

*The two Sons of Oil ;*  
OR,  
THE FAITHFUL WITNESS  
FOR  
*the* MAGISTRACY & MINISTRY  
UPON A  
SCRIPTURAL BASIS.

ALSO,  
A Sermon on Covenanting.  
*BEING THE SUBSTANCE OF TWO DISCOURSES.*

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*" And I will give power to my two witnesses, and they shall  
" prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days  
" clothed in sackcloth.  
" These are the two olive-trees, and the two candlesticks  
" standing before the God of the earth."*

*REV. XI. 3, 4.*

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## P R E F A C E.

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*THE principles of reformation are not fashionable. They were once, however, considered as the glory of Presbyterians. The time has been, when the whole body of Presbyterians in Scotland, England and Ireland, unanimously subscribed them. For civil and ecclesiastical reformation; for a glorious covenanted cause, thousands have bled and died.*

*In the following discourses, I have endeavoured to advocate that cause. Not because it is an ancient cause; not because many have sealed it with their blood; but, because I thought it the doctrine of the Bible, and the cause of Christ.*

*I make no apology—I court no one's favour. A conviction of truth, was the cause of publication. There may, no doubt, be unguarded expressions. Any thing that is so, if demonstrated, will be candidly acknowledged.*

SAMUEL B. WYLLIE.

# *The two Sons of Oil, &c.*

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## ZACHARIAH IV. 13.

*Then said he, These are the two anointed ones, that stand by the Lord of the whole earth.*

**T**HIS chapter is replete with abundant comfort to the returning captives. In their embarrassing circumstances, they stood in great need of consolation. They were disposed to consider their situation as helpless and deplorable ; and doubted much, whether the temple they were about to erect, would ever acquire the respectability of the former one, or their city abound with its usual population. They could scarcely believe, that “ *The glory of this latter house would be greater than of the former.*” Hag. ii. 9.

The scope of this vision, therefore, is, to shew, that God would, by his own omnipotent arm, consummate the work, notwithstanding the imbecility of its friends, and the malignant opposition of its enemies. To this purpose he informs them, by his prophet, that the head stone would be put on, with shoutings of joy ; and that this was not to be attributed, so much, to visible instrumentality, as to the superintending influences of his own omnipotent spirit. Verses 1.- 10.

From the eleventh verse to the end of the chapter, we have a brief explication of this vision, intended as an illustration of the assurances already given. This is done by the angel, at the request of the prophet, verse 11. “ *What are these two olive trees upon the right side of the candlestick, and upon the left side thereof?*” The angel having sufficiently humbled him, by leaving him to repeat his request, lower his terms, (confining it to the two olive branches) and confess his ignorance, answers in the words of the text, “ *These are the two anointed ones,*” &c.

The answer itself requires explanation. Who are intended by these two *Anointed Ones*, or *Sons of Oil*, as it reads in the original? Who these are, will perhaps be best ascertained by attending to the functions which they discharge, compared with collateral texts. By comparing together, the second, third, and twelfth verses of this chapter, it would appear, that they pour golden oil into the bowl on the head of the golden candlestick. That this golden candlestick represented the *church* of Christ, is abundantly evident, from several passages in Scripture, see Exod. xxv. 31. and 1st Kings, vii. 49. and Rev. i. 20. The seven golden candlesticks are expressly declared, by the Spirit of God, to represent the seven churches.

The church of Christ may be considered under a two-fold point of view, namely, *invisible* and *visible*. In relation to the *first*, the two olive branches may be emblematical of Christ and his Spirit, the Redeemer and Comforter. Jesus is not only the Messiah, the *Anointed One* himself, but he is also the good Olive-Tree to his church. John i. 16. "*Out of his fullness have all we received, and grace for grace.*" The Spirit is the *Unc-tion* or Anointing, which replenishes the mind with divine illumination. 1st John, ii. 20. "*But ye have an Unc-tion from the Holy One, and ye know all things.*" From Christ the Olive-Tree, by his Spirit the Olive-Branch, is communicated to believers all the golden oil of grace, whereby their lamps are kept burning and luminous.

In relation to the *second*, viz. the *visible* church, they may be symbolical of the two great ordinances of *Magistracy* and *Ministry*, vested at that time in these two illustrious characters, Zerubbabel and Joshua, the former in the state, and the latter in the church. They are characterized as "*Sons of Oil.*" Kings and priests were anointed, and thus solemnly set apart to their respective functions. They "*stood by the LORD of the whole earth,*" importing that they were faithful adherents to his cause and testimony, continually emptying themselves into the golden bowl, contributing their respective influ-



ences to the advancement of civil and religious reformation, as the objects of his peculiar care. In allusion to this passage in Zechariah, the two Witnesses mentioned Rev. xi. 4. are designated by the same emblems, viz. "*The two Olive-Trees standing before the God of the earth.*" The analogy of Scripture, as also the current of the best commentators, agree, that by these two Witnesses, is meant, that succession of men, who, in all ages, and against all opposition, have valiantly contended for the purity of these divine ordinances, both in constitution and administration. In this sense consider these two *Anointed Ones*.

In the prosecution of the subject, we shall, I. premise a few things, which, if duly attended to, may be useful in the farther illustration of this text. And 1st, God, the Father, Son and Spirit, is the Supreme Governor of the universe. Rev. xix. 6. "*The Lord God Omnipotent reigneth.*" This will be generally admitted.

2. All physical and moral power, is, naturally, necessarily, and independently, in God. Gen. xvii. 1. "*I am God Almighty.*" This is admitted even by the haughty Babylonish monarch. Dan. iv. 35. "*He doth according to his will in the armies of Heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, what dost thou?*"

3. All power to be found among the creatures, is necessarily derived from him. He is the original source and fountain from which it flows. Acts xvii. 28. "*For in him we live, and move, and have our being.*"

4. All his delegated or derived power, should be exercised to his glory, and regulated by his law. 1st Cor. x. 31. "*Whether, therefore, ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.*" To effect this end, all our powers should be directed, and of this, his law is the unerring rule. By this, therefore, all rational beings are indispensably bound. God has given them no right to do what it prohibits. To suppose men to possess any such right, is wicked and blasphemous. This would be the same as to suppose God to say to them, I,

as the Supreme Legislator, give you my law. To the least breach of it, I annex the penalty of eternal damnation; yet I give you a *right* to violate this *my law*, and to wage war with your GOD, and direct your artillery against the Sovereign of the Universe!!! The Scriptures inform us otherwise. Deut. xii. 32. "*What thing soever I command you, observe to do it: thou shalt not add to it, nor diminish from it.*"

5. This delegated power appears most conspicuous in the person of the Mediator. Into his hands universal dominion is committed. Mat. xxviii. 18. "*All power is given unto me, in Heaven and in earth.*" Here the donation is universal. Its extent is unlimited, as to created nature. 1st Cor. xv. 27. The apostle expressly declares, that nothing is excepted from his dominion, but the Godhead itself. Remarkable to this purpose, is John v. 22. "*The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son.*" As Mediator, therefore, he pronounces sentence upon the reprobate, "*Depart from me, ye cursed,*" &c. for this is a part of his judiciary functions. That this power, and the exercise of it, belong to him, as Mediator, is abundantly evident, not only from the circumstance of donation, which can in no sense apply to him as GOD, (for in this character nothing could be given him, being necessarily LORD of all) but also, from the explicit and positive assertion, in the twenty-seventh verse, that all this authority was committed to him, "*Because he is the Son of Man.*"

6. This universal dominion committed to him, as it respects the human family, in its administrations, consists in two great branches, namely, *Magistracy* and *Ministry*. Through these channels it flows down to human kind, contributing its influences to ameliorate the character of those who are destined to everlasting life, to whom "*all things shall work together for good.*" Rom. viii. 28. While it issues in the obduracy of those who continue implacable enemies, on whom every divine dispensation shall have a contrary operation.

7. Though both these branches are put under the Me-

diator's controul, yet they are so, under different regulations. Ecclesiastical power is delegated to him, in such a manner, that all ordinances and institutions, necessary to the formal organization of a visible church, flow *immediately* from him as Mediator, Mat. xvi. 18. He is the builder of the church, the author of all her sacred institutions. All ecclesiastical functionaries, likewise, receive their authority from him, in the same character, for every part of their administration. Hence, Mat. xvi. 19. he commits unto them the keys of the kingdom, and the exclusive power of binding and loosing. But civil power is under a different regulation. It flows *immediately* from GOD CREATOR, as the Governor of the universe. Jer. x. 7. "*Who would not fear thee, O King of nations ?*" It existed previously to the fall, and would necessarily have existed, even had we never revolted from GOD ; though no doubt, in that case, it would not have been clothed with some of its present modifications. Man's subjection to the moral government of his Maker, would have then been similar to that of beings of a more dignified order.

Civil government does not, as some modern politicians affirm, originate either in the people, as its fountain, or in the vices consequent upon the fall. Among the angels, who retained their primitive rectitude, we find certain orders, suggested by the denominations of Archangels, Thrones, Dominions, Principalities and Powers, Col. i. 16. This testifies regular subordination among them, agreeably to the constitutional laws of their nature : and their amenability to GOD, their Creator and LORD. But though civil government is no new order of things, predicated upon the fall, nor, like the ministry, in all its circumstances, flowing immediately from Christ as Mediator ; yet it is among the all things, committed to him by the donation of the Father, Eph. i. 22. Its officers, likewise, are enjoined, under pain of perdition, to make all their administrations bend to the honour of Immanuel ; and the body politic indissolubly bound, to modify their constitutions by his word, when in his goodness he has revealed it

unto them. Ps. ii. 10, 12. "*Be wise now, therefore, O ye kings, be instructed, ye judges of the earth. Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little.*" Can any thing be more explicit in demonstrating the obligation of the civil authorities to render homage and respect to Messiah? But as it is suggested that these two branches are under different regulations, we shall endeavour in the II. head, to shew a little more particularly wherein they differ.

I. They differ in their *immediate* origin, as already hinted. Magistracy flows *immediately* from GOD CREATOR, and is predicated upon his universal dominion over all nations. Ps. xlvii. 7. "*GOD is KING of all the earth.*" To the same purpose we are informed, Jer. x. 7. "*Who would not fear thee, thou KING of nations? For to thee doth it appertain.*" And as it flows from GOD CREATOR, the common Parent, and Head of all, the law of nature, common to all men, must be the immediate rule of all its administrations. A relation common to all, should be regulated by a rule common to all. All stand in the same relation to GOD, considered as Creator, and Moral Governor. The standard for regulating this relation, must, of course, be common. This standard is the law of nature, which all men necessarily possess. Revelation is introduced as a rule, by the requisitions of the law of nature, which binds men to receive with gratitude, whatever GOD is pleased to reveal; and to adhere to it, as the perfect rule, under pain of condemnation, and being treated as rebels against his moral authority. But,

Ecclesiastical power flows *immediately* from Christ, as Mediator, and is founded on his economical Headship over the church. Eph. i. 22, 23. GOD "*gave him to be Head over all things to the church, which is his body.*" As this power flows thus from Christ as Mediator, the law of revelation, announced by him as the Angel of the Covenant, must, consequently, be the immediate standard for the regulation of every part of the system; and the law of nature comes in to be a rule, only in subserviency

to the general rules of Scripture. Phil. iv. 8. "*Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.*"

2. They differ in their immediate objects. Magistracy respects things external, relating immediately to the outward man, 2d Chron. xxvi. 16, 20. Where Uzziah usurped the sacerdotal functions, and presumed to burn incense, contrary to the express command of God, the priests valiantly withstood him, and said, "*It appertaineth not unto thee, Uzziah, to burn incense unto the LORD, but to the priests, the sons of Aaron, who are consecrated to burn incense: go out of the sanctuary,*" &c. Yea, the LORD punished his presumption, and smote him with leprosy, and they thrust him out of the temple. Whatever provisions of external accommodations he is authorised to make, calling synodical assemblies, and issuing compulsory process for attending spiritual courts, respect men, as members of the commonwealth, and subjects of the realm. His ratification of church decrees, is nothing more than civilly adopting them, as good and wholesome laws, calculated to promote the welfare of the state.

But all ecclesiastical power is exercised about things spiritual. 2d Cor. x. 4. "*For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty,*" &c. It considers men, as members of the mystical body of Jesus; and if it takes any concern with the external man, such as the eyes and ears, it is only that it may thereby reach their consciences. To those that are without the pale of the visible church, its jurisdiction does not extend. 1st Cor. v. 12, 13. "*For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? Do not ye judge them that are within?*"

3. They differ in their form. The magistratical power is lordly and imperial. It belongs to its functionaries to exercise dominion, as the vicerents of God; use compulsory measures with the disobedient, and en-

force obedience to the laws, of which they are the executors. Rom. xiii. 1. "*Let every soul be subject to the higher powers.*" And in case of disobedience to his legitimate authority, the magistrate ought not "to bear the sword in vain." He must not, indeed, exercise dominion capriciously, but act as the "*minister of God for good*" to his subjects.

But ecclesiastical power is altogether *ministerial*. Its functionaries are considered as stewards of the manifold mysteries of the spiritual kingdom, and are positively discharged from acting as "*Lords over God's heritage*," 1st Pet. v. 3. Like their great master, they ought not to come to be ministered unto, but to minister to the spiritual exigencies of perishing sinners. They are, however, entitled to attention and obedience, to their spiritual ministrations. Heb. xiii. 17. "*Obey them that have the rule over you in the LORD,*" &c. But still they can exercise no compulsion upon the persons of men. This belongs exclusively to the civil magistrate. And whereas civil rulers may and ought to punish transgressions, as *crimes* dishonouring to God, as King of nations, and prejudicial to the state; church rulers are to consider them as *scandals*, wounding to the honour of Jesus Christ, dishonouring to God, in him, and ruinous to the souls of men.

4. They differ in their proper end. The immediate and proper end of all civil power, is, that the good of the commonwealth may be provided for, their temporal safety and civil liberty secured upon the footing of the moral law, Rom. xiii. 4. The magistrate is accordingly called a "*minister of God for good*" to men. The ultimate end to be attained, is, the advancement of the glory of God, as King of nations, and a concern to promote the prosperity of the church; and the propagation of truth should be exercised as the means best calculated to obtain that end. Or the good of the church may be considered as an *accessary end*. The more faithful the administration of justice, the fewer will be the violations of the divine law; and, consequently, the fewer *scandals* to annoy the peace and happiness of the church.

But the proper and immediate end of all ecclesiastical power is, that the conviction, conversion, and edification of the souls of men may be promoted, Eph. iv. 11, 12. Here we find, that the immediate end of appointing all church officers was, “*For the perfecting of the saints, and the edifying of the body of Christ.*” The ultimate end is the glory of God, as he is “*in Christ reconciling the world unto himself,*” 2d Cor. v. 19. The welfare of the state, is only an accessory end, at which the church officers, as subjects of the state, ought to aim. The better they discharge their ecclesiastical functions, the fewer will be the crimes in the state, and the more faithfully will every civil relative duty be performed, and thus the welfare of the nation greatly promoted.

5. They differ in their effects. The effects of all civil powers are, either proper or redundant. The proper effect of civil power is, the temporal safety and welfare of the commonwealth, together with the undisturbed enjoyment of all civil privileges.

The redundant effect is the good of the church, as far as this may result from the righteous administration of the divine law, in rewarding the righteous, and punishing offenders, Rom. xiii. 3. And in removing all impediments that would obstruct the propagation of the religion of Jesus; like as Josiah and other reforming kings of Israel did.

But the proper effect of all ecclesiastical power, is wholly spiritual, agreeable to the spiritual nature of Christ's kingdom. John xviii. 36. “*My kingdom is not of this world.*” It is spiritual, and its exercise produces spiritual effects, operating on the souls and consciences of men.

The welfare of the state, as such, is only a redundant or accessory effect. It may, however, be very considerable. The amelioration of character, produced by the benign influences of the religion of Jesus, upon the human heart, may be highly advantageous to national prosperity: as true godliness has the promise of the life that now is, as well as of that which is to come.

6. They differ in their subjects. Civil power may be

vested in one or more. This is left to the discretion of the body politic, and is hence called "*an ordinance of man.*" 1st Pet. ii. 13. Whatever the particular form be, whether monarchical, or republican, it is legitimate, and entitled to obedience, provided the constitution be agreeable to the moral law.

It may also be delegated from one to another. 1st Pet. ii. 14. We are commanded to yield conscientious obedience, not only to the supreme magistrate, but also to his delegates. "*Unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him, for the punishment of evil doers, and for the praise of them that do well.*"

But ecclesiastical power of *jurisdiction*, cannot vest in one. 2d. Cor. ii. 6. When speaking of the restoration of the incestuous person, who had been excommunicated, the apostle informs us, that his censure "*was inflicted by many.*"

Though the power of *order*, or the administration of the word and sacraments, belongs to every regular gospel minister, yet the power of jurisdiction belongs exclusively to a consistory of presbyters. Neither can one ecclesiastical officer delegate authority to another, to perform ministerial functions. It can come only from Christ the head, by the medium of proper officers. See Mat. xvi. 19. compared with Tit. i. 5.

7. They differ in their correlatives, or the persons on whom they are exercised respectively.

The civil power extends to all persons, resident within the realm, be their estate, character, or condition what it may. Rom. xiii. 1. "*Let every soul be subject to the higher powers.*" Here there is no exception of any clais or condition of men. But,

Ecclesiastical jurisdiction extends only to those who are professed members of the mystical body of Jesus Christ, and operates upon them exclusively under that character, 1st Cor. v. 12, 13. where we are informed, that all church power of jurisdiction is confined solely to those that are within. Hence those who are not church members, if guilty of any thing scandalous, requiring public censure, must become members of the



church, before they can become proper objects of ecclesiastical censure. Church jurisdiction extends not beyond the walls of the house of God.

8. They differ in their distinct and divided exercise. Thus, should the one neglect the performance of duty, that is no reason why the other should be remiss, but rather the contrary. Should the state take no notice of the murderer, or the adulterer, their neglect by no means unnerves the arm of ecclesiastical jurisdiction, neither should it relax the rigour of church censure. The same will hold equally in a change of cases. Again, when either has done what is just and right, by a process issuing in the acquittal or condemnation of the person arraigned, the other is bound to take cognizance of the offence, and proceed accordingly. Thus, when a church member has satisfied the civil law for a crime committed against the state, the ecclesiastical authority ought to prosecute him for it, as a scandal, and deprive him of privileges, until he gives due evidences of contrition, and satisfy the laws in that case made and provided. Thus both the civil and ecclesiastical authority, may, and in many cases ought, to punish for the same offence; yet the process ought to be entirely distinct, and the powers independent on each other.

But as we have endeavoured to shew wherein they differ, it will be necessary also, in the

III. place, to shew wherein they agree.

I. They agree in this, that GOD the Father, Son, and Spirit, is the original fountain from which they flow. To suppose any power or authority whatever not originating from GOD, essentially considered, would necessarily lead to *atheistical* principles. It must therefore emanate from him. Rom. xiii. 1. "*There is no power but of GOD.*" To the same purpose is 2d. Cor. v. 18. "*All things are of GOD.*" Civil power was already shewn to originate from GOD, as Creator, and to be founded on his universal dominion, as the King of nations, Jer. x. 7. And though all ecclesiastical power flows immediately from Christ, as Mediator, yet it is radically and fontally in a three-one

**GOD.** All the right and authority of Christ, as Mediator, is originally derived from GOD, as well as civil power.

They are, to be sure, under different regulations: these have been already stated. By virtue of this derived right, Jesus is constituted the sole Legislator in Zion, and is the *immediate*, as the father is the *ultimate*, source of all ecclesiastical authority. Hence the authority of church officers is analogous to that of Christ himself, namely, by delegation. John xvii. 18. Christ himself states his own and his ambassador's commission, as being parallel in this particular point, "*as thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world.*"

2. They agree in this, that both are subjected to the Mediator, though under different considerations. Mat. xxviii. 18. John v. 22. and 27. Eph. i. 21, 23. with many other portions of Scripture, leave no room for the candid mind, to doubt of the universality of the donation.

But the different regulations, under which these two branches are subjected unto him, are very important, and highly worthy of the most serious attention.

In civil matters, he does not commission rulers and officers. These receive their commissions from GOD, from whom their authority emanates, and upon whose Sovereignty over the nations, it was founded, previously to, and independent of, the developement of the new covenant economy. But, in virtue of the Father's donation, he has a right to require the execution of the orders given to civil rulers. Ps. ii. 10, 12. "*Now, therefore, be wise ye kings, &c. Kiss the Son lest he be angry.*" To obedience they are indispensably bound. If they refuse, they are in danger of being dashed in pieces by his iron rod. Thus Jesus, as the Governor in the kingdom of Providence, (the wheels of which he manages, Ezek. i. 26.) conducts the golden oil of the benign influences, as well of the civil as of the ecclesiastical branch, into the golden bowl of his mediatory fullness; thence to be dispensed to the lamps of civil and religious reformation, till the kingdoms of this world become the

kingdoms of our LORD, and of his Christ. Hence, Eph. i. 22, 23. he is the head over all things, for the use of the church his body.

3. They agree in their *mutual independence*.

They are *co-ordinate*. They may beautifully subsist together, independently of each other; but they are not *collateral*, mutually dependent, and which cannot rightly subsist, if separated.

The civil branch has no power over the ecclesiastical, *as such*; nor has the ecclesiastical any power over the civil. Yet the same persons, in respect of different relations, may be superior, or inferior, to another person; and may require another, or be themselves required, to fulfil relative duties: and in case of delinquency, may arraign others, or be themselves arraigned, pursuant to the laws of their respective courts. Thus ministers, as ambassadors of Christ, have a right to require magistrates, as church members, faithfully to execute their magistratical power, so as may best promote the honour of Christ, and the welfare of his church; and in case of gross acts of mal-administration, may inflict upon them the censures of the house of God. And on the other hand, magistrates have a right to require ministers, as their *subjects*, faithfully to execute ministerial power, as an excellent mean of rendering the nation pious and virtuous, in order that its happiness may thereby be promoted.

This principle, if duly attended to, and judiciously applied, will free the Westminster Confession of Faith from the false imputation of Erastianism, charged upon it by modern reformers.

There are several articles in the twentieth, twenty-third, and thirty-first chapters, which have been much inveighed against, as giving the civil magistrate too much power in the church of Christ. Let it be considered that he can convoke synods, *not formally as ecclesiastical judicatories*, but only as members of the commonwealth, in which character they are his *subjects*. Rom. xiii. 1. "*Let every soul be subject,*" &c. When convened, surely they are bound to do what is most cal-

culated to promote the glory of God. If their synodical deliberations be calculated to do so, should they not essay them? Should they become remiss, ought not he to require them, as his subjects, to do their duty? Should they adulterate the pure fountain of evangelical doctrine, with the worm-wood and gall of errors and heresies, ought not he to prohibit them from poisoning the souls of his subjects, debauching their moral feelings, and thereby bringing down the vengeance of God upon the commonwealth. If he views these things with indifference, how can he be the minister of God for good to men?

