

MINUTES

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OF THE

GENERAL SYNOD

OF THE

REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH,

SESSION SEVENTEENTH,

HELD IN THE CITY OF PITTSBURGH,

October, 1834.

WITH AN APPENDIX, CONTAINING

TWO OVERTURES:

- I. On the 'Jury Act,'**
- II. On the Magistrate's Power,**

CIRCA SACRA.

NEWBURGH.

PRINTED BY C. U. CUSHMAN.

1834.

MINUTES

OF THE

GENERAL SYNOD.

PITTSBURGH, Oct. 8th, 1834.

Synod met agreeably to adjournment, at 7 o'clock, P. M. The Moderator, Rev. John Cannon, opened the meeting with a Sermon on the subject assigned him, from Rom. 13, i. "*Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers; for there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God.*" After sermon, the Court was constituted by the Moderator with prayer.

Adjourned to meet same place, to-morrow at 9 o'clock A. M.

Same place, 9th Oct. 9 o'clock A. M.

The Court met and was constituted with prayer. The members of the present Synod were ascertained, when it appeared that there were present from the

SOUTHERN PRESBYTERY,

MINISTERS.	RULING ELDERS.
Rev. R. GIBSON,	Mr. JOHN HOUSTON.
" J. R. WILLSON, D. D.	
" C. B. M'KEE,	
" M. RONEY,	
" D. SCOTT,	

NORTHERN PRESBYTERY.

" S. M. WILSON.

OHIO PRESBYTERY.

" JOHN WALLACE,	" ABRAHAM PATTERSON,
" D. STEELE,	" CHAS. TONER,
" J. B. JOHNSON,	" ALEX. FOSTER.

PITTSBURGH PRESBYTERY.

" JOHN CANNON,	" THOS. GEMMIL,
" JAS. BLACKWOOD,	" SAM'L STERRIT,
" THOS. SPROULL,	" NATHAN JOHNSTON.
" WM. SLOANE,	" SAM'L WYLIE.

From the Western Presbytery no representation.

The Rev. Robert Gibson, was chosen Moderator; Moses Roney, Clerk, Thomas Sproull, Assistant Clerk.

ARGUMENT

ON THE

MAGISTRATE'S POWER CIRCA-SACRA.

[Published as an Overture.]

WHAT is the duty of the Christian magistrate as it respects sacred things? It is generally known and acknowledged that the opinions of the Christian world respecting magistracy, have undergone a remarkable change since the commencement of the reformation.

That the civil and religious rights of mankind are better understood and more correctly appreciated, is generally admitted. It is the opinion of many, that on these subjects, the community is rapidly becoming more enlightened. Hence it is supposed, that prudence would require us to defer publishing our sentiments on so momentous a question, till the subject shall be better understood. And seeing the church, in consequence of the near approach of the millennium, is "moving with accelerated velocity," it would be wiser not to expose our folly, by exhibiting doctrines which further information may induce us to retract. Such objections are easily obviated. The course of this world has never been considered the standard of either faith or practice by the church of God. The sure word of prophecy, by which we mean to steer our course, points always in the same direction. That which, alone, can enable us to see divine truth clearly, is the Holy Spirit strengthening our intellectual vision, and not the dark and distorting medium of public opinion. There is no new thing under the sun. The church has sometimes been rapid in her motions in former times, as well as now. "Every one turned to his course as the horse rusheth into the battle."* Our people will not expect us to reveal any new truth, or entertain them with theories of our own. Our only aim is to illustrate and defend that great system of evangelical truth, which has been transmitted to us by our reforming ancestors. In the Westminster Confession of Faith we find the following sentiments: "The civil magistrate may not assume to himself the administration of the word or 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

* Jeremiah 8. vi.

and discipline prevented or reformed, and all the ordinances of God duly settled, administered and observed. For the better effecting thereof, he hath power to call synods, to be present at them, and to provide that whatsoever is transacted in them be according to the mind of God.* Their views are further developed in the Larger Catechism, where they enumerate among the duties required, "the disapproving, detesting, opposing all false worship; and according to each one's place and calling, removing it, and all monuments of idolatry. They enumerate among the sins forbidden, all devising, counselling, commanding, using, and in any wise approving any religious worship not instituted by God himself; tolerating a false religion, &c." and we pray that the church may be countenanced and maintained by the civil magistrate.†

The same is the doctrine of our testimony. It is the duty of the Christian magistrate to take order, that open blasphemy and idolatry be suppressed; that the church of Christ be supported throughout the commonwealth; and for the better discharge of these important duties, it is lawful for him to call synods, in order to consult with them; to be present at them, not interfering with their proceedings, (unless they become manifestly seditious and dangerous to the peace,) but supporting the independence of the church, and its righteous decisions, and preserving its unity and order against the attempts of such despisers of ecclesiastical authority as should endeavour, in a riotous manner, to disturb their proceedings.‡

In treating of the magistrate's power, as it respects the church, we have to deal with two sorts of people, namely, the Erastians, who pretend that there is no government to be acknowledged by the church, but that of the state; and the infidels, who pretend that the magistrate, as such, has nothing to do with religion. To each of these we are equally opposed.

Let us first examine the Erastian doctrine, which is, that neither under the Old nor the New Testament did Christ institute any form of government in the church, but left the whole modelling of her doctrine, worship and discipline to the civil magistrate. A doctrine so monstrous, that one would think scarce any professor of religion could have believed, much less maintained it. A sentiment of which Gillespie says, its father was the old serpent, its mother the natural enmity of the heart against God, its birth-place Rome, and it was ushered into the world by Thomas Erastus, M. D., at Heidelberg.

In opposition to the Erastians, the orthodox divines, in the Westminster Assembly, maintained that Jesus Christ, as king of the church, has himself appointed a church government distinct from the civil magistrate.

As the doctrine of Erastus is not very popular in the present age, and as his followers depended much for the support of their cause on arguments taken from the state of things in the Jewish church, it might

* Chap. 23, sect. 3.

† Questions 108, 109, and Answer to Question 191.

‡ Reformation Principles, chapter 28, sec. 7.

seem advisable to let the dispute sink into oblivion ; but when we consider that multitudes of errorists and heretics in the present day, hold the same opinions respecting the Jewish church which were held by the Erastians, the discussion of this question appears of no small importance. The Erastians, in order to support their doctrine, maintained that in the Jewish church there were no rulers distinct from the civil magistrate ; and no discipline distinct from civil punishment. Our present heretics hold the same opinion ; but the two parties deduce very different conclusions from the same premises. The Erastians, supposing that civil and ecclesiastical rulers were the same under the Old Testament, maintained that they are so still. Our present heretics, assuming the same false premises, allege, that all which is recorded of the pious kings of Judah suppressing idolatry, was done by them as ecclesiastical rulers ; and that the ancient dispensation being abolished, their example is not to be followed by the Christian magistrate. In opposition to both, we maintain that the Jewish church had a government distinct from that of the state, and a discipline distinct from civil punishment.

