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# COVENANTER.

MAY, 1847.

(For the Covenanter.)

ESSAYS ON ROM. XIII. 1—7.

(BY REV. W. L. ROBERTS.)

MR. EDITOR,—This interesting passage has been, and is at the present time, a subject of controversy; one class of interpreters urge it as a strong proof of the doctrine of *passive obedience and non-resistance*. That whatever government exists in Providence is God's ordinance, to which subjection is due "for conscience sake." The *tory* of the American revolution urged it against the *patriot*, as a valid argument for implicit subjection to the British tyrant. The elder Adams deduced from the same passage an argument *for* the patriot,—demonstrating, by a just criticism, that the government described in the text possessed a certain character, viz., "*the minister of God to men for good*," which belonged not to the king of Great Britain. Such, he argued, no *tyrant* can be; hence the passage does not teach implicit obedience to despotic power, that, for wise purposes, may have a being in Divine providence.

The true import of the text will be clearly ascertained, by a knowledge of its original design. The Holy Spirit had a specific object in view, in inspiring the apostle to indite this beautiful description of civil magistracy. Its object was, a confutation of "the licentious principles and practice of a pestilent sect which had sprung up in the church, denying the very being of civil government under the gospel, and maintaining that the church of Christ had nothing to do with such an institution."

The apostles Peter and Jude give a graphic description of this tribe of ancient heretics. "The Lord knoweth," says Peter, "how to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment, to be punished: but chiefly, them that walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness, and despise government. Presumptuous are they, and self-willed, they are not afraid to speak evil of dignities," 2 Peter ii. 9, 10. And, Jude, ver. 11, describes them, by comparing them with Korah and his company, two hundred and fifty princes of the assembly, who gathered themselves together against Moses, and who perished so awfully,—"*perished in the gainsaying of Core*." Korah and his companions were rebels against God's ordinance of civil government, as administered by Moses, and perished miserably in their insurrection. Paul, to guard Christians against anarchy on the one hand, and the support of immorality and despotic power on the other, describes the ordinance of civil government without a reference to any particular country, but with a perfect

applicability to all, as a holy institution, to be framed according to the Christian law.

The late Rev. Mr. Holaday, of the Reformed Presbyterian Church, Scotland, in his notes on Romans, states, as the essence of the teaching of this passage, the following propositions:—a demonstration of the truth of which, is my aim in these essays.

I. "That civil government in its nature is not a mere invention of man, but an ordinance of God, instituted by him, for the good of the church, and of society, in subordination to his own glory."

II. "In its constitution it is not left to be modelled by a nation according to their pleasure, but must be framed according to certain laws, and made to exhibit a certain character, and to possess certain qualifications to make it his ordinance.

III. "That every government of this description, must be submitted to as God's ordinance, and from a dutiful regard to his will, and must on no account be resisted or overturned."

I. The first proposition will be obvious, if we attend to the description here given of the *power* to which subjection is demanded, upon the peril of damnation.

It is a self-evident truth, that all God's institutions are like himself, holy, and have in their essence no element of immorality. The description here given of civil rule, presents an institution becoming the ordination of a righteous God. This is evident,

1. *From the original word, (ἐξουσία,) translated "powers,"* v. 1. "*The higher powers.*" Schrevelius defines it *moral powers*, in contradistinction from (δυναμεις,) *active power*, or physical force. Without resting upon this authority, we will examine the word critically. It is derived from ἐξεστι, *licet*, that which is *lawful, right*. Hence, its radical idea is *license, or liberty*—that is, liberty to do a certain thing—derived from *Him* who alone can confer such license. In this sense Paul uses the word, 1 Cor. viii. 8, 9, "But take heed, lest by any means, this liberty (ἐξουσία) of yours, become a stumbling-block to them that are weak,"—the liberty or license to eat meat. Also, ix. 4, 6, "Have we not power (ἐξουσία) to eat and to drink?" "Have we not power (ἐξουσία) to lead about a sister or a wife, &c.?—or I only, and Barnabas, have not we *power* (ἐξουσία) to forbear working, &c.?" In all these passages, the idea of *right* derived from a competent source—even God himself, who hath granted meat for food, who hath instituted marriage, and made it honourable in all, and hath ordained, that he that preacheth the gospel, shall live of the gospel—is the radical sense of the word. What is *rightful* or *lawful*, therefore, in the nature of the case, is its just import. It carries that radical idea with it, when employed to signify magistracy, as in the text. It signifies a lawful moral authority. He who has authority, must have it lawfully, otherwise, it is a usurpation and immoral. It is on this account, the word is used to signify the mediatorial authority of Jesus Christ. Mat. vii. 2—9, "He taught them as one having authority, (ἐξουσία,) and not as the scribes," and John xvii. 2, "As thou (the Father) hast given *Him* (Christ) power (ἐξουσία) over all flesh." Christ's universal dominion is a happy illustration of ἐξουσία, moral authority.