4. They agree in being both bound to take the moral law, as the unerring standard of all their administrations.

That the civil branch is thus bound, is evident, not only from the voice of nature, which announces the moral law, as the supreme rule, regulating our relation to God, as our LORD and Sovereign, and requires the body politic to graft upon it their civil constitutions, under pain of Heaven's high displeasure; but also from the express command of God in his word. To this purpose, see Deut. xvii. 18. when speaking of supreme magistrates, it is observed, "*and it shall be when he sitteth upon the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write him a copy of this law in a book, out of that which is before the priests the Levites. And he shall read therein all the days of his life.*" That the obligation still remains under the New Testament, is evident, not only from the morality of the duty, but also from the circumstance, that the detailing of such a constitution as is here mentioned, would be productive of both the character and administration indispensably required, Rom. xiii. 1, 6. The denial of this seems unreasonable, even were Scripture silent on the subject. Is not the divine law a complete rule of faith and manners? Is it not so to every individual, as such? If every one is individually bound thereby, will their union, in a national society, dissolve the obligation? Is there any incompatibility between civil government and christianity, so that men must be divested of the latter, before they em-

bark in the former? If not, should not they, in every part of their administration, consider themselves as christians, and remember their amenability to the divine law? By this, every action shall be tried. Rom. ii. 12. "*As many as have sinned in the law, shall be judged by the law.*"

That the ecclesiastical branch is bound by this divine rule, is obvious to all. Mal. ii. 7. "*For the priests lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth.*" And in their commission, the ambassadors of Jesus are strictly enjoined, to teach mankind to observe all things commanded by their divine Master, Mat. xxviii. 20.

5. They agree, in as much as both have supreme and subordinate judicatories, in which they exercise jurisdiction, Mat. xviii. 15, 18. where we have a divine warrant for *kirk sessions*. These are subordinate to, and two or more of them constitute, a *Presbyterial judicature*, which is divinely recognized, 1st Tim. iv. 14. and also Acts, viii. 1. and xiii. 1. These are subordinate to, and two or more of them constitute, a *Synodical assembly*, which also is recognized, Acts xv. and xvi. chapters. Here we have a *reference, convocation, discussion*, and the *Synodical decrees*, consequent thereupon. This may be regularly extended to *Ecumenical or General Assemblies* over the whole *habitable globe*, as the word imports, and as the necessity of unity in counsel and co-operation, among the members of the mystical body, evidently requires.

The supreme and subordinate judicatories in the state, are variously modified, at the discretion of the body politic, which, if not repugnant to the moral law, ought to be considered legitimate.

6. They agree, in as much as both, on account of their divine authority, entitle their faithful executors to double honour. 1st Tim. v. 17. "*Let the elders that rule well, be accounted worthy of double honour.*" Here honour and respect are enjoined towards the ecclesiastical branch, whose character should be venerated, and their persons cherished even for their work's sake.

Reverence and honour are also due to the civil branch. To this purpose we are commanded, Prov. xxiv. 21. to "*fear GOD and the king.*" Lawful rulers are GOD's vicegerents, and ought to be honoured, on account of him whom they represent. And Rom. xiii. 7. when speaking of the civil magistrate, the apostle commands to "*render to all their due, fear to whom fear, and honour to whom honour.*"

7. They agree in this, that the ultimate end of both, in every part of their procedure, should be the glory of GOD. In Isai. lxi. 1, 4. we are informed that the grand end of every part of Christ's economical administration, in proclaiming liberty to the captives, in opening the prison doors to them that were bound, and announcing the acceptable year of the Lord, was, "*that GOD might be glorified.*"

In like manner, to this end, ought all the movements of the civil branch to be directed. It is a divine ordinance. Its executors are the vicegerents of Jehovah. Every act of their administration, should, of course, be a farther developement of his character, and a new manifestation of his glory. 1st Cor. x. 13. "*Whether therefore, ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of GOD.*" But as it appears that the two branches agree, in several things, it may be proper, still farther, in the

IV. head, to shew what concern the civil branch should take with the ecclesiastic, or enquire how far the civil power, *circa sacra*, reaches.

That magistrates have officially, by divine authority, something to do with religion, to enforce the commands of GOD, and suppress the violations of his law, appears plain, even from New Testament documents. Rom. xiii. 4. "*He (the magistrate) is the minister of GOD.*" Now how can he be GOD's minister, and yet be regardless of the honour and laws of him, from whom he has derived his authority? Moreover, GOD's commands are obligatory upon every one, in his respective station and relation in society.

When GOD says, "*Buy the truth and sell it not.*"

“Contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints.” When he forbids “turning aside to the right hand or to the left.” In one word, when speaking of idolators, Deut. vii. 5. he commands, “to destroy their altars, and break down their images, and cut down their groves, and burn their graven images with fire.” Upon whom are these injunctions obligatory? Is it only upon private individuals? Is the magistrate exempted? Does the circumstance of his being God’s minister, loose him from the obligation of the divine law?

This, indeed, would be doctrine worthy of modern illumination. But it stands in direct contradiction to the whole volume of the book of God. See one passage, Deut. xvii. 18, 19. But we shall proceed more particularly to enquire, what concern the magistrate has *officially* with religion?

1. He hath no *directive* power about any thing ecclesiastical. He hath not any right to prescribe rules, introduce new modifications, or alter a single pin of the sacred tabernacle. The church’s constitutional laws, are derived from a higher authority. To this she is amenable. Isai. viii. 20. “*To the law and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.*” The church judicative, as such, possessing the sacred depositum of the heavenly oracles, ought, as in Mat. xxiii. 10. “*to call no man master. For one is her master, even Christ.*”

2. He hath no power *in*, but only *about* ecclesiastical concerns. Every act of his, concerning religion, should be essentially and formally *civil*. He may not dare to touch either the *key of order*, or the *key of jurisdiction*. Should he, like Uzziah, presume to interfere with the sacred ministerial functions, let him dread the tremendous consequences. He ought, like Asa, Jehoshaphat, and Hezekiah, to contribute every effort, as far as his political influence can extend, to promote religious reformation. Thus we find, 1st Tim. ii. 2. that this is the desirable end to be effected by his righteous administration, viz. “*That we may lead a quiet and peaceable life, in all godliness and honesty.*”

3. The civil magistrate ought to defend and protect the church of Christ. Isai. xlix. 23. "*Kings shall be thy nursing fathers, and their queens thy nursing mothers,*" &c. Does not this imply protection? The metaphors selected by the Spirit of God, involve the highest possible care and tenderness. I know it has been objected by some, that the tender care and concern here intended, is not *official*, but merely *personal*, as an individual member of the church. The reason assigned is, that the epithet involving concern, is not confined to *kings*, but is common also to *their queens*: and this must be acknowledged to be unofficial. Sure none are exempted from being concerned about the interests of religion. ~~The~~ irrelevancy of the objection will appear, by attending to an observation formerly made, viz. that the commands of God are obligatory upon every one, in his respective station and department of life. Queens are bound to exercise all the influence, which in the providence of God is conferred upon them, in promoting the religion of Jesus. Kings, or civil magistrates, in like manner, are indispensably bound, to exercise all the power which they possess in their stations, to promote the same desirable end. Whatever quantity of this power is kept back, is so much unliquidated debt due to the Messiah, by the express command of that God whom magistrates represent. Ps. ii. 12. "*Kiss ye the Son lest he be angry.*" When Christ's mystical body needs this power, and the magistrate withholds the benefit of it, does he not run the risk of being charged by Jesus at the last day, as we read, Mat. xxv. 42, 45? "*I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat, I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink, &c. Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these my brethren, ye did it not to me.*"

This same idea of protection, tenderness and care, as a blessing, to be expected in New Testament times, is held out, Is. lx. 10, & 16. "*Kings shall minister unto thee,*" and "*thou shalt suck the breasts of kings.*" All these passages evidently intimate, that the civil power shall be exercised in administering *officially* to the church,



every comfort which may be expected to result from the union of magistral authority, and paternal care; such as, defending her from her enemies, and securing to her all her privileges.

Moreover, when in 1st Tim. ii. 2. we are commanded to pray for magistrates, the *end* proposed is, that the church and people of God, under the wing of their protection, "*may lead quiet and peaceable lives in all godliness and honesty.*" Either indifference, therefore, on the part of the state, towards the church, or an equal protection to her enemies, is notoriously incompatible with the ideas obviously contained in these sacred passages.

4. He ought, by his civil power, to remove all external impediments to the true religion and worship of God, whether they be persons, or things; such as persecution, profaneness, heresy, idolatry, and their abettors, as did Aza, Hezekiah, Josiah, and other pious kings.

Thus we are informed in the ninth chapter of second Kings, that Jehu was anointed to cut off the idolatrous house of Ahab. In the tenth chapter, we are told, verse 25th, *that he destroyed the worshippers of Baal*; and in the 30th verse, God commends him for doing so. And expressly on that account, promises his children the throne of Israel, to the fourth generation.

Further, to the same purpose, we have the approved conduct of Aza, 1st Kings xv. 12, 25 "*And he took away the Sodomites out of the land, and removed all the idols that his fathers had made. And also Maachab his mother, even her, he removed from being queen, because she had made an idol in a grove; and Aza destroyed her idol, and burnt it by the brook Kidron.*" And in this, we are told, "*He did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord, as did David his father,*" verse 11.

Yea he is even complained of, in the 14th verse, *because the high places were not removed also.* This, however, he afterwards performed, as appears from 2d Chron. xiv. 2, 5. where we have some more fragments of his history "*He took away the altars of the strange gods, and the high places, and brake down the images,*

and cut down the groves," and in this, "*Asa did that which was good, and right in the eyes of the Lord his God.*"

An approved example is equal to a precept; but precepts are not wanting, see Dent. xiii. 5, 18, 20. Zech. xiii. 3. and Rev. xvii. 16. Were it needful, we might quote also the authority of most of the reformed churches in Europe, as also of the most eminent martyrs. "*We are encompassed about with a great cloud of witnesses.*"

The sentiments of that venerable assembly which penned the Larger Catechism, are full and explicit on this subject. "The duties required in the second commandment, are, the detesting, disapproving, opposing all false worship, and according to each one's place and calling, removing it, and all monuments of idolatry." See Larger Cat. quest. 108. In this point, we might reasonably suppose all the Presbyterians in North-America to be agreed, as the above question from the Larger Catechism has been adopted, verbatim, into the creeds and church constitutions of every denomination of them, without exception. See said Catechism, as ratified and adopted in their constitutions.

5. He ought to use every lawful endeavour to promote purity, unity, and reformation, in the church. Doing so, he will suffer none to administer ordinances, but those duly warranted by ecclesiastical authority. Independantly of this, they are only impostors, who, like the locusts, devour every green thing, susceptible of their poisonous influence, and subvert the purity and unity of the Gospel church.

He will also call on ecclesiastics, as his subjects, to be active and diligent, in the performance of duty. 2d Chron. xxix. 5. Hezekiah commanded the ministers of the altar, to attend to their respective functions. "*Hear me ye Levites, sanctify yourselves, and sanctify the house of the Lord God of your fathers, and carry forth all filthiness out of the holy place.*" In this he acted not the part of a legislator, but only enforced the laws of his God, agreeably to the constitution of the kingdom, and required his subjects faithfully to perform their duty.

In the thirtieth chapter, he exhorts, intreats, and commands the people, to come to the house of God, and keep the passover. And when the magistrate commands what is expressly required by the law of God, his subjects are bound to obey. Rom. xiii. 1. "*Let every soul be subject to the higher powers.*"

It may perhaps be enquired, what are those things which he may lawfully command? To this I answer, he may lawfully command whatever is contained in the constitution, prescribed by him whom he represents. Deut. xvii. 18. we are told what this is, namely, *the Divine Law*. Whatever penalties are specified in that law, and no where either repealed or mitigated, should be duly inflicted, in case of disobedience. Where the law is silent, or indefinite, with respect to particular crimes, against any precept of the decalogue, and the punishment due thereto, great prudence and discretion will be necessary to ascertain, whether said crimes are punishable by civil pains, as there are many violations of the moral law, to which no particular *civil* penalty can attach.

Nothing should be held censurable by the church, or punishable by the state, but what is plainly *contrary* to the law of God; and become duly public, independently of requiring self-accusation.

But even when the crime is ascertained to be, in nature and circumstances, *punishable*, great discretion necessary, in fixing both the quantity and quality of the penalty. Perhaps, in certain particular states of society, forbearance, without punishment, even of many *real* crimes against both church and state, would be most prudent and eligible. But here, wisdom is peculiarly necessary to direct. But when it would be improper, thus to remit the punishment of these crimes, we observed, that the quality and quantity should be particularly attended to. In many of them, the quality should be *negative*, consisting in deprivation of privileges, which might otherwise be enjoyed. For the breach of the tenth commandment, the divine law has provided no other civil punishment. This is clearly implied in Exod. xviii.

21. where we are told, the magistrate must be a man "*fearing GOD and hating covetousness.*" If such only are eligible, the covetous man is, of course, disqualified. The same might, perhaps, hold with those, who are habitual in the neglect of religious duties, as also with other descriptions too tedious to enumerate.

With respect to the quantity of a penalty, in crimes of a particular nature, not specifically provided for in the divine law, there may be much discretionary power exercised, according to particular emergencies ; taking care, however, that the divine law may never be violated. In such cases, the light of nature will be greatly subservient to the general rules of Scripture. Ezra vii. 26. Artaxerxes orders, "*Whosoever will not to the law of thy GOD, let judgment be executed speedily upon him, whether it be unto death, or banishment, or confiscation of goods, or imprisonment.*" And in the next verse, Ezra blesses the Lord his GOD, for putting it into the king's heart.

But to return to Hezekiah. We find him, by civil authority, endeavouring to effect purity, unity and reformation in the church, and his exertions accompanied with the smiles of Jehovah's approbation ; for, in the twelfth verse of the thirtieth chapter of second Chronicles, we read, that in "*Judah, the hand of GOD was give them one heart, to do the commandment of the Lord, and of the princes by the word of the Lord.*" In order to effect these desirable ends, he has a right to convocate synods, and councils, consisting of ecclesiastical persons, to consult and advise how the church is to be purged from corruptions, and the truths of GOD most successfully propagated. For this, we have the approved example of pious magistrates under the Old Testament, as Asa, Josiah, Hezekiah, &c.

Moreover, the four Ecumenical Councils were called by christian magistrates. Constantine called the first Nicene Council : Theodosius the elder, the first Council at Constantinople : Theodosius the younger, the first Ephesian Council : Marcian the Chalcedon Council.

6. They ought to support the laws of GOD, by their

secular authority, as keepers of both tables of the law, enjoining and commanding all to observe the same, under such civil pains as may be calculated to effect their performance. Thus, 2d Chron. 34th chapter, good Josiah, after he had removed all the idolatrous images, altars and groves, and cleansed Judah and Jerusalem, commanded the priests to enquire of the Lord for him, and for all that were left in Judah and Jerusalem, concerning all the words of the book which had been found by Hilkiah the priest in the house of the Lord, and enjoined all that were present in Jerusalem, and Benjamin, to attend to, and observe its contents.

Thus, the civil authority is concerned, in sanctioning and ratifying the laws of the Most High God, acting as a terror to evil-doers, and a praise to them that do well.

The fourth commandment, whose obligation is perpetual, is directed to every relation. Every private individual must observe the law of God; but heads of families, and other superiors, must not only observe it themselves, but make those under their authority do so likewise, as far as their influence can extend, and also punish obstinate violators thereof. "*I know,*" says God, "*that Abraham will command his children and household after him.*" So the magistrate must provide, that the Sabbath be sanctified in all his gates; that is, as far as his civil authority extends. Yea, we find even here, then kings ratifying the laws of the Most High God, Ezra vii. 23. The decree of Artaxerxes, is, "*Whatsoever is commanded by the God of Heaven, let it be done for the house of the God of Heaven.*"

As it is his duty to ratify the law of God, in like manner he ought to sanction, by his civil authority, the decrees of ecclesiastical courts, when agreeable to the law of God, and calculated to promote his glory. ~~There~~ he civilly adopts, as good and wholesome laws, tending to promote the happiness of the realm, and the glory of God the King of nations. Hence it is, that good neighbourhood is promoted between church and state, and harmony and mutual co-operation between the

*testimony* of Israel, and the *thrones* of the house of David, Ps. cxxii. 4.

7. He ought, also, to exercise a compulsory and punitive power about things religious. This extends to all persons within his jurisdiction. Rom. xiii. 1. Every soul is strictly enjoined to be subject to his authority.

Should it be enquired, what is the standard regulating this subjection? we reply, the law of GOD. This is the unerring rule, whereby the exercise of his authority, and their subjection thereunto, will be tried. Isai. viii. 20. "*To the law and to the testimony,*" &c. This law he is obliged to execute, under pain of Jehovah's displeasure, Deut. xvii. 18. Those who refuse to obey, and so obstruct the wheels of government, and dishonour the GOD of nations, he is authorised to punish.

That offences against the *second* table of the moral law are punishable, is admitted by all. This, therefore, requires no proof.

That breaches of the *first* table should also be punished, is equally warranted by reason, and the word of GOD. Let us examine the penalties annexed to the obstinate violation of the four first precepts of the decalogue.. With respect to the *first* of these, see Deut. xiii. 1, 5. "*If there arise among you a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams—That prophet, or that dreamer of dreams, shall be put to death, because he hath spoken lies, to turn you away from the Lord your GOD, which brought you out of the land of Egypt.*" Shall the magistrate punish the man who rebels against his *own* authority, and pass with impunity, or extend protection to the man, who, "*untrembling, mouths the heavens,*" and points his artillery at the throne of the Omnipotent?

With respect to the *second* commandment, the penalty annexed to the breach of it is also expressly stated in Deut. xiii. 6. "*If thy brother the son of thy mother, or thy son, or thy daughter, or the wife of thy bosom, or thy friend, which is as thine own soul, entice thee secretly, saying, come let us go serve other gods—thou shalt not consent unto him, neither shalt thou spare, neither shalt*

*thou conceal him, but thou shalt surely kill him."* Compare Exod. xxxii. 27. Shall a robber of a little earthly property be severely punished? And shall he who robs God of his glory, and gives it to graven images, stocks, and stones, who as in Hab. i. 16. sacrifices unto his net, and burns incense to his drag, be allowed to pass with impunity? Hear what Job the Chaldean, (who lived not under the Jewish economy) says, chap. xxxi. 26, 28. "*If I beheld the sun when it shined, 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.*"

With respect to the third precept of the decalogue, we are informed, Lev. xxiv. 15, 16. "*Whoever curseth his God, shall bear his sin, and he that blasphemeth the name of the Lord, he shall surely be put to death; and all the congregation shall stone him,*" &c. Shall a man be punished for a treasonable expression against an earthly magistrate, and be protected in blaspheming Christ, denying his Divinity, and vilifying and reproaching his blessed Spirit!! "*If he that despised Moses's law, died without mercy, under two or three witnesses; of how much sorer punishment suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of Grace?*" Heb. x. 28, 29.

With respect to the fourth, we may consult Nehemiah xiii. 15, 19. When the people about Jerusalem engaged about secular employments, bearing burthens, and trafficking out and in the city, he expostulates with them, shuts the gate of the city, and sets his servants to see that no burthens be brought in on the Sabbath. And in the 21st verse, he testifies against the merchants who lodged about the gates and wall, saying, "*why lodge ye about the wall? If ye do so again I will lay hands on you.*" Here, we have an approved example, for punishing the obstinate violators of the holy Sabbath.

Thus, the breakers of all the precepts of the *first* table are punishable by civil pains.

I cannot here omit quoting the following paragraph from Gillespie's Miscellaneous Questions. "Is not (says he) the mischief of a blind guide greater than if he acted treason, &c. and the loss of one soul by seduction, greater mischief than if he blew up parliament, cut the throat of kings or emperors, so precious is that invaluable jewel of a soul. And (says he) when the church of Christ sinketh in a state, let not that state think to swim. Religion and righteousness flourish or fade, stand or fall together. They who are false to GOD, will never prove faithful to men."

8. He hath a right to judge of the decrees of ecclesiastical assemblies, whether they are agreeable to the law of GOD, the supreme law of the land. 1st Thess. v. 21. The command to "*prove all things*," is obligatory on the magistrate, as well as others. He also is bound to use the rule of unerring rectitude. Isai. viii. 20. "*To the law and to the testimony, if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.*"

Before he gives his sanction to any church deed, he must bring it to this sacred touch-stone; if it agrees therewith, he ought to ratify it, if not, he has not only a right to reject it, but he is also bound to stamp his negative upon it.

This ratification of it is solely *civil*, and similar to his sanctioning of civil ordinances.

If this power is denied him, he must be considered as a being of no discretion, and, consequently, unfit to be a civil magistrate. To suppose him bound to ratify whatever the church might decree, without previous examination and conviction of its propriety, would make him a mere tool, fit for nothing but propping up the crazy chair of the man of sin. But, as we have endeavoured to shew what the civil power ought to do for the church, it will be necessary, in the

V. place, to shew what is the character of the civil branch, from which this is to be expected. And,

1. It should possess wisdom and understanding. Exod.



xviii. 21. *“Moreover thou shalt provide out of all the people, able men.”* And Deut. i. 13. *“Take ye wise men and understanding—and make them rulers over you.”* They must be men of ability, possessing wisdom and prudence, and well acquainted with the laws of the Most High God. Thus it is, that *“wisdom and knowledge shall be the stability”* of their administration, Isai. xxxiii. 6. And without this, there can be no reasonable expectation that they will answer the ends of their appointment.

2. Another part of their character, is, a profession of christianity. For a christian people to appoint a *Deist* to govern them, to say nothing of its repugnancy to the divine law, is even shameful. It is just like the trees in Jotham's parable, Judg. ix. 14. *“Then said all the trees unto the BRAMBLE, come thou and reign over us.”* Because they could not find a tree of more generous growth, to govern them. But this is contrary to the express command of God. Deut. xvii. 15. *“Thou shalt in any wise set him king over thee, whom the Lord thy GOD shall choose: one from among thy brethren shalt thou set king over thee; thou mayest not set a stranger over thee, which is not thy brother.”* Is it to be expected that the man, who is not a brother in the profession of the religion of Jesus, but an obstinate *Infidel*, will make his administration bend to the interests of Immanuel, whose existence he denies, whose religion he mocks, and whose kingdom he believes to be fictitious!

3. Another character is, uprightness and integrity. Exod. xviii. 21. we are here informed that they should be *“such as fear GOD, men of truth, hating covetousness.”* The high responsibility connected with their station, requires men of rectitude, and integrity of character; thus, 2d Sam. xxiii. 2, 3. *“The Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and his word was in my tongue. He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of GOD.”*

4. They must be a terror to evil-doers. Rom. xiii. 3, 5. *“For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil—the ministers of GOD, avengers to execute*

wrath upon him that doeth evil." Hence, we are informed, "*he beareth not the sword in vain,*" suppressing, as far as his influence can extend, every violation of the divine law.