We prove our doctrine by the following arguments :

1st. 'The plan of the Israelites' civil polity was suggested by Jethro, approved by God, and carried into effect by Moses and the people, Ex. xviii, and Deut. i. 9. 18.

But God himself (Moses and the people not being consulted) did separate the tribe of Levi to the service of the sanctuary, and the family of Aaron to the priesthood ; and to them he committed the whole administration of ecclesiastical matters. This argument is farther corroborated by Deut. xvi. 18. "Judges and officers shalt thou make thee in all thy gates, which the Lord thy God giveth thee throughout thy tribes." This evidently implies, that the judges and officers might be chosen indiscriminately out of any of the tribes ; hence they could not be ecclesiastical rulers, or allowed to interfere in the service of the tabernacle or temple, for that belonged to the priests and Levites only : and the prohibition that no stranger should come nigh on pain of death is *seven* times repeated.* Consequently, judges and officers, appointed by the people out of all their tribes, could not in virtue of such appointment be ministers of religion, much less church rulers. If it could even be proved that they were generally or *always* chosen out of the tribe of Levi, it would not help the Erastians, because the Levites were set apart to minister in *holy things* by God himself ; but if they were appointed judges and officers, it was by the people—not for religious service, but to judge civil causes ; so that though the priest, or Levite might be a judge or civil officer, it was in another character than that of an *ecclesiastical* ruler. Nay, were it a fact, that civil rulers were generally Levites, it would rather prove that there is no government divinely instituted but that which is ecclesiastical ; and that ministers of religion were *ex officio* rulers in the state. But the fact is otherwise : of all the judges, Samuel only was a Levite ; for though Eli is said to

* Numbers i. 51 ; iii. 10. 38 ; xvi. 40 ; xviii. 4. 7. Ezek. xl. 9.

have judged Israel, yet, as he was contemporary with Sampson, his jurisdiction was ecclesiastical rather than civil.

2d. In Deut. xvii. 8. 13, the Israelites are directed, if a matter should arise in any of their cities which should prove too hard for the civil judges, to go to the place which the Lord should choose, to inquire of the priests the Levites; and the man that would do presumptuously, and would not hearken to the sentence of the priest or the judge, was to be put to death. From this passage it is evident, that there was an ecclesiastical as well as a civil court; and that in extraordinary cases, either the two met together and determined the matter by their joint suffrage, or that the ministers of religion were the supreme judges in criminal cases. Those that oppose our doctrine may choose which side they please.

3d. In the time of David, we find the distinction between civil and ecclesiastical rulers clearly marked, 1 Chron. xiii. David sets about bringing up the ark from Kirjathjearim to Jerusalem; but the captains of thousands and captains of hundreds seem to have been first consulted. He did not effect his purpose.

In chap. xv. the priests and Levites occupy the most conspicuous place; and in addition to the reason assigned in the 13th chapter, David says, the Lord made a breach upon them, because they sought him not in a proper way; intimating that as this was a religious business, the ministers of religion should have had the precedence. We find, indeed, that David, toward the end of his reign, made several regulations about the service of the sanctuary, but it is evident he did this not as a *king*, or by his authority as a civil ruler; for we find Hezekiah and Nehemiah citing him as an authority for the use of psalms and instrumental music,* which, being civil rulers themselves, they needed not have done had he acted merely in that character. It is true, that in 1 Chron. xxiii. 4, we read that 6000 of the Levites were officers and judges; but this no more proves that the civil and ecclesiastical government was the same, than the fact of one man's being an elder in the church and a magistrate in the state, would prove that a magistrate and an elder is the same.

Although Benaiah was one of the captains and a chief priest, yet the divisions of the army and the divisions of the Levites were perfectly distinct; and though David made a great many of the Levites officers and judges, he did not by that confound church and state. Nay, we find him careful to preserve the distinction, 1 Chron. xxvi. 30, in all the business of the Lord, and in the service of the king, ver. 32, for every matter pertaining to God and affairs of the king. Here we find that God's matters and the king's, though managed by the same persons, were understood to be quite different. But though David, in his choice of civil rulers, appears to have preferred Levites, yet he did not choose them exclusively; for among the rulers of the tribes recorded in the 27th chapter, only two Levites are mentioned. Here it is worthy of observation, that while many of the Levites were appointed rulers over

* 2 Chron. xxix. 25. 30; Neh. xii. 45, 46.

the other tribes, one of another tribe was never appointed to rule over the Levites. Does this prove that, in the Jewish church, civil magistrates were church rulers ?

4th. Equally obvious is the distinction between the civil and the ecclesiastical government in the time of Jehoshaphat, 2 Chron. xix. 11. And behold Amariah, the chief priest, is over you in all matters of the Lord, and Zebadiah, the son of Ishmael, the ruler of the house of Judah, for all the king's matters. Here then are ecclesiastical and civil affairs ; the matters of the Lord and the matters of the king—ecclesiastical and civil rulers, Amariah the chief priest, and Zebadiah the ruler of the house of Judah.

In short, this chapter gives us the very important account of Jehoshaphat's putting in force that law given in Deut. 17th chap. to which we have already referred.

5th. In Jeremiah, 26th chapter, we find the two governments still distinct : we find the priests and the prophets pronouncing Jeremiah worthy of death, and the people acquiescing in this sentence ; but the princes, the civil judges, to whom it belonged to inflict the punishment, heard the cause and reversed the sentence ; and it appears that the giddy populace acquiesced in *their* decision. So that although the civil set aside the sentence of the ecclesiastical court, yet it is evident that there were two distinct courts ; the court of the priests which, had cognizance of blasphemy and the like, and the court of the princes, which had the power of inflicting civil punishment.

6th. After the captivity, we find the two departments still separate. We find Zorobabel the supreme ruler, under the king of Persia, in the state ; and Joshua, the high priest, the supreme ruler in the church. Afterward we find Ezra the high priest, superintending and directing ecclesiastical matters ; while Nehemiah was employed about the business of the commonwealth. It is true, we find them harmoniously co-operating for the reformation of both church and state ; but neither of them intruding on the other's province. The distinction of civil and ecclesiastical governors, we find to have continued among the Jews notwithstanding all their corruptions, till the time of our Saviour. We find chief priests and elders mentioned as distinct characters. Matth. xxi. 23—xxvi. 47, 59—xxvii. 1. Luke xxii. 66—xxiii. 13. We see then that even under the Old Testament, the church was complete in herself, and not dependant on the state. As to whether Christ has appointed the civil magistrate a ruler in or over the church in New Testament times, we would only observe, That no such thing is mentioned or even hinted at in scripture ; and it is a fact which admits of no dispute, that the apostles and their successors managed the affairs of the church for 300 years without the interference or countenance of the civil magistrate.