It is no objection to this interpretation, that the word is applied to Herod's *jurisdiction*, (Luke xxiii. 7,) and to the kingdoms of the dragon. (Rev. xiii. 2.) There is no ordinance of God which the devil

does not claim as his property. And usurpers, who are his instruments, claim a rightful authority. But their claims do not legitimize their authority. The devil claims also the ministry, and the high prerogative, in imitation of Christ, of commissioning apostles and prophets, and of conferring a right to teach. Yet with all this alleged authority, they are still false prophets, and false apostles, of whom we are to "beware." We test their character by God's holy ordinance of the ministry, and the *truth* and *ordinances* which they are ordained to teach and administer.

Magistracy as God's ordinance, is a rightful, moral authority, proceeding from himself alone, which neither devils nor man can originate or confer; and if the devil and the Herods of the world claim it, it only proves the greatness of their daring.

2. We prove the proposition *by the epithet associated with the word "powers,"* *υπερεξουσιαις*,—translated, "*higher*." This word does not designate the powers as higher or lower, as to degree of elevation, or rank, or grade in office; but their moral character. It signifies the *better* or *excelling powers*—pre-eminent as to moral excellence. In this sense, the word is used in Phil. ii. 3, "Let each esteem others better (*υπερεχοντας*) than themselves." "Let every soul be subject to the *better* powers,"—to civil authority, as a moral ordinance of God, impressed with his moral image. Legitimate magistracy is moral authority. It is a morally excelling power. He who is elevated on earth above his fellow-men, is not, therefore, possessed of legitimate authority, but he who having obtained from God a right to rule, exercises a moral sway, governs by moral principles and laws.

3. I reason the proposition *from the literal rendering of the second clause*, "For there is no power but of God,"—*ου γαρ εστιν*, "For it is not,—or there is not, *εξουσια*, a rightful authority, *εμνη*, unless, except, or if not, *απο θεου*, from God. *There is not, or it is not a rightful authority, if it be not from God.* God is the source of legitimate magistracy, and if the character of the authority exercised, will not bear the test of the character of the source of all lawful powers, *it is not a power in the view of this passage.* If immorality characterizes the power, we must look to another source for its origin. *As a power* it cannot be from God.

It will not do to say, because an acknowledged immoral power may have some just principles in its constitution, and may enact and enforce some just laws, that, therefore, it is to be viewed partly the ordinance of God, and in part, the ordinance of the devil. The question is not, how much good there may be, as leaven, mingled among the immoral elements of an illegitimate power, but *whence* the power? Does the right, the authority, to rule come from God? Is it from God in the aspect in which it is considered an existing power? It is a power in its complex character, as it is constituted, and if its constitution is immoral, and *as a whole*, it is acknowledged an immoral power, it is not from God, notwithstanding the elements of good with which the dragon has garnished it, wherewith to catch a class of Christians who are easily gulled by a gilded bait. No, no. God has not in this momentous matter, framed a confederacy with the dragon, any more than light can have communion with darkness. It must have the impress of his authority, otherwise, it is not a lawful authority, because not *from Him*.

4. I reason further, *from the literal version of the next clause.*

“The powers that be, are ordained of God.” Literally, *αι δε υσσαι εξουσιαι*, but they are powers, *υπο του θεου τεταχμεναι εισιν*, which are ordained of God. They are lawful powers, which are appointed of God. The clause does not mean, governments which exist in providence are of God’s appointment; for “they set up kings, but not by me;” not by God’s appointment or approbation. It signifies rightful authority, because of the Divine appointment or institution. The mere existence of a power, is not the fact here contemplated, but its character, as an institution of God. Magistracy is of God’s appointment, and is therefore moral, for it is not consistent with his nature to ordain an immoral institution having a claim to the conscientious allegiance of his moral subjects. The rebellious heretics against whom Paul wrote, were commanded to recognise magistracy as a holy institution, appointed of God, and to distinguish it from those immoral and despotic powers, the prevalence of which is often the reason why even wicked men who are fond of liberty, reject all magistratical authority; examples of which are known in our own times. Individual man derives from God the right of self-government, hence the origin of personal liberty. Man, in his collective capacity, derives from God the right of government, hence the origin of civil rights: and God’s moral ordinance of civil government embraces human rights in its very institution. Can it for a moment be supposed that it excludes his own? Does his own institution cast off his own authority, and justify man in omitting his right in the constitution of government? Inconceivable. His own rights, as he is the source of all lawful power, are imbodyed in his own institution; and wherever that institution exists in operation, these rights are recognised; otherwise, it is not a “power” in the sense of the text. It is not a power ordained or appointed of God, for the government of man.

