

4. The Gospel spread, and abundant blessings were shed down upon the community.

In no country, without the aid of the civil magistrate, can Christianity universally prevail. There is not an instance on record of a nation forsaking idolatry and embracing true religion, where the civil power was not exercised for furthering the spread of the Gospel, and restraining its enemies. Paganism maintained its strongholds in the principal cities of the Roman empires, till Constantine the Great gave a civil establishment to the Church of Christ, and brought under

restraint the adherents of the ancient superstition.* Popish delusions received no effectual check in Scotland, till the rulers and nobles of the land put their hand to the work, and called into exercise their official authority to restrain and punish the enemies of the truth. In both instances, the effect of the interposition was most salutary. The temples of idols were deserted—the Gospel spread—the Church had rest round about, and many of the servants of God were sealed in their foreheads.

The diffusion of true religion throughout a nation has been followed by a rich abundance of outward temporal blessings. The history of all ancient States, and the records of inspiration, equally with the annals of commonwealths that have existed since the canon of revelation closed, bear uniform testimony to the important fact, that, in proportion as nations and their rulers honour Messiah, keep his laws and ordinances, and determinedly oppose his enemies, so have been their peace, stability, and general prosperity. What were the most flourishing periods of the Israelitish commonwealth? Were they not those of the reigns of David, Solomon, Asa, Hezekiah, &c., when civil rulers employed their authority and the resources of the nation to beautify the sanctuary, destroy monuments of idolatry, and extirpate the abettors of error and false worship. A similar appeal might be triumphantly made to the history of modern States. Our own country stands conspicuous among the nations as a living witness of the truth that God, by a special providence, is with a people while they be with him, whereas, if they forsake him, He will forsake them. The days of Britain's glory and prosperity were those in which magistrates were truly God's "ministers to men for good," promoting godliness, and executing faithfully the penal laws against noted heretics and contumacious idolaters. Soon as they laid aside this character, and ceased from exercising this guardian care of the Church, confusion overspread their counsels, the hands of enemies were strengthened, and dark clouds collected around the destinies of the nation. Such are a few of the consequences which in times past have flowed, and which natively flow from the employment of magistratical authority for promoting true religion and punishing its enemies. Instead of the direful results of the establishment of our doctrine, which the Reviewer has conjured up, we place in proud contrast the genuine fruits of rightful civil authority exercised in guarding both tables of the Divine law. Authentic history bears us out in every statement which we have advanced. The increase of true religion—the extirpation of error and vice—the efficiency of the Christian ministry—the universal diffusion of the Gospel, and national prosperity—have been the consequences of civil rulers, as such, making religion their grand concern. Can the principle be pernicious that leads to such results? Rather, is it not worthy of all acceptance; and even where it has

* It betrays gross ignorance of ecclesiastical history to assert, as many do, that the establishment of Christianity under Constantine first corrupted the Church. The leaven of corruption was extensively spread long prior to this period. The reader will find ample proof on this point in the admirable details of "*Milner's History of the Church of Christ.*"

not hitherto been embraced, should not persons inspect the evidence of testimony, and, marking its genuine fruits, give it at least the trial of a fair experiment?

CONSEQUENCES OF THE NEW LIGHT SCHEME EXEMPLIFIED IN
FRANCE AND THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

Having thus exhibited the legitimate consequences of the principle of magistral interference for promoting religion and restraining error, let us glance at the effects flowing from the doctrine of our opponent—that magistrates, as such, should do nothing towards protecting the Church, and should permit the most notorious heretics to live unmolested, and to spread their soul-destroying errors and practice their evil deeds, with impunity. Here, too, we have the benefit of experience and historical testimony to guide us to a proper conclusion. The New Light scheme of the Reviewer has been partially adopted in several modern States, and sufficient time has been allowed to ascertain its tendency. After the overthrow of the Covenanted Reformation in Britain, through the influence of sectaries, and the writings of philosophers, the toleration of gross heresy gained countenance, and, in later times, by means of infidel statesmen, the revolting blasphemies and idolatries of the Man of Sin have been not only connived at, but received into public favour. The confusion of national affairs which has been daily increasing since these fatal steps of defection were taken, and the prevalence of irreligion and vice, as contrasted with the godliness and morality of the reforming period, sufficiently attest the pernicious consequences of the growth of liberalism in politics and religion. Let but the principle of the Reviewer be more fully adopted by our rulers, and the remaining barriers, which the wisdom and piety of our ancestors raised against the attempts of heresy and idolatry be removed, by the entire abandonment of the principle that it is the duty of a nation and its rulers to establish and protect the Church of Christ, and to exterminate palpable heresy and idolatry, and the flood-gates of evil will then be lifted up. Men who mock at all that is sacred will be emboldened in their iniquity; the foundations of civil society will be moved out of their course; and blasphemy and heresy, idolatry, Sabbath-profanation, and vice of every shape will prevail, like a wide-spread and desolating deluge over the land. The tide has already set in strong and rapid, and the abettors of toleration, who are of the Reviewer's sentiments, may ere long see to a fearful extent the consequences of the non-interference of the magistrate for promoting true religion and suppressing error. The most inattentive and unprejudiced observer cannot fail to discern the length in a course of defection and ruin in which such conduct has already led the nation.

There are *two* striking exemplifications of the liberal sentiments on magistracy furnished by the history of modern nations. To these we may be permitted briefly to advert, as exhibiting the consequences of the system that magistrates should give no national establishment to Christianity, and should extend to heresy and idolatry of every kind an indiscriminate and unbounded toleration.

In *France*, at the period of the first revolution, the primary doc-

trine of the magistrate's care about religion was publicly renounced, and in the boasted triumph of reason, with the breaking up of the old establishments, there was unlimited scope afforded for the spread of every kind of error. What was the result? Massacres, bloodshed, crime such as never before had stained the annals of nations, marked the adoption of the liberal theory in that country. The rest of the Sabbath day was abolished by a public decree; altars were erected to the goddess of reason; public prostitution encouraged by an allowance out of the treasury to unmarried mothers; and deeds of wickedness the most atrocious perpetrated without exciting the least portion of popular indignation. All this, be it remembered, happened among the most refined people in the world, and as the native consequences of the principles inculcated by a multitude of writers who had obtained possession of the public mind, and who assiduously declaimed against the doctrine of a national establishment of religion, and raised the outcry of persecution against all exercise of magistratical authority for the suppression of vice and irreligion, while they were the strenuous advocates of *toleration*, the *rights of conscience*, and the *liberty of the press*.* Here we might take our ground, and following the worthy example so frequently set us by the Reviewer, might ask our readers what have been the consequences of the New Light doctrines on magistracy which he labours to introduce?† The French revolution has recorded in characters of blood the genuine working of this anarchical system. The doctrine of our opponent had the advantage of a fair experiment made in favourable circumstances at that time, and it produced then such a complicated series of every thing evil, and destructive of the welfare of society, that the nation was forced to abandon the system, and, instead of the galling yoke which liberal and toleration principles had writhed around it, to return to the exploded superstition,‡ France stands as a beacon among the nations. Whenever the Reviewer and his friends are disposed to deny the Scriptural doctrine which we advocate, and to muster up against our reasoning an array of revolting consequences, let them turn their eyes to that ill-fated country, and recall the scenes of the first revolution. They will perceive herein the tendency of their own scheme, and may learn the evil of rashly meddling with maxims on government and religion, that are based on immutable truth, and are rendered venerable by the laws and usage of nations throughout many generations.

The United States of America afford another specimen of the working of the New-light scheme, though even there the principle is by no means carried into full extent. The government of this land

* See Presbyterian Review, No. X. Art. *Liberal Theory*.

† Here we would avail ourselves of a sentence of the Reviewer (p. 31,) which we modify to suit this connexion, at the same time that we retain his grammatical blunder—'Covenanters! pause, before you adopt the New-light principle, the destructive tendency of which in the French Revolution *have* been long since seen by almost all denominations of Christians.'

‡ It will not be suspected by any thing which we have here advanced that we favour the re-establishment of Popery, or of any corrupt system of religion—all we intend is to exhibit the native fruits of the prevalence of infidel and misnamed liberal sentiments in relation to government.

of freedom, as it is boastingly termed, not only contains no direct recognition of the Moral Governor of the universe, offers no homage to Messiah, but makes it essential that no favour should be extended to the Church of Christ more than to any merely civil institution, while her avowed enemies are eligible to all places of power and trust, and the fullest toleration is extended to every species of error and irreligion. Persons of the Reviewer's principles have been accustomed to boast, in the most fulsome terms, of the civil and religious freedom enjoyed in the northern republic of the new world; and some who once contended for the doctrine of a Scriptural magistracy have gone the length of claiming recognition for the United States government, as the moral ordinance of God. Into the discussion of this topic it does not concern us at present to enter. But if undeniable facts are to be relied upon, there is evidence enough to show, that even in America, with all its advantages, the doctrines that are opposed to a national establishment of Christianity, and to the restraint of gross error and idolatry by the civil magistrate, are productive of pernicious consequences. Here are the testimonies of two witnesses of high repute, every way disposed to extol American institutions, as to the effect of the civil magistrate taking no concern with religion:—

“ In the year 1800,” says Dr. Dwight in his Travels, “ there were in Connecticut 231,002 inhabitants, with 194 ministers”— that is, every 1293 inhabitants enjoyed the services of a minister in that part of the Union where the state provided for the support of religion. Nor were these ministers idlers. “ It is doubted,” continues Dwight, “ whether there is a collection of ministers in the world, whose labours have been more prosperous, or under whose preaching a greater proportion of those who heard them have become the subjects of real piety. I know of no country in which revivals of religion have been so frequent, or, in proportion to the number of inhabitants, so extensive as in these states. God, therefore, may be considered as having thus far manifested his own approbation of the system. If, at the same time, we advert to the peace, the good order, the general distribution of justice, the universal enjoyment of schools, the universal enjoyment of the education they communicate, and the extension of superior education, it will be difficult for a sober man not to perceive, that the smiles of Heaven have regularly accompanied this system from its commencement to the present time.” On the other hand, in the states south of New England, at the same period, were 4,033,775 inhabitants, with 275 ministers— that is, there was about one minister to every 14,668 persons. “ If these states,” says Dwight, “ maintained congregations, and were supplied with ministers in the same proportion as Connecticut, the whole number of ministers settled and supported would be 3024,” instead of 275. “ In this statement we have a fair specimen of the natural consequences of *establishing*, or *neglecting* to establish, the public worship of God by the law of the land. In Connecticut every inhabitant who is not precluded by disease or inclination, may hear the Gospel, and celebrate the public worship of God, every Sabbath day. In the states specified, it is not improbable that a number of people, several times as great as the census of Connecticut, *have scarcely heard a sermon or a prayer in their lives.*”

“ We find,” says the British Review,⁶ proceeding on the calculations made by *Dr. Beecher a very few years ago*, “ we find a statement, which affords the melancholy intelligence that, out of eight millions, the computed amount of the American people, *five millions of persons are destitute of competent religious instruction.* Setting out upon the assumption, that there ought to be a clergyman for every thousand souls, Dr. Beecher assures us that in Massachusetts there is a deficiency of one hundred and sixty-eight competent religious teachers. In Maine, not more than one-half of the population is supplied with religious in-

struction. In New Hampshire the deficiency is one-third. Vermont is nearly in the same situation. In the western part of Rhode Island, embracing a territory of fifty miles in length, and thirty in breadth, and including one-half of the population, there is but *one* regularly educated minister, and but ten in the other parts. In Connecticut there are 218 congregational churches, of which thirty-six are vacant. In New York the actual number of pastors is about 500; the population of a million would require double the number. In New Jersey there is a deficiency of at least fifty pastors. Virginia, with a population of 974,000, has but sixty regular ministers; consequently, 914,000 persons are without adequate religious instruction. The situation of Maryland is similar to that of Virginia. North Carolina, with a population of 555,500; which would require 550 clergymen, has but twenty. South Carolina, which, with a population of upwards of 400,000, ought to have 400 pastors, has but thirty-six. The state of Georgia has but ten clergymen. So much in proof of the maxim, that religion being one of the natural wants of the human mind, 'requires no aid from the magistrate in an enlightened age.'"

To these testimonies, we might add, were it requisite, many other to the same effect. With all the vigour and zeal of the churches in the United States, in consequence of the neglect of the civil rulers on the score of religion, the idolatry of Popery is spreading with rapidity; Deistical temples are openly resorted to, and avowedly Atheistical publications are in circulation; and, in many large districts of the land, there are literally no ordinances of religion observed, and no Sabbath honoured, while the most destructive errors are rampant, and the people are led away by the wildest enthusiasm, or become the prey of the most ignorant pretended teachers of religion.

From these examples, we may learn sufficiently what we have reason to expect from the adoption of the liberal doctrines respecting Christian magistracy. Instead of the benign fruits which the principles held by our forefathers bring forth, we have the alternative of suffering such consequences as have been exhibited in the French and American Republics, if we go over to the New Light side.*

It were unnecessary to go into detail in enumerating them; they stand forth so distinctly visible in the pages of history, that he who runs may read. Under the reign of liberal sentiments on magistracy, error of every description has spread. Our opponents, in demanding that the special protection of the magistrate should be withdrawn from the Church, and that all *penal statutes* against heretics should be repealed, ask only a *fair field* for the contest between truth and error, and they promise themselves an easy victory. The claim betrays an utter ignorance of human nature, and one would hardly expect to have it put in by any who admit the cardinal doctrine of

* We are not to be understood, in what we have advanced above respecting the French and American Republics, as maintaining that the Reviewer holds the *liberal scheme* in all its parts which has come into operation in these countries. That he maintains certain parts of the system, such as unlimited toleration, liberty of conscience, &c., is quite obvious; and, in our apprehension, the denial of a National Establishment of Christianity; the total neglect, as far as the nation is concerned, of the Christian Sabbath; the countenancing, without limitation, of the most gross and revolting heresies and false worship; and even the national rejection of the scheme of Revelation and the authority of Jehovah, are intimately connected with the principles to which he has laboured to give currency. From such consequences we believe the mind of our brother recoils with horror; but it surely behoves him to consider seriously, whether he has not, by his writings, propagated principles which lead to them.

human depravity. Error and idolatry are congenial to the natural man; all that their abettors, who are restless in evil, require in order to their obtaining establishment, is freedom from authoritative restraint. Well do they know that the deceptive forms wherewith they can invest them, combined with the propensities of the heart, will do the rest. God, the author of truth, who declares human wisdom to be folly, has chosen methods adapted to the exigencies of the case to counteract the evil. Parental and ministerial and magisterial authority have been instituted by Him, each in its separate province, to be exercised in protecting the truth, and in opposing and restraining such as speak lies in hypocrisy. If any of these is withheld, when error prevails, then the truth has not a *fair field* for combating it. Error finding its ally in the darkness and passions and prejudices of the human heart, is exalted to a vantage ground. What should we think of this argument in relation to *parental* or *ministerial* authority? Would it be held a sufficient reason why a Christian parent should suffer his children to become the prey of every system of lies or delusion, or a Christian minister should leave his people to the intrusion of grievous wolves not sparing the flock, to allege that they should be allowed to hear both sides of the question, that they should be permitted to judge for themselves, and that truth and error should have a *fair field*? And if to act thus in the cases supposed would involve no ordinary criminality, and if authority of both kinds, as well as instruction, should be employed to guard the objects of their care from evil, we desire to know on what proper principle a similar concern can be refused to the Christian civil magistrate in relation to the people to whom he is a nursing-father and a civil parent? In France and America, the would-be-wise men of the age have freed the magistrate from such a concern; and an *open field* has been afforded, according to the Reviewer's plan, for the contest between truth and error. Future generations will have reason to look back with wonder on the infatuation that led Christian men to countenance a system fraught with such consequences as were exhibited in these countries. On the principles which originated the French Revolution, and which have formed the basis of the policy of the United States Government in relation to religion, the sanctions of religion are withdrawn from the civil contracts which bind man to man in society, for it is manifestly absurd for a government which acknowledges not God nor Divine revelation, or its functionaries who may be Heathens or Atheists, to invoke the name and perfections of Deity on their transactions. The community thus deprived of a sense of moral obligation, are left, as far as the State is concerned, wholly destitute of the religious training that might qualify them equally for their duties as citizens, and for the privileges of future blessedness; the most fearful crimes, such as heresy, blasphemy, idolatry, are virtually declared by the law to be of no demerit; and their perpetration would soon be a matter that would excite no repulsion, and, however aggravated, would call for no restrictive visitation. In short, were the liberal scheme to be generally embraced, and Christian governments modelled according to it, the foundations of civil society would be overturned; and, as far as human instrumentality is concerned, every barrier that guards the

religion and morality of the nation would be swept away. The friends of religion and social order will pause before they adopt speculative views that lead to such results; the Reviewer will, we trust, himself consider the matter, and retrace his steps. We believe that in some cases he has erred through ignorance; that he has overlooked the testimony of history in the matter; and that, in his zeal against *The Covenanter*, he has failed to keep in view the necessary connexion between cause and effect, and the manner in which government and laws operate on the opinions and character of society. As we can have no greater joy than to find an erring brother retracing his steps, and embracing the truth which he once impugned, we ask him to consider attentively the comparison which we have instituted; and we earnestly desire that he may be led to renounce his errors on magistracy, and to return to the faith of his fathers on this article.

That we have not overrated the pernicious nature of the consequences that result from the Reviewer's doctrines, will appear from the following quotation from Dr. M'Crie,* the biographer of Knox and Melville, bearing on this subject:—

“ To render the ultimate tendency of these principles (those that relate to the magistrate refraining from *establishing* religion, and suppressing heresy, idolatry, &c.) more apparent to those who cannot trace them to their necessary consequences, let us apply them to the political system of our own country, and let Britain be supposed the scene of future operation. There was a notable period, in which a series of laws were made for advancing and sanctioning a religious reformation, which obtained the approbation of the wise, and a testimony from the good. These have long ago been rescinded by the sweeping act of Charles II.; annulling the authority of the parliaments by which they were made. As these are now politically dead, they must always remain so, and no enlightened statesman must ever propose or assent to any thing like a revival of them. Nor can the existing laws with reference to religion expect to meet with a better fate. All laws ratifying the Protestant religion in Britain, or even recognising Christianity and the Bible, must be set aside. The whole series of laws approving, confirming, and establishing the Presbyterian religion, with the liberties and privileges of the church in Scotland, to continue without any alteration to the people of this land in all future generations; whether granted in the more early periods of the Reformation, or in pursuance of the claim of right at the Revolution, the security of which establishment was declared to be ‘ a fundamental and essential condition ’ of the union between the two kingdoms, ‘ without any derogation thereto for ever; † all of these must be given up with, and exchanged for the visionary and undescribed liberty of all religious professions. The coronation oath, by which his Majesty swore that he would invariably ‘ maintain and preserve the settlement of the true Protestant religion, with the government, worship, and discipline, rights and privileges of the Church of Scotland established by the laws; ’—must be declared null and void: together with that fundamental law of the British constitution, which provides, that none shall ascend the throne of this kingdom who is not a Protestant, or who marries any other than a Protestant. The public provision settled by law for maintaining divine ordinances and religious instruction, must be withdrawn, wholly secularized, and applied to the more laudable and useful purposes of making roads, or constructing bridges, paying subsidies, or carrying on wars.—It would be a fundamental law in the new constitution, that no part of the national property should henceforth be applied to any religious purpose whatsoever, and that no legislature should have it in their power to vote any sum for promoting Christian knowledge in ignorant, poor, or desolate places at home, or for Christianizing extensive regions of the

* M'Crie's Statement, pp. 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28.