In consistency with their fundamental error, of the civil magistrate's being *ex-officio* a church ruler, the Erastians allege, that to him belongs the keys of the kingdom of heaven—that it is his province to admit to or exclude from church privileges—and that there should be no discipline exercised on offenders distinct from civil punishment. For the support

of this opinion, they depend chiefly on arguments taken from the Old Testament: We admit, indeed, that had civil rulers among the Israelites, faithfully executed the divine law, there would have been little need of ecclesiastical discipline. But we prove, that under the Old Testament, sins were viewed, not only as crimes against the state, but also as scandals against the church; and that they were not only punished by the civil magistrate, but also censured by church officers, by the following reasons.

1st. Every punishment that was to be inflicted by the magistrate, is precisely defined; but there was a punishment appointed for offences against the church, which is termed *being cut off from his people*. This cannot mean that the offender should be capitally punished, for where that is intended, it is particularly specified. Nor does it appear to mean that God would immediately take away the life of the offender, for it was the punishment appointed for those who neglected the pass-over: yet it would seem that the Israelites were often guilty of neglecting that ordinance. The account of its celebration by Hezekiah, in 2d Chron. 30, and by Josiah in chap. 35, naturally induces us to believe that the duty was very much, if not altogether neglected in the times of apostacy. Yet God did not immediately take away their lives.

The meaning of the phrase then seems neither to be cutting off by the civil magistrate, nor by God himself; but *cutting off from church privileges, by excommunication*. This appears obvious, from Numb. xix. 13, where it is used as equivalent to being unclean; his uncleanness is yet upon him, and 20th verse, he is unclean.

2d. The whole fifth chapter of Leviticus, treats of church discipline. There the offender is directed to bring an offering, and to confess his sin not to the magistrate, for he is not mentioned; but to the priest who was to make an atonement. Here, then, we find confession of sin enjoined; public confession for the bringing of the offering to the tabernacle or temple, would make the matter public; and the reparation was to be made, not to the state but to the church. The same law is repeated in the 5th chapter of Numbers. The law in this case exhibits the sin not as a civil crime; but as an ecclesiastical scandal: and the way in which the offence was to be remitted, was not by suffering corporal punishment, but by confession and application to the blood of sprinkling.

3d. How much soever discipline might be neglected in the Jewish church, in times of apostacy, it is plain that it never was neglected with divine approbation. Is. i. 11; lviii. 1; lxvi. 3; Jer. vii. 8; Ez. xxii. 26; xlv. 6. 9. When God declares that on account of their sins, their assemblies were an abomination to him, when he asks whether his house had become a den of robbers in their eyes, and when he so sharply reproves the ministers of religion for not putting difference into his house, strangers uncircumcised in heart and in flesh, how absurd to suppose that there was no discipline in the church; or that the ministers had not committed to them the power of admitting to, or excluding from church privileges? Why should God have upbraided his ministers for neglecting discipline, if no such thing had been required?

4th. That holiness was required as a qualification for membership in the Jewish church, and that consequently discipline must have been exercised, is proved from 2d Chron. iii. 18. For a multitude of the people, even many of Ephraim, and Manasseh, Issachar, and Zebulon, had not cleansed themselves, yet did they eat the passover otherwise than it was written; but Hezekiah prayed for them, saying, the good Lord pardon every one that prepareth his heart to seek God, the Lord God of his fathers, though he be not cleansed according to the purification of the sanctuary. From this we learn, that in the days of Hezekiah, moral purity was considered more acceptable to God, than that which was merely ceremonial.

5th. Again in Ezra vi. 21, and the children of Israel which were come again out of captivity, and all such as had separated themselves unto them from the filthiness of the heathen of the land, to seek the Lord God of Israel, did eat, and kept the feast of unleavened bread, seven days with joy. From this it is plain, that none were accounted fit to eat the passover but those that had separated themselves, to seek the Lord God of Israel.

6th. In Ezra x. 4, Shechaniah, speaking of the sin of the people in taking strange wives, says to Ezra, arise, for this matter belongeth unto thee: intimating that Ezra being high priest, and of course the supreme ruler in the church, he was the proper person to take cognizance of this matter. It is true he had the concurrence of the civil men of whom Nehemiah was at this time chief; but the cause was not first carried to them, and though the princes and elders interested themselves to have the law executed on the offenders, yet we find that if any proved contumacious, he was to be punished not only with confiscation of property, but also with excommunication. We see then, that the ministers of religion in the Jewish church, were required to exercise discipline; they were reprov'd for neglecting it. In times of reformation, discipline was exercised.

7th. That the civil magistrate is not a church ruler, is further proved by the case of Uzziah, 2 Chron. xxvi. 16. 21. Had Uzziah been a minister of religion, the priests certainly would not have thrust him out of the temple: far less can we suppose that God would have struck him with leprosy. If then he was not a minister of religion at all, how absurd to pretend that the ministers of religion as such, were under his government?

The government of every society must necessarily be of the same kind with the society itself—civil society must have civil government, and ecclesiastical society ecclesiastical government. If the example of Moses be urged, who was the civil ruler of Israel, and yet consecrated Aaron and his sons. And of David, who regulated the courses of the priests, composed psalms and invented instruments of music for the temple worship. It may be replied, they did those things as inspired men, having an extraordinary call to that work. Hence we find that both Hezekiah and Nehemiah cite the authority of David for the use of psalms and musical instruments, 2 Chron. xxix. 25. 30; Neh. xii. 45, 46. Not so the reforming kings, Asa, Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah and

Josiah, when they removed monuments of idolatry or punished idolaters. Because in that, they neither acted as extraordinary characters nor needed the example of extraordinary characters to justify them. They acted in destroying idolatry, not as ecclesiastical rulers but as pious kings, God's vicegerents to whom was committed the keeping of both tables of the law. That the New Testament church is required to exercise discipline, is written as with sun-beams. The degree of censure varying with the nature of the offence; as admonition, Matth. xviii, 15; 2d Thess. iii. 15; rebuke, 1 Tim. v. 20; excommunication, 1 Cor. v. and 1 Tim. i. 20; and in all the directions given to the church respecting discipline by our Lord and his apostles, there is not so much as an allusion to the civil magistrate.

The only plausible objection to the exercise of discipline by the N. T. church, is the case of Judas; who it is alleged was admitted to the Lord's supper. Here we might deny the premises as it cannot be proved that Judas partook of the Lord's supper; and if it could be proved, it is nothing to the purpose; the church does not censure for crimes which men *intend* to commit; while that intention is known only to God and themselves.

From the foregoing observations we conclude, that neither the preaching of the word, the administration of the sacraments, nor the exercise of church discipline, belongs to the civil magistrate.