5. The proposition is evidently the sense of the text, *from the title given to the magistrate*. “For he is the minister of God,” v. 4. No one can properly be the minister of God, but by his own appointment, and he who represents as such, the HOLY ONE, must be possessed of moral character. How can an immoral man, and the administrator of an immoral constitution or law, be the *minister of God*? Strange, that the servant of the devil administering an immoral constitution of government, should, at the same time, be the minister of God? It is impossible. This point will be more extensively reasoned under the second proposition.

6. I reason further, *from the design of the institution*. God’s design in the institution of magistracy, is *the good of society*. “He is the minister of God to thee for good.” Society is here taken in a complex sense, as embracing *civil* and *ecclesiastical* society; that civil magistracy was designed to promote the welfare of civil and *religious* society, is a solid proof that it is a divine ordinance, and not a human invention, and is a moral and excelling power. Few, indeed, will deny that it is instituted for the good of man in his civil interests. Few, however, admit that it was designed to promote his religious welfare. What says the text? To whom does the relative *thee* point as the antecedent? Look back to the first chapter and 7th verse. The letter is addressed to those who are entitled, the “Beloved of God, called to be saints.” He is the minister of God to *thee*; the “Beloved of God, called to be saints.” Magistracy is therefore ordained of God, for the welfare, the religious welfare of the saints, as the beloved of God, as well

as for the good of man in his civil relations. It is especially for the good of the saints, as an ordinance of God. When men institute government by their own will, the spiritual interests of men are neglected, the church is cast off, as is abundantly evident in our own country. As the text, however, specifies the interests of the saints, as such, as a special object of government, it is an ample proof that civil government is God's ordinance, and not the invention of man.

Paul could have no allusion in this text to the Roman power, then wielded by Nero. He persecuted the saints; set fire to the city of Rome, and charged the crime upon the Christians; wrapped them in garments saturated with inflammable substances, and made of them torches to illuminate the streets; or clothed in the skins of wild beasts, exposed them in conflict with the ravening lion, and relentless tiger. Rome was not the ordinance of God. Its whole structure as a politico-religious system, was in direct opposition, and in fierce hostility, to the beloved of God, "called to be saints." It was a dreadful, and terrible, exceedingly strong engine, erected by the dragon, in open warfare against the kingdom of Christ, whose foundations were laid in the world, after the establishment of this diabolical empire—as "a stone cut out of the mountain without hands."

7. I reason *from the province of the magistrate as specified in the text*. This province is the protection of *virtue*, and the suppression of *vice*. "Rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil." Not to be a terror to good works, implies, that good works and those who are employed in them, are special objects of governmental care: whilst vice and the vicious are to be discouraged and suppressed. Human institutions, based upon the popular will, are most likely to foster vice, and to protect the vicious, as has been abundantly manifested in all former ages, as well as in our own, and in our own country; but the fact that magistracy, according to the text, is designed for the fostering of good works, and that such is the peculiar function of the magistrate, contains the utmost evidence, that civil government is not the institution of man, but the ordinance of God, and is characterized by moral excellence. This, with other points at which we have glanced in this discourse, will be more fully discussed under the next proposition.

Finally, the first proposition is fully established *by the fact, that according to the text, the civil magistrate, as God's minister, is armed with the sword, and clothed with vengeance, to inflict the penalty of the law upon transgressors—even to the taking away of life*:—endowed with the right to inflict capital punishment. The sword is an instrument designed and employed to take away life. It was anciently the instrument of inflicting the penalty of death—of which there are numerous examples under the Jewish economy.

The *vengeance*, also, which the magistrate executes, runs parallel with the penal sanctions of the divine law: covers the fearful sentence, "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed." "But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain; for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil," v. 4. "These are not the words of a vain philosopher carelessly slumbering over ideal plans of reform. They are the words of truth. The idea of civil punishment which they convey, differs entirely from the fanatical imaginations of deluded

minds, and from the pretended discoveries of infidel humanity. The sword of the sovereign is not merely *disciplinary*, as an instrument of reform, it is also for *vengeance*. Punishment is not prospective, but retrospective. It contemplates not so much the capabilities for improvement, as the *guilt* of its subject. It is the connexion established by the moral governor of the universe, between pain and crime. This is punishment: and he is a novice in the science of jurisprudence, who has the idea yet to learn.”