5. They must be a "*praise to them that do well.*" 1st Pet. ii. 14. Rewarding and encouraging the virtuous, "*that they may live quiet and peaceable lives in all godliness and honesty.*" Solomon's administration is represented as being of this description, Ps. lxxii. 7. "*In his days shall the righteous flourish, and possess abundance of peace.*"

6. They should be continually attentive to official duty. Rom. xiii. 6. "*For they are GOD's ministers attending continually upon this very thing.*" If this were duly attended to, not only would magistratical functions be better executed, but the absurdity of Erastianism would at once appear.

The church functionary is also commanded to attend continually to his department. 1st Tim. iv. 15. "*Give thyself wholly to them.*" Of course, some are provided (exclusively of the civil magistrate) whose business it is to manage ecclesiastical concerns. But if this also was formally the magistrate's official duty, why should others belonging to another department be appointed? Further, how could the magistrate attend continually upon this very thing, viz. his own official duty, which is purely civil, and at the same time attend to another concern, which is not civil? Common sense teaches, that if he attend continually upon the one, the other will of course be neglected.

7. The civil magistrate should be a keeper of both tables of the law of God. Deut. xvii. 18, 19. "*And it shall be when he sitteth upon the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write him a copy of the law in a book, out of that which is before the priests, the Levites. And it shall be with him, and he shall read therein all the days of his life: that he may learn to fear the Lord his God, to keep all the words of this law, and these statutes to do them.*" How can he be GOD's minister, if he be regardless of his law? And where can he find such a constitu-

tion, as that provided for him by the Spirit of infinite wisdom? By this he is indispensably bound, in his official capacity, as well as his subjects are, in their private individual capacity. But, as we have been endeavouring to characterize the civil branch, from which protection to the church may be expected, it will be proper, in the

VI. place, to characterize the ecclesiastical branch, which is, of right, entitled to this protection. And,

1. Her constitution should be agreeable to, and founded on, the word of God. Heb. viii. 5. "*See (says God) thou make all things according to the pattern, shewed to thee in the Mount.*" This suits every possible purpose of edification. 2d Tim. iii. 16, 17. "*All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.*"

2. Her officers should be regularly introduced to ministerial functions, by the presbyterial imposition of hands. 1st Tim. iv. 14. "*Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, and the laying on of the hands of the presbytery.*" The awful catastrophe of Korah, Dathan, &c. should be viewed as a beacon to all, who, by their ambitious dispositions, would be in danger of splitting on this tremendous rock.

Christ denominates those, who come not in by the door, "*thieve and robbers;*" and in Mat. vii. 15. commands us to "*beware of false prophets, who come to us in sheeps clothing, but inwardly are ravening wolves.*" Let none expect to profit by their ministrations. "*I have not sent them (saith the Lord) yet they ran, therefore they shall not profit this people.*"

3. She should "*contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints.*" Jude 3. And 1st Tim. vi. 20. "*O Timothy keep that which is committed to thy care.*" In doing this, as with faces of flint and brows of brass, they should be explicit, bold, and valiant, whether the generation unto which they are sent will hear or forbear. There is no neutrality in Christ's service. Judg. v. 23. "*Curse ye Meroz, (saith the angel of the Lord) curse*

*ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof: because they came not up to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty."*

The very light of nature, suggests the propriety of being plain and explicit with our brethren of mankind. Should we see our neighbour in danger of falling into a pit, where destruction would be inevitable, would we not violate the natural laws of humanity, if we did not warn him of his danger? Nay, would we not, to a certain degree, be considered by the divine law, as accessory to his ruin? Of infinitely more importance, is the salvation of the soul. Says our Lord, "*What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?*"

To faithful testimony-bearing, the following things are necessary: 1st. A just, summary, and clear statement, of the truths contained in the sacred oracles. 2d. A clear refutation of the opposite errors, and especially those that unhinge the present truth, or word of Christ's patience. 3d. A life and conversation becoming the gospel; without which, the other two are only a burlesque upon the religion of Jesus.

4. Her discipline should be impartial. 1st Tim. v. 20. "*Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear.*" This is to be done with singleness of heart, and a deep sense of our responsibility to the church's head. Hence, verse 21. "*I charge thee before GOD and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the elect angels, that thou observe these things, without preferring one to another, doing nothing by partiality.*" The rich should have no preference above the poor. 1st Tim. vi. 17. "*Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living GOD, who giveth us all things richly to enjoy.*"

5. Her worship should be pure, and free from all human inventions. 1st Tim. iv. 16. "*Take heed to thyself and to thy doctrine.*" It is a matter of vast importance; not only from the consideration, that it incurs the vengeance of Almighty GOD upon the innovators, but also, because it poisons the souls of men. It should be, therefore, such, and such *only*, as GOD has commanded.

*“ In vain (says Christ) do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.”* Mat. xv. 9. Those who add to, or diminish from the volume of God’s book, may abide the awful consequences. Rev. xxii. 18, 19.

Query: Is it not a matter of importance to know, whether the singing an *“ Imitation of David’s Psalms,”* in any sense incurs the above penalty?

6. Her ministry should be learned and pious. Without the former, they will only betray, through ignorance, their cause into the hands of the enemy; without the latter, they will pollute the sacred sanctuary.

Consider, for a moment, what a ridiculous figure the ambassador sent to negotiate with a foreign nation would make, who could not read his master’s commission. Would such an one be qualified to be an ambassador to an earthly potentate? Is not the negotiation of the King of kings much more important, than the adjustment of the differences between states and empires?

When Christ called his ministers in an extraordinary manner, he gave them extraordinary qualifications: and among these we find the gift of tongues. In 1st Tim. i. 7. those are severely reprehended, who presume to enter on office, without due qualifications, *“ desiring to be teachers of the law, yet understanding neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm.”* Such are the clouds of illiterate, methodistic locusts, which darken the horizon of these states. Without abilities, natural or acquired, they pour forth like torrents, over the face of the earth, and lead aside the simple and unwary. The infuriated zeal with which they propagate their poisonous doctrines, resembles much the character of the Scribes and Pharisees, mentioned Mat. xxiii. 15. *“ Who compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, he is rendered two-fold more the child of hell than themselves.”*

Without a due measure of learning, how can they meet the cavillings of deists, and crafty impostors, and so act the part of an Evangelist, required Tit. i. 9.

namely, to be able to convince the gainfayers, and put adversaries to silence ?

7. They should be exemplary in life and conversation. Even before they are clothed with official character, it is required that they "*have a good report of them that are without.*" 1st Tim. iii. 7. And to this purpose is the benediction of Moses, to the sacerdotal tribe. Deut. xxxiii. 8. "*And of Levi, he said, let thy Urim and thy Thummim be with thy Holy One.*" Let illumination of mind, and rectitude and integrity of character, be the portion of him who is devoted to sacred functions. The influence which their example will have on the generation, is of great moment.

The proverb, "*Like priest, like people,*" generally holds good. Hence it is said of this same Levi ; when "*the law of truth was in his mouth, and iniquity was not found in his lips, he turned many from iniquity.*" Mal. ii. 6. But when, as in the eighth verse, "*the priests departed out of the way,*" what is the consequence ? "*They caused many to stumble at the law.*" Thus we are commanded, Mat. v. 16. "*to let our light so shine before men, that they seeing our good works, may glorify our Father which is in Heaven.*" This is eminently obligatory on the ministers of the altar, who ought to be exemplary to society, in every part of their conduct. But, as we have now endeavoured to characterize both the civil and ecclesiastical branches, we shall endeavour, in the

VII. place, to shew what is our duty towards the civil branch, when thus *legally* constituted. And,

1. We ought to yield subjection with reverence and fear. Rom. xiii. 1, 4. "*Let every soul be subject to the higher powers.*" For this, we have the command of GOD, in the passage now quoted ; and that too, under the severest penalties. In like manner, Tit. iii. 1. the apostle commands, "*to put them in mind, to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates,*" &c. To the same purpose, 1st Pet. ii. 13, 17. "*Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man, for the Lord's sake,*" &c.

2. We ought to pay tribute conscientiously, as unto the legitimate administrators of the ordinance of God. Rom. xiii. 6, 7. "*For this cause pay you tribute also for, i. e. because, they are God's ministers,*" &c. Here, the legitimacy and right administration of the prince, is the formal reason assigned, why tribute should be rendered; consequently, where the cause exists not, the obligation otherwise established, ceases.

3. We ought to pray for their welfare, and give thanks unto GOD for them. 1st Tim. ii. 1, 2. The apostle exhorts us to make supplications, prayers, and thanksgivings, for kings, and such as are in authority. Here, certainly, he means such as make the law of GOD their rule, and bend their administrations to the honour of Immanuel. If this is not the case, the end proposed cannot be attained, namely, "*That we may live quiet and peaceable lives, in all godliness and honesty.*"

4. It is our duty to honour and esteem them, and not revile or curse them. 1st Pet. ii. 17. "*Honour the king.*" To the same purpose, Rom. xiii. 7. "*Render honour unto whom honour is due.*" All insults offered to magistrates, in the due exercise of their office, GOD will consider as offered to himself, in the persons of his representatives. This he forbids, under pain of his heavy displeasure. Exod. xxii. 28. "*Thou shalt not revile the Gods, nor speak evil of the ruler of thy people.*"

5. To obey "*not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake.*" Rom. xiii. 5. Here are two reasons or motives assigned, to enforce obedience. 1. For wrath's sake. The expression, that it is not *only* for wrath, intimates, that wrath is *one* reason, though it is not *all*. Obedience for wrath's sake, is a yielding subjection, on account of the penalty, that will be inflicted in case of disobedience. This ought to stimulate to the performance of a superior's commands, and is the thing intended by every penalty, and is the great reason why laws have penalties annexed to them, and is considered as a motive to obedience in all laws, divine as well as human. The threat of fear and punishment, is allowed to influence to obedience, in all things in themselves lawful, as

well under *illegitimate*, as under *legitimate* governments. The 2d reason is, for *conscience sake*. This implies two things—*First*, that the thing commanded, should be done, because it is right. *Second*, because it is commanded by legitimate authority. As to the *first* thing, viz. that we should do what is commanded, because it is right in itself, the obligation arises from the moral law requiring it, and may be done, be the power commanding it never so illegitimate. It, of course, implies no homologation of the existing authority. The *second* thing, viz. the doing it, *because* it is commanded, is competent exclusively to legitimate governments, and is the *only tessera* of loyalty.

6. We ought to live quiet and peaceable lives, bear true and faithful allegiance, and oppose all riotous and seditious practices. To the opposite of this conduct, GOD has annexed the severest penalties. Rom. xiii. 2. “*He that resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of GOD, and shall receive to himself damnation.*”

Such persons GOD will consider rebels against his own royal authority, displayed in the righteous administration of his lawful representatives. He stamps such with more than ordinary marks of disapprobation. In Jude 8, he calls them “*filthy dreamers, defiling the flesh, despising dominions, and speaking evil of dignities.*” The heinousness of their sin, and the vengeance of GOD upon it, is awfully marked in the destruction of Korah and his company, Numb. xvi. to which the apostle Jude here alludes.

7. We ought to support their just administrations with our blood and treasure. If a magistrate may lawfully go to war, in defence of the just rights and privileges of the commonwealth, whatever justifies him so to do, lays his subjects under an obligation to support him, in every just and necessary measure, with their estates and lives. To repel force by force, is an early dictate of the law of self-preservation. To this we are also bound by the social compact, in which mutual protection is solemnly stipulated. The danger of losing the invaluable privileges of religion and liberty, may



lawfully summon us to arms. In these cases, the civil magistrate is the public organ of the nation's will, and is entitled to obedience. Thus our renowned ancestors, by a solemn covenant, bound themselves to defend, with their estates and lives, the king's majesty, in protecting their religion and liberty : See Solemn League and Covenant. Such are the duties we hold ourselves bound to render to the civil branch, when legally constituted. Have we any right, then, to be stigmatized as anti-government men?

If *anti* should at all be used, it should immediately precede the word *immoral*, and then it is completely applicable. We always have been, and intend uniformly to continue, *anti-immoral-government men*.

Having thus shewn some of the duties which we owe to a government, when morally constituted, it may be proper, in the

VIII. place, to state the reasons why we cannot yield obedience, *for conscience sake*, to the present civil authority in North-America. And,

I. The federal constitution, or instrument of national union, does not even recognize the existence of God, the *King of nations*. In these civil acts, though the immediate end may be the happiness of the commonwealth ; yet the ultimate end, as well in this, as in every other thing we do, should be the glory of God. Ought not men, in the formation of their deeds, to consider their responsibility to the moral Governor, and this obligation to acknowledge his authority ? Prov. iii. 5. "*In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.*" That a national deed, emblematic about the fundamental stipulations of magistracy, as a ordinance of God, and the investiture of magistrates, as his ministers, should nowhere recognize the existence of the Governor of the universe, is, to say nothing worse of it, truly lamentable. May it not be said of this nation as of Israel, Hos. viii. 4. "*They have set up kings, but not by me, they have made princes, and I knew it not ?*" Did not the framers of this instrument act, not only as if there had been no divine revelation for the supreme

standard of their conduct ; but also, as if there had been no GOD ? Did they not, in this, resemble the fool, mentioned Ps. xiv. 1. who “ *said in his heart there is no GOD ?* ” Every official act of the governor of a province, must have some specific stamp of his dependence upon the authority which appointed him : and shall a nation act, as if independent of the GOD of the universe, and expect to be guiltless ?

2. Another objection we have, is, that most, if not all, of the state constitutions, contain *positive immorality*. Witness their recognition of such rights of conscience, as sanction every blasphemy, which a depraved heart may believe to be true. Moreover, the state constitutions necessarily bind to the support of the federal, as the bond of national existence ; and hence, the immorality contained in that instrument, becomes common to them all.

The recognition of such rights of conscience, is insulting to the Majesty of Heaven, and repugnant to the express letter of GOD’s word. Deut. xvii. 18. GOD prescribes to the magistrate, the divine law, as the supreme standard of all his administrations ; and which obliges men, in every station, to conduct themselves accordingly. Deut. xii. 32. “ *What thing soever I command you, observe to do it : thou shalt not add to it, nor diminish from it.* ” But, in the framing of these constitutions, the revealed law of GOD is not attended to ; though even the law of nature requires the adoption of every new communication, which GOD, in mercy, may be pleased to reveal.

The rejection of the divine law, as revealed in the Scriptures of truth, we consider as a contempt of the beneficence of Heaven, and an obstinate drawing back to heathenism.

3. The government gives a legal security and establishment to gross heresy, blasphemy, and idolatry, under the notion of liberty of conscience.

It would be too tedious, to examine each of the state constitutions on this head. One may suffice.

We shall select that of the state of Pennsylvania :

See the *preamble*, together with the *third* and *twenty-sixth* sections of the *ninth* article. Here, the constitution recognizes, and unalterably establishes, the indefeasible *right* of worshipping Almighty GOD, whatever way a man's conscience may dictate; and declares, that this shall, *for ever*, remain inviolate. We believe, that no man has a right to worship GOD any other way, than he himself hath prescribed in his law. We also think it criminal, for a man's conscience to approve any way repugnant to this sacred rule: and that this *crime* cannot legitimate *another*, or make an action right, which GOD expressly condemns, under pain of eternal wrath.

If conscience can legitimate what GOD's law condemns, it must be paramount to the divine law, and, consequently, to the Legislator also, in having a negative over the requisitions of both the one and the other.

Were this the case, it would not only free from criminality, but would render virtuous, laudable, and praise-worthy, the most damnable errors—the most horrid blasphemies—and detestable abominations; if but dictated by the consciences of Pagans, Mahometans, &c. Then, the Egyptians worshipping GOD under the form of a snake or crocodile, would be as lawful, yea, as commendable, as doing it precisely according to the manner which he has prescribed in his word, provided, that, in both cases, conscience said Amen!

But, supposing for a moment, that men had such a right, let us enquire how they came by it? Either they must have it by derivation from GOD, or hold it independently of him.

It cannot be by derivation from GOD. It would be absurd, in the nature of it, and incompatible with the essential attributes of his character.

To suppose GOD giving to his moral subjects a *law*, to the breach of which he annexes eternal punishment, and at the same time giving them a *right* to break it, is inconsistent, and impossible. *Right* would be opposed to *obligation*. A *right to obey*, and a *right not to obey*!

Let us, at this stage appear, we find the doctrine ad-

vocated, both from pulpit and press. Scarcely any where, however, is it more barefacedly maintained, than in the following declaration:—"To worship GOD after that way and manner, they judge most agreeable to his will, is a right common to all men. They may, and often do, err, and offend the Most High, by substituting a false religion in place of that which he requires: but no power on earth can take their right from them."\*

Here, there is a certain right established. To do what? To worship GOD whatever way a man may think most proper. But he may, and often does, think a *false way* most proper. Well; he has a right to worship the *false way*! But, worshipping the *false way* offends GOD. No matter, he has a right to *offend* GOD; for, if worshipping falsely, and offending GOD, are equivalent; seeing he has a right to do the one, he has a right to do the other!!! "*Tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Askelon: lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice, lest the daughters of the uncircumcised triumph.*" 2d Sam. i. 20.

To maintain, that men have a right to break the divine law, is too glaring. Does it not look very like blasphemy, to allow, that GOD has given them such a right? If they have it, therefore, it must be independently of him. It would be pretty nice, to draw the discriminating line between this and *atheism*.

This pretended right, however, is guaranteed to all, by the constitution of this state.

Every thing, suggested by conscience, which may not interfere with temporal safety, is unalterably established by the permanent law of the land. Should it dictate, obstinately to profess the most damnable heresy, and zealously practise, and propagate, every absurd and abominable form of idolatry, which a heart given up to strong delusions, vile affections, and a reprobate sense, could make one think innocent, the good people of this state have recognized *his right* to do so: and solemnly pled-

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\* See the Declaration and Testimony of the Associate Presbytery of Pennsylvania, Part I. Sect. 17.

ged themselves, in their constitutional instrument, to give him security and protection; the solemn prohibition of Almighty God notwithstanding!

Does not this amount to an establishment of religion?

That civil rulers should exercise their power, in protecting and defending the religion of Jesus, we do, and always did, maintain.

The dispute, then, will not turn upon the point, whether religion should be civilly established? (we take it for granted that Americans think so, seeing they have done it) but it is, concerning what religion ought to be civilly established and protected. Whether the *religion of Jesus alone*, should be countenanced by civil authority? or every *blasphemous, heretical, and idolatrous abomination*, which the subtle malignity of the old serpent, and a heart deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, can frame and devise, should be put on an equal footing therewith? The former we contend for, the latter we reject. The latter, however, is the plain doctrine of the constitution.

That it may appear, that this is no invidious comment on the articles of that instrument, let us, for a moment, attend to its application to practice, by the legislature. Their views of it, will be considered as impartial. In the discharge of their legislative *duty*, did they not incorporate a Roman Catholic society in the city of Philadelphia, and grant them special privileges, such as raising money by lottery, &c. for erecting a chapel? Who ever heard any of the approvers of the constitution complain, that said law of incorporation was unconstitutional? Indeed, no man of common sense could allow that it was.

If this be an evil, the constitution should be purged from such principles as sanction it; unless it be contended, that the people of these states have, among them, *rights*, ONE of which authorises them to give their power to the beast, and prop up the tottering fabric of that *man of sin*, whom God has threatened to "*destroy with the breath of his mouth, and the brightness of his coming.*"

We cannot, in conscience, however ill others may

look upon it, swear allegiance to a constitution, so friendly to the enemies of Jesus. We are bound to him, and cannot serve two masters. Is this putting of all religious sects upon an equal footing, consistent with the declaration concerning New Testament times, *Isai. xlix. 23. "Kings shall be thy nursing fathers?"* Would he not be a hard-hearted father, who would put his child upon the same footing with the wolves, tygers, and other voracious beasts of prey? The political father, who leaves the child *Truth* in the jaws of enemies, still more deadly, cannot be allowed to possess much more tender feelings. Will the church of Christ enjoy no other privilege than this, by "*sucking the breasts of kings.*" *Isai. lx. 16. "When her officers shall be peace, and her exactors righteousness."* verse 17.

4. We farther object to the civil government of this country, because its officers are sworn, by necessary implication, to support what GOD Almighty forbids, as appears from the oath of office. "Members of the general assembly, and all officers executive and judicial, shall be bound by oath or affirmation, to support the constitution of this commonwealth."\*

If, therefore, the constitution of Pennsylvania, as has been already demonstrated, supports, and legally establishes, gross heresy, blasphemy, and idolatry; it necessarily follows, that those who swear to support it, are bound, by solemn oath, to support the above principles and practices; which is nothing more, than a practical application of said instrument, in their respective administrations.

Is not this a glaring contradiction to the moral law, not only in its general precepts, such as *first, second, and third* commandments, &c. but also to the particular illustration of these precepts? See *Deut. vii. 5.* when speaking of idolators, "*Thus shall ye deal with them, ye shall destroy their altars, and break down their images, and cut down their groves, and burn their graven images with fire.*"

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\* See the oath of office, Constitution of the state of Pennsylvania, Art. 8.

But this obligation, to support gross heresy, &c. is not confined to officers under the constitution. It extends to all who swear allegiance to it, and thus incorporate, with the national society, upon the footing of this bond of union.

To what purpose is a constitution, if it does not contain a solemn stipulation, between each and every individual, and all the rest of the society, for the mutual guarantee of the privileges therein specified? We cannot, therefore, swear allegiance, because we dare not be bound, upon pain of perjury, if need be, to spend our blood and treasure in supporting the man of sin, or any of his allies. And I have never been able to satisfy myself, how it was consistent, in those who profess Presbyterianism, to swear an oath, which involves the supporting of idolatry, &c. while, at the same time, in their creeds, and church constitutions, they solemnly recognize their obligation, in their respective stations, to remove every monument and vestige of it from the land.\*

5. They make no provision for the interest of true religion. See Federal Constitution, Art. 3. Amendment. And, though there is some appearance to the christian religion, in some of the state constitutions, such as Massachusetts, Part 1. Art. 3. yet that article, respecting the *rights of conscience*, which lays the foundation, and terminates in the establishment, of every thing called religion, which may not interfere with temporal safety, is “a dead fly” to this precious ointment.

This indifference, about the religion of Jesus, is contrary to the law of nature; which requires rulers, “chiefly to care for the honour of God, the Governor of nations, and to adopt and enforce his laws, as the best mean for promoting the supreme end—which requires that men should be governed, as having immortal souls, and not as mere brute animals, about whose bodies *only* we are concerned;” contrary to the word of God, which teacheth, “*that righteousness exalteth a nation, whereas sin,*

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\* See Larger Catechism, Question 108, as ratified in their church constitutions.

(even blasphemy and idolatry as well as other sins) *is the reproach of any people.*" Prov. xiv. 34.