Having set aside the Erastian notion of the civil magistrates being a church officer; we proceed to consider what *is* his duty toward the church. This may be taken up in the three following queries:

1. Is it the duty of the civil magistrate to provide by law, for the support of gospel ministers? 2. Is it the duty of the civil magistrate, to suppress idolatry, heresy, and blasphemy? 3. Should a religious test be required as a qualification for civil office?

On all these subjects we hold the affirmative.

Here let it be observed, that by the term magistrate, we mean the whole authority of the commonwealth, legislative, judicial and executive; and that although we admit that it is every one's duty to promote the interests of Christ's church, seeing we find heathens commended for doing so, Ezra 6 and 7 chapters, yet in all our reasoning about the civil magistrate's power, in matters of religion we mean a government constituted and administered according to the word of God—rulers who love God's law—meditate on it day and night, and make it the constant rule of their conduct.

In defence of our first position, that the government should make legal provision for the support of a gospel ministry, we offer the following observations:

1. All power, physical and moral, is essentially in God, Ps. lxii, 11, "God hath spoken once; twice have I heard this, that power belongeth unto God."

2. As the creature is dependant on its creator for being, so it must also be dependant on him for the manner of its being; it ought to answer the purpose for which it was created; hence, the creator has an essential right to furnish laws for the regulation of every part of his rational creature's conduct.

3. Jehovah being the source and centre of all existence, glory, blessedness, and perfection, he can propose no higher end to himself, than the manifestation of his own glory, Prov. xvi. 4, "The Lord hath made all things for himself." Is. xlii. 8, "I am the Lord; that is my name and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images."

4. The end which Jehovah proposed to himself in revealing all things, is that, at which his rational creatures should aim in all their actions, 1 Cor. x. 31, "Whether, therefore, ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God."

5. This law necessarily binds every rational creature at all times, and in every situation, Rom. i. 20, "So that they are without excuse;" xxi. "Because that when they knew God, they glorified him not as God."

6. By the church in an especial manner, above all his other works, God manifested his glory, Ps. l. 2, "Out of Zion the perfection of beauty, God hath shined." Is. xlii. 21, "This people have I formed for myself, they shall show forth my praise." Eph. iii. 10, "To the intent, that now, unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places, might be known by the church, the manifold wisdom of God."

7. If God has created all things for his own glory; if he has chosen principally to manifest his glory in the church; if men are required to do all to the glory of God, then magistrates, as such, are bound to protect and encourage the church.

8. This sentiment is further corroborated by the consideration that in all his arrangements, God had a primary regard to the good of his church, for example, marriage was instituted for the good of the church, Mal. ii. 15, "And wherefore one? that he might seek a Godly seed." In apportioning the earth among the various tribes of mankind, Deut. xxxii. 8 & 9, "He set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel. For the Lord's portion is his people; Jacob is the lot of his inheritance." In the judgments which he inflicted on nations, Is. xliii. 3 & 4, "For I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour; I gave Egypt for thy ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for thee. Since thou hast favor in my sight, thou hast been honorable and I have loved thee; therefore, will I give men for thee and people for thy life."

9. Such is the benevolence of the Deity, that he has so intimately connected his own glory and our happiness, that in promoting the one we must necessarily promote the other; but God is especially glorified when his law is obeyed, John xv. 8, "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit. By obedience to the divine law, human happiness is most effectually promoted. That law is not only holy, but just and good." Rom. vii. 12, "A perfect law of liberty," James i. 25.

10. The very purpose for which men set up civil rulers, is to promote the happiness of the community; but the only effectual means of altering this important end is to promote the divine glory.

More particularly, we prove that the civil authority should provide for the support of the gospel by law, from the following considerations, namely,

1. This doctrine is taught by the light of nature. As early as the time of Jacob, "the priests" of Egypt, "had a portion assigned them of Pharaoh; and did eat their portion, which Pharaoh gave them," so that they did not need to sell their land in the time of famine; and from that time and forward we find religion supported by law among all nations, revolutionary France *and* republican America excepted. So that how much soever heathens may have erred in its application, it is plain they have recognised the principle.

2. That religion was established and supported by law among the people of God, under the Old Testament, require no proof. But it is plain the thing did not originate with Moses; we find Jacob some hundreds of years before devoting the tenth of his property to God; at a still earlier period we find Abraham giving Melchizedek tithes of the spoils.

3. We find it promised to the church, that under the New Testament "kings shall be her nursing fathers; and their queens her nursing mothers." Is. xlix. 23. "That she shall suck the milk of the Gentiles, and the breast of kings." Is. lx. 16, and in the 12th verse, "For the nation and kingdom that will not serve thee, shall perish; yea the nations shall be utterly wasted." If these passages do not mean that the church should be protected—that religion should be established by law, and that ministers should have constitutional security for their support; we would gladly learn, what they do mean. For it is egregious trifling to tell us, as some do, that those passages mean that kings shall be religious men, and that their example shall have a salutary influence on the community. A king and a man are distinct. A man is a private unofficial character: a king is a public official character. Acts of kings are official acts. Besides it is not easy to understand how an irreligious king can be a religious man; or how a man can sincerely desire the good of the church, and yet do nothing to promote it in that capacity in which he has most power and influence. Nor is it easy to conceive what sort of a nursing father or nursing mother it is that affords the child neither nourishment nor *protection*.

4. Although the law respecting tithes is not enforced in the New Testament as to its letter; yet its spirit is recognised, Matth. x. 10, "The workman is worthy of his meat." Luke x. 7, "The laborer is worthy of his hire." 1 Cor. ix. 13 & 14, "Do ye not know that they which minister about holy things, live of the things of the temple? and they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar? even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel." But it will be objected, if ministers be entitled to support, because the laborer is worthy of his hire, then let them receive their remuneration from those whom they serve. To this it is answered, nations as such, are bound to employ ministers. God has not left it to men's option whether they will have the gospel among them or not. He has declared that the nation that will not serve the church, shall perish. Apply this reasoning to civil officers and what would be the consequence.*

* If every individual were allowed to employ, or pay them, or not, as he pleases, how would they be supported?

Even infidels admit that religion is the most powerful auxiliary of civil government. Sound policy then would point out the support of religion by law, as the best security for civil institutions.

Objection 2. We read of no religious establishment in the New Testament. We reply—There was not at the time the New Testament was written, any Christian government, consequently there could be no national establishment of Christianity. But so soon as the government of the Roman empire became reformed, Christianity obtained a legal establishment.

Objection 3. National establishments confound church and state; and they have been the fruitful parents of oppression, ignorance and immorality. We answer—The best things are liable to abuse and have been abused. But that the establishment of religion by the Covenanters of Scotland from 1638 to 1649, and by the Puritans of New-England, produced oppression, ignorance and immorality, or that it blended church and state, we have yet to learn.

For national establishments in which superstition, idolatry, and the most pernicious heresies, are sanctioned under the name of religion, we offer no apology.