† Act for securing the Protestant Religion, and Presbyterian Church Government, Anno 1707.

empire abroad. Public institutions for education, as far as they have religion for their object, and as securities respecting the religious principles of teachers are appointed by government, would also be abolished; as implying that the promoting of religion belonged to civil authority, and impiaging on the corner-stone of the new scheme, that, 'in matters purely religious, civil rulers have no right to judge for any but themselves.'

"The laws against blasphemy, profaneness, and the propagation of infidelity, would be found incompatible with the new opinions. Those which were made for promoting the sanctification of the Sabbath, and for preventing the profanation of that holy day, cannot escape in the application of the extensive and sweeping principle, that 'the power competent to worldly kingdoms respects only the secular interests of society.' No other institution has contributed more to preserve religion in the world than the Sabbath; and its decent and religious observance among any people must greatly depend upon the enactment and due execution of salutary laws. But it cannot be pleaded for as contributing to promote the secular interests of society, except upon the principle, that the observance of religious ordinances does so; nor can the laws in its favour be successfully or consistently vindicated in any other way than upon the principle that magistrates, in their official capacity, have a concern with religion, and that it is their duty externally to support its institutions. But the admission of the last of these principles, and of the first as a ground for magistratical interference, is totally eversive of the New-light scheme. Neither is the Sabbath one of these things which are known by the light of nature, nor is it an ordinance merely moral, but, as far as respects the definite and specified time, is of positive institution. The observance of the *first* day of the week is an appointment of Jesus Christ, the King and Head of his Church, and contained in the New Testament. According to the new principles, civil rulers can have no right to make laws respecting this ordinance, or add sanctions unto it; their conduct in this matter must be represented, according to the reasoning now current, as an invasion on the prerogative of Christ; as if the king of Spain or the emperor of France should presume to ratify and add his sanctions to the laws made by the king and parliament of Great Britain. Such laws must therefore be repealed, and every one left at liberty to pursue his secular interests or pleasure on that day, to walk or ride, to buy or sell, to plough, or sow, or reap, provided he does not disturb the peace of society.

"Such are a few of the pernicious effects which would be produced by the new system. If reduced to practice in Protestant and reformed countries, along with some abuses, it would remove and abolish much that is good and valuable—institutions conducive to the welfare of society, and capable of being improved to the great advancement of religion and the kingdom of Christ. However much such a scheme of government and reformation may be now cried up as sound policy, essential to the liberties of mankind, and necessary to secure the spirituality of Christ's kingdom; for our part, we do not see how it can be freed from impiety and rebellion against the Lord and his Anointed. Its language is too like to that of those who said, 'Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us;' it is a refusal to obey the divine command, to 'serve the Lord the Son,' which is addressed to nations as well as individuals. It would be an irreligious, an ungodly, an unchristian reformation. If adopted by Britain, instead of reviving the spirit and prosecuting the ends of former reformations, it would blot out her name from among the nations of Christendom, and would expose her to the merited exprobaton addressed by God to his ancient people—'Pass over the isles of Chittim and see; and send unto Kedar and consider diligently, and see if there be such a thing: Hath a nation changed their gods, which are yet no gods? But my people have changed their glory for that which doth not profit. Be astonished, O ye heavens, at this, and be horribly afraid, be ye very desolate, saith the Lord!'"*

* Jer. ii. 10—12.

CHAPTER VIII.

INFERENCES FROM THE REVIEWER'S PREMISES, RELATIVE TO UNLIMITED PASSIVE TOLERATION, AND UNRESTRICTED FREE AGENCY.

AFTER the lengthened comparison which we have instituted between the principles of *The Covenanter* and those of the Reviewer, on magistracy, we judge it necessary to exhibit a few legitimate and unavoidable conclusions from the doctrines taught in the Review—that the aberrations of the Reviewer from the Standards of the Reformed Church may be still more manifest.

1. If the plea of unbounded toleration of whatever is called religion, and the right of unrestricted free agency in all such matters, is sustained as valid, it follows, that it is tyranny of the most aggravated character—tyranny over conscience, and the inalienable right of private judgment, in a Christian nation to enact, and in the civil magistrate to execute, any penal statutes, positive or negative, against any form of false religion. All such enactments are, besides, at direct variance with the mildness and clemency of the new dispensation. But penal enactments against popery, prelacy, heresy, &c., formed an integral part of the Presbyterian Covenanted establishments of Britain and Ireland during the purest period of the Reformation. That establishment, therefore, was essentially Antichristian, tyrannical, and slavish. Covenanters! Do you admit the premises? Do you sustain the spurious plea of unrestricted free agency in matters of religion, misnamed liberty of conscience? If so, you cannot possibly shrink from the avowal of the conclusion—the conclusion every right-hearted Covenanter detests.

2. If molestation from the magistrate for whatever men call religion be persecution, the assumption with which the Reviewer sets out, and which pervades his whole pamphlet, it follows, that our solemn Covenants, our excellent Confession of Faith, and our admirable Act and Testimony, are instruments of that infernal thing. It matters not as to the legitimacy of the conclusion, whether they do or do not approve of depriving heretics, idolaters, and blasphemers, of life; the least infliction, negative as well as positive, is persecution. For it is a maxim universally received—*magis et minus non variant speciem*, “difference in degree does not change the kind.” It is an atrocious measure to exclude, by law, any Infidel, Papist, Arian, Socinian, Neologist, or Atheist, from any place of power or influence in any department of the state, in the cabinet, in the senate, in the army, in the navy, at the bar, or on the bench. Exclusion of this kind would be regarded by devotees of corrupt systems an infliction of much greater severity, a more intolerable hardship, than perhaps corporal pains or pecuniary mulcts to a considerable extent. Covenanters! You cannot but perceive that, by your most solemn vows, both at Baptism and the Lord's Supper, you have pledged yourselves by the terms of communion sanctioned in our Church, to be aiding and assisting in this alleged infernal work. If, by these standards, false religionists, of whatever stamp, are rendered ineligible

to any place of power, honour, or influence in a reformed state, they are convicted by the premises of a persecuting character, and should be abjured as bonds and instruments of iniquity. Covenanters! Are you prepared for shooting the gulf of apostacy with others? If not, beware of the doctrine which tends to it.

3. According to the Reviewer's principle, the Christian magistrate is not properly and exclusively the *nursing father* of the Church of Christ. The designation in the inspired page is a misnomer. By the premises, the people of God's curse should have the same rights by law as the children of the promise. He must provide equal advantages, and secure equal protection for clubs of infidels and associations of idolaters, as for that Church which is the pillar and ground of the truth. The Bible may be openly and impudently blasphemed, or it may be corrupted by interpolations and mistranslations, or it may be mutilated, and its entire instructions not be allowed free course. Heretical pulpits may every week resound with blasphemous effusions—infidel and blasphemous presses may be put in requisition. All this may be done with impunity, because done under the pretence of conscience. Thus another gospel may be palmed or imposed upon the people than the gospel of Christ—another Christ may be preached than the Christ of God. No matter, it is religion and conscience; and who may dare to interfere? The imposture must not be checked, nor the impostor molested except by argument. No pulpit must be closed by law, no press must be muzzled. No civil order must be taken with any Voltaire, or Paine, or Carlile. To God only are they accountable. The magistrate has no concern, by virtue of his office, with keeping religion pure—no concern, in the event of the salvation or destruction of the souls of his subjects. The ministers of religion *may, if they please*, look after these things; but the ministry of the magistrate has no respect whatever to the subject's chief good. Such, Covenanters, and Christians of every name, are specimens of the *abominable* consequences of the doctrine of unbounded toleration of all religions, and unrestricted liberty of conscience. And, mark well, these consequences, not like those of the Reviewer in many instances, follow from the premises without force or straining.

4. The doctrine of the repeal of the penal laws against heresy, idolatry, &c., or of God's changing his plan, without his giving any notice, or supplying any record of the fact, would be an unaccountable and unprecedented anomaly in the government of God.

That the New Testament contains a record of the fact, the Reviewer does not attempt to show, and finds himself driven to the alternative of making it a parallel case with the change of the Jewish Sabbath, though the attempt is puerile and vain. The fact of the primitive Christian Church, under the infallible ministry of the apostles, assembling regularly on the first day of the week for the solemn services of religion, affords a most irrefutable proof of the change of the Sabbath. Besides, as being consecrated to the exercises of piety by the authority of Christ, instead of the Jewish Sabbath, it was called, from the time of the Apostles, the *Lord's Day*. These well-attested facts leave no room to dispute as to the change of the Sabbath. No record could be more convincing than that which these

facts supply, and now there is but one opinion on this subject throughout Christendom. Such satisfactory notices in a matter of such importance as the change of the Sabbath, is just what was reasonably to be expected from the character of the Great Head and Legislator of the Church. The repeal of the ceremonial law, with its sanctions, and the repeal of the law of the Levitical priesthood, are unquestionably recorded in the New Testament. Thus the rule of analogy is fully established, and the most complete evidence from analogy obtained, that had the law against the crimes in question been repealed, the fact would have been as explicitly recorded as those referred to. It would reflect on the moral character of God, and the equity of his government, not to make the fact of the repeal of any of his laws as public and explicit as the law itself previously had been. Such conduct on the part of human legislators would be utterly indispensable—it would be regarded as a violation of the most obvious principles of political justice. And “shall mortal man be more just than God; shall a man be more pure than his Maker?” From this blasphemous conclusion it will be impossible to shrink, if the Scripture is silent as to the alleged fact, so that its patrons are driven to the alternative of fine-spun theories and forced analogies, instead of reason, Scripture, or fact in its support.

Can it be believed, had the law in question been repealed, that when the Apostles were brought before rulers and kings for Christ's sake, for a testimony against them, as he had foretold, they would not have availed themselves of the fact in defence of their lives and liberties. Neither James, the brother of John, whom Herod killed with the sword, nor Peter, whom he also imprisoned, pleaded with Herod the repeal of that law, with which he must have been acquainted. And when afterwards Paul made so eloquent a defence before Herod Agrippa, he never once touches at the fact, though he knew Agrippa to be expert in all the questions and customs that were among the Jews. Had the fact been so, it is unaccountably strange, that when in conducting his defence he found he had made such a favourable impression on the king, he should omit to urge the plea of unrestricted free agency in religious matters. It is passing strange that, in such an admirable appeal, he should have omitted to plead, as would be done at present, that religion, whether true or false it matters not, is a thing with which no civil ruler on earth has any right to interfere, being an affair altogether between God and every man's conscience. Yet so it was, that neither that deep concern which he took in the conversion of his judges and auditors, nor his regard for his liberty and life, induced him to give the most distant hint of its repeal. What, then, is the conclusion? Clearly this, that the apostles knew nothing of the alleged fact, otherwise they would not have been ashamed to declare it as an important part of the counsel of God. Modern Apostles now, in the nineteenth century, know better. What a disparity, not between the ninth, but between the first and the nineteenth century! How amazingly rapid the “march of intellect,” more especially in the science of Scripture politics!

CHAPTER IX.

MISREPRESENTING THE PRINCIPLES OF THE CHURCH.

The Covenanter the uniform advocate of the doctrine of the Standards—The Reviewer obviously denies and impugns them—The Reviewer studiously conceals the obnoxious parts of his system—Its grand peculiarities—Comments on his admission respecting seditious heretics—Quotation from the “*Explanation and Defence of Terms of Communion*”—Judicial laws and toleration—Sentiments of the Reviewer and Standards, &c. contrasted, &c. &c.

IN all that we have advanced on the article of magistracy, either in this reply, in *The Covenanter*, or elsewhere, we have endeavoured to abide closely by the sentiments propounded in the Confession and Testimony of the Reformed Covenanted Church. We can in all good conscience declare, that since the commencement of this controversy, we have carefully re-considered the principles which they exhibit, and the manner of statement and illustration pursued by the compilers. It has ever been our ambition to hold fast, with unwavering firmness, the principles to which we once pledged our solemn adherence; and no other object have we had in view, in aught that we have written on the subjects in dispute, than to display a standard for truth—the same which our fathers unfurled, and by which the martyrs fell.

It has been our painful task, in dealing with the avowed sentiments of the Reviewer on magistracy and other collateral subjects, to mark his departure from the doctrines of our authoritative Standards—Standards to which he had frequently, in the most public and solemn manner, given his assent. We are well aware that this is a serious charge, and nothing but the most convincing evidence could have induced us at first to make it, or now to repeat it. This evidence we shall now lay before our readers, that they may be enabled to judge for themselves. From the exhibition, it will be altogether apparent that he not only has charged us falsely, but that he himself has misrepresented the doctrines of the Church on the article of magistracy in the most glaring manner. In furnishing answers to two inquiries which he has mooted—Are the principles taught in *The Covenanter* believed by the Supreme Judicatories of the Reformed Church? Are they taught in our subordinate Standards? The Reviewer has brought forward quotations from various writings to prove a negative in both cases. These quotations, it is worthy of remark, either speak nothing at all on the point in dispute, or are from no document embodied in our Terms of Communion; yet it is by such evidence that the Reviewer attempts to prove his positions that the views of *The Covenanter* on magistracy are heterodox, and that his own New-light scheme exhibits the principles of genuine Covenanters in all ages! *The Covenanter*, on the other hand, has produced, and can still produce, an host of documents, taken from records of greater antiquity, and much higher authority, in direct opposition to this scheme, and in proof of the sentiments advanced on the magistrate's right to sanction ecclesiastical proceedings—to suppress and eradicate gross error and heresy—and to restrain and punish

obstinate and perverse heretics, blasphemers, and idolaters. We shall subjoin, without comment, a few specimens of the sentiments of the Reviewer and Reformed Standards, placed in juxta-position, that our readers may be the better prepared to judge whether our sentiments or those of the Reviewer are most in accordance with our subordinate Standards.

Before exhibiting this contrast, it may be worth a moment's attention to consider, and expose, in the way of a hasty comment, some of the leading positions of his scheme. These are stated in his pamphlet with much caution and artifice, for it seems to be one chief aim of his writings rather to shake the faith of his readers in doctrines long received in the Church, than to develope very clearly his own system. Like other New-light innovators, he can find fault and dogmatise, and exhibit fancied incongruities, while he sedulously keeps back the plan of his own mighty reformation in politics and ecclesiastical standards. This, to say the least, and to use a phrase of his own, may "be very good policy; but whether it be honourable or dishonourable, glorious or inglorious, are quite different questions." Notwithstanding all this studied concealment, however, the grand peculiarities of the Reviewer's liberal system may be collected without much difficulty from his pamphlet. That heresy and idolatry should not be suppressed by the Christian civil magistrate, and that heretics and idolaters should not in any case be coerced or punished—that the judicial laws which respected the punishment of heresy and idolatry are wholly abrogated under the New Testament—and that to all heretics and idolaters should be extended by the magistrate unbounded passive toleration. These are the sentiments propounded in several publications of the Reviewer, and carefully inculcated, and frequently insisted on in his attack on *The Covenanter*.

In attempting to give currency to this latitudinarian scheme, he admits, indeed, that heresy should be authoritatively restrained or punished when the heretic or idolater is guilty of that for which every other person should be punished—when he commits a direct act of sedition or rebellion, but not that heresy or idolatry, as such, should be restrained or punished.* However specious this admission, the candid reader will observe that it is still in keeping with his doctrine, that the civil magistrate, as such, may not take cognizance of violations of the first or second precepts of the Divine law. Sedition and rebellion are crimes that come under those prohibited by the second table; these the magistrate may coerce or punish from a regard to the outward interests of civil society, while he must not in any case employ his authority for correcting that which manifestly strikes against the Divine honour, or is prejudicial to the spiritual interests of the community!

The Reviewer, in endeavouring to show that the sentiments of *The Covenanter* respecting the restraint and punishment of heresy and idolatry, are opposed to those of the Supreme Judicatories of the Reformed Presbyterian Church, and that his own views are in accordance with them, refers repeatedly to the "EXPLANATION AND DEFENCE OF

* *Covenanter Reviewed*, p. 106.

THE TERMS OF COMMUNION." Again and again he brings forward this document, in order to show that the Scottish Reformed Synod does not hold, that gross heretics and idolaters should be punished in a reformed nation by the civil magistrate. Respecting his quotation, and the purpose for which it is adduced, we remark, 1. That it is manifestly irrelevant, as, in the very same document and elsewhere, as we shall afterwards show, our Scottish brethren assert the principle for which we contend—the duty of Christian civil magistrates to coerce gross heretics and idolaters. 2. That the compilers of the *Explanation and Defence of the Terms of Communion*, in the passage quoted in the Review, vindicate the character of the members of the Church from an unjust aspersion of maintaining the principle of unwarrantable coercion of evil-doers, while the great principle of coercing the heretical and idolatrous, asserted in our Standards, is never attempted in the smallest degree to be set aside; and, farther, they defend the nation for restraining heretics at the reforming period, taking the lowest possible ground, because of their being seditious and rebellious. The *Acts of Assembly* referred to, it is true, are not incorporated in our Standards or Testimonies, nor is the approbation of them ever imposed on any person as a term of admission to the privileges of the Church, but their acknowledgment is demanded from *every minister* of the Church, as a part of his solemn ordination engagements. For the information of our readers, and to help the recollection of our brother the Reviewer, we subjoin a few of the queries addressed to licentiates in the Reformed Church at their ordination to the ministry:—

" 2. Do you believe the doctrines contained in the Westminster Confession of Faith, and Catechisms Larger and Shorter, to be founded on the Word of God, and agreeable thereunto—as such, do you acknowledge them the principles of your faith ?

" 6. Do you promise to follow no divisive courses, either in theory or practice, from said doctrine, worship, discipline, and government ?

" 8. Do you own the Covenants, National and Solemn League, and Acts of Assembly, from A.D. 1638 to 1649 ?