This indifference about the religion of Jesus, is in opposition to the promised blessings in the word of GOD. The exercise of the magistrate's power, in favour of the true religion, is promised as a blessing, in New Testament times. Isai. xlix. 23. "*Kings shall be thy nursing fathers,*" &c.

Let the law of GOD be established as a rule, and that will, of course, establish truth.

The allegation usually brought forward against this position, viz. "that the law of GOD is so equivocal, that it cannot be understood, and so ought not to be made the basis of legislation," is invalid.

If it be admitted, the divine law is no longer a rule of faith and manners : and GOD only imposed upon his rational subjects, in giving them a law, that was unintelligible, and at the same time annexing the most tremendous penalties to the violation of it. We are usually taught to have other views of the GOD of mercy and truth.

But can there be any thing plainer, or clearer, than the precepts of the decalogue, in which we have a summary of the moral law, a bright transcript of the perfections of Jehovah ? What is all the preceptive part of the Bible, but an elucidation, or comment, upon the precepts respectively ? What are all the promises or threatenings, but the sanctions of that law, applied to their respective cases by GOD, in order to enforce duty, and deter from disobedience ?

Would it be considered as warrantable, in a court of justice, to acquit a criminal, arraigned at the bar, because he pleads, "the law, with respect to the breach of which I am charged, was unintelligible, [or] I had as good a *right* to explain it as another. The true meaning of it, I think I have fulfilled. I demand my liberty." Must this law, ever after, cease to be a rule ? If this is admitted, there is an end to all government ; and men will, as in those days, when there was no king in Israel, "*do, every man that which is right in his own eyes.*"



But, in opposition to this, see the conduct of the pious kings of Judah, 2d Chron. xxxi. and xxxiv. chapters.

6. Another reason, why we cannot fully incorporate with the national society, is, because we consider them in a state of national rebellion against God. Jer. x. 7. God announces himself King of nations, unto whom fear and homage appertain : his will, of course, should be the *supreme* law.

This *will* of his, as revealed in the book of nature, and imprinted upon the heart of man, in his first creation, was, in a great measure, obliterated by the fall. God, in mercy, has been pleased to send us a written transcript of his will, with valuable enlargements, superior to any thing, which could have ever been discovered, by the mere light of nature.

If we refuse to receive it, and obstinately prefer the obscure shattered fragments, revealed by nature's light, to the rejection of divine revelation, do we not pour contempt upon the Legislator, and hoist the signal of rebellion ? Has this nation, in its national capacity, adopted this law, or has it not ?

This point will be ascertained, by an examination of their national deeds. If they have not, what is their character ? How does the government of any country view a province or county, which refuses to receive the laws which they have constitutionally enacted ?

They consider them in a state of rebellion ; and send their armies to suppress them as rebels. Shall provinces be *accounted rebels*, for refusing to receive the laws of *earthly rulers* ; and shall nations refuse to recognize the laws of the *Moral Governor of the universe*, and be *accounted innocent* ?

But this is not all. The nation has not only rebelled against God, in refusing to recognize the divine law ; but has also been aiding and assisting his enemies, by supporting those who are at war with the Almighty. Witness the protection of idolatry, and all manner of anti-christian delusion. For this, God is very jealous—*“ He will not give his glory to another, nor his praise to graven images.”*

Would to GOD, that, while “ *the kings of the earth are combined, to plot against the Lord, and his anointed,*” these lands, highly favoured by benevolent Providence, would neither touch, taste, nor handle, the unclean thing. O that they could say, like the two tribes and an half, on the eastern side of Jordan, Jos. xxii. 29. “ *God forbid that we should rebel against the LORD, and turn this day from following the LORD, to build an altar for burnt offerings, for meat offerings, or for sacrifices, besides the altar of the LORD our GOD, that is before the tabernacle.*”

7. Deists, and even atheists, may be chief magistrates—See the Federal Constitution.

In this instrument, a belief in the existence of GOD, is not made a necessary qualification for holding office! Neither is it essentially involved, in the obligation, taken previously to entering upon office.—See the last paragraph, of the first section, of the second article, of the Federal Constitution: here a *simple affirmation*, without even naming the name of GOD, is considered sufficient!

The allegation, “ that an oath involves an appeal to GOD,” is no real objection to what is here asserted. We admit it does. But will it therefore follow, that a simple affirmation is an appeal to GOD? The Scripture knows no such doctrine. If it did, the institution of an oath would have been useless, as containing nothing specifically different from simple assertion.

Then we would be constantly swearing, or doing what would be equivalent, in our common conversation.

But, in a word: the people, in whose favour it is generally supposed the liberty of affirmation is granted, deny the propriety of all such appeals to GOD. If it be objected, “ that quakers *only* are intended, and that all such acknowledge the Being of GOD:” it may be answered, that they are not specified—others are not excluded—atheists might plead the privilege—*and* if they were specified exclusively, still there is nothing in the *instrument itself*, that makes a profession of the belief of a Supreme Being essential. A simple affirmation, does not necessarily imply the profession of a belief in a Su-

preme Being, as an oath does. Nor is it inconsistent with the principles of an atheist, to affirm or assert.

A belief, therefore, in the existence of a Deity, is not, by the Federal Constitution, either directly or by implication, made a necessary qualification of the first magistrate.

Where is the homage, which, it might be expected, a people professing Christianity would pay to the Messiah? Where is the respect, that even a deistical society might be supposed to render to the King of nations?

Nay, at not a very distant period, even so late as the year 1797, the good people of the United States of America, concentrated by representation in the senatorial council and chief magistrate, disclaimed the religion of Jesus, and cast away the cords of the Lord's anointed, in the ratification of the treaty of peace and friendship with the BEY of Tripoli.

The American plenipotentiary availed himself of it, as an important circumstance in the article of negotiation, that the American government was not predicated upon the Christian religion; and, consequently, a government that the Bey might safely treat with. Take it in the words of the treaty itself. "The government of the United States of America, is not, in any sense, founded on the Christian religion. It has, in itself, no character of enmity against the laws or religion of Musselmén."\* And, what is further worthy of notice, by the sixth article of the Federal Constitution, this treaty is made the supreme law of the land!

Must it not be dishonouring to Christ, and calculated to procure the infliction of his iron rod, thus, nationally, in so many words, to disclaim his holy religion, to count kindred, or at least deny enmity against Mahomet, the vile impostor!

3. The major part of the states, recognize the prin-

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\* See this quotation in Art. xi. of the Treaty of Peace and Friendship between the United States of America and the Bey of Tripoli of Barbary, as filed in the laws of the United States, Vol. 4th.

ciple of *slavery*. Some, partially, and others, without taking any steps, as yet, towards its abolition.

Strange it is, indeed, that in a land of such boasted liberty, such horrid inhumanity should be tolerated ! It is contrary to the Declaration of Independence, and most of the state constitutions, which justly declare, " that all men are created FREE and EQUAL, and that LIBERTY is one of the invaluable rights, with which their Creator has endowed them." Is it not strangely inconsistent, that the constitution, the paramount law of the land, should declare all men to be free, and the laws, pretended to be constitutional, doom a certain portion of them to hopeless bondage, and subject them to the wanton barbarity of savage and inhuman masters, who, in many instances, treat their brutes with more tenderness ?

Time would not allow to enter, at large, into a refutation of it. Indeed, it is too shocking to find advocates among any, but those whose conscience is seared as with a hot iron. Suffice it to say, at present, that there is one precept, given by our Saviour, declared to be a summary of the law and the prophets, viz. "*Whatsoever ye would, that men should do unto you, do ye even so to them ; for this is the law and the prophets.*" Mat. vii. 12. To which the practice of slave-holding, is flatly repugnant.

But, supposing the Scripture silent on the subject, it is even impolitical and dangerous. What interest has the man, whom I unjustly detain, to work for me, seeing he receives scarcely any other compensation for his labour, than a *hungry belly*, and *hard blows* ? By what tie is he bound to spare *my* life, seeing I rob *him* of that which is dearer than life itself, and without which life is miserable ? Must not the philosopher execrate this nefarious traffic ? Must not the philanthropist shed a tear, on the bleeding wounds of outraged humanity !

Of this barbarous traffic, the judicatories of our church have given their pointed disapprobation, and all approving of, or engaging in it, are excluded her communion.

9. A last reason why we reject these constitutions, is, that we are bound by the moral law, as subjects of the

GOD of Heaven, to obey his will : and whatever is contrary thereunto, we are obliged to reject. And to all who censure our conduct in so doing, we reply, "*Whether we should obey GOD or man, judge ye.*"

This obligation necessarily flows from our relation to GOD, as the Moral Governor. See Exod. xx. 1, 17. where we have an epitome of his laws, and by this we hold ourselves indispensably bound.

And, moreover, in the exercise of that delegated power, which we hold from GOD, we have solemnly recognized this moral obligation, by our own act and deed. In the preface to the ten commandments, as delivered on Sinai, GOD binds himself to be our GOD : "*I am the Lord your GOD.*" We are called upon, by the laudable example of the saints—by our personal relation to GOD—and by his own express command—to lay hold upon his covenant, and avouch him as our own GOD in Christ Jesus. We have endeavoured to do so. We have covenanted in our ancestors—in our baptismal engagements—and by our own personal act—in solemnly recognizing all these obligations, in commemorating the death of our crucified Redeemer. We have thus sworn allegiance to the King of Heaven, and must reject every thing inconsistent therewith. Dare we pretend to be bound by those covenants, which oblige us to use every lawful endeavour to *extirpate* heresy, idolatry, and every thing contrary to sound doctrine, and the power of godliness ; and, at the same time, swear another oath, which necessarily involves in it their support and protection ? On this, let us resolve with the good old Joshua, "*Let others do what they will, as for us and our houses, we will serve the Lord.*"

But, as we have stated our objections to the civil constitutions of these states, candour requires us to declare, at the same time, that we consider the American government, with all its evils, the best now existing in the Christian world, and, if we know the sentiments of our own souls upon this subject, desire nothing more than its reformation, happiness, and prosperity ; though we feel bound by our duty to GOD, to testify against all

its immoralities. It will be proper, however, seeing we consider it as immoral, and, in the Providence of God, are living under it, to enquire, in the

IX. place, what should be our conduct towards it? And,

1. It is our duty to mourn before God, over all the prevailing abominations. This is one of the characters of those, who are marked with the broad seal of the Holy Ghost. Ezek. ix. 4. And the Lord said, "*Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and cry for all the abominations that are done in the midst thereof.*"

We ought, also, to confess and mourn over our own sins, which, no doubt, contribute their share to the procuring and continuance of those evils.

2. We ought to pray for their reformation with earnestness, at a throne of grace. 1st Tim. ii. 1. we are commanded, to make prayer and supplications for all men--and, Jer. xxix. 7. the captives in Babylon are commanded, to "*pray for the peace of the city, and cry to the Lord for it, that in its peace they might have peace.*" This prayer, however, ought not to recognize them, in their official capacity: for this would be saying Amen, to the immorality of the constitution on which they stand. 2d John, 10th & 11th verses, we are commanded, "*not to receive impostors into our houses, or bid them God speed, for he that biddeth them God speed, is partaker of their evil deeds.*" This must respect them as *deceivers*, and not as *men*, for we are commanded to "*pray for all men.*" 2d Tim. ii. 1.

3. We ought to use every lawful endeavour to promote reformation, such as, rational arguments, and decent remonstrances: thus, 1st Kings xii. 3, 4. "*Jeroboam and all the congregation, came to Rehoboam, saying, thy father made our yoke grievous, now, therefore, make the grievous service of thy father, and the heavy yoke which he put upon us, lighter, and we will serve thee.*" To reason, remonstrate, and expostulate with the generation, on this subject, as well as on others of

truth and duty, we are bound, by the love we ought to exercise towards our fellow brethren of men, in not suffering sin to lie upon them, without informing them of it—by the obligation we are under, to promote the interest of religion, and the advancement of Immanuel's kingdom—and by the express command of GOD. Isai. lviii. 1. "*Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and shew my people their transgression, and the house of Israel their sins.*" See also, Ezek. xxxiii. 1, 9. where we are told, that, if the watchman neglect to warn the people of the enemy's approach—if they die in their sins, their blood shall be required at *his* hand—but, if he be faithful, and give warning, whether they hear or forbear, he shall deliver his own soul.

4. We ought to do no act, which may be justly considered an homologation of their illegitimate authority.

Those, who directly, or indirectly, consent to the evil deeds of others, are partakers in their criminality. Ps. l. 18. "*When thou sawest a thief, then thou consentedst with him :*" which GOD severely reprehends. If, therefore, the constitution be essentially at war with the religion of Jesus, an homologation of it is striking hands with his enemies. No oath of allegiance, therefore, can we swear; because, we believe the constitution to be contrary to the moral law, and our covenant engagements. Farther,

We cannot elect public functionaries to fill the various offices in the state; for, between the *elector* and the *elected*, there is a representative *oneness*; so that every official act, done constitutionally by the latter, is *virtually* done by the former, through his representative organ. He must, also, be introduced to office by an oath, homologating the constitution. Whatever, therefore, we cannot do ourselves, on account of its immorality, we ought not to employ others to perform.

Neither may we accept of any office to which an oath is annexed, obliging either, *first*, to support an *immoral* constitution, or, *secondly*, to apply, or judge, under the direction of an *immoral* law. *First*, to support an *immoral* constitution. Such are all offices, considered by

the constitution as belonging either to the executive or judicial departments in this state. An oath, to this amount, is expressly required of all officers, executive and judicial.\* *Secondly*, to apply, or judge, under the direction of an *immoral* law. Of this sort, we consider serving on juries. The juror must come under an obligation, to determine the law and the facts.†

This must, certainly, be a determining what is the true spirit and meaning of the law, and its application to the particular fact under consideration. Did it mean, a determining whether the law be *moral* or *immoral*, and so, such as ought, or ought not, to be carried into operation, juries would possess a *negative* over the legislature, and render their decisions unobligatory and useless. They are, therefore, bound to apply the existing law, in its true spirit and meaning, to the case immediately under their deliberation.‡

If the civil code contain laws, in themselves *immoral*, we ought not to come under any obligation, to determine cases by them, or judge under their direction.

Though we believe most of the laws, in the civil code, are just and equitable, yet there are some exceptions.

Such are, all laws agreeable to, and predicated upon, the *immoral* part of the constitution, *e. g.* laws incorporating Roman Catholic societies, &c. Such, also, are some laws, which are unconstitutional, *e. g.* laws recognizing the right of holding slaves for life, and indemnifying masters, where slaves are capitally punished.||

Supposing a case, in which any of these *immoral* laws are concerned, comes before a jury: for example, a suit, in which a master pleads his right of holding one of his

\* See Constitution of Pennsylvania, Art. 8th.

† See Constitution of Pennsylvania, Art. 9th, Sect. 7th.

‡ It will be no real objection to the above, that in some courts, the oath is administered to the jurors, "to determine according to the evidence," without mentioning the law. The law is still implied, otherwise, the jury are above the law, and there is an end to all legislation. It is to be feared, jurors often impose on themselves in this particular.

|| See Read's Digest, page 265.



*fellow brethren* a slave for life, and his brother pleads his right of being free, what is the juror bound by his oath to do, in this particular case? The poor man was *unfortunately* (but through no fault of his). born before the first of March, 1780, and was registered, in due form of law, before the first of November, same year, and is, therefore, *legally*, a slave. The moral law says he is free. Agreeably to which of these laws, thus opposite to each other, does the juror's oath bind him to find a verdict? If agreeably to the *moral* law, the law of the state is set aside, and the legislature is controuled by the jury.\* But, if his verdict be agreeable to the law of the state, in that case made and provided, the *law of God* is set aside—the Majesty of Heaven is insulted—and the rights of humanity outraged and trampled upon, by *those* who ought to protect them. We cannot, *con-* 97  
*scientiously*, put ourselves into such a predicament.†

But farther, we may not engage in any service, which is regulated by, or puts us under, the controul of any *immoral* law. Engaging in the militia, when called

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\* *In this case, the juror's oath must be considered as null and void, or else broken; for he has acted flatly contrary thereto.*

† *In no case does the violation of the divine law appear more flagrant, than in the law of Pennsylvania, respecting murder. God expressly commands, in the most pointed manner, Gen. ix. 6. "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed." And, Num. xxxiv. 21. "Moreover ye shall take no satisfaction for the life of a murderer, which is guilty of death; but he shall be surely put to death." Verse 33. "And the land cannot be cleansed of the blood that is shed therein, but by the blood of him that shed it."*

*The divine law distinguishes between a man-slaughter and murder; but not between murder of the first degree, and murder of the second. How, say, cometh it, to the law of God, is the law of Pennsylvania, which declares, that, after April 23, 1794, "No crime whatever, (except murder of the first degree) shall be punished with death, in the state of Pennsylvania." See Harris's History, page 238. How could a juror, who was a Bible believer, act in this case?*

out to *actual service*, may come under this consideration. We thus pledge ourselves, by our own act and deed, if need be, to fight in defence of any one of the existing laws, under all existing penalties, in such cases made and provided. Who knows, but while on duty, he may be commanded to spill his blood in support of a mass-house, or, at the cannon's mouth, protect the graven images of the gross idolator, which GOD has expressly commanded to be destroyed? Deut. vii. 5. We ought not, therefore, to put ourselves into a situation, in which we know, that a thing, in itself *immoral*, may be *legally* commanded, under specific penalties, while we stand pledged, by our own act and deed, to yield obedience.

5. We may do every thing commanded, which is in itself right and lawful; provided it be not clogged by some *immoral* circumstance.

This will account for our refusing to avail ourselves of the rights, execute the offices, or engage in the services mentioned, in the last particular: though there is no criminality in the things themselves, yet they are connected with such circumstances, as we deem *immoral*.

Many things, not criminal in themselves, ought to be abstained from, on this account. For example, it would not be considered as unlawful, in itself, for a Presbyterian to go to Rome, suppose to make some mercantile arrangements: but, provided that *allegiance* to the holy see, and *worshipping the host*, were made a condition of his entering that city, he ought surely not to go thither. In like manner, the offices, &c. which we refuse, though all lawful, considered in themselves; yet, since they cannot be engaged in, unconnected with some immorality, ought not to be accepted at all. But all other things commanded by the constituted authorities, which are neither in themselves unlawful, nor connected with unlawful circumstances, may be done, not because they are commanded by legitimate authority, (which is the true testera of loyalty) but, either because the moral law requires them, or, because we may be compelled to do them by physical force. This may happen to be the case, in

those things which are not in themselves *morally* evil ; and, when commanded to do such things under heavy pains, of these two physical evils, we may lawfully choose the least. Thus, I may give away part of my property, to save the remainder, though the man who demands it, has no other right than physical force, or a power of compelling obedience.

6. We ought to wait patiently, under these disadvantages, till the Lord be pleased to bring back again the captivity of Zion. Thus, the weeping prophet observes, Sam. iii. 26. "*It is good that a man should both hope, and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord.*" Our principles may, indeed, subject us to much inconvenience ; but we ought, like Moses, to prefer affliction with the people of GOD to the treasures of Egypt, and the pleasures of sin, which are but for a season : keeping our eye upon the recompence of reward. Heb. xi. 25, 26.

Is it reasonable to expect, that, while the Dragon's successors are in power, and the rulers of the earth endeavouring to heal the wounds of the beast, the woman and her seed will return from the wilderness ? Rev. xii. 14, 17. The time, times, and half a time, or twelve hundred and sixty years, are not yet closed, since she fled thither on eagle's wings, during which period she should lay her account with embarrassments and tribulations.

Nay, there is reason to expect, that still more tremendous scenes of persecution and carnage yet await the church, than any she has hitherto experienced. The Witnesses have not yet finished their testimony. One point yet remains to be sealed with their blood, namely, the Mediator's headship over the nations. 'Tis not unlikely, that this is one of the articles for which the Witness's shall be slain, when, as we read, Rev. vi. 8, 9. "*they shall lie dead, three days and an half,*" which is equal to three years and an half, in prophetic language. But they shall have a glorious resurrection, when these three days and an half are expired. And though we should not live to see these happy days, let us rejoice in the consideration, that we have been endeavouring, in our civil and religious systems, to antici-

pate the millennial period, when Jesus shall reign in Jerusalem, in Mount Zion, and before his ancients, gloriously. And, if we are faithful and conscientious in doing so, GOD will say to us, as he did to David, respecting his intention of building the temple, "*Thou didst well that it was in thine heart.*"

7. We ought to live peaceable and regular lives, "*giving no offence to Jew or Gentile, or to the church of GOD.*" 1st Cor. x. 32. "*To adore the doctrine of GOD our Saviour in all things.*" Tit. ii. 10. To oppose all riotous and seditious practices, which may arise to injure the peace and prosperity of the land wherein we live—To comply with the common order of society, in all things in themselves lawful—To live as citizens of the world, and not incorporate ourselves with the national society, in any of their political movements; looking up for the day of our redemption, when GOD's appointed time, for favouring Zion, shall come. But, as the doctrines advanced in the preceding part of this discourse, are unpopular with the present generation, it may be necessary, in the

X. place, to obviate some of the leading objections which are usually made thereto.

*Objection 1.* The apostle, Rom. xiii. 1. informs us, that all power is of GOD—" *There is no power but of GOD,*" consequently, we owe conscientious obedience to every power. To this, it may be answered. There are two kinds of power, viz. *physical* and *moral*; both are of God: for "*in him we live, and move, and have our being.*" Acts xvii. 28.

By the exercise of the *first*, all actions, just and unjust, are performed. In the exercise of this *physical* power, Paul persecuted the church of Jesus: by the same power he laboured, with unwearied industry, in the propagation of the doctrines of the cross. This power, therefore, is common to all actions, whether *moral* or *immoral*, that come to pass in the *providence* of GOD. The

*Second*, is not only providential, but also *moral* and *preceptive*, and respects those things which GOD, in his

law, requires, as the duty of moral subjects to perform.

Is it the *first*, or the *second*, of those, that every soul is commanded to be subject unto, under the penalty of damnation, mentioned in the passage now under consideration?

If the *first*, then it is a damnable sin to resist the Devil! For he is a "power," and, in the providence of God, as *prince* of this world, he *rules* in the hearts of the children of disobedience, Eph. ii. 2. But this cannot be the case, for God has strictly charged us "*to resist him.*" James iv. 7. Were this the case, then we would incur Jehovah's wrath, in resisting lions, tygers, and other beasts of prey: for, in the providence of God, they possess more physical power than we do, and have also derived it from God.

Then, at the risk of damnation, would *tyrants* and *usurpers* be resisted, and the justly exploded doctrine of passive obedience and non-resistance, would be recognized under pain of Jehovah's high displeasure!! And to crown all, the people of these states, who justly and valiantly *resisted* the wicked domination of the British tyrant, would have thereby rendered themselves obnoxious to damnation!!!