All objections against national establishments of religion taken from the supposed injustice of the thing, as if it were an infringement of the rights of conscience, or held out a lure to ungodly men to join the church, are so many charges against Jehovah himself! He established religion by law, and with him the objector must settle the dispute.

If we be told that the ancient dispensation is now abolished, we reply, that is another part of the subject, it proves nothing against the equity of the thing. That the church of Christ has received a new organization is certainly no proof that the civil magistrate does not owe her protection.

The principles laid down in the beginning of this article, prove that every rational creature is bound by the law of its creation to support and defend the church. For a view of the evils produced by religious establishments, the enemies of the reformation, refer us to the kingdoms of Europe, that is, to show that it would be a very bad thing for *kings*, to own allegiance to him who is King of kings and Lord of lords—or to protect the bride, the Lamb's wife, they refer us to the kings, who, "give their power and strength to the beast," Rev. xvii. 13, and who "have committed fornication with the mother of harlots," Rev. xvii. 2. Europe furnishes no example of king or emperor supporting the *true church*, therefore, all reasoning from the state of things there is perfectly negatory. We have already proved that the Old Testament establishment did not bind church and state.

The second question, in relation to the magistrate's power in religious matters is, ought the Christian magistrate to suppress idolatry, heresy, and blasphemy?

Our Westminster divines have taken their views on this subject from Deut. xiii. and other parallel places of scripture; hence all that is necessary for the defence of their doctrine is to prove that *that* law is not abrogated.

Before we proceed to prove the permanency and immutability of the law in Deut. 13 and 17, let us consider what is its import.

1. It did not require the Israelites to put to death all who differed from them in opinion. 2. It did not require them to put all *idolators* to death. It gave them no authority to take cognizance of the conduct of the idolatrous nations around them. 3. It did not require them to pry into men's private opinions, while they kept them private. But 4. It required them to punish with death all who would attempt to propagate idolatry. 5. It required them to punish in like manner all Israelites who would practice idolatry, all who would seduce others or apostatise themselves, from the worship of the true God to idolatry. Deut. xxii, 2. 7.

We prove that this law neither *is* nor ever can *be* abrogated from the following reasons :

1. Idolatry rejects the authority and strikes at the very existence of Jehovah. It says that he should not be God, consequently it rejects every law that he has given to his rational creatures, and even denies his authority to give law. Hence it opens the flood gates to all crimes and is not less pernicious to civil society than subversive of divine authority.

2. Job says, chap. xxxi. 26. 28, "If I beheld the sun when it shines, or the moon walking in brightness; and my heart hath been secretly enticed, or my mouth hath kissed my hand;" this also were an iniquity to be punished by the judge, for I should have denied the "God that is above." It was the custom of idolaters to kiss the images of their gods. 1. Kings xix. 18, "All the knees that have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him." Hos. xiii. 2, "Let the men that sacrifice kiss the calves." It appears then that the sun, being too distant an object for kissing, they kissed the hand and stretched it toward him, as we do in modern times when we would salute those whom we cannot reach. This paying of adoration to the sun, then, is declared to be an iniquity to be punished by the judge. Why? Because it is an offence against civil society? No: but because it would be "denying the God that is above." As to the quibble that some have offered, viz. that the judge means God, it is sufficient to observe that the word here employed, is never used in such a sense, and that the judge and the God that is above are plainly distinguished.*

3. We prove that the law respecting idolatry, is obligatory under the New Testament from Zech. xiii. 3. All admit that that production refers to the times of the gospel; yet we are assured that there the law respecting idolatry will be executed in its utmost rigor. Some pretend to set aside this argument, because, say they, the false prophet and the heretic are entirely different characters. We have only to observe that this was not Peter's mind, 2. Pet. ii. 1, "But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable *heresies*. Peter seems to have thought heretics the genuine descendants of false prophets.

4. We prove our doctrine from Rom. xiii. 4, where the civil magistrate

* This assertion is made after a critical examination of all the places where the word judge occurs in the Old Testament.

is called by the apostle the servant (Gr. diakonos) of God. 6. The minister (Gr. leitrougos) of God; and in Ex. xxii. 28, they are called gods, "Thou shalt not revile the gods nor curse the rulers of thy people." Ps. lxxxii. 6, "I have said, ye are gods and all of you sons of the Most High."

From these and similar passages, we conclude that magistrates are God's vicegerents—that they are keepers of both tables of the law, and therefore ought to punish the violaters of the first as well as of the second table." Rulers are not a terror to good works, but "to the evil." We ask then, by what standard are they to pronounce works good or evil? Is it by God's law or some other? Is it by the second table only that they are to judge or by both tables? Must he be partial in the law? He is a revenger to execute wrath on him that "doeth evil." Is an idolater, a heretic or a blasphemer, not an evil doer?

5. The many passages of divine revelation in which the universal supremacy of the Redeemer is asserted, and particularly his authority over rulers of every grade, prove that civil rulers should protect the bride the Lamb's wife by suppressing idolatry, heresy and blasphemy. Ps. ii. 6; Prov. viii. 15, 16; Dan. vii. 13, 14; Matth. xxviii. 18; 1 Cor. xv. 25. 27; 1 Tim. vi. 15; Rev. i. 5., &c.

6. The equity of the law is admitted by the apostle in Heb. x. 28, "He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses." This he makes the basis of an argument and thus establishes its immutable equity. The force of the apostle's reasoning is, that by how much the Son of God is more glorious than Moses, by so much disobedience to him is a more aggravated offence. It is true this proves nothing with respect to the perpetuity of Moses' law, but it does prove that it was founded on the principles of immutable justice. If the fact that the criminality of idolatry is aggravated under the gospel, proves that it is too great a crime to be punished by man, as some absurdly pretend; then, the same may be affirmed of all crimes; and if the premises were admitted, then all civil punishment must be abolished, especially as it is only in the Old Testament, that a magistrate will find any directions as to the manner in which crimes are to be punished.

7. In Heb. ii. 2, we are informed that "every transgression and disobedience, received a just recompense of reward." Indeed, if we admit that God gave the law to Moses, how could it be otherwise? Was it possible that God could give an unjust law? Was it possible that he would not annex an adequate penalty to his own law? Was it possible that he would enforce his law by too severe a penalty? What an astonishing compound it is of folly, arrogance and wickedness, for men to suppose they know better what is an adequate punishment for breakers of the divine law than the great Lawgiver!

8. We prove that it is the duty of civil rulers to suppress idolatry by the examples of Asa, Hezekiah and Josiah. To this, it is objected by some that those kings lived under an extraordinary dispensation and had the privilege of consulting God by Urim and Thummim, and that unless we have equal privileges, we should not imitate their conduct.