The right to inflict the punishment of death is derived from God. He who gives life can take it away, and can command it to be taken away, when forfeited by crime. He can confer this right upon his own minister. Magistracy as the ordinance of God, is, therefore, invested with this right: and the fact that the text exhibits the civil magistrate as clothed with this awful authority, is the clearest and fullest proof that civil government is God’s ordinance, and not the invention of man, and that moral excellence is an essential characteristic.

The first proposition is therefore fully sustained, by this exegetical argument, and the glory of God is displayed in the fact, that he is exhibited as the author of a holy institution, designed for the welfare of the church, and of society in general, and not the fountain of immoral and despotic power, trampling the religious and civil liberties of mankind in the dust, and covering the face of the world with lamentation, mourning, and wo.

(To be continued.)

[For the Covenanter.]

J U D A S.

Judas has obtained an unenviable notoriety for crime. His history is preserved in the records of the Christian church, as a warning to all her members to avoid his sin, that they may escape his punishment. His name is familiar, yet it is probable that many, especially of my young readers, have never studied his history so carefully as to derive much instruction. They have not become sufficiently acquainted with his character, his sin, the circumstances in which it was committed, nor the awful punishment which God inflicted. Nor may it have once entered their minds, that Judas was once as young and promising, and full of hope as they are, and if God withhold the influences of his Holy Spirit, they may commit a sin similar to his, and become partakers in his disgrace and eternal destruction. Yet all this is possible, as the history will show.

*Judas was the son of covenanted parents.* He was born in the church, and could trace his relation to God’s covenant through a long line of religious ancestors. We think it a great privilege, and so it is, to be able to say, the covenant God of my fathers for a few generations; but Judas could look back about two thousand years, and through almost fifty generations, and still see his fathers in covenant with God. When he was a little infant only eight days old, he was publicly acknowledged to be a child of the church, and entitled to all her privileges. As he advanced in years, he associated with her members. The ministers, and the godly prayed for him. His parents taught him the Bible. He was well instructed in the prophecies, and expected the Messiah. He seemed to improve his privileges. As he advanced to manhood, he did not despise his connexion with the church, and trample upon his covenant engagements, as many baptized members do, who refusing to

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AUGUST, 1847.

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*Address of the Synod of the Reformed Presbyterian Church to the parents, members in full communion, and to baptized youth in their bounds who have yet delayed the vows that are on them.\**

**BELoved IN THE LORD,**

We approach you with a tender of counsel and exhortation, on a matter of the deepest interest to yourselves now and to posterity hereafter, in the church on earth and in time; on a matter involving issues of eternal moment. We crave earnestly and affectionately, in the name, in the bowels of our Lord Jesus Christ, we crave your earnest, and your special attention. Were it a matter of ordinary concern, indifference might be indulged; but we hope to satisfy you that it is one in which indifference can have no place, either on our part or on yours. Were it a matter in which you had no personal concern, you might well refer to those whose business it is; but we hope to convince you that you have such part in it as all eternity alone can fully unfold.

Parents, believers in the Lord Jesus, bound by vows relative to yourselves, and by vows equally sacred and interesting relative to your offspring; and to the latter of this additional interest, that while they hold you bound to duties great and many, the performance or the fulfilling of which is of inexpressible moment in the judgment of God, they are most intimately connected with the welfare, temporal and eternal, of the children whom God has committed to your care.

You have vowed before God, and to him, that you would train up these your children "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord;" that you would, early, diligently, and with prayer, teach them the doctrines of salvation from sin and wrath by Christ Jesus, and their duty to God as members of his household and kingdom; that you would set them a godly example, in the observance of all Christian duties, and, in substance and in fine, make it your study to gain them and train them for Christ and his kingdom. And now, dearly beloved, how stands the matter with you? have you in deed and in heart, in painful, patient and godly labour, toiled for this end? have your souls wrestled with God in frequent and earnest supplications to Him for his blessing on your seed? have you sought, as it was worth<sup>h</sup>, his blessing on your instruction and example? in fine have you done as much for their soul's welfare as natural affection teaches you to do for their bodies? If yea, it is well. Should they perish, their blood will not be on your skirts. But if not, how lamentable the prospect—faithless, guilty parents—ignorant, un-

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\* This Address is published by order of Synod, see Minutes, page 363.

tudes will have but a poor account to render of its distribution, even should they prove clear in its acquisition. And for the latter, they are but slippery places from which the fall is so much the more dangerous. Are these to be compared, as objects of your ambition, with "the honour that cometh from God," with the assurance of Heaven that "a little that a righteous man hath is better than the riches of many wicked?" Many of you have witnessed the progress of your parents through the toils of life, and seen them in some instances emerge from straits and obscurity, to distinction and even affluence. And how often, when the whirlwind of national calamities sweeps over a guilty land, have the humble dwellings of the pious remained unharmed and secure? The devil says, All these things shall be thine if thou wilt serve me. God puts the lie upon his wicked temptation, when such dreadful reverses come on as shake a nation, but leave his people satisfied and in peace. "The Lord knoweth the days of the upright, and their inheritance shall be for ever. They shall not be ashamed in the evil time, and in the days of famine they shall be satisfied."