This doctrine, however, is too grossly ridiculous, to merit much serious attention. I conclude, therefore, that the power in question, is of the moral and preceptive kind: unto which obedience is enjoined, under such heavy penalties. To this, we heartily subscribe; and believe, that none else can bind the conscience, or be entitled to conscientious subjection.

This will, moreover, appear evident, by attending to the qualifications of that *power*, unto which we are commanded to be subject, in the passage alluded to. See Rom. xiii. 1, 7.

*Obj.* 2. But God has commanded to be subject unto them, for conscience sake. Rom. xiii. 5. And 1<sup>st</sup> Pet. ii. 13.

*Ans.* The power alluded to, in the first of the quotations, was already proved to be moral and preceptive. This must, necessarily, be the case, with all power enti-

tled to obedience, for conscience sake. If a power, contrary to the divine law, be entitled to conscientious obedience, God is no longer the exclusive Lord of the conscience, but it is subject even to the illegitimate dominion of men. It is true, many things commanded by immoral powers, when not in their natures sinful, we may be obliged to perform, and even these actions, as well as others, should be done conscientiously. For example, were I enslaved by an Algerine pirate, and sold to a cruel master, I ought not, by fractious and stubborn conduct, to procure myself the bastinado, or turn the rod of chastisement into a venomous serpent. I am in his power, and so should behave obsequiously, in all things in themselves lawful, that I may lighten my chain, and alleviate the evils which I cannot avoid. Such a course of conduct my conscience should approve. But on what account? Is it because my conscience approves of *his right* to keep me in slavery? Nay, is it not rather, because my conscience approves of using every innocent mean, which the laws of self preservation may dictate, to alleviate my present misery?

This principle is equally applicable to a people under unjust and immoral government; and to no other kind of subjection was Nero, the monster at the head of the Roman empire, when the apostle gave the above directions, entitled. Did he possess any of the characters connected with that power, unto which obedience, for conscience sake, is enjoined? If we give credit to the historians of his age, he was the very reverse of all these. The brutal barbarities of his reign, are too notorious to require rehearsal, and too shocking to the feelings to be told, when necessity does not demand it. But still, it is objected, "that even though he was such a monster, yet all his lawful commands ought to be obeyed." To this, it may be observed; that he who has no moral right to command, can give no lawful commands. A command presupposes a power commanding. The *legality*, or *illegality*, of the command, is determined by the *legitimacy*, or *illegitimacy*, of the power, from

which it flows. “ *Who* (says the inspired penman) *can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one.*”

An immoral power may command, what is in itself lawful, and which may and ought to be done; yet, as a moral authority is necessary to constitute a lawful command, the latter cannot exist, where the former is wanting. Suppose, for example, my neighbour, who has no civil or religious authority over me, should come to my house, and authoritatively command me to worship GOD in my family, and conscientiously perform the duties of my station: all this I am bound to do, because it is right, but does any part of my obligation arise from his command? His command was without authority; and, *when* this imposes moral obligation, we need not think it strange to find sons who have had no fathers—wives who have had no husbands—and things existing in plenty, without their necessary correlates.

. It is farther objected here, “ that the apostle could not have had any other *particularly* in view, but Nero, or, at least, that he mu<sup>d</sup> be meant; because, it would otherwise render the precept useless, as to any immediate application to existing circumstances.”

. This objection is repugnant to daily experience. Were it just, then all instruction of youth, to fill the various departments of social life, to which they might be destined, when grown to maturity, would be useless and inexpedient. To what purpose, then, would GOD have given Israel a constitution and laws, for their kings to walk by, while they were yet in the wilderness? See Deut. xvii. 15.

*Obj.* 3. “ But even the worst of rulers, such as Hazael, &c. are said to be anointed of GOD, 1st Kings xix. 15. and so should be considered legitimate.”

*Ans.* The general signification of anointing, is a setting apart for some particular service. Thus, though GOD denominates the Assyrians, Medes, and Persians, the “ *rod of his anger,*” he also designates them by the name of his “ *sanctified*” or anointed “ *ones.*” Isai. xlii. 3. As for Hazael’s anction, it was only setting him apart to be a scourge and plague to Israel, on account of

their sins—"to rip up their women with child—dash their children—slay their young men, and fire their strong holds." 2d Kings viii. 12.

To such work, that, when foretold by the prophet Eli-sha, he replies, "*Is thy servant a dog, that he should do this thing?*"

GOD, in his providence, sometimes sets apart earthquakes, pestilence, locusts, &c. as the ministers of his wrath, and executors of his vengeance; but, what argument can be brought from this, to prove that we ought to yield obedience, for conscience sake, to immoral power, whether the immorality lie in the constitution or administration?

*Obj. 4.* "But the saints accepted offices, and held places of trust, under heathen princes—See the cases of Ezra, Nehemiah, and Daniel, in the books called by their names.

"If the saints thus accepted offices, &c. we may conclude, either *first*, that the power was *legitimate*—or *second*, that offices may be held under *illegitimate* governments, or *third*, that the saints sinned in accepting them."

*Ans.* The second proposition we grant. The first and third we deny.

Let us enquire whether, because Daniel lawfully held an office in Babylon, either of those two propositions will necessarily follow, viz. *first*, that he recognized the government in Babylon as legitimate, or *second*, that we may lawfully hold, and execute, all offices, without exception, under the American constitution?

As to the *first* of these, I would observe, the principles laid down in the fourth particular of the preceding head of this discourse, respecting the holding of offices, &c. if justly applied, will solve this question. There are laid down, in that place, certain principles, ascertaining what offices *may not be held*, without homologating an immoral constitution. Here I would lay down a principle, which may be of use, to ascertain positively, what offices *may be held*, without criminality, be the government never so wicked.



Any office may be held, or service engaged in, upon the three following conditions :

1st. That the duties belonging to it, be right in themselves.

2d. That they be regulated by a just law.

3d. That there be no other oath of office required, but faithfully to execute official duties. Let these be the stipulations, and an office may be held under any power, however immorally constituted, without an homologation of its immorality.

Suppose I were in Algiers, residing there at pleasure ; would my accepting an office from the dey, under the regulations now specified, say professorship in an university instituted by him, for the instruction of youth, be an homologation of his immoral regency—naval piracy—or the blood and murder upon which his throne is erected ? If then, as a *slave*, would not the appointment be still more eligible ? This corresponds with the situation of the captives in Babylon : it does not, therefore, follow, that holding an office necessarily supposes, either that the government be lawful, or if not, that the person holding the office, is implicated in the immorality.

With respect to the *second* thing, supposed to follow from Daniel's holding an office in Babylon, viz. that we may hold any office, without exception, under the American constitution, it may be observed, that in order to this, the cases must be parrallel, and then it will be readily granted. But the cases are vastly different. The immorality of the Babylonish government was indefinite. They had no fixed constitution. The monarch was legislator. His *will* was the law of the realm. Dan. v. 19. "*Whom he would, he slew, and whom he would, he kept alive.*" We are not certain whether there was any thing essential to this government, but mere physical force, and that is neither moral nor immoral in itself. But in the American constitutions, almost every thing is specific, and essential to the social compact. And, though we are no advocates for absolute governments, where the monarch's will is the law ; nay, though we think that constitutions and laws cannot be too speci-

fic and definite; yet, we are of opinion, offices may be held under absolute princes, whose wills are limited by no fixed constitution, without being implicated in any criminality, when they cannot be so held under some, more specifically constituted. In *these*, offices are usually entangled with the immorality of the constitution, to which, also, allegiance is, in almost all cases, required. In *those*, there is no immoral constitution to swear allegiance to. And if the monarch's *will*, which resembles a standing legislature, command that which is immoral, it ought not to be obeyed any more than an unjust law, even when there is a just and moral constitution. Daniel had not, therefore, to swear to support an immoral constitution, for there was none.

If it be pleaded, that the monarch's will was the constitution, this, even if admitted, makes no difference. The office was either such as required allegiance to this constitution, or it did not. If the *latter*, it is the thing contended for, viz. that there was no immoral obligation connected with his office. If the *former*, he was perjured, not only by breaking it in several instances, but in taking it also, for he swore to a *blank*, *i. e.* to perform he knew not what. But there is no account of Daniel's coming under any such obligation. Indeed, it would have been inconsistent with the smiles of Heaven, which he, and others in office, evidently enjoyed.

Let us suppose a case, similar to that of Daniel, and another, similar to our situation, at present, under the American constitutions. This may serve as an illustration of the general principle here contended for.

Let *one man* be taken prisoner by a party of Indians, intending to explore the head waters of the Mississippi. They have no particular system laid down, for regulating their conduct, during the expedition. They are under the command of a chief, whose will is the law, and who has power to punish, in case of disobedience. Let another, in Providence, be residing among a party engaged in the peaceful pursuits of agriculture, and now and then trafficking in furs, the product of their hunting excursions. Let this party have a small system of rules,

specifically providing for every office, that may be necessary in the community. Let all the rules of this little system be just, and equitable, save *one*. Suppose the exceptionable one to be, that every morning and evening, the officers shall take care that those under their respective charges, shall pow wow, or worship the Devil, as it is said some of the Indian tribes are accustomed to do. Let an oath to support and maintain this little code, be made, by the community, an essential qualification of holding any office.

Now, supposing these two men are called to accept offices, in their respective tribes, may they both comply with good consciences?

Or rather, may not the one, of whom no immoral stipulation is required, safely do it; and, if commanded to do what is wrong, imitate Daniel, who, at the risk of his life, disobeyed the king's commandment: whereas, the other may not accept, for he is introduced to office by a stipulation, which violates the moral law. The application of this, is abundantly evident.

*Obj.* 5. "But the saints prayed for them, Gen. xlvii. 7, 10. and Dan. vi. 21. And in 1st Tim. ii. 2. they are commanded to do so. Must they not, therefore, be considered as legitimate rulers?"

*Ans.* If they be *immorally* constituted, prayer for them, as such, is plainly contrary to the command of God, 2d John, 10th & 11th verses. As *men*, they ought to be prayed for, according to the command of God, 1st Tim. ii. 1. where we are ordered to make "*prayers and intercessions for all men.*" As to the command to pray for kings, &c. 1st Tim. ii. 2. it is evident it respected moral rulers, who conduct their administrations so, that godliness, true piety, and honesty, may be promoted among their subjects.

*Obj.* 6. "The saints addressed them for justice, Acts xxv. 10, 12. & xxvi. 32. where the apostle appeals unto Cesar.

To this, I answer. An appeal to their tribunals, no more involves in it an homologation of their lawful dominion, than an appeal from a murderer to a thief,

who would be disposed to save one's life, would be an homologation of his living habitually in the breach of the eighth commandment. Suppose, for example, that Allegheny mountains were infested with a banditti of robbers, whose captain retained still so much humanity as to establish a law, that no poor man should be robbed of more than ten dollars—you happen to be crossing the mountain—five of the gang approach you, and rob you of one hundred, which is nearly your all—you meet with the master of the fraternity—you know of the law—and believe that he still has as much humanity remaining, as will induce him to execute it. Will you appeal to him to cause your *ninety* dollars to be refunded, which are due to you by his own law? If you do, will this implicate you in the immorality of the banditti, or be saying Amen to their unlawful practice? Certainly not. If this hold in the greater, it will surely hold in the less. If an appeal may be made to the captain of a band of robbers, without implication in his criminality, much more to these institutions, which, though wrong in some fundamentals, are yet aiming at the good of civil society.

*Obj.* 7. "Christ, himself, both paid tribute, and commanded his disciples to pay it, and that even to Cesar. Mat. xvii. 27. and xxii. 21. Was not this an acknowledgment of his authority?"

*Ans.* Simple payment of tribute never was considered as any homologation of the authority imposing it. It may be given to the worst of tyrants, if not demanded as a tessera of loyalty.

We might ask, here, do the people of the United States homologate the authority of the dey of Algiers, or, for conscience sake, recognize him as their legitimate ruler, when they pay their annual *tribute* to the haughty Musselman? Do they think that the dey has any moral right to demand such a thing? Do they not rather go upon the principle, that it is better to give a part to save the remainder, than, by withholding, lose all? Such a course of conduct, may be prudent and innocent with any band of robbers.

The allegation brought from Mat. xvii. 27. is evidently unfounded. See the passage.

The best commentators consider the tribute, here mentioned, to be *temple money*, the ransom of the soul, spoken of, Exod. xxx. 12, 13. That this was the case, will appear evident, *first*, because the piece of money, found in the fish's mouth, is allowed, by the best critics, to be equal in value to two half shekels, one for Christ, and the other for Peter. And, *secondly*, from the argument by which our LORD pleads exemption, namely, from the example of the kings of the earth. "*What thinkest thou, Simon? Of whom do the kings of the earth take custom or tribute? Of their own children, or of strangers? Peter saith unto him, of strangers. JESUS saith unto him, then are the children free.*" Here we find, by the example of earthly kings, Christ was free. How was he free? By being son to the king to whom the tribute belonged. Who was this king? It could not be Cesar. Was Christ Cesar's son? No. For had he been Cesar's son, it must have been, either by natural generation, adoption, or citizenship. None of all these was the case. And even though the last had taken place, which is the only plausible supposition, (though false) it would not have procured this immunity, because citizenship did not exempt from tribute. But JESUS was the *Son* of the GOD of Heaven, that KING, to whom this tribute belonged; hence he says "notwithstanding," that is, though I am free, by the relation of Sonship, &c.

The other allegation brought from Mat. xxii. 21. "*Render to Cesar, the things that are Cessars,*" &c. is equally unfounded.

It is abundantly evident, from the passage, that the question was intended to ensnare the Lord Jesus Christ, answer as he would. It was proposed by the Herodians, and Pharisees; *those*, votaries for Roman domination, and *these*, the sticklers for Jewish immunities.

Had he said, "Give it to Cesar," the Pharisees, ever ready to accuse him, would have represented him to the people, as an enemy to their ancient privileges. Had

he said, "Don't give it," the Herodians would have represented him to Herod, as an enemy to the government of Cesar. In the fifteenth verse, we are expressly told, they came to him with a view to "*entangle him in his talk.*" But he, "*knowing their craftiness,*" split their dilemma, and left their question undecided. He, on several other occasions, thus baffled his adversaries; as in John viii. 4, 12. in the case of the "*woman taken in adultery,*" and in Luke xii. 14. when application was made to him concerning the settlement of the earthly inheritance. It is objected here, by some, "that this explanation of our Saviour's answer, represents the Lord Christ as shunning to declare the whole counsel of God—giving no answer in a case respecting sin and duty." The inference is false. They were not without information on this very subject. They had the law and the prophets. The Lord Jesus Christ had given specific directions concerning the character of lawful rulers, Deut. xvii. 15. to whom it was lawful to pay tribute, for conscience sake. But it was not information they wanted, but to ensnare him, let him answer as he would, as has already been shewn. If silence, or refusing to answer in every case, even in matters respecting sin and duty, let the design of the querist be what it will, be accounted criminal, in what point of light will the objector view the Lord Jesus Christ, when he finds him *actually refusing* to answer a question respecting *sin and duty*, in the case of his own authority? Mark xi. 27, 33. "*Neither do I tell you (says he) by what authority I do these things.*" It would be well, if men would consider the awful consequences of some of their objections, before they make them.

But, supposing that CHRIST, in both the instances alluded to, had commanded tribute to be paid to Cesar, what does it prove? Unless he commanded it to be paid as a *testera* of loyalty, it proves no more the morality of Cesar's right, than a minister of the gospel's, advising one of his hearers to give the robber part of his property, to secure the remainder, would, that the minister considered the robber morally entitled to it.

*Obj.* 8. "But you make use of the money which receives its currency from their sanction; and you support them by paying tribute, &c. Why not swear allegiance, hold offices," &c.

*Ans.* We make use of the money, to be sure, but when we give an equivalent for it, by industry or otherwise, it is our own property; and, another man's *stamping his name* upon our coats, is no reason why we should throw them away.

It must be granted, also, that we do support them, by paying tribute, &c. So do we the robber, unto whom we give a part, to save the remainder. But will it, therefore, follow, that I may legally swear allegiance to him, or become one of his officers, in the business of robbery and plunder!

*Obj.* 9. "You swear oaths administered by them, and hold deeds of land, &c. whose validity rests entirely upon their sanction."

*Ans.* Administration is not essential to an oath. It is no part of it. An oath is a solemn appeal to God, in which we call him to witness the truth of what we assert or promise, and to be an avenger, in case of perjury. Administration is nothing more than *arranging* the matter and expression of the oath, into due form. This may be done, either by the person himself, who swears, or proposed by another; and, if in itself equitable, may be adopted by the juror, be the proposer whomsoever he may.

Should a robber meet me on the highway, and, upon finding that I had no money, put his bayonet to my breast; and should it appear evidently, that he intended to kill me, unless I would solemnly engage to take, or send him, a certain sum of money, in a given time, say fifty dollars, ought I not to comply? If I do, the oath is the result of mutual stipulation, which existing circumstances render eligible. It seems to me immaterial, whether the overture originates with him, or with me. In either case, I consider it lawful to give fifty dollars to save my life. Would swearing this oath, if proposed by the robber, be any recognition of his right

to my property? Where would be the difference, should my life be saved, by another coming under similar engagements for me, with my consent? Whatever difference there is between this illustration, and appearing in common courts of justice, to plead, or be impleaded, where oaths are necessary to a decision, is in favour of the position contended for; inasmuch, as the persons, before whom the affair is transacted, are considered as possessing honour and respectability.

With respect to the other allegation, viz. "The holding land by tenures, whose validity depends upon their sanction," it is also unfounded.

Does bargaining with a man for any article, in all cases, recognize the morality of the means, whereby he became possessed of the said article? If it does so, then, should any foreign power conquer America, (which God forbid) and declare all tenures of land null and void, which did not proceed from the new order of things, it would be criminal to hold them thus, and so the land must be vacated, and its planters flee somewhere else for an asylum. But, supposing they found things similar wherever they go, must they leave this world altogether? They must neither eat, nor drink, of the produce of the land, held by this immoral tenure; for, by the hypothesis, the cultivator holds it by an immoral tenure, and so, no bargain should be made with him, more than with the power from which the deed originally issues. Might I not rent a room of my own house, which a man has deprived me of, and now holds *legally*, though by an immoral tenure, without thereby recognizing the *morality* of his right? If I may rent it, may I not give an article in writing, securing the payment to him, and the tenure to me? If I may do so, with one room, may I not do so with the whole house, and tenement thereunto belonging? If I may rent the whole, may I not also purchase it, putting the bargain under similar securities, as above mentioned? If this be lawful, how can the case under consideration be unlawful?

*Obj.* 10. "But, when rulers are in possession, by the



voice of the majority, have they not, therefore, a claim to conscientious obedience?" To this I

*Answer.* Nations, as well as individuals, are bound to act agreeably to the divine law. If their conduct is repugnant thereto, it can confer no *right*, nor establish any obligation.

The act of a majority, can never legitimate what God has prohibited, under pain of his displeasure. If it could, then it would necessarily follow, that all things usually called right, or wrong, are, in themselves, indifferent; that the Bible has no definite meaning, in itself, but takes it altogether from the opinions of men, and so will equally authenticate *two* systems, though diametrically opposite to each other!

Neither possession, therefore, nor majority, can give a right, in opposition to the divine law. Possession may vest in *one*, and the right in *another*, as in the case of Solomon and Adonijah, 1st Kings i. 5. Both possession and majority may vest in *one person*, and the right in *another*, as in the case of David and Absalom, 2d Sam. xv. 10. & xvii. 14. The voice of the people is to be considered as the preceptive voice of God, only, when they act agreeably to his law; but, when the contrary, it neither establishes *right*, nor constitutes obligation. Hence, Hos. viii. 4. "*They have set up kings, but not by me: they have made princes, and I knew it not.*" The charge, here, must necessarily respect the neglect of the precept, for none could be advanced to civil dignity, without his providence. A sparrow cannot fall to the ground, without his providential permission.

*Obj. II.* "The restraint and punishment of idolators, blasphemers, and gross heretics, which you contend for, belonged to the Jewish theocracy, which was *typical*, and so ought not now to be imitated."

*Ans.* This objection is extremely popular, and deserves minute attention.

It cannot be better answered, than in the words of the late Rev. John Brown, minister of the Seeding Church, in Haddington, North-Britain, in his *Treatise on Toleration*, page 57. He defies his antagonist

to prove, that these instances of the restraint, and punishment, of idolatry, &c. by the Jewish rulers, were merely typical. He goes on to observe, thus : “ The  
“ typical magistrates of the Jewish nation, also exerci-  
“ sed laws relative to murder, theft, unchastity, trea-  
“ son, and other matters of the second table of the moral  
“ law. Ought, therefore, no magistrates now to do so ?  
“ The laws respecting the duties of the *second* table,  
“ pertained as much to the Jewish theocracy, as those  
“ relating to the *first*. Must, therefore, the Christian  
“ magistrate, for fear of copying the Jewish theocracy,  
“ meddle with no morality at all ? Must every thing,  
“ that was once typical, be now, under the gospel, ex-  
“ cluded from regulating authority ? Must all the ex-  
“ cellent patterns of Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham,  
“ Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Job, Moses, Aaron, Samuel,  
“ David, and other Hebrew saints, be rejected as typi-  
“ cal and useless ? Must all the laws directing to elect  
“ men *fearing God, and hating covetousness*, to be ma-  
“ gistrates ; or, directing men to judge justly and impar-  
“ tially, and prudently, and to punish murderers, adul-  
“ terers, thieves, robbers, &c. be discarded, as typical ?  
“ Must the weekly Sabbath, public fasts and thanksgi-  
“ vings, be laid aside, as typical, a mere sign between  
“ GOD and the Israelites ? Must the ten command-  
“ ments, and all the explications of them, in the Old  
“ Testament, be discarded, as published in a typical  
“ manner, and to a typical people, and used as the prin-  
“ cipal part of their rule of government, in the Jewish  
“ theocracy ? As the Jewish Church was a *real* church,  
“ and not *merely* typical, so their state was a real com-  
“ monwealth, or kingdom, and not *merely* typical :  
“ whatever, therefore, pertained to it, *as a real common-*  
“ *wealth*, is imitable in any other. The Jewish church  
“ and state, were as REALLY DISTINCT, as the church  
“ and state are now, though I do not say precisely in the  
“ same manner.” This learned and pious author pro-  
ceeds to shew, wherein they were distinct ; which he does  
in ten different particulars, which would be too tedious  
to detail here.

Those who would desire to see this subject largely and judiciously investigated, will find it in the first part of Gillespie's Aaron's Rod Blossoming, Book I. Chap. i. ii. iii. &c.

Mr. Brown still farther shews, wherein the Jewish and the Christian magistrate agree. This he does, in fourteen different particulars, which the inquisitive reader will find in the sixtieth, sixty-first, and sixty-second pages of the Treatise, cited above.

*Obj.* 12. "Your principles are contrary to the fourth section of the twenty-third article of the Westminster Confession of Faith, which teaches, "that infidelity, or difference in religion, doth not make void the magistrate's just and legal authority, nor free the people from their due obedience to him."