" 9. Do you consider the cause for which the martyrs suffered, under Charles 1st and 2d, and James the 7th, the cause of truth, and in conformity with our national engagements ?

" 10. Do you own the Act, Declaration, and Testimony emitted in behalf of the doctrine, worship, discipline, and government of the Reformed Church, and will you endeavour sincerely to adhere thereunto ?"

It need not be alleged, as the Reviewer has virtually done, that he holds *substantially* the principles exhibited in the *Acts of Assembly* on the article of magistracy, and that he differs from them only in several minute or unimportant circumstances. The Scottish brethren might consistently make such a declaration, as they have nowhere, throughout the " *Explanation and Defence of the Terms of Communion*," denied the doctrine of magistratical interference for the suppression of heresy and idolatry, and some of the compilers have in their writings expressed themselves as strongly on this article as *The Covenanter*; while the Reviewer has publicly denied and impugned this doctrine, though it is a principle which pervades the *Acts of Assembly*. Surely such conduct is something far different from holding *substantially* with them the sentiments which they maintained.

Further, the Reviewer does not positively maintain that the judi-

cial laws, with regard to any other crimes than heresy and idolatry, are repealed under the New Testament dispensation, and he asserts that, with regard to heresy and idolatry, they are utterly abrogated. In proof of this position, we are favoured with nothing but his bare assertion. On the other hand, we have repeatedly taught, that those laws which guard any precept of the Decalogue, and, of course, such as refer to the punishment of false teachers and idolaters, are unrepealed, and are still to be applied by the magistrate, as a civil sanction, as their spirit and general equity may require. In speaking on this subject in *The Covenanter*, the preceding parts of this Reply, and elsewhere, we have not only afforded ample proof of this position from Scripture inference and analogy, but have shown the consonance of our sentiments on this article with those of the eminent advocates of the Covenanted Reformation of former times. Let any one consult the writings of Knox and Rutherford of former times, and of Henderson of a later day, and there cannot remain the shadow of a doubt that the Reviewer is utterly at variance with them in this particular. In order to place our opinion relative to the judicial law in the most disagreeable light, the Reviewer represents us teaching that the denial of the obligation of the laws respecting the punishment of heresy, blasphemy, and idolatry, involves the entire removal of the sanctions of the Divine law.* It is enough for us to reply to this unfounded allegation, that the writer in *The Covenanter* spoke only of the *civil sanctions* of the Divine law—the subject did not require him to speak of sanctions in general, or of those which referred to God as Lord of the conscience, to the judgment to come, or to the eternal state.

In relation to *toleration*, we may finally remark, that both we and the Reviewer hold the sinfulness and evil of authoritative toleration; that we hold with him the propriety of passive toleration, but with this important difference—he would limit it only by the principle, that the magistrate should repress blasphemy and Sabbath-breaking, whereas, we maintain the propriety of the additional limitation, that as the magistrate is keeper of the whole of the first table of the law, he should also restrain heresy and idolatry, to which the Reviewer, in his liberality, would extend unlimited toleration.

That our readers may be prepared to judge of the unsoundness of the Reviewer's scheme, we now proceed, according to the design announced at the commencement of the chapter, to contrast his sentiments relative to the toleration of idolatry and heresy by the magistrate, liberty of conscience, the judicial law, &c., with extracts from the Standards and other approved books of reference of the Reformed Covenanted Church—

THE REV. JOHN PAUL, IN "THE
COVENANTER REVIEWED."

THE STANDARDS, &c.

"Such is the doctrine taught
in *The Covenanter*. The civil

"That Papistry and supersti-
tion may be utterly suppressed,

* *Covenanter Reviewed*, p. 56—58.

THE REV. JOHN PAUL, IN "THE
COVENANTER REVIEWED."

THE STANDARDS, &c.

magistrate, he declares, should use his authority in punishing an idolater as well as in punishing a thief, a murderer, or a traitor. Against this doctrine I enter my protest. If Covenanters held such principles, I would not continue a Covenanter for a moment."—Pp. 19, 20.

"The greatness of the crime of heresy is so far from being a reason why the civil magistrate should visit it with a sorer punishment than death, that I am not sure that it may not be a reason why he should not punish it at all. A justice of the peace must not try, condemn, and punish murderers and traitors. Why? Not on account of the smallness, but on account of the greatness of their crimes. Such criminals must be arraigned before a higher tribunal. The seventy elders, appointed as inferior magistrates, were to judge the smaller matters themselves, whilst the weightier matters were referred to Moses. On a similar principle, may not the punishment of heresy be a matter too high for any earthly magistrate, and may it not on that very account be wisely referred to the Judge of all."—Page 24.

"That the civil magistrate should punish heretics as well as murderers, appears to me a gross

according to the intention of the Acts of Parliament, repeated in the 5th Act, Parl. 20, King James VI. And to that end they ordain all Papists and Priests to be punished with manifold civil and ecclesiastical pains, as adversaries to God's true religion, preached, and by law established, within this realm, Act 24, Parl. 11, King James VI.; as common enemies to all Christian government, Act 18, Parl. 16, King James VI.; as rebellers and gainstanders of our Sovereign Lord's authority, Act 47, Parl. 3, King James VI."—(Acts of Parliament embodied in the National Covenant, and afterwards approved by the Compilers of the Act and Testimony.)

"That all kings and princes at their coronation, and reception of their princely authority, shall make their faithful promise by their solemn oath, in the presence of the eternal God, that, during the whole time of their lives, they shall serve the same eternal God, to the uttermost of their power, according as he hath required in his most holy word, contained in the Old and New Testament; and according to the same word, shall maintain the true religion of Christ Jesus, the preaching of his holy word, the due and right ministration of the sacraments now received and preached within this realm, (according to the Confession of Faith immediately preceding,) and shall abolish and gainstand all false religion contrary to the same; and shall rule the people committed to their charge, according to the will and command of God revealed in his foresaid word, and according to the laudable laws and constitu-

absurdity. The cases are not parallel; they are exceedingly different. About murder there is scarcely any difference of opinion, as we have seen above; about heresy there is an almost endless variety of sentiment. The punishment of murder *preserves* the public peace; the punishment of heresy *destroys* it."—Note, page 24.

"With great respect, I would ask *The Covenanter* two questions. First, *Who* would you punish as heretics? Second, What punishment would you inflict on them? First, *Who* would *The Covenanter* punish as heretics?"—Page 25.*

"Were the doctrine universally admitted, *that heresies should be suppressed by the sword of the civil magistrate*, and that heretics and idolaters should be punished as well as thieves, murderers, and traitors, the consequence would be awful. The whole Christian world, so far as I can see, would become an *Acelanda*—a field of blood!"—Page 28, 29.

tions received in this realm, no-wise repugnant to the said will of the eternal God; and shall procure, to the uttermost of their power, to the kirk of God, and whole Christian people, true and perfect peace in all time coming; 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."—(Coronation Oath in the National Covenant.)

"That we shall in like manner, without respect of persons, endeavour the extirpation of Popery, Prelacy, (that is, church-government by archbishops, bishops, their chancellors, and commissaries, deans, deans and chapters, archdeacons, and all other ecclesiastical officers depending on that hierarchy,) superstition, heresy, schism, profaneness, and whatsoever shall be found to be contrary to sound doctrine and the power of godliness; lest we partake in other men's sins, and thereby be in danger to receive of their plagues; and that the Lord may be one, and his name one, in the three kingdoms."—(Solemn League and Covenant, Art. 2.)

"Where any thing is amiss, we will endeavour a reformation in a fair and orderly way, and where reformation is settled, we resolve, with that authority where-with God hath vested us, to maintain and defend it in peace and liberty, against all trouble that

* To maintain strict accuracy of quotation, we have refrained from correcting the grammatical blunders.

THE REV. JOHN PAUL, IN "THE
COVENANTER REVIEWED."

THE STANDARDS, &c.

"Covenanters! Pause, before you adopt principles, the practical tendency of which is, not to promote, but to *exterminate* Christianity. Covenanters! Pause before you embrace principles which have already deluged the world with blood, and would deluge it again, if permitted to operate."—Page 31.

"Such are the authorized views of our Church. According to these views, the civil magistrate is to punish no man because he is a *heretic*, but because he is a *rebel*. When the heretic becomes a rebel, *then, and not till then*, is he to be proceeded against by the power of the civil magistrate."—Page 36.

"Sins striking against God, and not so immediately affecting the interests of society, are not *less* now than under the law; they are *greater*. Our light being greater, these sins are more aggravated. They are not, however, to be treated in the same manner. As God himself does not treat them in the same manner, neither should *we*. As he has changed *his* plan of discipline, we should change *ours* also."—Page 45.

can come from without, and against all heresies, sects and schisms, which may arise from within."—(Acts of Assem. 1638.)

"We make bold to warn your Majesty really, that the guilt which cleaveth fast to your Majesty and to your Throne, is such as, (whatsoever flattering preachers or unfaithful counsellors may say to the contrary) if not timely repented, cannot but involve yourself and your posterity under the wrath of the ever-living God, for your being guilty of the shedding of the blood of many thousands of your majesty's best subjects; for your permitting the mass, and other idolatry, both in your own family and in your dominions."—(Remonstrance to the king—Acts of Assembly, Feb. 1645.)

"So it cannot be denied, that upon these passages and proceedings hath followed the interrupting of the so much longed for reformation of religion, of the settling by Presbyterial government, and of the suppressing of heresies and dangerous errors, which works the Parliament had taken in hand."—(Declaration and Brotherly Exhortation in the Acts of Assembly, Aug. 1647.)

"We are also very sensible of the great and imminent dangers into which this common cause of religion is now brought by the growing and spreading of most dangerous errors in England, to the obstructing and hindering of the begun reformation, as, namely, beside many others, Socinianism, Arminianism, Anabaptism, Antinomianism, Brownism, Erastianism, Independency, and that

THE REV. JOHN PAUL, IN "THE
COVENANTER REVIEWED."

THE STANDARDS, &c.

"Had Christians known 'what manner of spirit they were of'—had they distinctly adverted to the change of dispensation with regard to discipline, errors and heresies would never have been punished by civil pains and penalties. The punishment of error and heresy by the power of the civil magistrate was certainly very culpable. It was completely at variance with the spirituality, the mildness, and the clemency of the Christian dispensation. But, alas! how weak and inconsistent a creature is man! Avoiding one extreme, we have fallen into its opposite. Guarding against persecution, we have abolished church discipline. Laying aside the civil sword, we have also laid aside ecclesiastical censures. In this we have displayed our weakness and our folly. We foolishly imagine that error, heresy, and idolatry, are not so sinful *now* as they were under the legal dispensation—because they are not punished by such awful visitations. The very reverse, however, is the fact. They are much *more* sinful. Their criminality is certainly much enhanced by the immense superiority of our light and privileges. Accordingly, we find that the punishment *then* threatened, was *temporal*; but that which is *now* threatened, is *eternal*."—Page 45, 46.

which is called (by abuse of the word) liberty of conscience, being indeed liberty of error, scandal, schism, heresy, dishonouring God, opposing the truth, hindering reformation, and seducing others."—(Declaration and Brotherly Exhortation.)

"The General Assembly considering how the errors of Independency and separation have in our neighbour kingdom of England spread as a gangrene, and do daily eat as a canker; insomuch, that exceeding many errors, heresies, schisms, and blasphemies, have issued therefrom, and are sheltered thereby; and how possible it is for the same evils to invade and overspread this kirk and kingdom, (lying within the same island,) by the spreading of their erroneous books, pamphlets, libels, and letters, * * * that some course may be taken to hinder the dispersing thereof: and hereby all Presbyteries and Synods are ordained to try and process such as shall transgress against the premises or any part of the same. And the Assembly also doth seriously recommend to civil magistrates, that they may be pleased to be assisting to ministers and Presbyteries in execution of this Act, and to concur with their authority in every thing to that effect."—(Acts of Assembly, August,* 1647.)

"That notwithstanding hereof, the civil magistrate may and ought to suppress, by corporal or civil punishments, such as by spread-

* This was the Assembly that received and approved of the Westminster Confession of Faith.

THE REV. JOHN PAUL, IN "THE
COVENANTER REVIEWED."

THE STANDARDS, &c.

The Covenanter, in reply to all this reasoning, may call upon me to produce one portion of Scripture in which the judicial laws against idolatry and heresy are expressly abrogated. To this call I will respond—*when?* As soon as *The Covenanter* produces a portion of Scripture in which the law enjoining the observance of the Jewish Sabbath is expressly abrogated—whenever *The Covenanter* produces a text which expressly declares that we should not observe the Jewish Sabbath, I will produce a text which expressly declares that we should not punish heretics and idolaters as well as murderers and traitors."—P. 52.*

"Some flagrant violators of the moral law of God are in this life visited with *terrible punishments*—some are punished, *but not so severely*—whilst others are *scarcely punished at all*."—Page 54.

"No more is God, our Heavenly Father, irresolute and capricious, who, during the *minority* of his church, chastised the idolater with temporal death; but now, under the mild dispensation of the Gospel, when his church has arrived at *maturity*, lays aside

ing error or heresy, or by fomenting schism, greatly dishonour God, dangerously hurt religion, and disturb the peace of the kirk. Which heads of doctrine (howsoever opposed by the authors and fomenters of the foresaid errors respectively) the General Assembly doth firmly believe, own, maintain, and commend unto others, as solid, true, orthodox, grounded upon the Word of God, consonant to the judgment both of the ancient and the best Reformed Kirks."—(CXI. Propositions, 8th Head.)

"As also, that as the ambassadors of Jesus Christ and his watchmen, you will give reasonable warning to the Honourable Houses of Parliament, that now (after the loss of the opportunity of so many years) they would, in their places, repair the house of the Lord, that lieth so long desolate, and promote the work of reformation and uniformity according to the covenant. For if the Honourable Houses of Parliament had timely made use of that power, which God hath put in their hands for suppressing of sectaries, and had taken a speedy course for settling of Presbyterial government, (a special and effectual means appointed by God to purge his Church from all scandals in doctrine and practice,) then had not the insolency of that party arisen to such a height, as to give occasion to the malignants of both kingdoms to justify and bless themselves in their old opposition to the work of reformation, and to encourage one another

* See our remarks on the change of the Sabbath, p. 75.

the rod of temporal punishment, and threatens with the penalty of *death eternal*."—Page 55.

"Under the legal dispensation, God said to the idolater, 'I will punish you with temporal death; I will cut you off by the sword of the civil magistrate.' Under the Gospel dispensation, he says, 'I will punish you with **ETERNAL** death.'"—Page 56.

to new and more dangerous attempts."—(Acts of Assembly, Aug. 2, 1648.)

"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 Christianity, 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 lawfully be called to account, and proceeded against by the censures of the Church, and by the power of the civil magistrate."—(Westminster Confession, Chap. xx. Art. 4.)

The following Scriptures, among others, are referred to by the compilers in proof of the doctrine which they have here advanced:—Ezra vii. 23, "Whatsoever is commanded by the God of heaven, let it be diligently done for the house of the God of heaven: for why should there be wrath against the realm of the king and his sons?" Ver. 25, "And thou, Ezra, after the wisdom of thy God that is in thine hand, set ma-

THE STANDARDS, &c.

gistrates and judges, which may judge all the people that are beyond the river, all such as know the laws of thy God; and teach ye them that know them not." Ver. 26, "And whosoever will not do the law of thy God, and the law of the king, let judgment be executed speedily upon him, whether it be unto death, or to banishment, or to confiscation of goods, or to imprisonment."—Zech. xiii. 2, "And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the Lord of hosts, that I will cut off the names of the idols out of the land, and they shall no more be remembered: and also I will cause the prophets and the unclean spirits to pass out of the land." Ver. 3, "And it shall come to pass, that when any shall yet prophecy, 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."

"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 corruptions and abuses in worship and discipline prevented or reformed, and all the ordinances of God duly settled, administered, and observed. For the better effecting whereof, he hath power to call synods, to be present at them, and to provide that whatsoever is transacted in them be according to the

THE STANDARDS, &c.

mind of God."—(Westminster Confession, Chap. xxiii. Art. 3.)

"Lev. xxiv. 16, 'And he that blasphemeth the name of the Lord, he shall surely be put to death; and all the congregation shall certainly stone him: as well the stranger as he that is born in the land, when he blasphemeth the name of the Lord, shall be put to death.' 2 Chron. xxxiv. 33, 'And Josiah took away all the abominations out of all the countries that pertained to the children of Israel, and made all that were present in Israel to serve, even to serve the Lord their God. And all his days they departed not from following the Lord, the God of their fathers.'

"As also the disapproving, detesting, opposing, all false worship; and, according to each one's place and calling, removing it, and all monuments of idolatry."—(Larger Catechism, Quest. 108.)

Among the sins forbidden in the second commandment is mentioned—"tolerating a false religion."—(Larg. Cat. Quest. 109.)

In the second petition we pray that the Church may be "countenanced and maintained by the civil magistrate."—(Larger Cat. Quest. 191.)

To assist in understanding the views of the Westminster Divines on the subjects to which these extracts refer, we subjoin the following extracts from the Letters of Bailie, one of the Ministers of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, who was a Commissioner to the Westminster Assembly:—

THE STANDARDS, &c.

“ Only they* in New England are more strict and rigid than we, or any Church, to suppress, by the power of the magistrate, all who are not of their way, to banishment ordinarily, and presently even to death lately, or perpetual slavery.”—(Baillie's Letters, vol. ii. p. 17.)

“ The Independents here, finding they have not the magistrate so obsequious as in New England, turn their pens, as you will see in MS., to take from the magistrate all power of taking any coercive order with the vilest heretics. Not only they praise your magistrate, who for policy gives some secret tolerance to divers religions, wherein, as I conceive, your divines preach against them as great sinners, but avow, that by God's command the magistrate is discharged to put the least discourtesy on any man, Jew, Turk, Papist, Socinian, or whatever, for his religion.”—(Ibid. vol. ii. p. 18.)

“ Many of them (the Independents) preach, and some print, a liberty of conscience, at least the great equity of a toleration of all religions; that every man should be permitted, without any fear so much as of discountenance from the magistrate, to profess publicly his conscience, were he never so erroneous, and also live according thereunto, if he trouble not the public peace by any seditious or wicked practice.”—(Ibid. vol. ii. p. 85.)

“ The Independents have the least zeal to the truth of God of any men we know. Blasphemous

THE STANDARDS, &c.

heresies are now spread here more than ever in any part of the world; yet they are not only silent, but are patrons and pleaders for liberty almost to them all.”—(Ibid. vol. ii. p. 197.)