We reply—It is easy to quibble. We do not read that Urim and Thummim were consulted or to be consulted, but in great public emergencies. How ridiculous to talk of consulting God, to know whether we should keep or break his law! Where does the objector find the most distant hint of the people of God consulting Urim and Thummim to know whether they should punish idolaters?

It is farther objected that the kings of Judah were church rulers, an in reforming abuses in the church and in punishing idolaters, acted not as civil, but as ecclesiastical officers. The fallacy of this position has been shown in our reasoning with the Erastians. The church and the state were as distinct under the Old Testament, as they are under the New.

It is still farther objected, that they were typical characters. This is our opponent's strong city, and as a high wall in their own conceit it is deemed their impregnable fortress. We shall, therefore, consider it somewhat more particularly.

That there were typical persons, things, times and places is admitted. That there were laws which respected those typical things, and that these are now abrogated, is also admitted.

From this arises a very important question, viz. How shall we know which of the Old Testament laws are abrogated, and which are obligatory?

Some of our opponents themselves have answered the question satisfactorily in this manner, viz. If the law relates to something which was typical, and which has had its fulfilment in Christ, or some New Testament institution, it is of course abrogated; but if it belong to the moral law—that is, if it has had its foundation in the moral perfection of God, or in the relation subsisting between him and his rational creatures, or among the creatures, it is still in force. Of the latter kind we consider the law respecting idolatry. We have seen that idolatry is a crime that strikes at the very existence of God. We have seen that it is a crime by which the creature renounces the allegiance which it owes to its creator; and therefore, the law against it neither is nor can be repealed.

But it is alleged, that as God was himself immediately the king of Israel, idolatry was viewed under the Old Testament in the light of treason, and therefore being a crime against the government, it was to be more severely punished formerly than now. This argument is based on an unscriptural and absurd principle, viz. that an offence against the peace of society is greater than one against God himself. It is also based on a false assumption, that God was the King of Israel in a sense in which he is not our King. In opposition to this, let it be observed that the civil government of Israel was completely organized by Moses in the wilderness; they had a perfect code of laws given them, and officers appointed to administer those laws. Hence we never find God interfering with either their civil or ecclesiastical politics farther than to give evidence of his approbation when his laws were obeyed, and of his disapprobation when they were violated. Finally, at this point, God always was, is, and for ever will be King of nations. **Jer. x. 7. 16.** The language of the church in all ages, is "The Lord

is our Judge—the Lord is our Lawgiver—the Lord is our King, Isa. xxxiii. 28, “There is one Lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy,” Jas. iv. 12. Sins against God are not extenuated but aggravated under the gospel.

9. We prove that the laws against idolatry and blasphemy, were not peculiar to Israel, but were intended as a perpetual and immutable rule for all nations; from the fact that in respect to blasphemy, there was to “be one law for the stranger and for him that was born in the land.” Lev. xxiv. 16; Num. xv. 30. The law respecting enticers to idolatry, Deut. xiii. and apostates, Deut. xvii. 2, 7, makes no distinction between an Israelite and a foreigner. Very different was the case with respect to ceremonial institutions. No law required the foreigner to observe them; whether circumcision, the passover, purifications, meats or festivals.

After all the notion of idolatry being a typical crime, seems too absurd to merit a moment’s consideration. We therefore reject the notion of its being a type of high treason.

Our opponents have some plausible objections against our system, which we might dismiss by adopting the sentiments of some able writers, viz.—That the arguments belong to our knowledge; but the *objections* to our ignorance; and therefore, objections arising from our ignorance should never induce us to call in question what we know. But as our object is to satisfy, as far as possible, every candid mind, and as we believe that we are able by the aid of reason and revelation to solve all the difficulties which are presented to us, we shall attend to some of their strong reasons.

1. To prove that the laws against idolatry and blasphemy, are not now binding, we are referred to Christ’s conduct towards the Samaritans, and the woman taken in adultery, and to 2 Cor. x. 4. We reply; it shows either great ignorance or great want of candor to argue from the directions given to private Christians, or gospel ministers, to the duty of civil magistrates. Christ acting as the *great high priest of our profession* took upon him the form of a servant, “a servant of rulers! He was a minister of the sanctuary. True, he is “King of kings, and Lord of lords!” But in no instance would he interfere with the province of the civil magistrate. Only let it be observed, that neither by precept nor example did he inculcate subjection to heathen rulers, but in both ways he inculcated subjection to the Jews. The question of paying tribute to Cæsar he left undetermined, but he directed Peter to pay the tribute money for the service of the temple. He told his disciples, “The Scribes and Pharisees sit in Moses’ seat, all therefore, whatsoever they bid “you observe, that observe and do.” He gave no such command concerning Cæsar, Herod or Pontius Pilate.

The very fact that the Redeemer introduced a new dispensation *into the church*, but made no alteration in the state, and that his apostles have contented themselves with merely enjoining subjection to civil rulers, prove that the laws which he gave to Israel, are as far as they are moral still binding.

It may be alleged, that it would be absurd to suppose that Christiani-

ty would enjoin obedience to a dynasty that had almost come to a period. We reply—Our business is with matter of fact. The Jewish government lasted about forty years after this command was given ; and how short soever its duration might have been, the commands of Christ were an explicit recognition of its authority among Christians.

2. It is alleged, that to punish men for idolatry, blasphemy or heresy, would be an infringement of the rights of conscience—it would be persecution.

To this it may be replied, that scripture never speaks of persecution, but in reference to the people of God. We read of persecution for righteousness sake, but never for wickedness sake. We therefore conclude that to punish men for breaking God's law, is not persecution in the scriptural acceptance of the word.

The worshippers of Baal must have been very conscientious, yet Elijah put them to death. Paul was very conscientious in murdering the saints, and compelling them to blaspheme. Would it have been persecution to prevent him ?

A jesuit may be very conscientious in taking an oath to murder his prince because he thinks him a heretic, and the prince may be equally conscientious in making the jesuit expiate his crimes by the axe or halter.

Besides who is lord of the conscience, is it not God himself? Shall we pretend then that he has given conscience authority to break his law ? Under pretence of respect for the divine law, plead the rights of conscience for breaking that law !

3. It is alleged that no man, individually considered, has a right to force his opinions on another ; but the power of the community is made up of the power of individuals, and as no one of them had the power of forcing his neighbor to be of his opinion, neither has the community.

To this we reply, there is here an (*ignorantia elenchi*) mistake of the question. We do not plead for forcing others to be of our opinion.

Papists have held the principle and acted upon it, but not Reformers.

What we plead for is, that the magistrate should, by the power of the sword, restrain men from propagating idolatry, blasphemy, or damnable heresies.

Further, the objection is *prima facie* absurd ; if the government has no more power than an individual, what purpose does it serve ?

We assert farther, that it is not from the community, in every respect, that civil rulers receive their authority.