*Ans.* The sense in which the General Assembly, as also the current of reformers and martyrs of the seventeenth century, understood this passage, is fully stated in our Testimony, as also in the letter from Stirling, by the Rev. John M'Millan, jun. They distinguished between reformed and enlightened lands, and those that were unreformed and unenlightened. In the latter, many things may be borne with, which ought not to be suffered in the former; particularly, when, by a solemn national act, they have made scriptural qualifications essential to the civil constitution. This our ancestors did, in their Covenants National and Solemn League. All ranks and conditions, in the realm, solemnly swore to use every lawful endeavour to extirpate popery, prelacy, &c. It might have been enquired, would swearing allegiance to a constitution, afterwards erected upon the ruins of this, of which the support and establishment of any of these abjured abominations, was made an essential part, have been a mean well calculated to promote the intention of their oath? This was exactly the situation of the lands of our nativity.

Prelacy, which had been nationally abjured, was made essential to the British constitution, and the king solemnly swore, in his coronation oath, to support it.

Were not these two oaths, viz. *one*, to extirpate pre-

lacy, and *another*, to support it, flatly contradictory? To swear the *latter*, is a declaring the *former* unobligatory, and, consequently, criminal, when originally entered into. Can any one, professing friendship to the reformation of these times, thus barefacedly pronounce its sentence of condemnation!!

Let the authority of the magistrate be just and legal, we will then hold ourselves conscientiously bound to yield obedience.

No authority can be just and legal, with which a contradiction to the moral law is essentially incorporated. Simple infidelity will not render it unjust, either in a heathen country, or in one emerging from Pagan darkness. Neither, will simple difference in religion make it void, when the nation have not, by their own solemn act and deed, made conformity an essential article of their constitution.

There may be many defects in a civil constitution, and yet morally binding upon a nation: but where plain immorality, or a solemn obligation to support what the Legislator of the universe prohibits, under the severest penalties, is essentially incorporated therewith, it cannot bind the conscience.

*Obj.* 13. "Your principles lead to persecution, and are *cruel and unmerciful*."

*Ans.* The church of Christ never persecuted. If our principles lead to it, they are certainly wrong.

But what is persecution? Does it consist in executing GOD's law? If it does, he must be the author of it. Does it not rather consist in injuring men in their characters, property, or persons; for their tenacious and steadfast adherence to his divine commandments? If this is not persecution, then the martyrs have suffered, not for the cause and testimony of Jesus, but for their obstinate rebellion against it. How does this correspond with the character of those souls, whom John saw lying under the altar, "*who were slain for the word of GOD, and for the testimony which they held.*" Rev. vi. 9. Whatsoever the law of GOD commands to be punished, ought to be punished, with the penalties therein made and

provided ; but GOD has commanded gross heretics, blasphemers, and idolators, to be punished with certain specified penalties. Therefore, such ought to be punished.

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

Thus, we find, the *first*, *second*, and *third* precepts of the moral law, pointedly prohibiting these things, and requiring the contrary duties. All the precepts, and threatenings, which are to be found among *these*, scattered up and down the Bible, are only elucidations of *those* commandments.

I would leave this particular, with proposing one question, which the judicious reader will easily solve. Was Elijah a persecutor, when he caused the law of GOD to be executed upon the prophets of Baal ?

*Obj.* 14. " But the constitution makes provision for its own amendment ; if, therefore, you think it wrong, why don't you join and elect good representatives, who may be instrumental in rectifying it. "

*Ans.* A representative must swear to support the constitution, before he can take a seat in the legislative assembly. This oath we have already shewn to be *immoral*, and such as we cannot, in good conscience, swear ourselves ; what, therefore, we cannot do ourselves, on account of its *immorality*, we ought not to employ others to do for us.

We are bound, by the moral law, and our covenant engagements, to extirpate all heresy, blasphemy, and idolatry, as far as our influence can extend. We con-

sider it not only unlawful, but also a very unlikely mean to effect this desirable end, first to swear an oath which necessarily involves supporting them. Would not this be "*doing evil, that good might come*" of it? which the apostle pointedly condemns.

Supposing we were certain, that a reform in these evils would be obtained next day, nay, even the next hour; should we swear an unlawful oath to obtain it, we would be violating the command of the Most High, and incurring his severe displeasure. But, farther, by our own solemn act and deed, we would tie up our hands, from effecting the thing desired, unless we account the initiating oath *unobligatory*, and so mock GOD in taking it. Should a bill be brought into the house, to make the *Bible* the supreme law of the land, would such a bill be constitutional? That it would not, does not require proof.<sup>1</sup> I am sworn to support the constitution. How shall I behave? There is no alternative, but either to reject that law, which is a transcript of the moral perfections of Jehovah, or commit perjury; unless I consider my oath to support the constitution *unobligatory*, and thus mock GOD, and impose upon society. Surely, I ought not to put myself into any predicament, in which I may be brought to the awful dilemma, of either rejecting the Bible, or committing perjury! Nor would it satisfy the conscience to sit silent, and give no vote. This would be a silent acquiescence in the violation of the constitution, which I was sworn to support. Would silence be supporting it? Neither is it lawful for any Christian to *put it out of his own power*, to speak in behalf of truth, when truth, or the Bible of GOD, comes to be spoken for or against.

*Obj.* 15. "But you are mostly aliens, and have no business with our governmental affairs." To this I

*Answer.* Admitting that we were all aliens, what does this prove? "*The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof.*" Ps. xxiv. 1. We are moral subjects of the Lord of the whole earth. While we maintain true and faithful allegiance to him, and conscientiously obey his laws, we have a right to live in any part of his domi-

nions, where, in his Providence, he may please to cast our lots. We ought not to infringe upon any of the just rights of others, for this would be inconsistent with faithful allegiance to the Moral Governor. GOD “ *has given the earth to the sons of men ;*” and to the faithful in Christ Jesus, a new covenant-right to every thing they possess. Let us maintain this character, and leave the consequences to a kind and benevolent Father, who hath informed us, that “ *they who truly seek him, shall want no good thing.*”

We meddle not with your governmental affairs, farther than their *morality* or *immorality* is concerned. We have a right to give our opinion. We do so, and the reasons on which it is founded. We are often asked, why we do not incorporate with the national society ? We wish to “ *be always ready to give every one that asketh us, a reason of the hope that is in us.*” We lament that we cannot join with you, in your national capacity. The fault is not ours, but your own. Much as we love you, and much as we prefer your government, comparatively, yet we cannot fully incorporate with you, lest we should sin against GOD, and be found unfaithful to him, who is the *King of nations*. As witnesses for the Lord Jesus Christ, we are also bound to testify against *every immorality*, in the constitutions of the land in which we dwell. How is it possible that we could be faithful in this matter, were we not, in some measure, to “ meddle with your governmental affairs ?” Faithful testimony-bearing, is one part of the character of the “ *two witnesses.*” It is our indispensable duty to imitate them. We are commanded to walk “ *by the footsteps of the flock.*” They grievously offended those, against whom they testified. They are said “ *to torment the men that dwell upon the earth.*” If we be faithful, as they were, we will do so likewise. And, though it should be told us, as the men of Sodom told Lot, Gen. xix. 9. “ *This one fellow came in to sojourn, and now he will needs be a judge ;*” yet the approbation of GOD, and the answer of a good conscience, will more than compensate those temporary evils.

Such are some of the leading objections, to the doctrines contained in the preceding part of this discourse. I come now to close with a few

USES. And,

1. *Of information.*

From the text and doctrine, we may learn, that magistracy and ministry are two very important ordinances: the two "*Sons of Oil*," that stand by the Lord of the whole earth. They are among his near and intimate concerns. Both are of divine institution, and are intended to answer the most important purposes. Without these, nothing but anarchy and confusion would prevail here, and gloomy horror cover the prospects of eternity. These very important ordinances, in which the happiness of our kind is so much concerned, should be regulated by the divine law. This, necessarily, carries in it an obligation to all the moral subjects, unto whom it is revealed, to modify their conduct according to its requisitions. Those who refuse to accept this rule, as the standard of their conduct, *civil*, as well as *religious*, rebel against the authority of the Moral Governor, and are in great danger of incurring his severe judgments. It is the duty of those, who would wish to bear a true and faithful testimony for Jesus, to be very cautious of doing any act, which may implicate them in the criminality of rebelling against GOD. "*Say ye not a confederacy*," &c. Though GOD may spare long, yet he "*will avenge himself of his adversaries*." Though he is the LORD GOD, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and slow to anger, yet he will by no means clear the guilty. He will not suffer "*his glory to be given to another, nor his praise to graven images*."

2. *Of examination.*

Let us enquire, how we have attended to these very important concerns. Have we been endeavouring, amidst all our difficulties, to be found faithful? When worldly concerns, and the enjoyment of civil privileges, and offices in the state, come in competition with the honour of Immanuel, have we abandoned them, for the cause of our Head and Lord? Have we revolved in our



minds, the character which Christ gives of the real disciple? "*If any man (says he) would be my disciple, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me.*" If, therefore, my brethren, ye would be followers of Jesus, self-denial is indispensably necessary. Did you calculate the cost, when you embarked in his cause? It may cost you much, but he will reimburse your expences, for he sends none on a warfare at their own charges. In a word, have you been resolving, like Ruth, the Moabitess, with her mother-in-law, in following the testimony of Jesus: "*where thou goest, I will go—thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God.*" &c.

### 3. Of consolation.

Though the wheels of the reformation-chariot move but slowly on; though the vision wait; yet, let not your expectation fall.

Though it tarry, wait for it. GOD's word is pledged, that it shall come at the appointed time, and shall not tarry longer. The time draws near, when the magistratical and the ministerial power, shall be established upon a scriptural basis. Is. xlix. 23. "*Kings shall be thy nursing fathers, and their queens thy nursing mothers.*" And though we should not live to see those happy days, yet, provided we are faithful witnesses, the time is coming, when, from the towering summit of Mount Zion above, we shall behold the kingdoms of this world become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ. Though we may be pressed with many difficulties, and encompassed with the most embarrassing circumstances, while running our Christian race, and "*pressing towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God, in Christ Jesus;*" what are all these difficulties, compared with those joys unspeakable, and full of glory, which shall be revealed in us?

Though we should, in Divine Providence, be called to seal the testimony with our blood, Jesus has promised, "*when thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee, neither shall the floods overflow thee; when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burnt, neither shall the flames kindle upon thee.*" And when he has

led us to the end of our journey, he will make us pillars in the temple of our God, to go no more out.

#### 4. *Of rebuke.*

This may be addressed to the three following descriptions :

*First.* To those, who, like Gallio, care for none of these things. There is a *woe* pronounced upon those who are at ease in Zion. God will rank the neutralists among his enemies. “ *They who are not for us, are against us.*” They are involved in the same curse with those who are found in open hostility. Judg. v. 23. “ *Curse ye Meroz, (saith the angel of the Lord) curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof; because they came not to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty.*”

*Second.* To those, who are opposed to reformation. Let such consider, they are fighting against God, and that they are in danger of being consumed by the fire of his indignation. “ *Who would set the briers and thorns against me in battle, (saith the Lord) I would go through them, I would burn them together.*” Behold the Lord is a man of war ! Beware of rushing on the thick bosses of Jehovah’s buckler. Those who are found in the character of enemies, have reason to fear lest the Lord should consume them with the breath of his mouth, and with the brightness of his coming.

*Third.* To pretended friends. The wounds are considered as receiving additional poignancy, from the circumstance of being inflicted in the house of one’s friend. From open enemies, nothing but hostility is expected. Had it been an enemy, said the Psalmist, I could have borne it. Let such as profess friendship to reformation, and, at the same time, sap its foundation, remember, that they will be considered equally inimical, (if not worse) as those, who, with axes and hammers, break down the carved work. Let such remember that affecting question, “ *Betrayest thou the son of man with a kiss ?*”

#### 5. *Of exhortation.*

From the whole, my brethren, be admonished to be

careful and conscientious in keeping these ordinances pure and entire. To this I would exhort you all :—By the example of the saints—“ *Go forth by the footsteps of the flock.*” Being encompassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, lay aside every weight, and the sins that do most easily beset you.

By your covenant obligation. You have sworn allegiance to God. After solemn vows, dare not to make enquiry.

By the obligation of the divine law. This binds all, unto whom it comes. Your heathen neighbours, in the forest, will rise in judgment against you, and condemn you, should you neglect this unerring rule.

By the law of nature. This requires us to receive the divine law, as the rule and standard of all our actions.

By your relationship to God. If he is our master, should we not fear him? If he is our father, should we not honour him?

By the incomparable price, a crown of immortality. “ *Be thou faithful unto the death, and I will give thee a crown of life.*”—A crown of salvation—a crown of eternal glory. Remember we are told, that eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath the heart of man conceived its excellence and glory. Amen.

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A  
S E R M O N  
ON  
C O V E N A N T I N G.

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By SAMUEL B. WYLIE, A. M.  
PASTOR OF THE REFORMED CONGREGATION IN THE CITY  
OF PHILADELPHIA.

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*"Vow, and pay unto the LORD your God."*

*Ps. lxxvi. 11.*

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# *A Sermon on Covenanting.*

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EXODUS XX. 2.

*I am the LORD your God.*

**M**OUNT Sinai was a barren, rugged rock, surrounded with an howling wilderness. It was, naturally, of little consequence. It derived all its celebrity from the circumstance, that it was selected by God, as the theatre upon which he was pleased to exhibit the most tremendous displays of divine majesty, ever witnessed by mortal men. From the craggy summit of this Arabian mount, as the Supreme Legislator, he proclaimed his law to the astonished Israelites, accompanied with scenes of the most awful sublimity. Not long before this memorable occasion, veiled in a cloudy pillar, he had brought Israel out of Egyptian bondage, making the briny deep fly hither and thither, that the ransomed of the LORD might pass through with safety. The better to organize them into a separate community, from Sinai's flaming top, with voice of deep-toned thunder, he announced the precepts of the decalogue, a transcript of his moral perfections.

It has been a subject of considerable controversy, whether the divine oracles, published from Sinai, exhibited the covenant of grace, or the covenant of works, or a national covenant between God and Israel. This dispute, may, however, be compromised without much difficulty. When we consider the ten commandments, as ushered in with such dreadful and tremendous thunders, and sanctioned with such heavy and awful penalties, they appear evidently to be a re-exhibition of the covenant of works, that the Israelites might be alarmed to flee from it, to him, who had magnified this law, and made it honourable. So august and terrible was the manifestation of the divine majesty, that Moses himself

said, "*I exceedingly fear and quake.*" Heb. xii. 21. When we consider the ten commandments, as founded on the preface, viz. "*I am the LORD your GOD, who brought you out of the land of Egypt,*" &c. and laid up in the ark, which was typical of the blessed Jesus, and accompanied with the sacrifices, and other ceremonies, considered in their evangelical signification; there appears, evidently, a declaration of the covenant of grace, and the divine law embodied therein as a rule of life, in the hand of the Mediator. The terms of this covenant are, doubtless, evangelical. Privilege is made the foundation of duty, and moral obligation. I am the LORD your GOD, therefore, ye are bound to obey my commandments. But the tenor of the old covenant required duty, as the foundation of privilege; keep my covenant, that I may be your GOD. When we consider, that a conscientious observance of those laws was necessary to secure a happy entrance into Canaan, and a peaceful residence therein, we may denominate them a national covenant between GOD and Israel.

When GOD announces himself to be our GOD and LORD, it necessarily imposes the firmest obligation to lay hold upon his covenant, and solemnly engage to be his people. Hence, say the penmen of the Shorter Catechism, when speaking of the preface to the decalogue, "because GOD is the Lord, and our GOD, therefore, we are bound to keep all his commandments." That a national covenant was here entered into, by Israel, to serve the LORD, is plainly evident, not only from the consideration, that the covenant of grace is here enunciated, and obligation established upon the footing of privileges; but also, from the solemn act of the Jewish society, in binding themselves to the performance of duty. "*All that the LORD hath spoken, we will do.*" All unto whom this revelation is made, are bound, by their relationship to GOD, as his moral subjects, to avouch him as their LORD, and solemnly engage to the performance of the duties which he requires in his law. In the illustration of this subject, I shall

I. premise a few observations, preparatory to a farther elucidation. And,

1. GOD, the Father, Son, and Spirit, is the Supreme Governor of the universe.

2. All authority, to bind the consciences of rational beings, is, naturally, necessarily, and independently, in him. He, alone, is Supreme Lord of the conscience, and hath left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men, which are, in any thing, contrary to the divine law.

3. GOD delegates a subordinate authority to rational beings, in the various departments of life, to perform acts of self-government, corresponding to their respective relations. Prov. xvi. 32. Better is "*he that ruleth his spirit, than he that taketh a city.*" To every adult, in the possession of reason, he deposes a power to engage, bind, or oblige himself, by promises, vows, oaths or covenants, to act as becometh his relation and character in life.

4. The subjects of this delegated authority, are either individuals or corporations. The latter is considered as a *moral person*; can make contracts, is capable of similar obligations, and can plead and be impleaded in law, as well as the former. As physical persons are subject to increase and diminution, by eating and drinking, and the necessary evacuations of the animal economy, without affecting their individual personality; so, corporations, or moral persons, are losing old, and receiving new members; and yet, their moral personality remains unimpaired. That these two kinds of persons are *both* subjects of moral obligation, is abundantly evident from scripture. For the *first*, see Ps. cxix. 106. "*I have sworn, and I will perform it.*" For the *second*, see Hai. xix. 18. "*Five cities shall swear to the LORD of Hosts.*"

5. This delegated authority, cannot interfere with the requisitions of the divine law. GOD cannot depute any such authority to his creatures. Their rights and liberties, are limited by the unerring standard of rectitude, which he has prescribed. If any obligation be entered

into, or any command given, contrary to this sacred rule, it is, in its nature, null and void. To allow that any man might impose an obligation, either upon himself, or others, repugnant to the divine law, would be exalting mortal man above the Sovereign of the universe.

6. As no deputed authority, derived from God, can increase the supreme and infinite authority, which he hath in himself; so, no self-engagement of ours, can increase the obligation of his moral law, or make a commanded duty, in its nature, more obligatory. Nevertheless, all lawful engagements have a voluntary, self-binding obligation, superadded, whereby the person, who neglects the duty, or transgresses the law, to which he thus engages, is more criminal, than he would otherwise have been.

7. The divine law, is the foundation of the duty of covenanting. It is in it, that we are authorised to bind ourselves. It demands certain duties of us, and requires the adoption and use of all lawful means to promote their performance. Among these means, it suggests and commands that of covenanting, as an ordinance well calculated to hedge us in from immorality, and stimulate to the performance of commanded duty. But, the requisition of the divine law, or the morality of the duty, is not the formal reason of covenant obligation. The personal, or representative act, of the jurant, is the only formal reason, why the thing sworn to is binding, *as a covenant duty*. The things required by the divine law, are binding upon all men, in their respective stations, as *moral duties*. Whatever, therefore, the *morality of the duty* is, the reason of, must be common to all. But covenanting is not common to all, but confined to a few: therefore, the *morality of the duty* is not the formal reason of covenant obligation.

8. There is, therefore, an intrinsic obligation in covenants, *distinct*, though not *separable*, from the divine law. That these obligations are not *separable* from the divine law, is evident. (1.) Because it is by the moral law, that we are *authorised* to make covenants. (2.) It is in the moral law, that we are *required* to make them. (3.) It is in the moral law, that we are *commanded* to per-



form them, when made. They are distinct. Things may be so, though not separable. Gravity and extension are distinct, though, in all material substances, they are inseparable. Justification and sanctification are distinct, though not separable. In like manner, the obligation of a covenant, and the obligation of the moral law, are distinct, though inseparable. Were there no intrinsic binding obligation in a vow or covenant, the divine law could no more bind or oblige us to perform them, than the laws of the United States could oblige us to pay a bond, which contained nothing but cyphers. But this will lead, in the

II. head, to state the difference between this self-obligation, which arises from covenanting, and the previous obligation of the moral law. And,

1. GOD, in his law, binds us by his own authoritative command. Deut. xii. 32. "*What thing soever I command you, observe to do it: thou shalt not add to it, nor diminish from it.*" In our vows, we bind ourselves, by our own voluntary act. Numb. xxx. we are informed, the jurant *binds himself*. His act is denominated his *own bond*, &c. Hence, they are called *our vows*, *our bonds*, *our oaths*, &c. because *we* make them, in the exercise of that obligated authority, which we hold from GOD, the Moral Governor, to be employed in subserviency to his glory.

2. Both the matter, and manner, of our engagements, or covenants, should be scrupulously examined. 1st Thess. v. 21. "*Prove all things.*" This examination ought to be conducted, by the unerring standard of rectitude. Isai. viii. 20. "*To the law and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.*" But, to examine, whether what we know to be the law of GOD, be right or wrong, is blasphemous presumption. To question its rectitude, would be arraigning the Omnipotent at the tribunal of carnal reason. What is his law must be right, being a picture of his moral nature, the ultimate standard of all holiness and perfection.

3. Another obvious difference is, GOD's law binds

us to perfection, in thought, word, and deed, be we never so incapable of maintaining it. Our inability cannot nullify God's just claim, nor make void the supreme authority of his law. That man should, by sinning, procure an indulgence to sin with impunity, would set sin above God, and empower it to nullify his inalienable claims. The law of God still binds as much to perfection, as it did before the fall. The command of our Saviour, Mat. v. 48. is, "*Be ye also perfect.*" But vows and covenants bind *only* to a conscientious performance of that, which is in our power. Neither may any man bind himself to perfection; for this would be binding himself to perform that, to which he knew himself perfectly inadequate, and which the word of God informs us, no mere man on earth ever attained. Rom. iii. 10. "*There is none righteous, no, not one.*" Would not this be perjury? No vow or covenant ought to be made, which, by the grace of God enabling us, we cannot fully keep. In Ps. xliv. 17. the church declares, "*All this is come upon us, yet have we not forsaken thee, nor dealt falsely in thy covenant.*" But, had covenants bound the jurants to perfection, no church, or member of a church, while on earth, could ever have said so.

4. GOD's law binds to perfection *for ever*. It will be the eternal rule of rectitude, regulating our relation to God, the Moral Governor. Ps. cxi. 7. 8. "*All his commandments are sure, they stand fast for ever and ever.*" The substance of them shall exist, even in the mansions of immortality; binding angels and men in love to God, and to one another. But vows and covenants are obligatory only *in this present life*. They are intended as auxiliaries, well calculated to promote holiness and sanctification of character. But, at death, these attain perfection in the realms of bliss; therefore, these auxiliaries are unnecessary. In hell they can be of no service, for from thence there is no redemption.