“ And therefore as he doth now detest and abhor all Popery, superstition, and idolatry, together with prelacy, and all errors, heresy, schism, and profaneness, and resolves not to tolerate, much less allow any of these, in any part of his majesty's dominions, but to oppose himself thereto, and to endeavour the extirpation thereof to the utmost of his power.”—(King's Declaration at Dunfermline, 1651, and approved by the friends of the Covenanted Reformation.)

“ We cannot but detest, abominate, and abhor, and likewise protest against the vast unlimited toleration of error and sectaries, which, as a necessary and native consequence of this union, will inevitably follow thereupon, and which will certainly have a bad influence upon all the parts, pieces, and branches of the reformation, both in doctrine, worship, discipline, and government, yea even upon the most momentous and fundamental articles of the Christian faith.”—(Protestation and Declaration of the United Societies against the Union, 1707.)

“ Yet, alas! so far has the land been defective in this, that upon the contrary, it hath been polluted with idolatrous masses; altars and other monuments of idolatry were suffered again to be erected; the

* The Independents of that day.

penal statutes were disabled, stopped and suspended by an absolute arbitrary power, by means of a toleration, in its own nature tending, and in its design intending to introduce Popery and slavery; which yet was accepted and addressed for by many backslidden ministers, who to this day have made no public acknowledgment of the sin of so doing, notwithstanding all the reformation which is bragged of; and was countenanced, complied and concurred with by many people, without a testimony, or endeavour to withstand it."—(Acknowledgment of Sins in the Auchinsaugh Renovation, p. 60, last edition.)

"But these lands have again transgressed the Lord's commandments, and broken this part of the Covenant of the Lord, by receiving, admitting, supporting, and subjecting to such, for kings and queens over these realms, as want the qualifications required in God's word, and enacted by the righteous and laudable laws of the land, to be its magistrates, superior and inferior: which were not brought under Covenant ties and obligations, to be for God and religion in their own persons and families, and to advance and preserve the same allenerly in their dominions; but in place thereof have come under oath and obligation to countenance, protect, and advance the Romish superstitions and innovations in the worship of God and government of the church, which the Covenant binds these kingdoms to suppress and extirpate, and in consequence of, and conformity to, these obligations, do maintain and defend, or tolerate and allow Prelacy and Sectarian errors in their domin-

ions, contrary to the true religion, and sound doctrine; contrary to justice and equity; yea, contrary to that trust, especially committed to the hands of Christian magistrates, who for that end have the sword given them, *That they may be a terror to evil-doers*, preserve and defend the true religion and professors thereof, and punish and extirpate false religion, and heresies, and bring the wheel over the broachers, maintainers and abettors thereof."—(Ibid. p. 73.)

That these sentiments have been maintained by genuine Covenanters of a later period, is evident from the two following extracts:—

"And where would be the tyranny of God's public minister, appointed to be the keeper of both tables of his 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

THE STANDARDS, &c.

God's judgments, and subversive of the good of civil society, why may not God's minister punish the same according to his own holy law?"—(Rev. T. Henderson's Preface to Testimony Bearing Exemplified, p. 13, 14.)

“ The Jewish magistracy was an ordinance of God. Magistracy is still an ordinance of God, to be submitted to for the Lord's sake. The Jewish magistrates were God's deputies and ministers. Christian magistrates lawfully constituted are still powers ordained by God, and ministers of God for good, to whom we must be subject for conscience sake. The revealed will of God was the proper statute book of the civil law of the Jews: the will of God revealed in Scripture is still the supreme standard of all civil laws among Christians, on which they ought to be founded, and by which their moral obligation is circumscribed. And the Jewish magistrates were ordained to promote the welfare of the Church, that they might thereby promote the welfare of the state, in subserviency to the glory of God, the king of the nation. Christian magistrates are still bound to do the same as they have opportunity.* 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

THE STANDARDS, &c.

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?"—(Ibid. p. 17.)

“ And here we may observe, that while this Church and nation contended for the obtaining a legal establishment of the ecclesiastical polity, they were no less concerned to have that other distinct ordinance of God, civil magistracy, unalterably settled, in agreeableness to the rule of God's word. This appears, not only by their earnest contendings against the abuse of that ordinance amongst them; but also, by the public acts of parliament, obliging Prince and People to be of one perfect religion, and wholly incapacitating all persons for bearing any office, supreme or subordinate, who refused, by their solemn oath, to approve of, and, to the utmost of their power, engage to defend the true religion, as contained in the word of God, and Confession of Faith founded thereon, then believed, and publicly professed within the realm, ratified and generally sworn to in the National Covenant, during the whole course of their lives, in all their civil administrations.”—(Act and Testimony of the Reformed Presbyterian Church, page 10, Belfast edition.)

“ From what is noticed above, the Presbytery cannot but declare their hearty approbation of the zeal, courage, and faithfulness of our honoured ancestors, in their valiant contendings for the valua-

* Deut. xvi. 18, 19; Rom. xiii. 1—6; Psal. lxxxii. 1—6; Isa. xlix. 23, and x. 3, 10, 16; Acts iv. 19; Brown on Toleration, pp. 60, 61.

THE STANDARDS, &c.

ble liberties and privileges of the spiritual kingdom of the Messiah, until they got the same established, and the nations brought under the most solemn, sacred, and inviolable engagements, to maintain every branch of this glorious reformation; a reformation not only from the more gross errors and idolatries of Popery, but from the more refined superstition of Prelacy, and all that Antichristian and Erastian supremacy that in former times had been exercised on the heritage of the Lord; a reformation of both the divine ordinances of the ministry and magistracy, from all the abuses and corruptions thereof, by the inventions of men, joined with the above-mentioned establishment of them, in some measure of agreeableness unto their Scriptural institution."—(Ibid. p. 18.)

"1st, Their hearty approbation of the faithfulness of such ministers and others, who opposed, and faithfully testified against the public resolutions of Church and State, framed in the year 1651, for receiving into places of power and trust malignant enemies to the work of reformation, contrary to the word of God, Exod. xviii. 21.; Deut. i. 13; 2 Chron. xix. 2; and to all acts of assembly and parliament in the reforming period in favours of religion and reformation; the assembly disclaiming the resolutions, as appears from their act, June 17th, 1646, session 14th, entitled, *Act for censuring the compliers with the public enemies of this Church and kingdom*. Thus, both Church and State exerted themselves in the discharge of their duty, in order to obtain a settlement, ac-

THE STANDARDS, &c.

ording to the word of God, and the covenants, which were now become the *magna charta* of the privileges and liberties of the nations, both civil and religious; and, therefore, were sworn to and subscribed by Charles II., as was also the coronation oath, for the security and preservation of the true religion, at his receipt of the royal power."—(Ibid. pp. 44, 45.)

"The Presbytery testify against a sinful and almost boundless toleration, granted Anno 1712, a woful fruit of the union; by which toleration act, not only those of the Episcopal communion in Scotland have the protection of authority, but a wide door is cast open, and ample pass given to all sects and heretics (Popish recusants and Antitrinitarians some way excepted, who yet are numerous in the nation) to make whatever attacks they please upon the kingdom and interest of our glorious Redeemer, in order to the advancement of their own, and the devil's, and with all impunity. The foresaid act warrants the Episcopal clergy publickly to administer all ordinances, and perform their own worship after their own manner, with all the Popish canons and ceremonies thereof, and obliges all magistrates to protect and assist them, while it destroys the hedge of Church discipline against the scandalous and profane, and is therefore a settling and establishing of Prelacy in Scotland, giving it a security, little, if any thing, inferior to that which the established Church has. Again, by a clause in the toleration bill, the security given by former laws to Presbyterian church government and discipline is undermined and taken away, at least

THE STANDARDS, &c.

rendered ineffectual, and made the subject of ridicule to the openly profane, by the civil magistrate's withdrawing his concurrence, in as much as it declares the civil pain of excommunication to be taken away, and that none are to be compelled to appear before Church judicatories. There is nothing in religion of an indifferent nature, 'For whosoever (saith Christ) shall break one of the least of these commandments, and shall teach men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of Heaven.' It must then be the most daring wickedness, and an affronting of the Majesty of Heaven in the highest manner, for an earthly monarch to pretend to enact a toleration of religions, and thereby give a liberty where the divine law has laid a restraint; it implies an exalting of himself, not only to be an equal with, but to a state of superiority above the God of glory. Whatever principles are of divine authority require no toleration from man; it is wickedness to pretend to do it, seeing whatever comes under the necessity of a toleration, properly so called, falls at the same time under the notion of a crime. And no less wicked is it for a magistrate to protect, by a promiscuous toleration, all heretics, heresies, and errors; yea, it is a manifest breach of trust, and plain perverting the end of his office, seeing he is appointed to be *custos et vindex utriusque tabulae*, intrusted with the concerns of God's glory, as well as the interests of men. Experience has in every age taught that a toleration of all religions is the cut-throat and ruin of all true religion—it is the most effectual method that ever the policy of hell hatched to banish all true

THE STANDARDS, &c.

godliness out of the world."—
(Ibid. pp. 82, 83.)

"The Presbytery cannot also here omit observing, and that with deep regret, that although the most damnable principles, which have a direct tendency to deny the being of a God, and so to propagate opinionative atheism, to subvert all religion, to extol the power of corrupt nature, and exalt Popery as the best form of religion, to deny the subjection of the world to the Providence of God, to destroy all distinction betwixt virtue and vice, and consequently affirm, that there is no moral evil in the world, and to ridicule Christianity as destitute of divine authority, have been lately vented by David Hume, Esq., and another designed by the name of Sopho. Yet this Church hath passed no suitable censure upon the authors of these impious and blasphemous principles, though they justly deserve the very highest; nor have they done any thing to testify their dislike, or put an effectual stop to the spreading of these abominable tenets. The Presbytery, therefore, as they declare their abhorrence of these, and the other errors formerly mentioned, so testify against the Church's notorious unfaithfulness, in suffering these wretches to pass with impunity; and as being, on all these accounts noticed, unsound and corrupt, in the matter of doctrine, &c. It may also be here remarked, as an undoubted evidence of the corruptness of the state, that although there are civil laws presently in being, which declare the maintaining of Antitrinitarian, Atheistical principles, to be not only criminal, but capital; yet the civil

THE STANDARDS, &c.

powers in the nation have not so much regard to God, and the Son of God, as to punish treason openly acted against them."—(Ibid. p. 90.)

"Not to insist further in enumerating particulars, the Presbytery finally testify against Church and State, for their negligence to suppress impiety, vice, and superstitious observance of holy days, &c. The civil powers, herein acting directly contrary to the nature, and perverting the very ends of the magistrate's office, which is to be *custos et vindex utriusque tabulae*; the minister of God, a revenger, to execute wrath on him that doth evil. Transgressors of the first table of the law may now sin openly with impunity; and, while the religious observance of the Sabbath is not regarded, the superstitious observance of holydays, even in Scotland, is so much authorized, that on some of them the most considerable courts of justice are discharged to sit. Stage-plays, masquerades, balls, assemblies, and promiscuous dancings, the very nurseries of impiety and wickedness, are not only tolerated, but even countenanced by law."—(Ibid. p. 91.)

"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 in 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 pro-

THE STANDARDS, &c.

ceeded against, by inflicting ecclesiastical censures or civil pains, in a way agreeable unto the divine determination in the word concerning such offences."—(Ibid. p. 160.)

"Which power 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; Deut. xvii. 14; 2 Kings xi. 17; 1 Sam. xi. 15; 1 Tim. ii. 1, 2; 1 Pet. ii. 17; Rom. xiii. 2 to 8; 2 Kings xviii. 4, and xxiii. 1 to 26; 2 Chron. xxix. and xxx. chapters throughout; Ezra vii. 23; Confess. chap. 23, sec. 3; coronation oath of Scotland sworn and subscribed by Charles II. at Scone, January 1, 1651, and oath of fidelity by the people."—(Ibid. p. 164.)

"We are likewise of opinion, that the magistrate may warrantably punish gross outward acts of vice and immorality, in general, whether they be transgressors of the first or of the second table of the moral law."—(Explanation and Defence of Terms of Communion, p. 31.)

"It is his (the magistrate's) duty to see that the violation of the moral law * * * in gross

THE STANDARDS, &c.

and public idolatry * * as well as in open injustice, licentiousness, and immorality, be duly restrained, as scandalizing to religion, and the Church of God, as hurtful to the peace and good order of society, and as provoking the displeasure and rebukes of the Almighty against the nation.”—(Summary of the History, Principles, and Testimony of the Re-

THE STANDARDS, &c.

formed Presbyterian Church in Scotland, in overture before the Scottish Reformed Synod, p. 55.)

“ Now, particularly on the subject of civil government, we testify against the following errors * * That the repression of outward public acts of idolatry or blasphemy is persecution.”*—(Summary, p. 59.)

These extracts require no comment. They prove to a demonstration that the Reviewer's sentiments and those exhibited in our Standards are as opposite as light and darkness.

CHAPTER X.

ALLEGED ERRORS IN THE COVENANTER—REPLY TO THE REVIEWER'S "OBJECTIONS ANSWERED."

The Reviewer's profession of forbearance towards the Editor of *The Covenanter* considered—His declaration about publishing a "rival Periodical"—Statements of *The Covenanter* rescued from the perversions of the Reviewer, as those which relate to *Old Books—Adoption—Magistracy founded in nature—Sister communities—Characteristic Sketch of the Rev. James M^r Kinney, &c.*

AFTER the full discussion of the main point at issue between the Reviewer and *The Covenanter*—the civil magistrate's power, *circa sacra*—it will not be necessary to enter at large into the consideration of the remaining parts of the work. With the great interests of truth, apart from all personalities, we are chiefly concerned; in their support and establishment we are willing to merge the defence of the character of the periodical and its conductors, assured that they are preserved in safety beyond the power of such an assailant as the Reviewer to injure them, and that they have already received a testimony of approbation from those whose good opinion we are most anxious to gain, from which his snarling censure can make no abatement.

In attempting to bring into discredit the statements of *The Covenanter*, the Reviewer proposes to answer a number of *objections*, which

* These two last quotations are from one of the latest documents of the Scottish Reformed Synod. Whether they prove that our Scottish brethren are of the Reviewer's mind, or accord with the sentiments of *The Covenanter* on the article of magistratical coercion of heretics and idolaters, we leave it to the most superficial reader to determine.

he foresees may be advanced against the course of procedure which he has chosen to adopt. It is well that he has condescended on taking betimes a defensive attitude, when he was attacking, with consummate artifice and virulence, the sentiments of his opponent. The work in which he was engaged, it is probable, he felt demanded something said by way of apology or excuse; and, after all that he has advanced in the four concluding chapters of his pamphlet, the members of the Church to which he belongs, and the religious public generally, have yet to be convinced that he has given any good evidence of zeal for the truth, or regard to the peace and good order of the Church, or brotherly feeling towards the editor of *The Covenanter*, by attacking him in the columns of a newspaper, without any previous steps being taken to have the matter properly settled; and by throwing out before the public the statements of *The Covenanter* disjoined from their natural connexions, and covered with the most unjust aspersions. The Reviewer, however, has taken his own course, in contempt of the discipline of the Church, and in violation of the brotherly covenant; and so far is he from being sensible that there was any thing wrong in this, that he is sore displeased with the editor of *The Covenanter* for insinuating that he had attempted to injure the periodical. Once and again he has charged us with arraigning his motives, condemning his thoughts, and using "heart-probings," instead of meeting his arguments. It is enough to reply to all this, that palpable and repeated acts sufficiently declare his intentions. It was not sufficient on his part, and that of some others, at the commencement of the periodical, to write to various ministers of the Church at a distance, and represent the Editor as acting an Anti-presbyterian, Independent, and Popish part—not sufficient to speak of *The Covenanter* disrespectfully on all occasions; the Reviewer, in addition, attacked it in a newspaper, placing its sentiments in a disagreeable light, just at the time when an attack was calculated to bring the work into discredit; and afterwards he published a professed Review, the very title of which identifies *The Covenanter* with persecution, and in which, from beginning to end, there is not one word of satisfaction expressed either with the Editor or the periodical. Yet, after all this, the Reviewer is to be believed in his solemn appeal to the Searcher of hearts, that his intentions in writing were most friendly towards *The Covenanter*, and that his was the most pure and disinterested love towards its Editor! We have no disposition to dwell upon this subject: while we should, perhaps, like a testimony of friendship towards us and our work given in another manner, we leave the Reviewer to the conscious enjoyment of the sincerity of his intentions, and the purity of his motives. The day will declare every man's work of what sort it is. Meanwhile, as we feel very little concern either about the Reviewer's kind offices or attacks, we shall dismiss his *proofs of forbearance* towards *The Covenanter* in a summary manner.

He informs us that he might "have published a rival periodical," and represents his not doing so as a singular instance of his sparing mercy towards *The Covenanter*. Now really, after all, we confess ourselves unable to appreciate the extraordinary forbearance herein evinced. We happen to know, and we give the public to understand,

that the Reviewer, or his friends, did actually write to various ministers of the Church respecting their design of commencing a periodical, and that they used this as an argument why persons should not subscribe for *The Covenanter*, and why they should even withhold the subscriptions promised. After such attempts, taken in connexion with the book-making and money-making propensities of some men, we can come to no other conclusion than that the Reviewer would have published his rival periodical, if it had appeared a good speculation. With all his agitation, he found that his conduct received no countenance from those to whom he applied. The activity and industry required in editing and circulating a work of the kind, and the little prospect of pecuniary profit, served more, we believe, to deter him from the undertaking, than any extraordinary lenity to the Editor of *The Covenanter*. Besides, as we are not of them who think the labours of others in well-doing will detract from or impede our humble efforts, so we are at a loss to perceive what sparing mercy there was in withholding a rival periodical, if the Reviewer thought it called for, and deemed himself qualified for advancing thereby the interests of truth. We voluntarily offered him at first the aid of our contributions, should he commence such a work. Sincerely would we rejoice at all times to behold among brethren a rivalry in doing good. As some persons, however, seem incapable of understanding the actuating principle of such a course of procedure, we are compelled to judge of their professions by their conduct, and to withhold our belief when there appears the most marked discrepancy. We fear the Reviewer's professions, in this instance, must be judged by this rule.

As further proof that the Reviewer has "treated the editor and his periodical with much forbearance," he notices various statements of *The Covenanter*, which he alleges are "highly exceptionable," and insinuates, that they are so erroneous as to demand from him a public review, or a process before an ecclesiastical judicatory! The Reviewer, in his surprising forbearance towards the editor of *The Covenanter*, "passed them all over" for a time. Now, however, he cannot be silent any longer. The errors contained in these statements are of so grave a character as imperatively to demand his keenest rebuke; and, in tender mercy to a brother, who, he believes, has grievously erred in publishing them, he exposes them in all their naked deformity to public view, without one word of previous admonition or explanation in private, or any application to a court of redress! So much for the Reviewer's tenderness and compassion on the ignorant, and such as are out of the way. Now, let us see what are these self-same errors which are sufficient to stamp the periodical as utterly heterodox, and exhibit its editor as liable to censure from his Presbytery.