3. Consider that God is now setting before you for your own choice, "life and death, blessing and cursing," and requires of you to choose life, that you may live. We in his name, "determining to know nothing among you save Jesus Christ and him crucified," exhort you to accept of his proffered salvation. Are you offended in heart with the lowly condition of his church, the obscurity or the imperfection of her members—and are you for that reason tempted to take some less objectionable form of religion in these respects? Observe that if you shrink from choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, and to take Christ's cross, your choice, however wise it may seem to you, is not likely to meet the seal of his approbation. You choose in that matter not him, but worldly ease, it may be, or some relief from his reproach, by a vain unprofitable conformity to the world. Oh take Him to your hearts; take Him in all the glory of his righteousness for your justification; take Him in the power of his Spirit for your sanctification; take Him for your God and Redeemer; and all the little and transient ills connected with his service will appear as nothing. Nay, if you shrink from suffering with Him, how can you expect to reign with Him? Be early, be earnest, be determined, "If the Lord be God, serve Him; if Baal be God, serve him."

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ESSAYS ON ROMANS XIII. 1—7.

BY REV. WILLIAM L. ROBERTS.

[Concluded from p. 296, vol. ii.]

II. I am to prove in the second place, from this passage,

"That civil government in its constitution, is not left to be modelled by a nation according to their pleasure, but must be framed according to certain laws, made to exhibit a certain character, and to possess certain qualifications." In proof of this—I remark,

1. It must be so constructed, according to this passage, *That those who administer it, must be constrained to act always and to all as the "ministers of God."* For they are the "ministers of God." The ministers of God must be God's representatives. The servants of God executing for him in the government of man, what he hath not chosen



to execute himself, but as an institution by which, as an instrument, he will rule the human family; and as it is his ordinance, we have seen, it is a moral institution. When a nation, therefore, constitutes its civil government, it must enact a moral instrument of government, such as is a suitable representation of the authority of Him, who is infinitely holy; and such as will direct its administrators in such moral actions in their rule as will exhibit them the servants or representatives of God. It necessarily follows from these facts that the authority of God must be recognised in the constitution of government, and also the authority of his mediatory servant, Jesus Christ, who is entitled the "King of kings"—the "*Prince of the kings of the earth,*" having "all authority (*ἐξουσία*) in heaven and in earth" delegated to him. "He that ruleth over man must, indeed, be just, ruling in the fear of the Lord." The supremacy of the law of God, must, moreover, be acknowledged, and the Christian established as the religion of the nation. Upon what other principles can we conceive Magistracy to be the *minister of God*?

According to this passage, therefore, the *will of God* must be the foundation of the constitution and the rule of administration: not as made known merely by the dim light of nature, but as fully revealed in the scriptures of truth. The *servants of God* must certainly apply the law of God, the ten commandments and all precepts founded thereon: and laws enacted to vindicate the authority of the decalogue, must be the basis of the constitution, and the rule of administration. Rulers, as God's servants, must be *Custodes utriusque tabulæ*, guardians of both tables of the law. If they reject the *first table*, they have *no right* to administer the second; for thereby, they throw off the authority of God, and are no longer his ministers, doing his will: for the will of the Master must be the rule of the servant in all his actions, as his servant, and the servant has no right to contemn any of his master's commandments. Thus plainly and forcibly speaks the passage—"for they are God's ministers, attending continually on this very thing." What thing? Manifestly, the execution of the divine will or law as the basis of a righteous constitution, and the rule of a just administration. How can they be the servants of God if they refuse to execute any part of his will? if they deny his authority and cast his laws behind their back? if they refuse to do homage to his Son in their constitutions of government and in their official stations? All governments which refuse the execution of the first table of the divine law, necessarily authorize the violation of its precepts. How, then, can they be the ministers of God, who uphold their subjects in the infraction of his law? Can a government be his minister which gives *his* glory to another, and his praise to graven images? which does not make His glory the ultimate and highest end of its rule? Plainly not. This answer the scriptures affirm. "Why do the heathen (nations) rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord; and against his anointed, (Christ) saying—Let us break their bands asunder and cast away their cords from us." "Be wise now, therefore, 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."