5. They differ in this, that the divine law is a *rule* of action, in every department of life. To this rule all

every action be brought, and by this, shall its quality be tried and judged. Rom. ii. 12. "*As many as have sinned in the law, shall be judged by the law.*" But a covenant is not properly any new rule of action, (unless in matters previously indifferent) but is rather a new obligation, or bond, superadded by our own voluntary act and deed, in which we solemnly declare, that we will conscientiously perform that duty, which the divine law previously required.

6. The law of God binds all men, be they who they may, and whether they will or not. We cannot conceive of a rational creature, under no obligation to love God and his neighbour. This is the essence of the moral law. All men are the subjects of Heaven's Almighty Ruler, and can no more be exempted from the obligation of his law, than they can elope from his dominions. But covenants bind only those who have entered into them, either *personally*, or by *representation*. With respect to those, who enter *personally* into covenant, I presume their obligation will be questioned by but few. With respect to those, who enter into covenant, *representatively*, it is not so generally admitted. I shall, therefore, endeavour, in the

III. head, to shew, that vows and covenants may be binding, also, on those, who enter into them by representation.

We shall not, in this investigation, avail ourselves of the covenant made between God and Adam, in which all the human race were represented; though this proves, to a demonstration, that there is nothing improper in the nature of the thing. But as it may be objected to, as being a singular and extraordinary case, we shall endeavour to select such instances, as are not liable to this objection. And,

1. We have an instance of a covenant made by God with Noah, which recognizes posterity. Gen. ix. 9. "*Behold, (saith the High and Lofty One) I establish my covenant with you, and with your seed after you.*"

2. Another instance, is that of the Abrahamic covenant. Gen. xvii. 7. "*And I will establish my covenant*

(saith GOD) *between me and thee, and thy seed after thee, in their generations, for an everlasting covenant; to be a GOD unto thee, and thy seed after thee.*" This was not only an exhibition of the covenant of grace, but also a covenant of property grafted thereupon, importing, that his seed should be very numerous, and have Canaan for their inheritance. Ps. cv. 11. The relationship of Abraham's seed to this covenant, was remembered and recognized by GOD, to thousands of generations. Ps. cv. 8. And the promissary part of it, both in a spiritual and temporal point of view, is, by the apostle, asserted, as belonging to them. Acts ii. 39.

3. The covenant made with Jacob, Gen. xxviii. 14. also proves this position. When travelling to Padan Aram, in the vision of the night, GOD covenanted to give unto him, and his seed, all the land of Canaan. This may be considered, as a renovation of the covenant made with his grandfather Abraham. This covenant is pleaded, by his posterity, more than a thousand years after that period. See Hos. xii. 4. where they recognize their obligation, by that transaction, in Bethel.

4. We have another instance of this kind, Gen. 1. 24. in a covenant made between Joseph and the rest of the children of Israel, respecting his bones. This they found themselves obliged to fulfil, two hundred years after, as we are informed, Exod. xiii. 19. "*And Moses took the bones of Joseph with him; for he had straitly sworn the children of Israel, saying, GOD shall surely visit you, and ye shall carry my bones up hence.*" This obligation was not imposed upon them, capriciously, by Joseph, as might, perhaps, be alledged, seeing it was a matter of indifference where his bones lay. It was an evidence of Joseph's own faith in GOD's promise. "GOD (says he) *shall surely visit you.*" It was also calculated to strengthen the faith of the oppressed brick-makers, that GOD would one day bring them to the land, concerning which he had sworn to their fathers. Hence, we read, Heb. xi. 22. "*By faith, Joseph, when he died, made mention of the departing of the children of Israel, and gave commandment concerning his bones.*"

5. We have another striking example, in which the obligation of a covenant recognizes posterity, in Deut. v. 2, 3. Moses thus addresses the Israelites: "*The LORD our GOD made a covenant with us in Horeb: the LORD made not this covenant with our fathers, (only) but with us, even us, who are all of us here alive this day.*" There are several things here, particularly worthy of notice.

*First.* That this Sinaiic covenant was made but a few weeks after their departure from Egypt. See Exod. xix. 1. where we are informed, that it was in the third month, viz. *Sivan*, they having left Egypt in the first, viz. the month *Abib*. *Second.* That of those, whom Moses now addressed, none had personally covenanted at Sinai, save Caleb, the son of Jephunneh, and Joshua, the son of Nun; see Numb. xxvi. 64, 66. The rest of the adults had all died in the wilderness. *Third.* That it is now the eleventh month, of the fortieth year of their peregrinations in the wilderness. Deut. i. 3. *Fourth.* That those, whom Moses now addresses, must be of the three following descriptions, namely: (1.) Those who were minors at the transaction on Sinai, and so incapable of covenanting personally for themselves; and (2.) Those who were born after that transaction. (3.) Caleb and Joshua. *A fifth thing, worthy of notice, is,* that, notwithstanding all those were dead, with whom the covenant was personally made, save two; yet Moses expressly declares, that this covenant was not made with their fathers only, but with *us*, (says he) *even with us, who are all of us here alive this day.* Does not this prove, to a demonstration, that they were bound in the obligation of their ancestors?

6. We have another example full in point, in the renovation of this same Sinaiic covenant, Deut. xxix. 10, 15. where Moses addresses the whole congregation, who were all assembled, from the hewer of wood, and the drawer of water, to the highest captain and officer in the camp: even the little ones are specified. He calls upon them to renew the covenant with the LORD, that so they might be established in the land, whither they

went, to possess it. “ *Neither with you only, (says he) do I make this covenant, and this oath : but with him also that standeth here with us this day ; before the LORD our GOD, and also with him that is not here with us this day.*” This covenant is evidently made between God and three different descriptions of people. Two of these are present, and the other absent. The *first* description of these covenanters, are *adults*, unto whom Moses addresses himself : “ *Neither with you only,*” &c. The *second*, are *minors*, who, though present, are spoken of, as being incapable of engaging, *personally*, in that transaction ; and are represented as only “ *standing with them.*” The *third*, must respect *children yet unborn*, who are spoken of as being absent. These could not refer to any of the congregation then in being, for they were every one present : yet with all these characters, respectively, was this covenant solemnly made.

7. Another instance occurs, in the covenant made between Joshua and the princes of the congregation, on the one side, and the Gibeonites on the other. See Jos. ix. in chapter throughout. This league, made by Joshua, and recognized and ratified by the princes, was obligatory, not only upon the congregation then existing, but also upon their posterity. Between four and five hundred years after this transaction, the children of Israel were visited with a severe famine, in the days of David. 2d Sam. xxi. i. when they enquire at the LORD, they are pointedly told, “ *That it was for Saul, and for his bloody house, because he slew the Gibeonites.*” Moreover, in the second verse, there is a recognition of that very covenant, and their breach of it is stated as the formal ground of the divine displeasure. Had it not been for the covenant engagement, their conduct would not have been imputed to them as a transgression ; for these Gibeonites belonged to the seven nations of Canaan, the cup of whose iniquity was full, and whom God had otherwise devoted to destruction.

8. Another striking instance of covenant obligation being transmitted to posterity, is to be found in Jos. xi. 10. “ *The house of Israel, and the house of Judah,*

*have broken my covenant, which I made with their fathers."* Now, it is plain, had this covenant been in no sense made with them, by representation in their fathers, they could never have been charged with the breach of it. God charges none with breach of covenant, made at their fathers, but those who have *really* covenanted in their fathers: but he charges the children of Israel with breach of covenant made with their fathers, in the text alluded to; therefore, the children of Israel had *really* covenanted in their fathers.

9. This position is also evident from the doctrine of infant baptism. Between the parent and child there is a representative identity, so, that whatever is done by the parent, in this representative character, is virtually done by the child, and then the deed of the one becomes obligatory upon the other. If this be denied, infant baptism is altogether useless. Either the child, when come to maturity, is bound by the obligations laid upon the father, or he is not. If he is bound, that is the thing contended for. If he is not, the baptism is useless, as it wants what is essential to a sacrament, viz. obligation, or "engagement to be the Lord's." He ought, of course, to have the ordinance administered to him, as an adult. If, therefore, the doctrine of covenant obligation being transmitted to posterity, by representation, be denied, infant baptism falls to the ground.

10. This doctrine is also recognized by the civil practice of mankind, in bonds and indentures. These are allowed to bind the heirs of the persons indenting. The objection usually made to this, viz. "That the obligation arises from the persons coming in to possess the inheritance of the deceased; but, should they disclaim all interest in the estate, the obligation could not extend to them," is easily set aside. Admitting it for a moment, then the children, or posterity, who choose to inherit the religious estate of their ancestors, are, consequently, bound. But is it merely optional, whether they receive the inheritance or not? Either their religious estate qualifies with the divine law, or it does not. If it does not, neither ought they to have occupied it, nor are we

bound to receive it. But, if it be agreeable to the divine law, we are bound, at our peril, to accept the inheritance, and endeavour to transmit it, with improvements, to succeeding generations. When God established his testimony in Israel, he charged the fathers to shew it to their posterity. Ps. lxxviii. 5.

II. This is further evident, from the general, I had almost said universal, practice of civil communities. National deeds are considered as obligatory, not only on the generation existing, when the thing is transacted, but also on their posterity. Suppose, for example, that the United States had borrowed one million of dollars from the court of Versailles, during the late struggle with Britain, which debt, through certain national embarrassments, should remain unliquidated for fifty years to come. The generation, for whose immediate exigencies the money was borrowed, would be then nearly all extinct. Would the generation, then existing, be under any moral obligation to make payment? If they would, who bound them? If they would not, where is national faith? In these matters, nations and individuals come under the same consideration. Moral engagements are obligatory on individuals, either while they live, or until the articles unto which they engage, are fulfilled. The same is the case with societies or nations. They continue bound, till every article of the bond is fulfilled. If the bond contemplates *accidental* debts, such as the one above mentioned, the obligation may be temporary, and terminates with its liquidation. If it contemplates those debts which are *necessary*, and inseparable from our existence, its obligation is perpetual. Of this kind are religious bonds and covenants, which contemplate the duties required by the divine law, and which necessarily bind us, from our relation to the Moral Governor. In the case of an individual, these bonds are obligatory through life: in the case of a community, while it continues to exist. But, as all bonds and covenants are not perpetually binding, it will be proper, in the

IV. head, to shew some of the things which are ne-



cessary to constitute perpetual obligation. And,

1. The parties contracting, must be permanent. It will scarce be necessary to suggest, here, that this permanency is to be understood in a relative and limited sense. National societies and corporations can, in no other sense, be called permanent. It must, therefore, upon the largest calculation, be limited by the duration of this world. In the world to come, they shall have no national or corporate existence. Permanency is attributed to them, because their existence is continued from generation to generation; and in this sense, they are said not to die. Beyond these limits, the duration of national contracts cannot extend; for, this would be lengthening out obligation beyond the existence of its subjects. Such societies and corporations, are fit subjects of perpetual obligation, in the sense already explained. And when the bond contemplates duties of a moral, and, consequently, of a permanent nature, they will be bound as long as they continue to exist under these characters. In bonds and covenants of this nature, while societies are bound in their social capacity, during their social existence, individuals are bound in their individual capacity, during their individual existence in this world, whether as members of that community, or any other. As long, therefore, as the national societies of Britain and Ireland continue to exist, and GOD remains unchangeable, they will be under covenant obligation to perform the duties required by the moral law.

2. The matter must be moral. The matter of human conduct, as it respects the divine law, is considered, by moralists, as being either *right*, *wrong*, or *indifferent*. What is *wrong*, though sworn to, can neither bind the jurant himself, nor any whom he represents. To that which is *indifferent*, a person may bind himself, and, when bound, ought to perform, though it should be productive of natural evil to him. Ps. xv. 4. But, obligations to things merely indifferent, cannot be transmitted to posterity. Whenever we find examples in scripture, of things, in themselves indifferent, being bound upon posterity, there are connected with them,

certain circumstances calculated to promote holiness and sanctification of character, which divest them, for a time, of this indifferent nature. This, we presume, was the case, in the instance of Joseph's binding the children of Israel to carry his bones to the land of promise, as mentioned above. But such things are not perpetually binding; and being, in their nature, changeable; vary with the change of those circumstances which suggested them. Those things, therefore, in themselves *right*, and those alone, can properly constitute the matter of perpetual obligation. The duties required by the moral law, are permanent, and, as moral duties, are obligatory, antecedently to all covenanting; and will be eternally binding on all rational subjects, when the duty of covenanting shall cease to exist. Such we consider the duties, contained in the Covenants National and Solemn League of Britain and Ireland. If there is any thing in these instruments, of a circumstantial nature, we admit it may vary with the circumstances which produced it: but whatever is moral, will remain as permanent as these nations, and as unchangeable as the great Legislator.

2. The end must be good, and that perpetually. The ultimate end of all our actions, ought to be the glory of GOD; and, subordinate thereto, our enjoyment of him here, and hereafter. Without this ingredient, no action can be formally good, in the sight of GOD, because, it wants one of these essentials, which his law requires. Thus, though Jehu's removing of the worshippers of Baal was *materially* good, being, in the matter of it, what GOD commanded; yet, as his end was self-aggrandizement, and not the glory of GOD, his conduct will not stand in the balances of the sanctuary. Thus, Hos. i. 4. GOD threatens, that he "*will avenge the blood of Jezreel upon the house of Jehu.*" The end, therefore, must be, supremely the glory of GOD, and subordinate thereto, the good of society, and the means such as he himself has prescribed. That these are the ostensible ends which our ancestors in Britain and Ireland had in view, will be ascertained from the instruments them-

selves. See the National Covenant, where the *ends* proposed, are, "For defence of the true religion, as it was then reformed, and is expressed in the Confession of Faith, which had been for many years, with a blessing from Heaven, preached and professed in this kirk and kingdom, as GOD's undoubted truth, grounded only upon his written word. And for maintaining the king's majesty, his person, and estate." And in the Solemn League and Covenant, the Covenanters thus express themselves: "Having before our eyes the glory of GOD, and the advancement of the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ, the honour and happiness of the king's majesty, and the true public liberty, safety, and peace of the kingdoms, wherein every one's private condition is included." These are the ends proposed by our reforming ancestors, when entering into solemn national engagements to GOD. That many of them were sincere, we have no right to question. Though others dealt deceitfully with GOD, this no more invalidates their national deed, required by the divine law, than a member of congress voting for a bill, with sinister and malignant views, nullifies its national obligation, when passed into a law.

4. The debt, the payment of which the bond or covenant contemplates, must be perpetual. It can never be diminished by continual payments, or come to final termination. It contemplates our duty to GOD and to man. The time will never come when this debt shall cease to be due. Love to GOD and our neighbours ought to be constantly a paying, yet shall never be finally paid. This is the debt, substantially considered, which these bonds of perpetual obligation chiefly contemplate. This is the sum and substance of the moral law. From the intercourse of men in society, obligations of a particular and adventitious nature, will frequently arise. The payment of these is enjoined by the obligation of the bond or covenant, now under consideration, as well as by the moral law. But, when all these are paid, the obligation still remains, to perform every duty, which may arise out of every new contract and relation in life.

If the debt were not permanent, neither could the obligation. An obligation to pay, when there is no particular debt to be paid, is unintelligible.

5. The bond must, either explicitly, or by necessary implication, contemplate posterity. When the national deed respects the conscientious performance of moral duties, both to GOD and man, all are nationally bound. When will this obligation cease? Is not the moral law unchangeable? Will it not continue to be the rule regulating our relation to GOD, our Creator and LORD? Whether, therefore, the obligation of posterity be explicitly asserted, or not; the nature of the duties engaged to, the express command of GOD, enjoining the stipulation, and his charging future generations with the breach thereof, necessarily suppose, that they are contemplated, by representation, in their ancestors. Jer. xi. 10. But, in the covenants of our ancestors, in Britain and Ireland, there are clauses expressive of perpetuity. In that article of the National Covenant, subscribed in the year 1638, they thus express themselves: "Being convinced in our minds, and confessing with our mouths, that the present and succeeding generations, in this land, are bound to keep the foresaid oath and subscription inviolable." In the first article of the Solemn League, they express themselves thus: "That we, and our posterity after us, may, as brethren, live in faith and love. And the LORD may delight to dwell in the midst of us." And in article fifth, "We shall endeavour that they may remain conjoined in a firm peace and union, to all posterity." Thus we find these covenants possess every thing, which may be calculated to extend their obligation to succeeding ages. The contracting parties, viz. GOD and the nation, are permanent; the matter is just, being the very things required by the divine law; the ends are good, the glory of GOD and good of society; the debt stipulated to be paid, though always a paying, can never be brought to a final termination; and our ancestors contemplated us, in making these engagements. But, that it may appear that this mean of promoting holiness and sanctification, is

not peculiar to the Jewish dispensation, I shall endeavour, in the

V. head, to prove the morality of this duty, in New Testament times. And,

1. Covenanting is a duty expressly commanded in scripture. Ps. lxxvi. 11. "*Vow to the LORD your GOD, and pay.*" It will be incumbent, therefore, on those who deny its propriety, in New Testament times, to shew, that it is somewhere abrogated. I know no other way it can be abrogated, but either by express precept, approved example, or necessary consequence. Once ever it is demonstrated to be repealed, by any of these modes, we shall consider ourselves bound to relinquish it. Till then, its opposers will, at least, excuse us.

2. Scripture prophecies, respecting New Testament times, speak of it as a blessing, and privilege. Isai. xix. 18. "*In that day (namely, in the Gospel dispensation, when the Gentile world shall be called) five cities in the land of Egypt shall speak the language of Canaan, and swear to the LORD of Hosts,*" &c. And, in the twenty-first verse, when speaking of the progress of light and information, among the Gentile converts, we read: "*And the LORD shall be known to Egypt, and the Egyptians shall know the LORD in that day, and shall do sacrifice and oblation, yea, they shall vow a vow unto the LORD, and perform it.*" Here we find, engaging in this duty spoken of, as a considerable attainment in religious reformation.

3. The New Testament, itself, recognizes it, 2d Cor. viii. 5. when the apostle is commending the liberality of the church of Macedonia, and their willingness in contributing to the exigencies of the poor saints at Jerusalem, he says, "*This they did, not as we hoped, but first, gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us, by the will of God.*" Here, we have not only the duty of covenanting necessarily implied, but we have also a phraseology, of the same import with that used in Old Testament times. They gave themselves unto the Lord, and unto one another. Does covenanting involve any thing

more, than laying hold of God's covenant, and solemnly engaging, conscientiously to perform all personal and relative duties? This transaction of the Macedonians, cannot allude to their entering into church communion, for they were in an organized capacity, previously to this solemn act. Neither can it respect sacramental communion, which, though it involves covenanting unto God, could not be reasonably supposed to have exceeded the apostle's hopes and expectations concerning them, as many of them believed, and cheerfully embraced the Gospel. Acts xvii. 14. It must, therefore, in all probability, respect solemn social covenanting, in their organized church capacity. The language of this transaction, to all who would wish to follow the footsteps of the flock is, of course, "*Go ye and do likewise.*"

4. It was a special privilege of the Jewish church, and it would be unreasonable to suppose these privileges abridged, under the New Testament dispensation. If we have not this privilege itself, is there any thing come in the room of it? If there is, what is it? If there is not, then the present dispensation, in this particular, is more limited than the Jewish economy, though the latter, in comparison of the former, is denominated a system of "*beggarly elements*"—a dispensation of "*darkness, bondage, and terror.*"

5. Its morality, in New Testament times, seems evident, from the very nature of it. It involves an oath of allegiance to God, as our God in Christ Jesus. There is, surely, nothing typical in the words of the preface to the ten commandments. When God declares himself, in these words, to be the LORD *our* God; does not this imply an obligation on us, to avouch him, as our God, and solemnly engage to be his people? Moreover, to this purpose, we read, in Hos. ii. 23. when times of refreshing are sent from the presence of the LORD, and the people are disposed to return to their allegiance to the Almighty, he declares, "*I will say to them that were not my people, thou art my people; and they shall say, thou art my God.*" If it be lawful to

swear allegiance to an earthly ruler, can it be unlawful to swear to the Ruler of the universe? If one may do this, may not two? If two, why may not a thousand? If nations may bind themselves to perform civil duties, to individuals or communities, may they not bind themselves, also, to perform those duties, which they owe to the GOD of heaven and earth.

6. The duty of covenanting is involved in the very nature of the church's relation to GOD, as a new covenant GOD in Christ Jesus. GOD stands related to her, in the character of a husband. *Isai. liv. 5. "Thy Maker is thy Husband."* She stands related to Christ, and to GOD in Christ, in the character of a bride, or spouse. Hence, in John's vision, she is called "*the bride, the Lamb's wife.*" This relationship is not confined to the internal mystical union, which takes place in the hour of conversion, but extends to, and clothes itself with, external significant acts. Nor are these peculiar to individuals, but common to societies, both great and small. To this purpose, we read, *Isai. lxii. 4. "Thou shalt no more be termed, Forsakers; neither shall thy land any more be termed, Desolate: but thou shalt be called Hephzi-bah, and thy land Beulah, for the LORD delighteth in thee, and thy land shall be married."* Now, how a land can be married to GOD, if national covenanting be denied, I confess, I cannot understand.

7. The utility of covenanting, allowing it not to be forbidden, would justify the practising of it. It is an excellent mean of promoting holiness, and sanctification of character. The common, nay the almost universal practice, of mankind, in requiring oaths, as the highest security they can possibly obtain, that witnesses will be candid and ingenuous in attesting the facts which are disputed, testifies, that they consider them calculated to promote truth. This is, also, the doctrine of the sacred oracles. "*An oath for confirmation is the end of all strife.*" And, as it is more likely men will tell the truth, when they are solemnly sworn, so it is more likely, that those, who thus solemnly engage to conscientiousness in duty, will be careful in performance. We are as prone

to sin now-a-days, as the Jews were of old ; and, consequently, stand in as much need of being hedged in to duty, and stimulated to holiness in life and conversation.

8. God has signally countenanced the performance of this duty, by the outpourings of his Spirit, preparing those, who had thus devoted themselves to his service, to stand the fiery trial. He has called out a great cloud of witnesses, engaged to him by covenant, to seal their testimony with their blood, and has acknowledged them, with testimonials of approbation, even amidst the most excruciating torments. May we not say, then, respecting the manifestations of divine favour to his honoured martyrs, as Manoah's wife said, upon the departure of the angel, Judg. xiii. 23. "*If the LORD were pleased to kill us, he would not have received a burnt-offering and a meat-offering at our hands.*" In like manner, had these covenants been displeasing to God, would he have so singularly countenanced the Covenanters, when dragged to the stake or scaffold, by their barbarous persecutors. Having endeavoured to shew some reasons of the morality of covenanting, in New Testament times, it may be proper, in the

VI. head, to mention some of the times and seasons, when Providence more particularly calls a nation, or church, *actually* and *publicly*, to essay this duty.