1. *The Covenanter* (vol. i. p. 10) has asserted, according to the Reviewer, in a "highly exceptionable statement," that "antiquity does not stamp currency on any thing connected with religion. Old religious books, old religious standards, and not only their old form and dress—which, we will not deny, may admit of improvement—but even the old Orthodox opinions which they exhibit are wearing so fast out of fashion, that, like the old style, they are likely soon to

become quite obsolete, and, like old coins which have been called down, they have nearly ceased to circulate." This the Reviewer has declared to be an untruth, and is quite angry with *The Covenanter* for speaking in disparagement of the religious taste of the present age, or for expressing a doubt as to the rapid spread and revival of old Orthodox opinions in religion. He delivers with sufficient pomposity his opinion, that a change in the religious taste of the age, greatly for the better, has taken place, and modestly requires the editor of *The Covenanter*, on his bare assertion, in opposition to all other testimony on the subject, to hail it with exultation, and to join him in his rejoicing at the unexampled prevalence of truth, and the downfall of error. Now, really this demand would require to come from some better authority, and to be supported by some more decisive evidence than any that the Reviewer has produced, before we can readily comply with it. He tells us that the republication of old religious books is the order of the day, and instances the works of Peden and Renwick as having been republished, "many of them warmly recommended." We ask him, in the next edition of his work, to inform his readers where the works of Peden and Renwick have been lately republished, and by whom have they been recommended? The fact is, no such thing has taken place, nor in one of the instances was it indeed possible. Peden wrote no works, and it is not very probable that there should be a republication of what never existed. Renwick's excellent Letters, Testimonies, and Sermons, are too pointed against evils in the Church and nation, which yet exist, to find countenance with liberals in religion and politics at present, and their not being called into notice is just another proof that the taste of the age is not altogether so excellent as the Reviewer would have it. After so palpable an error in a matter of fact, with which any person the least acquainted with the publications of the day must be familiar, we may justly hesitate before we receive the Reviewer's opinion as infallible, relative to the change in public sentiment respecting old books and old opinions. Again, he seeks to find matter of accusation against *The Covenanter* for not using his influence to bring such old books into notice. To this allegation we deem it unnecessary to furnish any refutation, well aware that all who are acquainted with our humble labours know, that while the Reviewer in his writings has actually done nothing to exhibit or recommend the peculiar principles of the Covenanted Testimony, *The Covenanter* has done more during the short period of its existence to recommend the works, and to display the principles of eminent advocates of Reformation principles, than any publication of the present day. A person who betrays so much ignorance and prejudice, in writing of mere matters of fact, concerning which he had every means of being fully informed, needs not think it strange if his opinions, however loftily promulgated, respecting the change in the religious views and feelings of the age, command not universal and implicit credence.

After all that he has said about the republication of old works, and the return to sound principles of some persons in sister communities, we may be permitted still to think, as *The Covenanter* has asserted, that "antiquity does not stamp currency on any thing connected with religion," and that "old religious books, old religious standards,

and old Orthodox opinions, are wearing fast out of fashion," &c. That there is much talk about religion in our day, much inquiry, much bustle in the religious world, we deny not; and we rejoice to think that there is, in some quarters, something more than mere profession and outward form in all this. But when we see, at the same time, large sections of the Church casting behind them the principles which their forefathers held, and rejecting leading articles in the Standards which they had adopted; errors the most revolting, openly propagated, and rapidly spreading; a growing disregard to some of the main truths which engaged the zeal and labours of reformers and martyrs; and a reckless spirit of innovation at work throughout the Churches—we cannot be mistaken as to the prevailing indifference or scepticism and irreligion of the age. For holding such an opinion, and offering so little flattery to a lukewarm or perverse generation, we may be held to be bigots by the Reviewer and by men of his way; but while his own New-light sentiments on magistracy are promulgated by one who is pledged to far other doctrines in the formulas of the Reformed Church, and while they receive the least countenance from any professed followers of the martyrs, we have proof near at hand, that either old books and old standards have worn out of acquaintance with some, or that the principles which they display are little regarded.

2. The Reviewer next imagines he has discovered a "*serious error*" in what was stated in *The Covenanter* relative to *Adoption*, (vol. i. p. 13,) and he has selected, as usual, *a part of a sentence, disjoined from its proper connexion*, for animadversion. The writer in the periodical, in declaring the importance of a person having evidence in his own case of being a subject of adoption, remarks—"As no change that ever passes on the moral condition of a descendant of Adam is of equal importance with this—it lying at the foundation of all gracious privileges here, and being indispensable to an entrance to glory hereafter—it becomes of vast moment for every individual, in his own case, to have satisfactory evidence whether he is the subject of it or not," &c. Most simple readers, who receive the doctrines of the Westminster Standards, will, we are persuaded, be at a loss to discover an error here that might require the power of such an indomitable defender of the faith as the Reviewer to correct, or might justly entitle the editor to process before an ecclesiastical judicatory. Had it been asserted that Adoption is the foundation of all gracious privileges, &c., then there might have been some pretext, however slight, for the Reviewer's objection; but when it was said "*to lie at the foundation*," &c., the meaning is most obviously, that it stands intimately connected with the great moral change on the condition of a sinner, whereby he is re-instated in the Divine favour, and becomes entitled to all the benefits of the new covenant. The subject which the writer handled did not require him to advert to the order of existence and the order of time in the various parts of the work of grace on the soul. Distinctions of this kind, however they appear to such a hair-splitting theologian as the Reviewer, are more nice than useful; and were we disposed to imitate our opponent, we might easily show, that the specimen of theological knowledge which, in this instance, he has furnished, (though, from the manner in which he has propounded it, it is, doubtless, in his estimation a choice one,) is,

to say the least, more showy than substantial. But we forbear. Our readers need hardly be reminded, that our excellent Westminster divines, in the Shorter Catechism, assert, that by Adoption we have "a right to all the privileges of the sons of God." Whether that which gives us a right to all gracious privileges does not lie at the foundation of them, as justification, which is a relative change, lies at the foundation of the sinner's alteration of state, we leave to our readers to determine, and with it the consonance of the Reviewer's opinions on this subject with the statements of our invaluable Standards.

3. Another fine example of the Reviewer's honesty and critical acumen, we have, (p. 69, 70,) where he fancies he has discovered a gross inconsistency between *The Covenanter's* views on Magistracy. In one place in the periodical, (vol. i. p. 128, 129, &c.) the writer rebuts the idea that magistracy is *founded in nature*, in the sense in which the opponents of the testimony of the Reformed Covenanted Church understand the phrase. Here the point under discussion was, whether civil magistracy has its origin in the law of nature, common to Christians and Heathens, without any particular reference to the revealed will of God, and the authority of Christ as Mediator, or whether it is a Divine ordinance prescribed in the Word, and subjected to Messiah, the King of nations. *The Covenanter* asserted the latter sentiment, and attempted to establish it in opposition to the former. In the other passage to which the Reviewer alludes, quoting, as usual, a clause of a sentence, the very same doctrine is taught. *The Covenanter* noticed the vagueness of the term *nature*, as employed in this discussion; and while he denounced the sentiment that magistracy is founded in lapsed nature, or in human nature separate from the law of God, in the very same passage, he admitted that, in a certain sense, it has its origin in nature—"We do not mean to deny that magistracy is founded in the *law* of nature; because we believe the law of nature, when rightly understood, is virtually the same with the moral law, revealed and detailed in the Holy Scriptures," (Cov. vol. i. p. 28.) In the other passage, (Cov. vol. i. p. 38) it is asserted, in similar terms, "While magistracy is *founded in nature*, it is also a Divine ordinance," &c. Where, we ask, is the precipitate, harsh, and inconsistent statement, as the Reviewer characterizes our reasoning, to be found here? We tell him he betrays either a culpable ignorance of the subject on which he writes, or wilful perversion of the passages on which he animadverts, or both. For his information on this point, we refer him to two old books, which, notwithstanding all he has said about the improved appetite of the age for such works, and their general circulation, we fear he has not very carefully studied. These are Thorburn's *Vindicie Magistratus*, and Fairley's *Answer to Goodlet*. In these able defences of the doctrines of our Church on magistracy, he will find once and again stated the very distinctions respecting the law of nature on which he comments. After perusing them, he may, perhaps, think that *The Covenanter* is no more liable to the just resentment of other communities, or to the discipline of the Church, than were these celebrated advocates of the Covenanted Reformation.

4. Again, the Reviewer, in his tender mercy to *The Covenanter*.

and its Editor, endeavours to arouse against him the indignation of *sister communities*, as he terms them;—and Seceders, Irish and Scotch, Presbyterians of the Synod of Ulster, Methodists and Independents, are all excited to view both with marked detestation. *The Covenanter*, in rebutting the allegation so often advanced against members of the Covenanted Church of disloyalty, and in vindicating their characters, employs the tone of reproof and rebuke; condemns the fulsome addresses presented to the King's Representatives by ecclesiastical bodies, and also the acceptance of *Regium Donum* by Presbyterian ministers, under an ensnaring condition. Because of this, the Reviewer is mightily offended, and will have it that we are uncharitable calumniators in all that we have advanced on this topic. Such a censure may, in his estimation, serve to excite odium against us and our work, but we can tell him that he has entirely failed in his object. We admit, as fully as he can, that both in the Synod of Ulster and among Seceders, there are men "whose prayers are not mercenary, and whose loyalty is genuine and disinterested;"—but we are not ignorant, at the same time, of the testimony of One who has declared that a "gift blindeth the eyes;" nor of the facility with which approbation of some of the worst measures of government is yielded by a "pensioned clergy;" nor of the ensnaring manner in which *Regium Donum* is granted to Presbyterian ministers in this country; nor of the fulsome Addresses frequently presented by such to the King's Viceroy, some of which we could quote in proof, were it necessary. The Reviewer, we presume, was also acquainted with these facts: whether they justified the language employed in *The Covenanter*, when speaking on the subject, consistent Covenanters will determine.

But it should seem, according to the Reviewer, *The Covenanter* has erred still farther, and he will have it that its conductors would *wish* to be handling the tithes themselves, or to obtain a portion of the royal bounty, (p. 73.) He had just exhibited them as objects of detestation to "sister communities," and he no doubt expects, if he can prove this last charge, that they will be regarded in the same light by Covenanters. How unhappy their lot! Exposed to ecclesiastical censure, and cast out of their own church; objects of odium to all around; of course, disgrace and infamy will be their portion in every quarter. Truly, if some men's power were equal to their will, the condition of their opponents would not be very comfortable. The charge against the Editor of *The Covenanter* and his coadjutors, of abetting the tithe system, and of thirsting for the *Regium Donum*, is made out in a singular way; was the assailant any other than the Reviewer, we would say in a way the most extraordinary. From the 15th Number (vol. ii. p. 87) a quotation is extracted concerning the duty of the civil magistrate to nourish the Church, and to provide an adequate support out of the national treasury for her public functionaries. This quotation is taken from the *Second Book of Discipline*, one of our most approved books of reference, and to which, as adopted by a free General Assembly in the reforming period, we are accustomed to appeal as authority in matters of ecclesiastical order and discipline. Now, be it remembered, the Reviewer's objections here strike not against *The Covenanter*, but against the author-

ized publications of the Reformed Church; and his declamation tends directly to overturn an article of the testimony of the Covenanted Reformation—namely, the duty of civil rulers to afford a national support for maintaining the ministrations of religion. Would it not be candid, in our friend the Reviewer, at once to abjure openly his attachment to principles which he is bound to maintain, but whose exhibition he regards as calculated “to spread and confirm calumnies against the Covenanting Church?” His conduct in this instance affords another example of his reckless disregard of the authority of received ecclesiastical writings, when they stand in the way of his attempts to expose *The Covenanter* and its conductors.

The subject of *tithes*, as spoken of in *The Covenanter*, has furnished a copious theme of declamation to the Reviewer, and others of his way; according to them, we are the supporters of the tithe system, and they would have the public believe that we are greedily panting after a share of the loaves and fishes. After the open and pointed protest which we have once and again published against the *tithe system*, of these countries, it is unnecessary to add aught in our own vindication. We are just as little ambitious of public money as others who declaim more on the subject; but the cry of illiberality, bigotry, &c., will never deter us from maintaining the principles which we are prepared to show our venerated forefathers held without exception—that there should be national churches, and that the ministrations of religion should be supported out of the national treasury. Though the avowal of such a doctrine may afford a topic of declamation about increasing public burdens, grinding the poor, &c., we think it would be no difficult task to show that a *public provision* for the Scriptural administration of religious ordinances throughout a country is the most effectual way of relieving public burdens; and such a provision may be clearly proved to be altogether necessary for the complete evangelization of a community, since voluntary benevolence alone has never in any country effected the work. It is, however, needless to enlarge on this point. The Reviewer is at liberty to declaim as much as he pleases about our desire after tithes, and the countenance we have given to tottering systems; but we defy him, with all his art, to show that we have advanced any thing on this subject different from what our renowned ancestors held; while we cannot fail to remark, that his opinions and theirs on this article are diametrically opposed to each other.

5. The Reviewer, not content with endeavouring to excite against the Editor of *The Covenanter* the indignation of the living, represents him as violating the sanctuary of the tomb. In our 6th No. (vol. i. p. 155,) we had offered a Characteristic Sketch of the Rev. James M'Kinney, an eminent and deservedly esteemed minister of the Reformed Presbyterian Church. Because we had not painted him a perfect character, and had, in imitation of the biography written by the pen of Inspiration, told his failings as well as his virtues, while we spoke of them in terms that the most cordial esteem dictated, the Reviewer is mightily offended, and labours hard to show that our conduct in this instance is worthy of the severest reprehension. Our defence is brief and simple. We stated nothing but what the Reviewer ought to have known is truth—we followed Scripture example

in sketching character—we had no notion of imitating some that we could name, who can trumpet excellencies of the living which they know them not to possess, and can represent the dead as without defect. All this may ill suit the Reviewer's notion of religious biography, but we have the highest possible warrant for it in the Divine Word, which, while it describes the man after God's own heart, conceals not his sin in the matter of Uriah, and while it sketches the characters of the Apostles of the Lamb, fails not to record of them that one of them forsook their Master, and in the hour of his trial, they all forsook him and fled. That the reader may have a fair specimen of the Reviewer's talent for misrepresentation, we may notice, that in the passage in which he attacks *The Covenanter* on this article, containing *three* sentences, and occupying about *one-third of a page*, there are no less than *four* palpable misrepresentations! 1. It is not true that *The Covenanter* has "assailed" the memory of Mr. M'Kinney. Let any one read the sketch contained in the periodical, and he will find it throughout embalming his memory, and holding him up to the highest admiration. 2. The Reviewer asserts that a charge was preferred against the Editor of *The Covenanter* to Synod on this head, and does not this language obviously imply that a formal ecclesiastical process was commenced against the Editor? Now this was by no means the case. In a disorderly way, a member of Court introduced the subject, and immediately became silent when it was shown that such a course of procedure was wholly irregular. 3. It is farther insinuated, that the Synod directed the accuser to prosecute the Editor before the Northern Presbytery—plainly implying that the Synod judged that there was ground for a charge, and that a regular process should be commenced. This is evidently the meaning which the words in the pamphlet must convey to a person who knew nothing before of the case. The Reviewer well knows that this is not the fact. It was simply declared in Synod that *if there was a charge* against the Editor on this or any other article, the person preferring it must apply in the first instance to the Presbytery to which he is amenable. How does it come to pass that neither the Reviewer, who has raised such an outcry about violating the sanctuary of the tomb, nor the venerable member of Court who spoke on the subject, nor any other, has instituted a process against the Editor? Will none of the many friends whose feelings, the Reviewer says, have been outraged in this case, interfere to bring the offender to condign punishment? All are silent. Why? Because, notwithstanding all the Reviewer has said and insinuated, they know well that *The Covenanter* is free of proper blame in this matter. 4. We are finally told that "nothing can repair the injury done to religion" by what *The Covenanter* has advanced on this point, nor soothe the outraged feelings of the widow, &c. Now, we happen to know something more of this matter than the Reviewer is aware of. One of the conductors of *The Covenanter* is in correspondence with the family of the subject of the sketch, and neither from this quarter, nor from many of his intimate friends in this country or America is there any complaint. We tell the Reviewer that, whatever he and some others who dislike the periodical, and love to find occasion against it, may

say, the characteristic sketch on which he animadverts is regarded by many friends of Mr. M'Kinney as a faithful and affectionate tribute to the memory of a great and good man.* After such a number of manifest misrepresentations which we have exposed in one short passage, let the public judge of the Reviewer's candour and honesty; and no doubt they will duly appreciate his avowal of friendly intentions towards *The Covenanter* and its editor, and his ability for performing the office of censorship, which he has undertaken.

From this catalogue of *serious errors*, contained in *The Covenanter*, which the Reviewer has exhibited, and our animadversions upon his exposure, the discerning public will be prepared to determine what credit is to be given to his frequently repeated professions of *tenderness* to the periodical. With a plausibility well fitted to deceive the simple, he pretends zeal for the cause of the Covenanted Reformation, speaks of consulting friends, and talks of the reluctance and pain which he felt in entering on this discussion. Now, all this may be so. He has said it, and we are bound to believe it. But we must say, that is indeed a strange zeal for the Covenanted cause which leads a person to undermine it, by impugning one, at least, of its leading articles, or to fritter it down to please the perverted taste of an infidel age; and that must have been an odd kind of reluctance which operated with the Reviewer, when he raked together every disjointed statement in *The Covenanter*, and gathered up every expression that appeared faulty, in order to make out matter of condemnation, and withal, laboured most assiduously to place the periodical and its editor before the public in the most odious light.