In this view, therefore, an immoral constitution of government, and unjust and tyrannical laws, the rejection of the authority of God and his

Son, of his law and his religion, deprive the government of the high dignity of being *his ordinance*, and the rulers of the distinction of being "*his ministers*."

2. Civil government, as described in this passage, *must be so constituted that the rulers in their administration shall be constrained to promote the moral and religious welfare of society.* "He is the minister of God to thee for good." We have considered society under a twofold view—civil and ecclesiastical. We have viewed the subjects of government as citizens of the state and members of the church. The same individual is both a citizen of the state and a member of the church. In proving civil magistracy to be the ordinance of God and not the invention of man, we reasoned from the text which describes rulers as the ministers of God for good. This good was shown to respect both the church and the state. But they are not to men simply for the promotion of the temporal or pecuniary benefit of the people, but chiefly for their moral and religious benefit. The government must make provision, therefore, that all the people, without respect of persons, enjoy the advantages of a sound, moral and religious, as well as intellectual, education—not only the arts and sciences, but morals and religion, are under its fostering care. "Good," in its widest range, temporal, intellectual, moral and spiritual.

To be destitute of the means of subsistence is not "*good*." The government must protect and foster industry—provision must be made for the poor. "Also that the soul be without *knowledge*, is not *good*."—The government must, therefore, "feed the people with knowledge." Every facility should be given for the promotion of education in all useful branches of knowledge. For a soul to be destitute of moral culture is not *good*. The morality of the Bible must be early taught, and in the primary schools, and thus the moral character of the youth be formed together with the cultivation of the intellect. But more than all, for a soul to be devoid of religious culture is indeed not *good*. "This is *eternal life*, to know the *True God*, and *Jesus Christ* whom thou hast sent." "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." How forcibly do these passages, viewed in connexion with the text, inculcate national instruction in the knowledge of the true God, and of the truth as it is in Jesus; the duty of the nation to train its subjects for heaven; and confirm the doctrine of the text, that rulers are the ministers of God for the highest good of man?

A moral constitution of government, and moral and pious rulers administering the laws of God, ruling over men according to the revealed will of God, will do much for the promotion of the religious good of man. It must be fully understood, however, that the civil ruler is not an ecclesiastical officer. *He has no authority in or over the church.* Yet he has much to do *circa sacra*, about sacred things. Whilst he is not a *lord* over God's heritage, he may be subservient to its interests. Yea, may nourish the church while he does not rule it. The church, as such, is absolutely independent of civil power. On the other hand, the church has no authority over the state. Church and state are co-ordinate powers, not subordinate one to the other, yet they are mutually subservient. They are under the authority of the same Lord, regulated by the same moral law, have the best interests of man subordinate to the glory of God, as the end of both, but they act in distinct spheres, co-operating in a mutual subserviency to the promotion of the common good. As religious good is the highest good of man, the promotion of

true religion must be a proper object of civil rule. If a state does not recognise the being or authority of God, nor the authority of Christ, nor receive the Bible as the supreme law, nor recognise the Christian religion as the religion of the nation; but is atheistic or infidel, or establishes or fosters a false religion, and tramples under foot the liberty and intellect, the moral and religious welfare of any class of its subjects, can it properly be esteemed the ordinance of God? the minister of God to man for good? Certainly not. It is the foe of God and man. If such cannot, in the nature of the case, be the ordinance or minister of God, then it follows that civil government, to be his ordinance, must be so constituted as that the rulers, in its administration, must necessarily promote the moral and religious welfare of the community.

3. This passage instructs us that civil government must be so constituted *that its administration shall always protect and encourage the good*. "For rulers are not a terror to good works." "Do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same." The duty of the subject as taught elsewhere in the scriptures, is "to lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty." The good works which they "must be careful to maintain," are the good works of *godliness* and *honesty*; whatever relates to the worship and glorifying of God, and an upright intercourse with man in society. God's law in both tables is the rule of all good actions. It teaches our duty to God and to man. This complex duty comprehends all the good works of godliness and honesty, which man is bound to perform. He owes obedience to God, and benevolence and integrity to his fellow man. He has duties to perform to himself also, he has individual rights, to the enjoyment of which he has an indisputable claim. He has a right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Civil government must be so constituted that the citizens may be protected and encouraged in the performance of all these duties of godliness and honesty, and in the enjoyment of all these rights. The ruler is not a terror to good works.