Public social covenanting, is not a *stated* and *ordinary* duty, but, *occasional* and *extraordinary*. In order duly to ascertain the times and seasons when this duty should be essayed, it will be necessary to pay attention to the occurrences of Divine Providence, which the approved examples of the saints may have, as it were, consecrated to these particular exercises. A few of these seasons we shall now endeavour to enumerate. And,

1. A time of public humiliation, for our apostacy from God, is a suitable season for engaging in this duty. Thus, we are informed, in Jer. l. 4, 5. "*In those days, and at that time, saith the LORD, the children of Israel, and the children of Judah, shall come together, going and weeping, they shall seek the LORD their GOD. They shall all the way to Zion, with their faces thither-*



ward; saying, come and let us join ourselves to the LORD, in a perpetual covenant, that shall not be forgotten." Deep sensibility, on account of sin, and confession of guilt and iniquity before GOD, are suitable to, and ought to be concomitants of, these solemn exercises. Such a season, and similar exercises, accompanied the renovation of the Sinaitic covenant, as recorded Deut. xxix. near the close. After their example, our ancestors connected, with a similar transaction, a public acknowledgment of their transgressions.

2. We are authorized to essay this duty, when the LORD is pleased to announce times of public revival, and give evidences of national reformation. Thus, we find, 2d Kings xxiii. 3. under the favourable auspices of the pious Josiah, a reforming king of Judah, the nation is called to public covenanting, as a noted mean of promoting national reformation. And Josiah, himself, is among the most forward, in this very laudable exercise. "*And the king stood by a pillar, and made a covenant before the LORD, to walk after the LORD, and keep his commandments and his testimonies, and his statutes, with all their hearts, and with all their souls, to perform the words of this covenant, which were written in this book: and all the people stood to the covenant.*" This, also, was the practice of our renowned ancestors in Britain. They considered those solemn engagements to GOD, and one another, as calculated to strengthen their hands, in the work of the LORD, promote mutual confidence, and give energy to their operations. They, of consequence, frequently essayed this duty, during the reforming period.

3. Times of thanksgiving, for public deliverance from national calamities, are also legitimated, by the example of the people of GOD, as suitable seasons for essaying this duty. Thus, 2d Kings xi. 12, and 17, and 20. when the reins of government were wrenched out of the hands of the wicked Atholiah, after six years usurpation, and Jehoash, the young prince, restored to the people, "*Jehoiada made a covenant between the LORD and the king, and the people, that they should be the Lord's people: between the king also, and the people—and all*

*the people of the land rejoiced, and the city was quiet."* Here, they considered this public deliverance, as being a proper occasion for entering into national obligations to GOD, to obey and serve him. This practice, on such occasions, is also expressly enjoined upon Israel, by the Psalmist, in the lxxvi. Psalm, and 11th verse. This psalm was penned on that very memorable occasion of the destruction of Sennacherib's army, before the walls of Jerusalem. "*Vow, and pay to the LORD your GOD.*" Such, also, was the practice of the reformers in Britain, when emancipated from the galling yoke of antichristian domination.

4. Times of public defections and apostacy from GOD, when, as Solomon says, "*the hearts of men seem set in them to do evil,*" call loudly for engaging in this important duty. Thus, we find the children of Israel, notwithstanding the marvellous things which GOD did for them in Egypt, at the Red Sea, and in the wilderness, prone to backslide and apostatize from him, who had been their Saviour. In the xxix. chap. of Deut. 14th and 15th verses, Moses, before his death, calls upon them to renew their covenant with GOD; that so, as far as means could go, he might tie up their hands from rebellion against GOD. In like manner, Joshua, before his death, finding the people froward and stiff-necked, convenes them together, and calls upon them to renew their engagement to the LORD GOD of their fathers. Jos. xxiv. 1, 25. "*So Joshua made a covenant with the people that day, and set them a statute and an ordinance in Shechem.*" After these laudable examples, the British reformers, amidst great national defections, especially at the revolution settlement, renewed their covenant with GOD, as a mean of acquiring new invigoration in promoting his glory, and stability in contending against the enemies of reformation.

5. Times of singular and eminent out-pourings of the Spirit of GOD, are also fit and proper seasons for publicly recognizing our obligation to GOD, and entering into covenant with him. When a new and divine energy fills the soul, and warms and animates the affec-

tions, nothing short of a marriage relation to GOD, publicly solemnized, will satisfy. Thus, we read, in *Isai.* xliv. 3, 5. “ *For I will pour out water on him that is thirsty, and floods on the dry ground; I will pour out my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring.*” And what do we find to be the consequence of this effusion of the Spirit? The first effect, produced by these former and latter rains of heaven, is spiritual vegetation. “ *They shall spring up as among the grass, and as willows by the water courses.*” This growth being begun, they engage in the business of covenanting. “ *One shall say, I am the LORD’s; and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob: and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the LORD, and surname himself by the name of Israel.*” This worthy example the British reformers followed, in their valiant struggle to propagate the religion of Jesus. GOD countenanced them with singular out-pourings of his Spirit, and times of eminent refreshing from his blessed presence, as their works, to this day, clearly evince. What do we find them then engaging to? They give themselves away unto GOD, in our everlasting covenant, not to be forgotten:

6 When a church, or nation, is subjected to the immediate pressure of calamitous circumstances, it may be a very suitable time for solemn public covenanting to GOD. For this practice, we have the example of the church, in the days of Nehemiah, when subjected to the wanton dominion of the Persian monarch, and his insidious court parasites. *Neh.* ix. 36, 38 they thus complain: “ *Behold, we are servants this day, and for the land that thou gavest unto our fathers, to eat the fruit thereof, and the good thereof, behold we are servants in it. And it yieldeth much increase unto the kings whom thou hast set over us, because of our sins: also, they have dominion over our bodies, and over our cattle, at their pleasure, and we are in great distress.*” Under these distressing circumstances, they engage in the duty of public covenanting, as an excellent mean of obtaining deliverance from these distresses. Hence, in the

next verse, they say, "*And, because of all this, we make a sure covenant, and write it; and our princes, Levites, and priests, seal unto it.*" In determining the proper season for engaging in this important duty, great attention is necessary to the peculiar completion of Divine Providence, comparing our circumstances and situation with the approved examples of the flocks that have gone before us. Those who are attentive, may expect direction Ps. cvii. 43. "*Whoso is wise, and will observe those things, even they shall understand the loving kindness of the LORD.*" But, as the doctrine advanced on this subject of covenanting, is much controverted, it will be proper, in the

VII. head, to obviate some of the objections made thereto.

*Objection 1.* "Covenanting is altogether unnecessary, because, what is *right*, ought to be done, independently of any other obligation; and if *wrong*, all obligations to perform it, are invalid."

*Answer.* This objection proves too much, and, consequently, proves nothing at all. Were the objection valid, then all promises would be useless and insignificant, except in mere matters of indifference. All oaths, testifying the truth between man and man, would be unnecessary appeals to Heaven. When a person is called before a court of justice, to give evidence in any litigated matter, he is indispensably bound, by the ninth precept of the decalogue, to tell the truth without reserve. Then, according to this objection, it would be wrong to call upon him to swear, because he is bound already. But, this is contrary both to the sacred oracles, which inform us, Heb. vi. 16. that "*an oath for confirmation, is an end of all strife,*" and to the common sense of mankind, as is evident in all judicatories, as well civil as ecclesiastical. The witness recognizes the obligation of the moral law, and solemnly binds himself, by his own act and deed, conscientiously to perform what it requires. In like manner, in covenanting to God, we consider ourselves bound, by the moral law, to obey and serve him. This obligation we solemn-

ly recognize, and bind ourselves, by our own act and deed, to a conscientious performance. And, as the witness, when sworn, if he tells what is not true, is guilty, not only of a *lie*, but also of *perjury*; so, apostate covenanters are guilty of a breach, not only of moral duty, but also, of solemn engagements. And as, by the general consent of mankind, it is admitted, that there is more probability a person will tell the truth, when duly sworn; so, it is probable, that those, who solemnly covenant to God, will be more conscientious in the performance of duty.

*Obj.* 2. "But these covenants, for which you contend, were only oaths of allegiance, and, consequently, can have no obligation, when you remove to a foreign land."

*Ans.* It will be admitted, that they were oaths of allegiance; but, it was primarily to the Governor of the universe, and secondarily to the government, while continuing to prosecute the spirit of these covenants, and the interests of Heaven's Almighty Ruler. With respect to the *first*, let us examine whether any of those circumstances, which can dissolve allegiance, has actually taken place. Allegiance may cease, by any of the *three* following means: *First*, by the dissolution of the dynasty, or government, when things revert to an original state of nature. *Second*, by emigration. Allegiance and protection being reciprocal, when the latter is no longer necessary, the former, of consequence, ceases. *Third*, by breach of the mutual compact, on the part of the government. This compact, being necessarily involved in the relation between the governed and the governor, ceases to bind the former, when violated and broken through by the latter. Has any of these things taken place, to dissolve our allegiance to the Supreme Ruler? The *first* has not; for, GOD is yet Governor of all the earth, and we are warranted to say, as in Rev. xix. 6. "*The LORD GOD omnipotent reigneth.*" Neither can the *second* take place, for we cannot elope from his dominions. 1st. xxiv. 1. "*The earth is the LORD's, and the fulness thereof.*" Nor, can the *third* ever come

to pass. God has never violated his covenant with his people. Sooner will he forget the ordinances of Heaven, that the grateful vicissitudes of the seasons, and the cheerful light of day, should cease, than he will forget his covenant with the seed of Israel. No! The mountains may depart, and the hills be removed—but, the covenant of his peace shall never be removed. *Isai. liv. 10.*

The oath of allegiance to the government of Britain, even were it morally constituted, however, ceases. The conditions, on which it was entered into, no longer exist. Seeing we have emigrated from that country, the obligation, of course, is null and void. But, our relation to God still remains the same. And even by that part of the covenant, which respects allegiance to government, we hold ourselves still so far bound, that, whenever we find legitimate rulers, in the land where we live, we will consider the duty of subjection, for conscience sake, not only as a moral duty, required by the divine law, but also, as a duty unto which we are bound by covenant.

*Obj. 3.* “ But these covenants were *local*, and required the performance only of *local* duties, and, consequently, are not obligatory in other lands.”

*Ans.* This objection is virtually answered, in removing the one immediately preceding. It is admitted, there are local peculiarities connected with the substance of these covenants. For these local peculiarities, we do not contend. In our terms of communion, adapted to our existing circumstances, in the United States, when recognizing the obligation of these covenants, we declare, that “ This obligation is not to be considered as extending to those things which are peculiar to, and practicable only in, the British isles ; but only to such moral duties, as are substantially the same in all lands.” Whatever things in these bonds were of a circumstantial nature, as we have hinted above, may vary with a change of circumstances. But our relation to God, is not a circumstantial or local thing. Love to God, and our neighbour, will still continue obligatory, though some

circumstances, connected with the expression and exercise of it, may, and often do, vary.

*Obj. 4.* "But, seeing you admit any part of them to be local, their obligation ceases. For the *local* part being removed, destroys the form of the covenant; and, as matter and form are necessary to their existence, they now want something which is essential to their existence, as covenants, and, consequently, are null and void."

*Ans.* This objection is more specious than solid. It might be enquired, how much of the present form of any subject is essential to its existence, in its present predicament? We find that *fingers, toes, legs, and arms*, all belong to the present form of men and women; but, suppose a finger, toe, leg, or arm, or even all of these, should be cut off, would this destroy the essentials of their humanity? If it would, to what class of *accountable* beings would they then belong, for the law would still account them as moral subjects? We hear of no other classes of accountable beings, but angels and men. If, therefore, they still remain accountable, and belong not to the latter, they must belong to the former. *Query.* Can angels be manufactured out of men, by an act of amputation?

Should a man have a wife and family, previously to his entering into the holy ministry, the form of his ordination vow would contain a clause, binding him to the conscientious performance of those duties, which arise out of the conjugal and family relation. Should his wife die, and his family become extinct, part of the vow has no present obligation, for the relation on which it was grafted, is dissolved; the form, of course, is, in part, destroyed: does his ordination vow, therefore, become invalid? Must he either cease to be a minister of the Gospel, or be re-ordained?

*Obj. 5.* "These covenants were national, and so have no obligation on individuals, when they cease to be members of the national community who entered into them."

*Ans.* Had the duties, contained in these covenants, been only of a temporary, local, or circumstantial nature, this objection would be relevant. But we have

endeavoured, above, to show, that these bonds contemplated the duties of the moral law, which is obligatory upon all men. Abstract principles do not vary, though the modifications with which they are clothed, in their reduction to practice, may, and often do, vary. Their circumstantials, we have publicly declared, we contend not for.

But here we might enquire, of what is a nation composed? Is it not of individuals? Can a nation be *nationally* bound, and the individuals not be *individually* bound? To what is the nation *nationally* bound? Is it not, to yield a cheerful and willing obedience to all God's holy and divine commandments, in their *national character*? Is not the individual *individually* bound to do the same, in his *individual character*? If he is thus bound in Britain, does the foil of Columbia loose him of all obligation to, and make him independent of, the Moral Governor? In as far as this moral obligation is concerned, between *national* and *personal* covenanting, there is only a *numerical* difference. In the latter, *one* individual is *personally* bound; in the former, *three, four, or five millions* of individuals, are *personally* bound. If individuals are not *personally* bound, they are not bound at all. To talk of an *individual* being *nationally* bound, would be a solecism worthy of the greatest blunderer.

*Obj. 6.* "But these covenants are embarrassments to those who would wish to join your church communion, yet never came under these obligations, either personally, or by representation."

*Ans.* To the judicious, this can be no objection. It is plain, that these covenants were binding, not only on the nation, *as a nation*, but also on the church, *as a church*. It would not be very hard to prove, that every man, by the very act of accession to the Christian church, becomes a *Covenanter*. This is not merely by having a visible relationship established between him and Jesus, the church's Head, but also, by joining a covenanted corporation. The Christian church is the same immortal society, which received its charter first in the garden of Eden, in the memorable words, "*It shall bruise thy head, and*



*thou shalt bruise his heel."* Though, for a period, its privileges were confined to the Jewish nation; yet, the middle wall of partition being broken down, she lengthened her cords, and strengthened her stakes, by the accession of the Gentile world. This branch, though wild by nature, GOD was pleased to graft upon the good Olive-Tree, when the natural branches were broken off, Rom. xi. 24. By this accession, they became bound, by all the moral obligations of the corporation, with which they were thus united. But this corporation was covenanted to GOD, in Horeb. This covenant was, moreover, renewed, in accommodation to existing circumstances, under the direction of Moses, Joshua, Aza, Jehoiada, Hezekiah, Josiah, and Nehemiah. The obligation of this covenant, thus solemnly sworn, the Jewish church lay constantly under. All who accede to this corporation, by the very act of junction recognize its obligation. All the Christian church is, consequently, bound, by covenant, to GOD. To our communion, therefore, covenanting can be no just objection.

This same covenant was renewed by our ancestors, and is binding on us, as a church, in this country. But, to meet the objection more closely. All, who would propose junction with our community, must belong to one or other of the three following grades, in the scale of reformation. Either they are before us, or behind us, or equal to us. If before us, let them shew us in what, and we will quickly follow them. If behind us, they ought to do the same with us. If equal to us, the objection does not apply.

*Obj. 7.* "We covenant to GOD, in the Sacraments of Baptism and the Supper, and any thing more would be unnecessary."

*Ans.* This objection would come with a better grace from an Anabaptist, than from a Presbyterian. Time would not allow us to follow the former, through the various topics of argument, which a refutation of his distinguishing principles necessarily embraces. With the Presbyterian, who admits Infant Baptism as substi-

tuted in the room of Circumcision, in the Abrahamic covenant, and who also grants, that the Sacrament of the Supper comes in the room of the Passover, the way is short and easy. To those, who are of this denomination, therefore, I would propose the following questions, viz. Had not the church, under the Old Testament, these two seals of the covenant substantially considered, in the institutions of Circumcision and the Passover? Did not these ordinances involve their engagement unto God, as much as Baptism and the Supper do, under the New Testament dispensation? Did the use of these supercede the practice of public covenanting, under the Old Testament? If it did not, why should it do so under the New?

*Obj* 8. "But in these covenants, for which you contend, *civil* and *religious* things are blended together. Preach up the Gospel; let civil things alone."

*Ans*. Our covenants, indeed, bind to the performance of civil, as well as of religious duties. It may be enquired here, does the moral law require any civil duties of us, or does it not? If it does, why may we not engage to the performance of them? If it does not, then they are matters of mere indifference. But this is so flatly contrary to Scripture, that it can have few advocates among professed Christians.

But, provided the circumstance of the covenants, requiring civil as well as religious duties, were any reason why they should be rejected, then the Bible itself should be cast aside. In this sacred volume, we find civil and religious duties required and enjoined, not only in the same book, not only in the same chapter, but also in the very same verse. "*Fear GOD and the king.*" This has not yet been expunged as apocryphal. Neither has it been supposed to destroy the obligation and validity of the divine oracles. Let us, for a moment, attend to the manner of Scripture covenants. See, for example, that one mentioned, Neh. ix. 38. "*And because of all this, we make a sure covenant, and write it; and our princes, Levites, and priests, seal unto it.*" Did these civil and ecclesiastical persons, swear this co-

venant, in their respective stations? And should we not, in covenanting to GOD, solemnly engage to yield a conscientious obedience to the divine law, in performing all the duties of our respective stations? Let us not, then, at the expence of Scripture example—at the expence of the requisitions of the Moral Law—and at the expence of reason and common sense—"for a morsel of pottage," quit with our birth-right.

The other part of the allegation, respecting preaching the Gospel, and giving ourselves no concern with political affairs, is equally unfounded. What is the commission of the minister of the Gospel? Does it not embrace the whole volume of divine revelation? It is as extensive as the sacred record. "*All things, whatsoever, I have commanded you.*" Has he given any commands respecting the constitution and administration of civil government? If he has, are not his ambassadors bound to teach them? If he has not, what is the meaning of Rom. xiii. 1—7. 1st Pet. ii. 13—17. with innumerable other passages of Scripture? Are not these ambassadors commanded to "*declare the whole counsel of GOD, keeping nothing back?*" Query. Do the portions, alluded to above, belong to the counsel of GOD, or form any part of divine truth?

*Obj. 9.* "Why do you talk so much about covenanting, yet have not, for many years, essayed the duty?"

To this, I reply. There is no command in Scripture, enjoining, precisely, how often it ought to be essayed. It is an extraordinary duty. It may be more frequently, or more rarely, engaged in, according to the circumstances in which a church or nation, may, in providence, be situated. Whether we have, or have not, duly attended to these circumstances, and providences, is no real objection to the duty itself. No doubt, in many things, we have come short. This is no reason why duty should be opposed, or the principle denied. We have uniformly contended for the binding obligation of the covenants of our ancestors. We consider ourselves bound thereby. We, as a church, have renewed these covenants, since the revolution settlement in Britain.

We hope, as a church, soon to essay the duty again.

I shall now close this discourse with a few inferences.

1. Public covenanting, is an incumbent duty on a nation or church. When GOD commands, we are bound to obey. When he says, "*Vow and pay to the Lord,*" we, as his moral subjects, are under indispensable obligations, to do as he requires. The example of the saints, calls also upon us to embark in this duty. We ought to follow the footsteps of the flock, in all their laudable undertakings, when existing circumstances will permit. "*Go ye forth by the footsteps of the flock,*" binds us to imitate their worthy example. "*Be ye followers of me* (saith the apostle) *even as I also am of Christ.*"

2. That having vowed unto GOD, we are solemnly bound to pay. "*Pay that which thou vowest.*" We ought to remember, that "*GOD will surely require it of us.*" The neglect of duty, in those who have thus engaged to the faithful performance of it, will be more criminal, than in those who have made no such engagements. Neither should we, from this consideration, omit the duty of engaging unto GOD, flattering ourselves, that we may have the more liberty of sinning. Though GOD says, 2d Pet. ii. 21. "*It had been better not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after it is known, to turn from it ;*" we are not, therefore, to conclude, that it is lawful for us to remain wilfully ignorant thereof, that so we may be the less criminal in our iniquity. Ignorance is a sin, as well as the abuse of knowledge. So, the omission of the duty of covenanting is criminal, as well as a violation of the covenant, when made.

To keeping of covenant with GOD, we will be induced, by attending,

1. To the advantages resulting therefrom. You will thus honour all the divine perfections. You have sworn by GOD ; attention to your oath will honour his attributes. You will glorify all the divine persons in the Trinity. The Father in his love, the Son in his grace, the Spirit in his application. You will disappoint the grand adversary, who is going about, like a roaring

lion, seeking whom he may devour. He waits for your halting ; he rejoices in tempting you to perfidy, in covenant engagements. You will testify the goodness of your cause, to the generation among whom you dwell. You are commanded to "*let your light so shine before men, that they, seeing your good works, may glorify your Father who is in Heaven.*" You will much promote your own satisfaction and holiness. This will be a noted mean to promote your fitness for the enjoyment of God, in the mansions of bliss and immortality above.

2. The disadvantages arising from unfaithfulness in covenant engagements. You show contempt to the divine law—You rebel against the divine authority, manifested in the law—You profane the ordinances of God's appointment, intended as a special mean of promoting a contrary course of conduct—You represent God as a willing witness of your perfidy in your engagements—You pour contempt upon him, as the guarantee of his own law, and avenger in case of perjury—Contrary to truth, you plunge into deceit—Contrary to equity, you rob God of his due—Contrary to good neighbourhood, you render yourself a plague and curse to society—Contrary to the end of your creation and preservation, you reject the glory of God. And, in one word, persevering in this course of conduct, nothing but a fearful looking-for of judgment awaits you. Resolve, then, my brethren, in the strength of grace, to say with the Psalmist, "*I have sworn, and I will perform it, that I will keep thy righteous judgments.*" Amen.

## ERRATA.

Page 5, line 12, from the foot, for *verses 1, 10.* read  
*verse 1—10.*

Page 9, line 12, from the foot, for *agreeably* read *agreeable*

Page 12, line 4, from the foot, for *accessory* read *accessory*

Page 13, line 9, for *accessory* read *accessory*

line 7, from the foot, for *accessory* read *accessory*

Page 15, line 19, for *gives* read *give*

Page 26, line 14, for *to* read *do*

Page 39, line 13, from the foot, for *this* read *their*

Page 58, line 9, for *adore* read *adorn*

Page 63, line 17, for *then* read *there*

Page 66, line 10, for *know of* read *know*

Page 74, line 19, insert the word *it* between *yet* and  
*morally*

Page 75, line 20, for *among* read *respecting*

Page 89, line 17, from the foot, for *obligated* read *delegated*

Page 92, line 10, for *promissary* read *promissory*

Page 94, line 2, from the foot, for *Jos. xi. 10.* read  
*Jer., xi. 10.*

Page 95, line 6, for *at* read *with*

Page 103, line 21, for *Forsakers* read *Forsaken*

Page 105, line 8, place a comma after *ancestors*

line 5, from the foot, for *Atholiah* read *Athaliah*

Page 107, line 22, for *our* read *an*

Page 108, line 8, for *flocks* read *flock*