But it seems, according to the Reviewer, *The Covenanter* had published and given extensive circulation to sentiments so injurious, that "nothing less than a public disavowal could defend the principles, or rescue the character of the Reformed Presbyterian Church;" (quere, "rescue" from what?) and this was the reason that called forth his newspaper attack, and his lengthened and laboured Review. So, then, the modest Reviewer, with all his complaints of the arrogance and assumption of others, is to be viewed as the authorized expositor of the principles, and advocate of the character of the Covenanted Church. How or when he may have been appointed to this office we pretend not to say; but sure we are, that those who have consulted the Standards of the Church, and who have perused his pamphlet, will think him by no means eminently qualified to perform its functions. One should think, that if a "public disavowal" of false and injurious imputations cast upon the Church was to be made, its Supreme Judicatory is the proper quarter to which we should look for such a vindication; and that an ecclesiastical court is the place in which the offence should be tried, and the offender censured. But, no—the Reviewer has obtained new light relative to the mode of

* The Reviewer, in his strictures on *The Covenanter* on this article, gives his sanction to the maxim—"De mortuis nil nisi bonum"—an adage more befitting a Pagan than a Christian divine. In its full and proper meaning we can regard it in no other light than impious. Scripture precept and example warrant us only to speak of the dead as of the living, according to the unerring rule of the word—in no case should "nil nisi bonum" be disjoined from "nil nisi verum."

procedure in such a case. Such usages, though according to the genius of Presbyterian order and discipline, are too "antiquated" for the 19th century;* and instead of resorting to them, he steps forward, denounces *The Covenanter* as heterodox, publishes his exposition of the principles of the Church, relative to magisterial interference for the suppression of heresy and idolatry, or rather his unmeasured denial of them, and then requires this to be received as the Synod's public disavowal of such errors! Truly this is modesty stretched to its limits—Presbyterian parity with a vengeance. *The Covenanter* always disavowed being the authorized organ of the Synod, and declared openly that the Synod was considered in no way responsible for its sentiments—the Reviewer has placed himself and his work in a far different predicament. Evidently *he* seeks to be viewed as the accredited expounder of the principles of the Church, on the subject under discussion. Our readers have already seen how he has executed the task, and in due time the Supreme Judicatory will determine how far it is to be considered identified with the New-light innovations which he has broached. The "editor and his coadjutors," if the Reviewer is to be believed, owe him many thanks for managing the matter "in the manner least calculated to hurt their feelings." Whether his own feelings may be so refined that he can sympathize with others, or what idea he may have of the feelings of those who are duly alive to public official character or ministerial responsibility, it is not for us to say:—but if to hold up to universal odium the principles and conduct of individuals; if to represent them chargeable with that which, if proved, must affect their ministerial standing, and render them obnoxious to the indignation of the community; if to drag all this at once before a public, with whom Covenanters and Covenanting principles are already sufficiently unpopular, without one effort made for a friendly understanding, and in utter disregard of the good order of the Church; if this was the manner least calculated to hurt the feelings of the "editor and his coadjutors," then we admit the Reviewer is guiltless. For our part, as we are not disposed generally to attach much credit to such professions from polemical disputants, so, in the present case, we have no thanks to spare. With us it is a matter of no moment whether the Reviewer designed to consult or to injure our feelings. We have, we trust, learned, in performing public duty, not to consult with flesh and blood, and to merge our own feelings and reputation in the advancement of the great interests of truth. Had the Reviewer merely inflicted a wound in our feelings, we had neither sought redress at a Church court, nor stood forward to vindicate our sentiments at the bar of the public. Once for all we tell him, that he is quite at liberty in this respect to pursue the course in which he has entered, or to take any other that appears to him most likely to destroy the reputation, or hurt the feelings, of the "editor and his coadjutors." Herein he will meet with no opposition from us, nor will we attempt to recriminate. We know well, that every attempt to destroy reputation made by a man like him, will only serve in time to come, as it has

* *Covenanter Reviewed*, p. 95.

in some measure served in time past, to heighten the reputation of those whom he assails, and to extend their influence. The purity and integrity of our forefathers' testimony, apart from any personal consideration, are our rallying point. The least article of this precious truth we will never willingly surrender; and however passive the Reviewer may find us in all that concerns the vindication of our own character, if he attempts to alter, take away, or soften down aught of our glorious Covenanted attainments, he may calculate on meeting in us decided and uncompromising opponents.

CHAPTER XI.

THE REVIEWER'S ANSWER TO ANTICIPATED OBJECTIONS EXAMINED AND REFUTED.

The Reviewer's attempt to throw the odium of the controversy on the Editor of *The Covenanter* vain—His *New Light* sentiments in his former publications—*The Covenanter* vindicated from the charge of attacking the Reformed Church and the Reviewer—The success of the periodical—The objection respecting "rash and unguarded expressions" answered—Other objections refuted, &c. &c.

THE Reviewer, who is at no loss to find a reason, satisfactory to himself at least, on all occasions for his conduct, attempts in his pamphlet (ch. xi.) to rebut the objection, that the dispute which he has originated, relative to the magistracy, "wounds religion, injures the Covenanted cause, and endangers the peace and unity of the Church." He might have saved himself the trouble of a formal reply on this point. The interests of Zion we believe to be safe in the hand of her exalted Head. On our part, we trust to be enabled to manage the controversy, painful as it is to have to expose the errors of a brother in the ministry, and to deal with the declamation which he has substituted for argument, so as to betray nothing inconsistent with Christian temper and moderation, and we believe the result will, in the end, be salutary, as persons will be thereby led to examine the points at issue, and a fuller developement of the doctrines of the Covenanted Reformation will take place.

The Reviewer, in his concern to avoid censure on this article, and feeling, it is not unlikely, that his conduct had justly laid him open to it, not only appeals to apostolic precedent, but by a *russe de guerre* not unusually resorted to by polemics, endeavours to throw the whole odium of the controversy on the editor of *The Covenanter* and his friends. Our antagonist, however, is singularly unhappy in his attempt to show that he is not the aggressor in the present quarrel, though once and again he takes care to inform us that he has written *in his own vindication*, and that in this dispute he is not the *aggressor*. How far this plea serves him, the following statement will show:—

The Reviewer refers to his former publications—"Creeds and Confessions Vindicated," and, "Review of Mr. Montgomery's Speech," as exhibiting, a considerable time ago, the same sentiments

which he now maintains, relative to toleration and the exemption from magistratical coercion of heretics and idolaters. These had been circulated throughout the Church; and because no person entered the lists against him as a public disputant, or prosecuted him for error, therefore he would have it, *all* the ministers and people of the Reformed Church were of his way of thinking. Nay, more, "the Reformed Presbyterian Synod of Ireland, without one dissenting voice, published to the world the very same sentiments." The editor of *The Covenanter* alone presumed to differ from this celebrated writer, and afterwards he tells us, he was arrested in his book-making business, by the suspicion that other members of Synod agreed with him in sentiment. Now, to all this we reply, that the authorized Standards of the Covenanted Church, to which every minister and member vows solemn adherence, expressly assert the doctrine of the civil magistrate punishing, with civil pains and penalties, heretics, idolaters, and profane persons. The Reformed Synod has never taught any thing in the least degree inconsistent with this, and the instance to which the Reviewer alludes, in the "Causes of Thanksgiving," says not a word on the subject. His own publications, as we have already seen, afford the first example of a minister attempting to soften down what he regarded as the harsher parts of the Church's testimony. In his pamphlet on "Creeds and Confessions," he censured by implication the writings of former advocates of the Covenanted Testimony, as participating in the spirit of the age in which they lived, and seemed to think it desirable that our subordinate Standards should be revised. The wish was *then* guardedly expressed; but amid the increasing liberality of the age, the Reviewer, in his Reply to Mr. Montgomery's Speech, proceeds directly to deny that heretics should ever be visited by civil pains and penalties—a principle which we have already seen is embodied in the Solemn League and Covenant. We can now inform him that, cautiously as these sentiments were expressed, they were far from being received with satisfaction by several ministers and members of the Church. If none, save the editor of *The Covenanter*, had the friendship or candour to tell himself the unpleasant truth, it was not because there were not dissentients from the views which he had promulgated. It would be a very odd way indeed to determine that certain views are approved of by the Church, because no person comes publicly forward to call them in question. On this principle, every person who does not at once turn author, or become like himself, a newspaper polemic, must be regarded as swallowing every opinion, however heterodox. But the Reviewer, notwithstanding all he has said, betrays his consciousness that *his* sentiments were not in accordance with those of his brethren. He did not fulfil the appointment of Synod in preparing a *Synopsis* of the principles of the Church, because he suspected the editor of *The Covenanter* and other ministers did not agree with him in sentiment. How came he to infer this in relation to those other ministers? Was it that he knew he had departed from the old Covenanting ground, and that they still lagged so far behind the growing liberality of the age as to maintain it? But, again, why did he not prepare the *Synopsis*, and even, according to his own admission, delay to fulfil a Synodical appointment? Why

did he publickly assign quite a different reason for this conduct than that which he has now assigned in his pamphlet? If he was aware of the editor of *The Covenanter* and other ministers holding what he considered dangerous error, might not a discussion, thus amicably and regularly brought forward, have been the means of reclaiming them, and might not the publication itself have served to check the growth of the evil? Was it not, on the other hand, the conviction, that his New-light innovations and latitudinarian sentiments received no countenance from the body, and that the majority of the Synod were opposed to him, that operated to prevent him from executing the task devolved on him? So much for the Reviewer's candour in explaining his own conduct—let us see how he explains the conduct of others.

The editor of *The Covenanter*, he tells us, published sentiments which he perfectly knew to be opposed to those which he had published, which he knew, or ought to have known, were opposed to those of the Reformed Synods of Ireland and Scotland, and he challenged his opponents to produce counter testimony. To the second of these charges, that on which the Reviewer lays the main stress, we plead not guilty; and notwithstanding all he has said elsewhere, we defy him to make it good. His quotations from the "Causes of Thanksgiving," and the "Explanation and Defence of the Terms of Communion," are wholly irrelevant, and speak nothing whatever of the point at issue. The Scottish Reformed Synod, in the very document from which the quotation is taken, declares—"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 the second table of the moral law."* The editor of *The Covenanter* always considered, and he had a right to consider his brethren in the ministry as maintaining the doctrine asserted so frequently in the subordinate Standards, that the civil magistrate should punish open heretics and idolaters; and the Reviewer was the first person whom he had cause to regard as denying it. How, then, could he know that any of them had embraced the New-light scheme? Notwithstanding all his parade of zeal, and his egotism, the Reviewer has yet to produce the "counter-testimony" demanded by *The Covenanter*. The extracts which he has brought forward, as we have shown, bear not at all on the point under discussion. *The Covenanter* had adduced many explicit and direct passages, confirmatory of his views on magistracy, from the Standards of the Reformed Church, and the writings of the most renowned martyrs and witnesses for the truth. Till the Reviewer confronts with them something bearing upon the question, and something having similar claims to notice, he labours in vain to distract the attention of the uninformed from the main point at issue, and our sentiments stand supported by evidences the most valuable, without any counter-testimony. Neither can *The Covenanter*, as the Reviewer alleges, be justly charged with making "reiterated, persevering, and long-continued attacks on the Reformed Presbyterian Church," and on himself.

* Explanation and Defence, p. 22.

The Covenanter has uniformly held forth and vindicated what all the Reformers, Martyrs, and Reformed Churches held on the subject of magistracy, and what the Reformed Presbyterian Church has ever held. On this article it could not, therefore, possibly attack the Church. The Reviewer is not once alluded to, nor the least reference made to him or any part of his works, in the articles on which he animadverts. He is attacked only in the same way that the Westminster divines might be said to have attacked the sectaries who impugned the doctrine of magistratical coercion of heretics, idolaters, and blasphemers, when they asserted the magistrate's duty to suppress heresy, idolatry, and blasphemy, or that the Church still attacks apostates and abettors of error, by maintaining a faithful testimony for the truth.

We shall afterwards see, with sufficient clearness, the justice of ascribing the evils resulting from this discussion to the course pursued at the commencement of the periodical. Meanwhile, it may be some comfort to the Reviewer, who all along manifests so tender a regard for the character of the editor, and the prosperity of the periodical, to be informed, notwithstanding all he has said about the abilities of the aged and experienced navigators whose nautical skill was rejected, the vessel continues to hold on her way, with a favourable gale, a rich cargo, and undaunted seamen. The "rocks and shoals which threatened her destruction," which were none other than those which the Reviewer conjured up, have nowise injured her; and now, in the *third year* of her voyage, notwithstanding his attempt to sink her, she continues to be regarded with interest and admiration by many who hesitate not to say that generations yet unborn will be enriched by her merchandise.

To the objection that the Reviewer has taken advantage of some strong, rash, or unguarded expressions in *The Covenanter* we have little to reply. It is easy for him to make a man of straw, as he has frequently done in this discussion, and to gain, in his own estimation, a noble triumph by overturning it. We never admitted, and we do not now admit, the force of the objection in the obvious sense of the terms employed. That there may be some expressions not the most guarded in our articles on magistracy we might freely admit. What human compositions might not be improved? But we do most distinctly assert, that it is only by such distortion and perversion as would make even the oracles of God themselves to appear to countenance any system of error, that such sentiments as the Reviewer exhibits as ours could be gathered from the pages of *The Covenanter*. The great doctrine, that the civil magistratę in a Christian land is keeper of both tables of the Divine law, and is bound to restrain and punish heretics and idolaters as civil offenders, we will ever maintain; while, as impartial journalists, we will extend all due liberty to our correspondents in using language according to their own peculiar manner, and the modes of reasoning and illustration to which they are accustomed. This doctrine we have taught, and we are still prepared to teach, because we believe it to be Scriptural, and held forth in the testimonies of our forefathers, which we have received as a sacred inheritance. It is not true indeed, as the Reviewer would have the public believe, that this is our *favourite doctrine*, in any

other sense than, as lovers of the truth, any doctrine revealed in the Scriptures engages our regard and veneration; nor have we given it undue prominence in the periodical. In opposition to all that the Reviewer has asserted here, we affirm that the punishing of heretics, &c., by the magistrate, is only introduced in the magazine in connexion with other subjects, and generally as a consequence from views already advanced, and that the other great doctrines of salvation, and of the Church's testimony, are assigned a proper place in the periodical. Any person who will take the trouble of referring to the work itself may have the opportunity of verifying this assertion, and of judging of the groundlessness of the Reviewer's representation.

The Reviewer anticipates another objection, that in the course of procedure which he has adopted, he has slighted the discipline and good order of the Church. Serious as is this charge, it is one from which he cannot escape, and all his attempts only involve him more deeply. The case is very simple. If the editor of *The Covenanters*, as he asserts, published gross and destructive error, broke faith, and acted in a tyrannical manner towards his brethren, was he not amenable to his Presbytery? And should not the Reviewer, in his zeal for the truth, concern for the purity of the Church, regard to Presbyterian discipline, and respect to the brotherly covenant, have had recourse to a court of redress? Why did he and his party, to the utmost of their power, circulate first privately throughout the Church charges against the editor calculated to affect his ministerial standing, and afterwards represent him to the world as holding blood-thirsty and persecuting principles, and never once apply to an ecclesiastical court to obtain the condemnation of such sentiments, and the chastisement of those who maintained them? He did indeed talk of taking such a course at first, and he takes care to inform the readers of his pamphlet that it is his right. That he did not avail himself of it, can be considered in no other light than criminal neglect, or the consciousness of his utter inability to make good the charges which he had advanced. If the representations which he has given of the principles and conduct of the editor and conductors of the periodical were just, then their conviction would have been an easy matter; and in the hands of such "aged and experienced" disciplinarians as the Reviewer and his co-partners, the process would have been readily managed, and the "young adventurous pilots" would have met the rebuke which their temerity deserved; and the vessel would have been rescued from their guidance.* That the Reviewer might, in addition to such a course, publish what he thought proper, is not denied; but if, in doing so, he has violated the good order of the Church, impugned any of her principles, and wantonly attacked public characters, he will not think it strange if he be called to bear the responsibility, and await the consequences.

Waiving his modest assumption, again repeated, of speaking and writing for the whole body of Covenanters, and of being the infallible

* By a process before an ecclesiastical court, instead of a newspaper discussion, the breach might have been healed, the misunderstanding between the parties done away, and the Church preserved from exposure to public odium and reproach.

expounder of their tenets, we cannot dismiss this part of the subject without adverting to the manner in which he speaks of the *discipline of the Church*. We charge him not only with setting it at defiance, but for attempting to bring it into discredit and contempt. Thus he pleads his right of publishing in opposition to *The Covenanter*, because of the tediousness of ecclesiastical procedure—"Had a process been entered against *The Covenanter*, in consequence of the various circumstances which might retard the proceedings, years might have elapsed before its termination; and, during all this time, the errors might have spread in geometrical progression."—(*Cov. Rev.* note, p. 94.) So far, then, is discipline from counteracting the spread of errors, that it permits them to spread in "geometrical progression." Discipline, as a means of checking error, he represents as fit only for the dark ages, and by no means adapted to the genius of the present times. He compares it to a "masked battery," affording a shelter to a bad or indefensible cause; exhibits it as the contrast of an appeal to Scripture and reason in the way of free discussion, and as the resource of a few bigots, who implicitly bow to ecclesiastical authority. Of course, all this must refer to an appeal to the discipline of the Reformed Presbyterian Church, for settling a dispute respecting an article of her testimony, and affecting the ministerial standing of her public functionaries. If it has not such a reference, then why introduce it at all? So, then, this is the manner in which the discipline of the Covenanted Church, which has hitherto been regarded as her glory, is represented by the Reviewer—a relic of the dark ages, a covert for a bad cause, and a means of facilitating the spread of error! Will the Church bear to have her authority set at nought? Will *Covenanters* allow themselves to be robbed of the faith of their fathers? And will they suffer, at the same time, the attempt to resist, *by legal and constitutional methods*, an aggression upon their testimony to be turned into ridicule and contempt—and this by one who is solemnly pledged on all occasions to maintain the good order of our Covenanted uniformity? Till of late, ecclesiastical courts were regarded as the proper place to which all matters respecting the doctrine and order of the Church should be referred, and all disputes between brethren affecting their Church-fellowship, or moral character, should be carried. It should seem that the Reviewer, amid the light and liberality of the 19th century, has discovered a better method; and this antiquated practice should, in his estimation, be superseded by *free discussion*. In due time it will be seen whether the Church will surrender her testimony for Scriptural discipline, and adopt his method. Meanwhile, we doubt not that a goodly number, not yet intoxicated with the new wine of liberalism, will be disposed to abide by the footsteps of the flock, considering the old wine better.