Whilst the expression is in a negative form, it is not implied that the duty of the ruler is of a merely negative character. That is, merely to do nothing to hinder a citizen living a life of godliness and honesty. Suppose, for a moment, it is merely negative, will this meet the claim of the ordinance of God? Let us try. The constitution has no positive moral or religious character. It is indifferent in matters of honesty and piety, but does not positively hinder either, neither does it positively check immorality and irreligion, but endeavours to maintain a neutral position. Will not such a system necessarily foster immorality and irreligion, and prove a hinderance, by its indifference merely, to morality and religion? If a parent does not inculcate moral and religious principles, train up his children in the knowledge and practice of their duty to God and man, but is indifferent in these matters, his children will grow up around him an immoral and ungodly race. Just so in the commonwealth. Indifference or non-hinderance, whilst there is no positive tuition and fostering of that which is good, will rear up an ungodly and immoral nation. Immorality and ungodliness will abound, and the dread of the reproach of being deemed singular, will operate as a hinderance to the practice of the good works of godliness and honesty. This is the great evil in our own government. The non-hinderance system, neutrality in religion, is the fruitful source of abounding irreligion and immorality.

Let us again suppose, on the other hand, the government has in its

constitution a *positive evil*, an element of tyranny, for example. Deprives unoffending men of civil rights, makes one class of the citizens *slaves* to another class. Is not such a government a terror to the morality and godliness of the slave? and will it not foster immorality and ungodliness in the master? Does it not deprive the slave of that which is "just and equal," and countenance the cupidity of the master in spoiling the slave of the fruits of his industry? Will such a system encourage the slave in the good works of honesty? It upholds the robbery of the master. Will it not teach the slave to steal? This is its invariable working. Slave-holders complain of the dishonesty of their slaves.—Does not this system of wrong react upon the master? How greatly has it weakened his sense of moral obligation? Will this system promote the godliness of the slave? It robs the man of himself. It makes his soul and body the property of another. Does it care for its soul? Will it trust him to care for it? Verily not. Thousands of slaves do not know that they have souls. Such is the tendency of an immoral system. It reacts fearfully, in this respect, upon the master. Hence the irreligion and profligacy of slave-holders. But God's ordinance does not for a moment tolerate such a system. It is a "terror" to all such evil-doings. It is designed to excite and encourage the performance of all good works of either godliness or honesty. The ruler, according to this divine system, must not be a terror to *good works*, but to *the evil*; consequently, civil government should be constituted so as always to protect and encourage the good in the performance of the works of "*godliness and honesty*."

4. Civil government, according to this passage, *must be so constituted, that the rulers shall be constrained to inflict deserved punishment upon criminals of every grade.* "But if thou do that which is *evil*, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain; for he is the minister of God, a *revenger*, to execute wrath upon every soul that doeth evil." We have proved the morality of civil government as God's ordinance from this passage; and the magistrate's right to inflict the awful punishment of death. This right must be firmly established in the constitution of government. Men are deeply depraved. In society this depravity will be developed in the commission of evil deeds. Those who commit these evil deeds are the objects of the "sword" of the civil magistrate, and of that "vengeance" with which he is clothed as the "minister of God." He must punish crimes according to the degree of their criminality.

As the minister of God, the magistrate must punish crimes against either table of the divine law. He must punish crimes both against God and man. How can he be the "minister of God," if he do not execute vengeance upon the transgressors of the first table of the decalogue, as well as upon those who transgress the second table? God's "minister!" yet he refuses to execute God's own sentence upon the transgressor of his own law! A strange minister indeed, who refuses to do his master's will! Yet he is a "revenger" to execute wrath, even the wrath of God, so far as it is to be *judicially* revealed, against *ungodliness* and unrighteousness *in this life*, upon "*every soul that doeth evil*." If sins against the first table are "*evil*," then is the magistrate their "*revenger*." So long, then, as God hath armed the magistrate with the sword, and he is entitled "a revenger," there can be no reasonable doubt that he is authorized in the execution of the penal sanc-

tions of law: and as he is the minister of God, can there be any reasonable doubt, that he is the revenger of both tables of the divine law? We judge not.

But what are the sanctions of the divine law? And what is that vengeance which it awards to the transgressor? God has not left the answer of this question to the wisdom, or weakness, or cruelty of men. "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord." He only can proportion vengeance to the criminality of the transgressor: and as God hath clothed the civil magistrate with his own vengeance as the moral governor of the nations, this vengeance is to be executed by his minister. He is a "revenger to execute wrath."