The community have a right to choose their own rulers, according to the divine law ; but the institution of government is from God : and to him civil rulers must render an account at last. Prov. viii. 15. By me kings reign and princes decree justice, &c.

4. It is objected to our doctrine, that it would make men hypocrites.

This objection would be equally valid against punishing men for crimes against the second table of the divine law, as for punishing them for crimes against the first. If it be true that because civil punishments cannot change the heart, therefore men should not be restrained from idolatry, blasphemy, and damnable heresies, because their restrain-

ing them will only be hypocrisy ; then away with gibbets, penitentiaries, prisons and finings ; for these cannot change the heart.

Then men must no longer be restrained from murder, adultery, and theft, by corporal punishment, because in that case their abstaining from them will be only hypocrisy. Let loose the gambler, the counterfeiter, the thief, the murderer, the robber, &c., on society, lest by restraining them from the commission of crimes, you encourage hypocrisy.

The same argument would be equally cogent against the infliction of ecclesiastical censure : men might plead, and actually have pleaded, the rights of conscience against church censure : and that it tends to make men hypocrites ; yet Paul delivered Hymeneus and Alexander to Satan, that they might learn not to blaspheme,* and commands us to reject a man that is an heretic, after the first and second admonition.†

Add to all this, that civil punishment was never intended for changing the heart—it is *punishment*, not discipline. It is to preserve the health of the body politic. The only way which divine wisdom has appointed for changing the heart, is the *gospel preached with the Holy Ghost sent down from Heaven*. Of his own will begat he us, with the word of truth.‡

Church censure is for reformation, that by the destruction of the flesh, the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.§ Civil punishment is for the good of the commonwealth. And all Israel shall hear, and fear, and shall do no more such wickedness as this is among you.¶

5. It is alleged that our system would make the magistrate the supreme judge in matters of faith.

No ; we hold that the decision of religious controversies, belongs originally to the church, Zech. vii ; Mal. ii. 7 ; Acts xv., and that in all difficult cases, civil rulers should constitute the ministers of religion. Num. xxvii. 18, spake Joshua—and give him a charge—and he shall stand before Eleazor the priest, who shall ask counsel for him after the judgment of Urim, before the Lord. Deut. xvii. 9 ; Thou shalt come unto the priests, the Levites, and unto the judge, that shall be in those days, and inquire, and they shall show thee the sentence of judgment.

David, when brought to a proper sense of duty, consulted with the children of Aaron and the Levites, 1 Chron. xv. 4. 14. But we hold that in extraordinary cases something extraordinary may be done. When Nabal proved himself such a son of Belial that a man could not speak to him, Abigail assumed the management of their domestic affairs. In the same manner we also hold, that if the church becomes notoriously corrupted, the civil magistrate may, as the minister of God, for good to the community, adopt means for her reformation. As on the other hand, if civil rulers be tyrants and usurpers, the ministers of the gospel should endeavor to have them deposed, and others put in their room. See the examples of David, Jehoshaphat, Asa, Hezekiah, Josiah, Jehoiada. The magistrate may not interfere immediately with ecclesiastical matters, but he is always bound to enforce every enact-

* 1 Tim. i. 20. † Tit. iii. 10. ‡ James i. 18. § 1 Cor. v. 5. ¶ Deut. xiii. 11.

ment which the church of Christ makes, in agreeableness to his law, 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?

6. It is further asked by way of objection, if the church and the magistrate differ, who shall decide? This might be answered by asking, if ministers differ, who shall decide? Let it be observed, that we have all along taken it for granted, that the magistrate is such as the word of God requires him to be, namely, an able man, wise, fearing God; one that delights in the law of the Lord. To such magistrates, and to such only, would we commit the support and defence of the church. We hold, that in all religious controversies, the Spirit of God, speaking in his word, is the supreme judge.

7. It is objected, that this doctrine would justify the cruelty of the papists; and that it is so much of popery, from which our ancestors were not reformed. In reply to this it may be asserted, that at no time since the introduction of popery, were its abominations more clearly understood, more thoroughly detested, or more faithfully exposed, than during the time of the Westminster Assembly. If punishing men for *breaking* God's law, and punishing them for *keeping* it, be the same, then we imitate the cruelty of the papists; for they punish men because they will not *commit* idolatry, and we would have them punished who do commit it. If they accuse us of cruelty, the charge must fall on God himself, the great lawgiver. He made the law, not we: we only vindicate his law against the opposition of men of corrupt minds. According to the spirit of this objection, it will be a time of great cruelty when the Lord shall pour out upon his people a spirit of grace and supplication; for then, the father and the mother of the false prophet shall thrust him through when he prophesieth. And that this thrusting through, is not to be understood in a metaphorical sense, appears evident from what is said in the immediate context, "Thou shalt not live."* And, according to the objection, it was very cruel on the part of the Redeemer, to declare that, unless a man hate his father and mother, and wife and children, in comparison of Him, he cannot be my disciple. Can any thing be more horribly blasphemous than thus to accuse the God of mercy of having made a cruel law? But to all our reasoning from the Old Testament, it is objected that the Jews were under a theocracy; hence the laws against idolatry, and the severe national judgments with which they were so frequently visited; but God has altered his way of dealing with the human family, and so should we. To this sophism we reply, God's precepts, and not the dispensations of his providence, are the rule of our duty. Were this not the case, when we find a man sick, we should endeavor to make him sicker; when we find a man rich, we should endeavor to make him richer; if poor, poorer; but Solomon tells us, Prov. xxii. 16, he that oppresseth the poor to increase his substance, and he that giveth to the rich, shall surely come to want. But we deny the premises; and affirm, that when nations transgress God's law, he treats them now as he

* Zeck. xiii. 3.

did formerly. What were the punishments which God inflicted on the Jews for their national sins? Sword, famine, pestilence, &c. See the prophecies of Jeremiah and Ezekiel. Does he not inflict similar judgments on offending nations still?

Let our frequent inclement seasons; let the wars, which, from 1789 till 1815, devastated the various nations of the world; let the multitudes that every year lose their lives while pleasuring on the Lord's day; let the destructive fires which so frequently occur in our populous cities, especially in those most notorious for wickedness; let yellow fever and cholera answer the question.

But to show that we admit neither the doctrine nor practice of papists, let the difference between them and us be distinctly understood.

1. The papists consign all to damnation that are without the pale of their church. We believe, that Christ holds communion with various other denominations of Christians besides ourselves.

2. The papists, as far as they have the power, put all to death who differ from them in judgment, by denying the pope's authority. We have never pretended that every error in opinion should subject a man to punishment, far less to capital punishment.

3. Papists punish men for disbelieving their opinions, though they never had an opportunity of knowing them. We would punish only obstinate idolaters, blasphemers, and incorrigible heretics.