Not only does the Reviewer seek to bring into discredit the discipline of the Church generally, but he impeaches the editor of *The Covenanter*, and the largest Presbytery of the Synod, to which he has the honour to belong, with disorderly and discreditable conduct, for observing what was obviously the proper procedure in such a case. At the very first meeting which was held after the attack on *The Covenanter* appeared in the columns of a newspaper, the editor consulted his Presbytery as to the proper course of procedure, profess-

ing his willingness to follow their direction. He delivered no vituperative speech against the Reviewer as has been represented, but simply asked advice, making such a statement as might justify him in presenting such an application to Presbytery. In the whole affair he submitted himself to Presbytery, professing entire willingness to abide their censure if it was found that he had acted improperly, or had published any thing opposed to the Church's testimony, and only requested advice as to the course which he should pursue in a situation so unusual and embarrassing. It is not, therefore, a fact, either that the editor of *The Covenanter* exhibited a complaint against the Reviewer in his absence, or that the Northern Presbytery entertained such a complaint, in the manner that he represents. Nor at the subsequent meeting in Ballymena did the editor of *The Covenanter*, and a majority of members of the court, make speeches against him, or address a "crowded assembly," as he says, endeavouring to prejudice them against him. In fact, no members whatever made speeches about him. The editor of *The Covenanter* simply repeated his request of advice in the case; and two or three other members made remarks on a most extraordinary communication which the Reviewer had forwarded to Presbytery. The meeting was held in the dining-room of an inn, and consisted of the members of court, and perhaps about twenty persons more. This was what the Reviewer terms, in most convenient phrase, a "crowded assembly."* After comparing this simple and naked statement of facts with the Reviewer's representation of the matter, and his tirade of declamation, the religious public will not wonder much that the principles taught in *The Covenanter* should appear so revolting, after they have been subjected to his mode of analysis and perversion. Neither at the one meeting of Presbytery nor the other, to which the Reviewer refers, did the editor of *The Covenanter* deliver a vituperative speech against him, nor is it true that he arraigned his motives. Had he acted thus, it is manifest that the Presbytery that received his complaint were equally chargeable, as he would have been, with ignorance of the very first principles of Presbyterian order, and with gross irregularity. The Reviewer has publickly made these assertions—he may find the proof not quite so easy as he expects. Meanwhile his conduct in this affair, taken in connexion with his declamation against asking advice, can be regarded in no other light than as of a piece with his other attempts to evade the discipline of the Church, and to bring it into discredit.† In such a mode of procedure he will receive no

* It will not be amiss in future if the Reviewer examines into the veracity and other capabilities of the persons from whom he receives accounts of the proceedings of the Northern Presbytery, before he attaches absolute credence to their reports, or publishes them to the world.

† Why does the Reviewer, throughout his pamphlet, seem so anxious to bring the matter in dispute before the bar of the public, and to remove it from the cognizance of an ecclesiastical judicatory—and that, after he has represented his opponent as holding sentiments unanimously condemned by the Irish and Scottish Reformed Synods; and labours hard to show him as standing alone and entirely opposed to his brethren on the questions at issue? By such conduct, the Reviewer betrays the weakness of his own cause, and virtually gives the lie to his representations respecting the sentiments and conduct of the editor of *The Covenanter*.

countenance from us; nor will we be deterred by all his vapouring about candid discussion, and his bravadoes about the unanswerable nature of his arguments, from following the course of public duty, in maintaining the authority of Church courts, and the good order of the sanctuary, and in seeking perseveringly for the condemnation of New-light innovations.

All that would require to be said in answer to chapter 12th of the Reviewer's pamphlet, has been already anticipated. His questions, to which he demands a categorical answer, may appear to himself of vast importance; and to some who are thoroughly imbued with the New-light and liberal doctrines relative to magistracy, may seem of no little consequence in deciding the controversy. To the candid and unprejudiced reader, however, they must appear in a totally different light—as captious and ensnaring, and a pitiful attempt to distract the attention from the main subject. On any other point of revealed religion, or even on the plainest and most generally received truth, might a multitude of similar inquiries be started; and easily might a sceptic enjoy his fancied triumph, till his opponent should furnish to each of them a plain and categorical answer. Such a subterfuge will not do. Already, in the exposition and elucidation of our views, have we furnished the most effectual reply to those inquiries which have any proper application to the case in hand; the others we leave to their sage propounder, informing him, that when he throws off the mask, and opens up as clearly, and explains as fully, his New-light scheme, as we have done the sentiments of the Reformers and Reformed Churches on the Christian magistrate's duty in matters of religion, *then* we shall either meet his modest demand, and furnish him with direct and categorical answers, even to the most frivolous and captious of his queries, or bring forward a catechism on the New-light doctrines on magistracy—the answers of which, by so celebrated a controversialist as the Reviewer, will, no doubt, be of signal service for the instruction of the present and future generations.

Before conclusion, it seems only requisite to advert briefly to what may demand a more lengthened and formal reply on some future occasion—the construction which the Reviewer and persons of his way have of late endeavoured to put upon our sentiments relative to magistracy.*

It is alleged, that when we propose to exhibit the *nature* of the Christian magistrate's office, we fail entirely in the design. Such an allegation from an opponent needs not surprise us, as it is not very likely that he would be pleased with any definition from us on this subject, however precise. In the present case, it is enough for us to remark that every person the least acquainted with the laws of reasoning knows that frequently we require to employ description, instead of definition properly so called. When we use the term *nature* in this case, we employ it according to one of its most usual and ordinary acceptations, to determine *the kind or sort*, and we follow the method of description instead of definition. This may not please a captious disputant, or a person of a fastidious taste;

* See a "Review of the Christian Magistrate," &c.

but to plain readers, who desire to know and to embrace the truth, it will be of more use than nice criticism or the statement of hair-spun distinctions.

A more serious charge is advanced against our views when the attempt is made to show that we hold that *dominion is founded in grace*. In stating the *Scriptural qualifications* of the Christian magistrate, we had advanced high the claims of true religion upon the homage of the heart and life; and because we have insisted that the magistrate in a reformed nation, to be recognized as God's minister, should possess the different features of character assigned to him in the Divine word, therefore it is inferred that we place the origin of civil government in grace. In relation to this most unwarrantable perversion, we may observe that the course of argument and objection which an opponent takes, decides, pretty accurately, whether he is a genuine Covenanter, or an enemy to the cause. In former times, the opponents of the Testimony of the Reformed Church always alleged, when Covenanters spoke of *Scriptural qualifications* being indispensable to the validity of the magistrate's office in a reformed nation, that this was teaching that *dominion is founded in grace*; and when the advocates of Reformation principles required the civil magistrate to repress by his authority irreligion and support the Church of Christ, their adversaries raised against them the cry of Erastianism, persecution, intolerance, &c. Whether the course of objection adopted by the Reviewer in this controversy does not go far to prove that his doctrines are near akin to theirs, and that he has virtually gone over to another camp, we leave it to our readers to determine.* Let it suffice to say, in opposition to this allegation, that we have again and again taught that magistracy flows not from Christ as Mediator, but that it is placed in subjection under him in his Mediatorial character, and that the magistrate has no authority as an ecclesiastical officer in the Church, which he certainly would have if dominion were founded in grace. When we insist on a high measure of *Scriptural qualifications* as requisite in the Christian magistrate, it will be remembered that all along we are speaking of the magistracy as held by a professed Christian, and exercised among a Christian reformed people: the character and conditions of magistracy in lands destitute of Divine Revelation fall not within the range of our reasonings and illustrations. It is the *external evidence* of religious principle that we hold to be necessary, in order to enable the people to determine the *Scriptural* character of their magistrates, just as the sacred penmen, and the most eminent divines, such as Dwight and others, speak of justice, the fear of the Lord, and piety being requisite in those who bear rule in the State. We pretend not to judge the heart, in determining the character of ecclesiastical or civil officers, of church members or subjects. In the one case as well as the other, we take the measur-

* It is a fact that deserves notice, that while in many parts of the Covenanting Church, the Reviewer's pamphlet attacking *The Covenanter* would not at all be received, he is indebted for its circulation to ministers and members of other Churches.

ing reed of the Divine Word, and yield our approbation only as far as their principles and conduct agree therewith.

It is altogether vain to allege that, in restraining or punishing heretics and idolaters, the Christian magistrate, on our principles, would act the part of an *absolute* tyrant, since we have repeatedly taught that, to be a proper magistrate, he must be the *people's choice*, and that the Divine Law and Christian principle are to guide his conduct.

Nor will it serve to set aside our doctrine that, under the present dispensation, gross heretics and idolaters should be coerced by the civil magistrate—to allege, as has been done, that we must of necessity hold that *capital punishments* should, in all cases, be applied, if we plead the permanent obligation of those precepts of the Judicial Law that relate to the punishment of false teachers, idolaters, &c., or refer to the writings of the Reformers. The Reviewer may think he serves a good purpose by forcing us to hold or to abandon the article of *capital punishments* in the coercion of idolaters and blasphemers, but we are not to be driven out of our position by his declamation. Repeatedly have we said, that we teach nothing as to the degree or measure of punishment to be applied—it is the principle, that gross heretics and idolaters should be coerced by civil authority, that we maintain, leaving its application to be directed by Christian liberty and the circumstances of the case. That a law may continue of binding obligation, while it may be modified according to peculiar circumstances, is obvious, even on the Reviewer's principles, since he holds that blasphemy and Sabbath-profanation should be punished by the magistrate; and, we presume, he must make this admission on the ground that the Judicial Law required such crimes to be punished, while he will hardly maintain that they should be punished in the same degree as of old. Let it be distinctly borne in mind, then, that we say nothing farther as to the degree of punishment to be employed in the cases supposed, than that which the Westminster Divines assert respecting the Judicial Law, that it obliges now only as far “as the general equity thereof may require.” The Reviewer may hope to distract attention from the main question, and to excite against us public odium, by declaiming about *capital punishments*, the magistrate's *sword*, and change of principles, but he must be sensible that these particulars have little to do with the proper determination of the controversy.

It is a direct and manifest perversion of our declared principles to affirm, that we teach that the Christian magistrate should punish all who differ from him in opinion on the article of religion. No such sentiment have we ever propounded, and to bring it forward, as the Reviewer has repeatedly done, and to attempt to extort it from disjointed clauses of sentences in our former publications, only betrays a weak and indefensible cause.

Most extraordinary is his declaration, made in reference to the “Explanation and Defence of the Terms of Communion” by our Scottish brethren, that blasphemy and Sabbath profanation should be punished as coming under the head of “vice and immorality” in relation to the precepts of the first table, but that heresy and idolatry

should be exempted from coercion, because they are not to be regarded in the light of vice or immorality. The Reviewer will please to inform us, for we really do not understand, how blasphemy falls under the designation of "vice and immorality," and gross heresy or idolatry does not, or how it is any more absurd to speak of acts of idolatry than of acts of blasphemy. Should it be even so as the Reviewer has alleged, that we go not all the length of some of the Reformers in the article of punishing heretics and idolaters, it remains to be shown wherein the *sophistry* lies of going with them in the admission of the principle, while we may differ from them in some of its minute applications. We hold their views on the main question at issue, because we conscientiously believe them to be Scriptural, and because they are embodied in Standards, to which, as Covenanters, we have vowed solemn adherence; while we are not pledged to every minute statement or illustration which they employed in explaining or defending their views. On the other hand, in spite of all he has said on this point, the Reviewer, in what he has written on magistracy, can be regarded in no other light than as impugning the doctrine of our Standards on the subject, and of manifesting decided and undisguised hostility against a principle which the Reformers held, and the martyrs sealed with their blood.

In thus exposing the errors, misrepresentations and perversions of our opponent, we have performed a necessary, though painful, public duty. With reluctance we entered upon the task. What we had prepared in the way of reply to the attack on *The Covenanter* we withheld for a length of time, and suffered our character and principles to lie under the obloquy with which the Reviewer had covered them, in the hope that the reception of his pamphlet by the Church would convince him of the folly of his attempt, and that he would, on reflection, see the evil and danger of New Light innovations. In this expectation we have been disappointed; and now, when successive publications from the same quarter manifest plainly the design to deny and impugn principles long received in the Church, and to pursue the editor of *The Covenanter* and his work with rancorous hostility, we are compelled to gird on the controversial armour, less in self-vindication, though this too is justifiable, than in defence of principles which we trust we will never be left to relinquish. Our sole desire is to maintain with firmness the purity and integrity of the testimony transmitted to us by our forefathers. If in this attempt we have said or written any thing inconsistent with the law of Christian forbearance and kindness, we earnestly seek to be forgiven, as we trust we have been enabled to forgive those who have causelessly risen up against us. In whatever regards our conduct in the whole affair, both as it relates to the principles which we have taught, and the different steps of procedure we have taken, we are entirely willing to leave the matter in the hands of the Judicatories of the Reformed Church. At such a tribunal, we have no dread that the doctrines of our Standards will meet with an uncompromising vindication, and an impartial decision will be come to respecting the conduct of the respective parties in the controversy. Earnestly do we desire that all may be brought to "speak the truth

in love," and that the Divine direction may be universally followed by the officers and members of the Church—" *Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing.*"

APPENDIX.

NARRATIVE OF PROCEEDINGS WHICH HAVE TAKEN PLACE IN THE CONTROVERSY BETWEEN THE REVIEWER AND THE EDITOR OF THE COVENANTER.

WHEN statements which misrepresent the character and conduct of individuals, and which conceal or misapply facts, that are necessary to be known for the right understanding of a subject, are published, the interests of truth demand that they should be met by a full representation of the real state of the case, however such a representation may serve to convict individuals of discreditable disingenuity and perversion. The statements made by the Reviewer, concerning the origin of this controversy, and the conduct of the Editor of *The Covenanter* at the commencement of the periodical, are of this character. That they have not, long ere now, been met by counter-statements, and, in several instances, by flat contradictions, is to be ascribed solely to the desire that the peace and unity of the Church might not be disturbed by personal collisions. We now furnish a succinct narrative of the proceedings to which the Reviewer has alluded in his pamphlet, and others which have taken place subsequent to its publication—not that the public generally can have much interest in matters of a private or local nature—but because in a reply such as the present, it seems necessary to afford full information on the various topics that have been matters of objection against *The Covenanter* and its Editor.

A considerable period before the meeting of the Reformed Synod in 1830, the present Editor of *The Covenanter* entertained the idea of originating a periodical magazine, which would be devoted to the elucidation and defence of the Covenanted Reformation, and might be a suitable vehicle for circulating important intelligence throughout the Reformed Presbyterian community in this country. In the view of the necessity and desirableness of such a measure, he was confirmed by correspondence and consultation with several respected fathers and brethren in the ministry, and with public spirited laymen in various parts of the Church. A short time previous to the meeting of Synod in Coleraine, in 1830, the Editor of *The Covenanter* conferred on the subject with the Rev. Dr. M'Leod, of New-York, whose high reputation as a divine and an author had long been established. Not only did this eminent individual most fully and cordially agree with him, on the desirableness of commencing without delay a periodical such as had been contemplated, but strenuously urged him to bring forward at Synod a motion to this effect. In consequence, a motion was presented, which was supported by Dr. M'Leod, and was unanimously adopted by Synod. It was in the following terms:—

“ Moved and agreed, that the Synod, regarding themselves called upon, by the state of the Churches, to take measures for a more open maintenance and advocacy, and for the wider extension of the principles of the Covenanted Reformation, and regarding the public press as a powerful instrument, which may be rendered subservient to the high advancement of the cause of truth, recommend to such of its members as may be able to give attention to the matter, to make arrangements for the publication of a periodical, to be circulated throughout the bounds of our religious community; and the members hold themselves engaged to use endeavours in order to obtain sufficient support for the undertaking from the several congregations.”

So far was the present Editor of *The Covenanter* from wishing to make a monopoly of the matter, that though he had exclusively taken the preparatory steps, and had brought forward in Synod the proposition respecting the periodical, the motion was put in terms that left the matter at large. Any member of Synod who was qualified for conducting it was at liberty to commence such a work, and to make whatever arrangements he might see proper for conducting it. No committee was named; and the Supreme Judicatory in no respect pledged its responsibility either for its management, or the sentiments which, in case it were commenced, it should contain. The proposer of the motion, wishing to defer to more aged and experienced brethren in the case, waited nearly *four months* after Synod, in the hope that some such might take steps for carrying into effect the Synod's expressed intention. Had any brother in the ministry, during this period, offered to commence a periodical, most gladly would he have furthered the undertaking, according to his ability, and co-operated as a contributor to the work. That the matter might not be altogether dropped, and to ascertain whether sufficient encouragement could be obtained, the Editor of *The Covenanter*, at the end of the time mentioned, prepared a *prospectus*, which, after having been submitted to several brethren in the ministry, in whose judgment he had the fullest confidence, was printed and circulated among the members of the Church. The interest taken in the proposed work was most gratifying. In the course of a few weeks, nearly 1500 subscribers were obtained, on the express understanding that the forthcoming periodical should be conducted according to the principles announced in the prospectus; and many others held out encouragement, which was afterwards amply realized. At this stage of the proceedings, the Reviewer and his party may be considered as having commenced their active opposition to the design, and their attacks upon the Editor, which have been carried on unremittingly since. Immediately after the conclusion of the Synod in which the matter was first mentioned, Mr. Paul, in the presence of a number of ministers and elders, scoffed at the proposal:—afterwards, neither he nor his friends made the slightest attempt to commence a work of the kind; and when the prospectus was issued, they did not even offer their individual subscriptions. They even carried their opposition much farther;—they went about unjustly and ungenerously, by petty criticism, depreciating the prospectus; threw out hints that the attempt would miscarry, or the periodical be short-lived; and, in fact, made every attempt that was in their power indirectly to frustrate the design.*

It may be asked, If such were the feelings towards the proposed periodical by the Reviewer and his friends, why call them together for consultation, as the Editor did, by the circular published in the Review? To this inquiry, we reply—That though all along, from the concern which we had taken in the matter, we considered ourselves having a chief interest in the periodical, and though, for a long period before, we had personally received any thing but friendly treatment from Mr. Paul and those who sided with him, we wished to carry the feelings of the public with us in the undertaking, and, if possible, to commence it with the good wishes and friendly co-operation of all the ministers and members of the Church. We had no unfriendly feelings towards those who had indirectly attempted to thwart the design; and we could not have calculated on the extent of the ill-will towards the Editor of *The Covenanter* which they subsequently discovered. On the ground of the prospectus, a large number of subscribers had been procured, not one of whom was reported from any of the congregations of the Reviewer and his party, with the sole exception of those from the congregation of Cullybackey. It appeared, therefore, desirable immediately to convene a meeting of friends, and of others whose co-operation it might be of use to secure, or whose opposition it was obviously better not to excite in a new undertaking. The call for this purpose was short, and the place of meeting unhappily fixed in Belfast. In consequence of the place not being central, and the season unfavourable for ministers travelling from a distance, the meeting was attended by none who had lent any countenance to the design, or who had exerted themselves to obtain subscribers, except the Rev. James Dick. Messrs. Paul, Henry, Alexander and Orr, were present, not one of whom had previously shown the least disposition to countenance the design, but all of whom, it was manifest from their conduct on the occasion, would willingly have secured the entire control over a

* In all this we except the Rev. Clarke Houston.

work which they had hitherto done nothing to promote, but which they now saw would be received with approbation by the Church.