But where has God meted out this vengeance? I answer, in the judicial law given to Moses. This law has not been altogether abrogated; for it contains enactments, the end and scope of which are perpetual. Those regulations which it contains peculiar to the commonwealth of Israel have been abrogated, such as the emancipation of Hebrew servants every seventh year: Exodus xxi. 2. The marriage of a brother with the widow of a deceased brother who died childless: Deut. xxv. 3. The release of debts in the year of release: Deut. xv. 2. Marriage with a woman of the same tribe: Num. xxx. 8. Such regulations as these, have necessarily been abrogated with the destruction of the Jewish commonwealth. But those enactments which relate to the punishment of crime, which were sanctioned by God for the defence of the decalogue, have not been abrogated, and are to be executed by the Christian magistrate. Those laws for the punishment of crimes are of a moral nature, and not conventual, and were enacted for the defence of the decalogue. Things which are moral, are immutable in their nature, and the authority of the decalogue is ever to be defended. Crimes are the same in all ages as to their criminality, and are, therefore, at all times deserving of the same punishment. Idolatry, blasphemy, murder, adultery, &c., possess the same moral turpitude at the present moment, which they did in ancient times, and are, therefore, deserving of the same punishment. *Vengeance*, rendering to every criminal his due, as the word signifies, is the same now as of old, and with this vengeance the civil magistrate is clothed. The penal sanctions of the law *are a part of the law itself*. Abolish the sanction, and you annul the law. The majority of the towns in the State of New York passed what is termed a license law, prohibiting the licensing of the sale of ardent spirits. This law is practically a nullity. Why? There is not moral principle sufficient in the community to execute it by the infliction of its *penal sanction* upon the transgressor. The law is a dead letter, because its wrath, its vengeance, contained in its penalties, which includes part of its essence, is not executed: and upon the same principle, the law of God against murder will soon become a nullity, because the penalty of death, which he has affixed as the sanction of the sixth precept of the decalogue, is not executed upon the murderer. Hence, the feeble influence of the laws of the first table in civil society at present: their sanctions are not even recognised, much less executed. These laws are not cruel. If there is moral courage, rather integrity, sufficient to execute, such will be the fear they will spread through society, the reverence of God in the person of his minister who executes his vengeance, that there will be few capital inflictions. I venture the assertion, that there were fewer cases of capital punishment under the Commonwealth of Israel, than in any other nation, because the execution of law was certain.

The righteous man, however, has nothing to dread. "The law (judicial) was not made for him, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers, and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, for whoremongers, and those that defile themselves with mankind, for men-stealers, for liars, for perjured persons, and if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine, according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust:" 1 Tim. i. 9, 10. This New Testament declaration covers all those enactments of the *judicial law* which were enacted to sustain the precepts of the decalogue, and to enforce them as the basis of the Constitution of the Commonwealth of Israel. They are correspondent with the benign character of "the glorious *gospel* of the blessed God," a benignity infinitely exalted above the fanatical imaginations of deluded minds, or the hypocritical sympathy of infidel humanity.

Civil government, therefore, authorized by this passage, must be so constituted as to give the magistrate full authority to execute the penal sanctions of the divine law, as Jehovah has, therein, proportioned his vengeance to the moral turpitude of transgressors. It is a *terror* to the evil. The magistrate "*is sent for the punishment of evil doers.*"—1 Pet. ii. 14.

5. Finally, civil government, according to the passage, must be so constituted *as to reward the good*. After what we have proved under the third particular, we need dwell but a moment upon this proposition. "Do that which is good, and thou shalt have *praise* of the same." My proposition is proved by a just interpretation of the word *praise*. It is used in reference to the same subject in 1 Pet. ii. 14, where submission is enjoined to governors, as unto those who are "sent for the punishment of evil doers, and for the *praise* of them that do well." Whilst the word does mean laudatory commendation, yet, certainly, this is not its precise import in these passages. It is contrasted in both texts with punishment. Now, the opposite of punishment is reward. A Christian government must hold forth rewards as well as punishments. Indeed, the magistrate should commend the good, encourage them by laudatory words, but empty words are not their full meed, the constitution itself should make provision that the good only should be elevated to the high places of power and trust, and establish it as a fundamental law, that the evil doer—the duellist, the drunkard, the adulterer, the gambler, the infidel, the atheist, shall have no seat there. God's ordinance exalts the well-doer. His *ministers* are the righteous whom he exalts, whilst he casts the wicked to the ground. And, although, every member of the community cannot bear rule, yet that rule which is exercised may be made to exert a peculiarly genial influence upon the good. So that to be good, may become an object of ambition, and the strife in the community shall be, not who shall be the greatest, but who shall be *the most excellent*. That constitution, by virtue of which, "the vilest men are exalted," and as a consequence, "the wicked walk on every side"—is not the ordinance of God, but has its origin from the Prince whose throne is erected in "the gates of hell." Such is civil government, according to this beautiful passage, and such the character of that constitution which can claim the high distinction of being the **MINISTER OF GOD**.