4. Papists punish men for reading the Bible. We say, search the scriptures.

5. Papists make the decrees of popes and councils, the writings of the Fathers, and unwritten traditions, the supreme standard in matters of faith. We say, "to the law and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." From these remarks, the reader may easily perceive how unjustly we are charged with desiring to put all to death who differ from us in opinion. Surely men who so much dread having the law of God executed, who are so ready to charge it with infringing on their rights of conscience, with cruelty, &c., must be conscious that their system and that law do not quadrate.

The third question to be discussed was, should a *religious test* be required as a qualification for civil office? or should a man, previous to his entrance on office, be required to swear that he will support the true religion? This we answer in the affirmative; and after what has been said, we deem it unnecessary to be very prolix in the proof.

That the subject may be clearly understood, we would premise, that we do not mean that swearing to support and defend the church, should open the door of office to irreligious men. We have nothing to say in favour of making divine institutions "*a pick-lock to a place.*" It is taken for granted, that none should be admitted into the church but men of knowledge and piety. And we affirm that church members only should hold civil office; that as civil government is instituted for the good of the church as well as of the state, none but the church's friends should be intrusted with its administration. That as God is the author of civil government, himself the supreme governor, civil

rulers should be required to take an oath of fidelity to him as well as to the commonwealth. Having settled the point with those who think that civil rulers should have nothing to do with religion, we shall not resume the subject. They are consistent in not requiring a religious test from their rulers.

That the civil magistrate should be a member of the church, and swear to promote her interests, we prove by the following considerations:

1. In 2 Samuel v. 3, and in 1 Chron. xi. 3, we are told that, all the elders of Israel came to David to Hebron, and that he made a covenant with them *before the Lord*. They did not trust their lives and fortunes to the will of a despot. They made a league, and this was made before the Lord—in the divine presence, or with a recognition of his authority, Ps. cxvi. 9. I will walk before the Lord.

2. In 2 Kings xi. 17, and 2 Chron. xxiii. 16, we read that Jehoiada made a covenant between the Lord and the king and the people, that they should be the Lord's people. It is plain that not only were the king and the people solemnly bound to the performance of their reciprocal duties, but both together bound themselves, by solemn covenant, to the performance of those duties which they owed to God.

Perhaps some will object that this was under the ancient dispensation—that the transaction was typical, &c. If the objector can prove that the Israelites had only a typical existence—that civil government is a typical thing—and that the God of Israel was only a typical character, let them do it. If they cannot prove all these, we shall hold their sophisms about theocracy, typical oaths, &c. unworthy of a reply.

3. In Eccles. viii. 2, Solomon says, I counsel thee to keep the King's commandment and that in regard of the oath of God. Is not the oath of God a religious test? If it be alleged that every oath may be called the oath of God, because it is by him we swear, we deny the position; for an oath by the head of Mahomet, or the cross, or the Bible, is not an oath by God. Again, shall we pretend to invoke God in swearing and yet allow nothing religious in the oath?

4. An oath of office should either expressly or by implication, bind to the performance of all those duties which the divine law requires of him who is to execute that office. But the divine law requires the civil magistrate to protect the church; therefore he should be bound to do so by his oath. Those who take a different view of this subject, point with an air of triumph to Europe, to designate the good a religious test has done there? We ask in return, in what nation of Europe have they made the experiment? For we must again repeat, that we do not consider an oath to support superstition and tyranny a *religious* oath. There was a short period when a religious test was required in Britain, as a qualification for office, during the sitting of the Westminster Assembly. What fatal consequences did it produce? It produced the reformation of both church and state, to a degree of purity unknown in any other nation. But it is alleged that a number of hypocrites crept into the church during that period, and this is charged to the account of a religious test. If we could banish hypocrisy from the world, it could only be by banishing true religion—where there is good coin, we may expect to

find men base enough to counterfeit it ; so while there is religion in the world, we may expect that Satan will tempt his servants to become hypocrites. But would those hypocrites not get into office if there were no religious test ? It must be admitted that they would ; but then it is alleged that we would not have incurred the guilt of tempting men to perjury and hypocrisy. If this mode of reasoning proves any thing, it will prove that we should not require an oath from witnesses before a court ; for if they are bad men it may tempt them to perjury. Nor should we require from the applicants for church privileges, a confession of faith, nor a reformation of their practice, for this will tempt them to hypocrisy. We should not require from offenders an acknowledgment of their offence, for this will tempt them to hypocrisy.

Nay, according to this reasoning, every law of God and man should be abolished, that men may, without restraint or disguise, act out the desperate wickedness of their hearts.

Further, the argument takes it for granted, that the applicant for office is one that will scruple at no means to attain his end. Now, this never touches our system ; for we maintain that whether a religious list were required or not, none should be admitted to office, but men of approved fidelity to the cause of God.

Again, taking the objector on his own ground, does he want the door of office set open to men who do not regard an oath ? Does he want every restraint taken away, that the vilest of men may be exalted ? Then why require an oath of office at all ? Why not say to civil rulers as sycophants have told their princes, that they are accountable to none but God ? Then we should have rulers without hypocrisy—such as Pharaoh, Jeroboam, Nebuchadnezzar, the twelve Cæsars, &c. But knowing the natural corruption of the human heart, and its consequent tendency to abuse power, we believe that those invested with office should give to the community all the security which is authorized by the word of God.

And we have seen, that the approved example of God's people warrants the community to require from their rulers an oath for the maintenance of religion and liberty.

That some notorious hypocrites swore the covenants, in the time of the reformation, is not to be denied ; but would those characters have acted better, either as men or as rulers, if there had not been a religious test ? Were Laud and Buckingham any better than Sharp and Lauderdale ? Suppose the covenants were abused by some making them a passport to office ; what then ? It is axiomatic in logic, that the *abuse* of a thing proves nothing against its *use*. After all, it is well known that before Charles Stuart and his adherents ventured to act out the wickedness of their hearts, they set aside the covenants as an *oath of office*, and substituted in its stead their own *irreligious test*. Even to such men as Stuart, Sharp, Middleton, and Lauderdale, the covenant proved for a time a salutary restraint. And they might have done so still, had not the usurpation of Cromwell, and the intrigues of Monk, prepared the nation for permitting them to be set aside.

Upon a review of the whole, we conclude that the doctrine of Covenanters, in relation to civil government, is in perfect accordance with reason and divine revelation. To satisfy our readers that the doctrine contained in this discussion is the same with that of the reformed churches generally, we refer such of them as have not an opportunity of consulting the confessions of those churches, to Gillespie's Aaron's Rod Blossoming, where they will find quotations from *seven* confessions, all maintaining the same sentiment.

NOTE.—Those who desire more ample information on the subject of the magistrate's power *circa sacra*, may consult Gillespie's Aaron's Rod Blossoming; Turretine, Loc. 18. Quest. 34. "*Quadnam sit jus Magistratus Christiani circa sacra.*" Brown on Toleration; and Houston's Reviewer Reviewed.

END.