From a meeting, composed of such members, it was plain Mr. Houston could expect little friendly counsel or encouragement. Accordingly, his past exertions were never once acknowledged; almost every motion suggested by him or his friend, as requisite for conducting the work, was rejected by a majority acting in concert; a committee of management, different from that contemplated, was appointed and arranged, so as to give the Reviewer and his friends the chief, if not the exclusive control over the work; the times of meeting for consultation were fixed, in opposition to Mr. Houston's remonstrances, so as to suit the convenience of Mr. Paul and others, his friends, who were engaged in teaching, and to preclude the attendance of the friends of the periodical who resided at a distance; and afterwards, by the power of a majority, the arrangement to pay out of the proceeds of the work the travelling expenses of the conductors in attending the meetings, which had been proposed and at first agreed to, was set aside. From all this, it was apparent that the whole aim of the Reviewer and his party was to bring the periodical completely under their power, and the alternative was presented to its present editor, either to let the work be strangled, or to seek safety and peace by leaving it entirely in their hands. From a desire to maintain harmony, and act to the utmost in a friendly spirit, concessions were made and measures of management agreed to, which, in other circumstances, would at once have been rejected with disdain.

That the public, whom the Reviewer has laboured assiduously to prejudice against *The Covenanter* and its editor, and whom his brethren who joined with him in emitting the letter published in their name in his pamphlet also try to mislead, may have a little clearer insight into the doings of some men who can talk plausibly and make a "fair show in the flesh," we may mention the spirit in which Mr. Paul treated the Editor of *The Covenanter* at the meeting to which we are alluding. 1. When Mr. Houston spoke of having consulted his friends in relation to the steps which he had already taken, Mr. Paul inquired contemptuously who these friends were, and spoke of them as a *conclave*. He appeared also mightily offended with him for having prepared and issued a prospectus, though it needs no sagacity to see that the Editor of *The Covenanter* has as good a right to publish a prospectus, or any other work, as to breathe the common air. 2. In arranging about the hour at which the Committee should meet for consultation, when Mr. Houston objected against meeting late in the evening, pleading his residence in the country, and the state of his health, as a reason why an earlier hour would be desirable, and alleging that he had nearly come to a resolution that he would attend no meetings in town in the evening, he was tauntingly told by the Chairman (the Rev. John Alexander), that he must have formed this resolution very lately, as he had seen him not long since at a public meeting in the evening;—and Mr. Paul said he (Mr. H.) should be more cautious in his expressions, as in the case of a Committee appointed by Synod to inspect the Causes of Thanksgiving, the fact about the attendance of one of the members turned out otherwise than he had represented. When Mr. H. offered to produce two letters from the individual alluded to, in confirmation of the account which he had given, and insisted upon the Chairman requiring Mr. P. to make an apology for the unjust and ungenerous insinuation, not only did he refuse to retract or apologize for the charge of falsehood, which, without the shadow of evidence, he had advanced against Mr. H.; but the Chairman took part with him, and told Mr. H. and his friend, who likewise insisted upon an apology being made, that they were making too much of it. 3. Mr. Paul, at the close of the business, completely destroyed the harmony of the meeting, and with it all hope of future agreement, by proposing to publish a new prospectus, delivering a long series of reasons why the proposal should be acceded to, and exhibiting several instances of petty and captious criticism, all tending to cast contempt on Mr. H. and to depreciate his labours. These he delivered in an insulting, contemptuous tone, as if triumphing over his victim, and the criticisms and alterations were such as no candid critic would have made. Though he was warned of the consequence of proceeding in this way, and once and again remonstrated with, he refused to desist, and evidently seemed to be actuated by one ruling principle throughout the whole proceedings—that of annoying and rendering contemptible, as far as in his power, Mr. Houston. It deserves further to be mentioned that, immediately before separating, Mr. Paul delivered a caution about bringing forward in the periodical certain parts of our

peculiar principles, alleging that we differed in opinion on them. When he was told there could be no proper difference among genuine Covenanters on the articles alluded to, as they were bound to receive them as defined in the Act and Testimony, he alleged we might differ about the definition itself. This avowal appeared in the light of a design to keep back the distinguishing principles of the Reformed Church, or to soften them down so as to please all parties.

After such treatment, it was manifest that nothing like friendly co-operation could be expected in conducting the magazine from Mr. Paul and his party, and as the matter had originated solely with the present Editor of *The Covenanter*, and all the subscribers that had been reported had been obtained on the principles of the prospectus which he had issued—as not a single subscriber, as far as we know, had been obtained by the gentlemen who treated him in the manner exhibited above, but, on the other hand, they had done all in their power to keep back and prevent subscribers—a little reflection taught him that the safest and best course was to proceed with the work without them, allowing them the same privilege and influence as any other member of Synod, that of publishing papers in the periodical, and of employing it as a vehicle for such intelligence as they might wish to communicate. This was the only alternative that appeared, without abandoning the design altogether—a measure which could not be taken, as subscribers had been obtained, and the public were looking anxiously for the appearance of the work. To surrender the entire control into the hands of persons who had ever been hostile to the measure—who had done nothing whatever to bring the matter to the state in which it then stood, but, on the other hand, had offered much opposition, and whose habits, to say the least, were not the best calculated to conduct with vigour and punctuality a monthly magazine, would have manifestly been an act of injustice done to individuals and the community, and to go in partnership with them, after the spirit which they had displayed, would have been impossible. The Editor of *The Covenanter* had formerly sat and acted with them in the same Presbytery, and whatever they may tell the public about the harmony of their meetings before and since his separation from them, he is prepared to show that, while he remained among them, he never received from them any thing like brotherly counsel or consideration, and that at almost every meeting he was subjected to annoyance, till at length he was compelled to seek from the Supreme Judicatory leave to join another Presbytery, which the Synod saw good cause to grant him. The elders and others who attended these meetings of the Eastern Presbytery, while Mr. Houston was a member of it, can testify who was the aggressor in these unpleasant collisions.

From the remembrance of such treatment formerly, and the recent proof afforded at the meeting in Belfast, that the spirit of the men was unchanged, Mr. H. saw that the only possible way in which the periodical could be conducted with comfort to himself, and profit to the Church, was to refuse to act with a committee which had been self-appointed, and the majority of whom had no claim whatever of an interest in *The Covenanter*. Soon after the meeting, he therefore addressed a brief and friendly note to the persons who had been present, informing them that he saw cause to recede from the arrangement which had been entered into, and that he would go on with the work on the plan announced in the prospectus, inviting at the same time their contributions, and promising them aid on his part, should they at any future period set on foot a similar undertaking.

The conduct of these brethren after *The Covenanter* commenced, was, from the beginning, equally uncharitable and unchristian. After the reception of the brief note just mentioned, they made out a long and laboured reply, published in the "*Covenanter Reviewed*," purporting to be an answer to Mr. Houston's letter; but instead of sending it to him,* they despatched it to various ministers and elders, with a note, which, as being probably ashamed of it, they have thought proper not to publish. In the latter communication they represented Mr. H. as self-willed, and acting in a tyrannical, anti-presbyterial, and independent manner. At the same time, they attempted in every possible way to prevent persons from subscribing to *The Covenanter*, spoke of commencing on their

* Though this letter was written professedly as a reply to Mr. Houston's note, and read as such to many persons by Mr. Paul and his friends, and afterwards circulated through the Church, Mr. H. never saw it, till at least 12 months after it was written, when it was published in Mr. Paul's pamphlet.

part a rival periodical, and in some instances endeavoured to induce persons to withhold the subscriptions to *The Covenanter* which they had promised.

It must be altogether evident to any unprejudiced person who reads this narrative, that in these steps the brethren referred to not only discovered rancorous enmity against the Editor of *The Covenanter* and his work, but that their conduct was in other respects highly censurable. 1. They endeavoured to prevent the diffusion of the truth. 2. They themselves acted unpresbyterially, unjustly, and tyrannically, having judged, pronounced sentence upon, and proceeded to punish a person without a trial, and without a hearing. 3. In violation of the brotherly covenant, and their own solemn vows, they attempted to sow discord in the Church. In circulating their answer to Mr. Houston's note, they selected some ministers, on whom they probably thought they could better work, and overlooked others. In some instances, where the minister appeared not to their mind, they sent their circular to elders. Intimations were made from the pulpit prejudicial to *The Covenanter*; and in public and private its Editor was unsparingly held up to their people as an object of deserved odium and reproach.

Though the Editor of *The Covenanter* and his friends were perfectly aware of these proceedings, they suffered them to pass without notice, cheered in their labours by the flattering reception which the periodical met from the Christian public, and willing to disregard aspersions on their own character and motives, rather than that the peace of the Church should be disturbed. In this course they had still continued to persevere, if Mr. Paul and his party had not taken other steps, which rendered the public vindication of principles and character an imperative duty. At the close of the first year of *The Covenanter*, there appeared in *The Belfast News-Letter* a virulent attack on the principles taught in *The Covenanter* on the article of magistracy, in a letter, signed by the Rev. John Paul, of Carrickfergus, which manifestly aimed at exhibiting the periodical and its conductor in the most disagreeable light, and which, from the time of its appearance, was well fitted to bring the work into general disrepute. When the Editor of *The Covenanter*, in self-defence, replied to this communication, through the same channel, declining a newspaper controversy, and signifying his intention of seeking redress in the discipline of the Church, another letter from Mr. Paul appeared in the newspaper, reiterating his former charges, and subsequently a large pamphlet, entitled the "COVENANTER REVIEWED," &c., with the contents and merits of which our readers are now sufficiently acquainted, was emitted and industriously circulated. As the Editor of *The Covenanter* was fully convinced that the author of these publications had acted in a disorderly manner—had most grossly misrepresented and perverted the principles of *The Covenanter*, and had published sentiments utterly at variance with those contained in the Standards of the Reformed Church, he felt it to be a solemn though painful duty to apply to an ecclesiastical court for redress, and to take steps for instituting a regular process against his opponent, and those who, by countenancing the circulation of his errors, had become accomplices with him. In adopting this course, he was actuated by no revengeful or merely personal considerations. Most gladly would he have held a friendly conference with Mr. Paul, in the presence of respected brethren, to which he (Mr. P.) was invited; and it was only after there appeared no hopes of terminating the dispute in this way, and when from the appearance of the "COVENANTER REVIEWED," and the sentiments therein contained, it was evident that the design was to gainsay important truths of the Church's Testimony, and to destroy the reputation of public characters, that the Editor of *The Covenanter* applied to the Supreme Judicatory of the Church, and submitted a libel against the Reviewer and those who had taken part with him in his irregular procedure. The Synod saw cause to receive and read publicly this paper, together with other documents bearing on the subject in dispute, and determined at its last meeting that the whole matter should be held *in retentis* till the following regular meeting. A paper thus read publicly before the representatives of the Church in Britain and America, and a large number of the Christian public, evidently became public property; and when, in reporting the proceedings of Synod, the heads of the libel were afterwards published in *The Covenanter*, no rule of proper procedure was violated, nor had any party just cause to complain; yet for this step Mr. Paul and his friends, defeated at Synod in their attempt to carry the point by boisterous declamation, and to embroil the peace of the Church, by having a special meeting called to investigate the matter, have held up the Editor of *The Covenanter* as an object of odium to the whole Church.

Soon after the last meeting of Synod, these gentlemen, after uttering violent philippics against the Editor of *The Covenanter* at a meeting of the Eastern Presbytery, held in Newtownards, resolved to address the different ministers and sessions of the Reformed Presbyterian Church in Ireland, in order to induce them to join them in an application to the Moderator of Synod, to call a *pro re nata* meeting in Belfast, for the purpose of having the matter of the libel tried. This was evidently a gross irregularity, as the Synod had already determined that the matter should not be tried till the next regular meeting, which, it was likewise resolved, should not be held in Belfast. Failing, after repeated applications, in the attempt to bring the ministers of the Church generally to countenance their divisive courses, they addressed the Editor of *The Covenanter*, who, by his brethren, had been appointed to fill the office of Moderator of Synod for the present year, they endeavoured to lead him into an approbation of the measure of convening a *pro re nata* meeting of Synod, representing that several ministers in the West had agreed with them in the propriety of a requisition for this purpose. As the Moderator considered himself bound to support the authority of the Synod's decision, to preserve the Church's peace and unity, and to consult the advantage and convenience of the members, the course of plain and obvious duty appeared to be to refuse the application to convene a special meeting, and to leave the matter to be tried, as the Synod, in whose name he acted, had already determined, at the next regular meeting.

Accordingly, in answer to the requisition from the brethren of the Eastern Presbytery, he addressed to them the following official communication, which, as explaining to them the reasons of his conduct in the affair, may not improperly conclude this narrative :—

To the Moderator and other Members of the Eastern Reformed Presbytery.

DEAR BRETHREN,—On the 4th instant, I received from you a communication addressed to me as Moderator of the Reformed Presbyterian Synod in Ireland, requesting me to convene a *pro re nata* meeting of Synod in Belfast, for the purpose of investigating certain matters referred to in a subsequent paper, which was handed to me by Rev. Messrs. Alexander and Orr, the gentlemen who composed your deputation. From the latter document especially, I perceive that you have applied to the ministers and sessions of the various congregations under the inspection of Synod, in order to induce them to join with you in this application; the chief reason assigned by you for this course of procedure being the publication, in the 21st number of *The Covenanter*, of the heads of a libel preferred by me against Rev. John Paul, and several of his co-presbyters. As I am thus directly brought in as a party in the affair, and the attempt is made to represent the Editor of the periodical as acting, in this case, in such a manner as to render an extraordinary meeting of Synod necessary, you will permit me to offer a few words of explanation, before proceeding to a direct reply to your communication.

A considerable time ago, Rev. John Paul thought proper, in the most unprovoked and unexpected manner, furiously and unjustly to attack me as Editor of *The Covenanter*; charging me with error and misrepresentation, and with holding detestable principles; and several of his brethren in the ministry were active in circulating his slanderous pamphlet. This publication, besides, contained an open denial of an important article of the Church's testimony, respecting the power of the Christian civil magistrate about religious matters, and set forth sentiments opposed to the doctrines of our Subordinate Standards. For the sake of the Church's purity and peace, and also in vindication of my own character, from most groundless and unjust aspersions, I was constrained to bring a series of charges against Mr. Paul before the Supreme Judicatory; professing, at the same time, my entire willingness to enter on the probation, and being fully aware of the responsibility involved in conducting such a prosecution. These charges embodied in the libel were, by the Synod's deliberate act, to which Mr. Paul or his friends offered no objection, openly read in court, in the audience of the representatives of the Church in Ireland, Scotland and America, and before a large number of the religious public of Belfast. The reading of the charges was not my act, but that of Synod; the public proceedings of Synod are public property; and *The Covenanter* contained only a brief outline of what had been committed to the public by the Synod itself.

As it is thus completely obvious that your communication has referred to no new matter, I must decline, as Moderator, to call a *pro re nata* meeting of our

Supreme Judicatory. Bound as I am, in the highly responsible office to which I have been appointed, to support the Synod's authority and decisions, and to consult for the interests of the Body at large, I have, after mature consideration, adopted this course for the following reasons:—

1. This *identical matter*, the Synod, at its last meeting, determined should be held *in retentis* till next regular meeting: The words of Synod's deed in this case are—"it is the deliberate judgment of Synod, that the present time is not favourable to the dispassionate discussion of the questions at issue;" and, again, "that the papers which have been handed in and read be kept *in retentis* in the hands of the clerk, until the next regular meeting of Synod, when they shall be taken under consideration by the court." After this decision, I cannot but consider your application to the sessions to join in a request such as you have addressed to me an undutiful attempt to overturn a deed of the Supreme Court.

2. That the ministers making this application, with one exception, are all parties in the matter to be tried, and no member of any other Presbytery, except Mr. Orr, who is also a party, has made direct application to me, which I conceive is necessary in such a case. Were I even to regard those as *joining in the requisition* who are said in your representation to me to be favourable to the measure, which I am not bound to do, all constitute only a minority of Synod. Besides, of the *four* members of the Western Presbytery mentioned in your communication, *two* were not present at the last meeting of Synod at all, and could not therefore be fully acquainted with the grounds of the Synod's decision, a *third* was not present when the matter was under judicial consideration, and the *fourth* is only an honorary member of Synod, still being subject to the control of the American Reformed Synod.

3. As our Synod, so far as I know, has provided no rule to direct the official conduct of a Moderator in relation to a *pro re nata* meeting, and as I have no guide in such a case but the application of a majority of members, I am sufficiently aware, that after the Eastern Presbytery had invited all the other ministers, and repeated the invitation to some of them, to join them in the requisition, a *majority of Synod* are opposed to a special meeting, and a great majority of those who are not parties, I would, therefore, subject myself to Synod's censure, were I to call a meeting in such circumstances.

4. The place specified in your communication not being central for the members of Synod to meet, the season being unfavourable for ministers and elders to travel a distance, and many members being averse to the measure, the attendance could not be expected to be such as the importance of the case would require; and as the parties are numerous, there is reason to apprehend that either the business could not with propriety be entered upon at all; or, if entered upon, could not be issued with safety to the interests of the Church, or justice to the persons more particularly concerned.

On these grounds, I decline compliance with your request, persuaded that thus I best consult the peace and safety of the Church, the wishes of the majority of the members of Synod, and the interests of all.

With sentiments of Christian and brotherly regard,

I am, dear Brethren,

Yours, in the bonds of the Gospel,

THOMAS HOUSTON, *Moderator*.

Ballymacarrett, 14th Dec. 1832.

THE END.

ERRATA.

- Page 10, line 10 from foot, for *accordance* read *discordance*.
11, line 11 from foot, for *affords* read *afford*.
13 at the top, for *vindicates and says* read *vindicate and say*.
15, line 14, erase *blasphemers*.
21, line 22 from foot, for *laudible* read *laudable*.
24, line 14 from foot, for *general ruinous* read *generally ruinous*.
26, line 20, for *consequences* read *consequence*.
29, line 4, for *wisdom* read *evidence*.
ib., line 12, for *vigour* read *rigour*.
30, line 18, for *invent* read *enact*.
35, line 8, for *he* read *the Lord*.
ib., line 14 from foot, for *forbearances* read *forbearance*.
36, line 2 from foot, for *charged* read *fastened*.
41, line 27, for *terroren* read *terrorem*.
42, line 14 from foot, for *poteatatis* read *potestatis*.
43, line 11 from foot, insert † after *extra*.
46, line 17 from foot, for *distinction* read *extinction*.
56, line 12, for *prevalibit* read *prevalebit*.
76, line 14, for *indispensible* read *inexcusable*.
88 at the top, erase *The Standards, &c. The Standards, &c.*
93, line 8 from the foot, right hand column, for *transgressors* read *transgressions*.