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A  
DISSERTATION

ON THE  
RIGHT AND OBLIGATION

OF THE  
CIVIL MAGISTRATE

TO TAKE CARE OF THE INTEREST OF RELIGION,  
AND PROVIDE FOR ITS SUPPORT;

IN WHICH THE ARGUMENTS IN CONFIRMATION  
OF SAID RIGHT AND OBLIGATION, BOTH FROM  
REASON AND THE SACRED SCRIPTURES,  
ARE ADDUCED :

THE USUAL OBJECTIONS EXAMINED,--TOGETHER  
WITH SEVERAL COROLLARIES DEDUCED  
FROM THE SUBJECT.

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BY SIMON BACKUS, A. M.,

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## INTRODUCTION.

**T**HE propensity of human nature to vibrate from one extreme to another, is so obvious as to become proverbial: which may afford a clue whereby to account for that diversity of sentiments which prevails with regard to particular subjects in different ages and periods of time.

During the reign of popery, the civil magistrate was supposed not only bound by virtue of his office to patronize and support religion in general, and to make provision for the maintenance of the public teachers of it; but also by the power of the civil sword, or penal laws, to compel an assent to such creeds and articles of faith, and a conformity to such ceremonies and modes of religious worship, as were enjoined by the church, or the pope: and all such as presumed to dissent from, or refused a conformity to such established standard of faith and worship, were, after conviction before an ecclesiastical tribunal, to be delivered over to the secular power, or the civil magistrate, who by a writ *de heretico comburendo*, or for burning of heretics, was to cause them to be publicly burnt to death.

Nor was this intolerant and persecuting spirit confined to the ages in which the papal system prevailed; particularly in England; but it continued after the commencement of the reformation. And during the reign of Henry the VIII. and Mary (who indeed was a bigotted papist,) and of Elizabeth, and the several branches or successions of the house of Stuart; the dire effects of which were severely felt by multitudes, in the deprivation of property, liberty and life; and averse

other corporal pains and penalties; for a mere non-conformity to the legal establishment of faith and worship.

This power of the civil magistrate, all protestants at the present day agree to expiode, as irrational, and absurd, and to the highest degree oppressive and inconsistent with the natural rights of mankind. And from a conviction and lively sense of this truth, derived from an experience of the horrid and pernicious effects of a power so exorbitant, the transition was very easy to the opposite extreme; or to a denial of all power, whatsoever, in the civil magistrate, with respect to matters of religion: Not duly considering the difference between power, and the abuse and misapplication of it; or absolute and unlimited power, and power under due limitations and restrictions. This I apprehend is a rational account of the origin of the doctrine maintained by many at the present day, viz. That the civil magistrate hath no authority whatsoever in matters of religion, any further than (as Dr. Price expresseth it) to keep the peace:--- thereby denying that it is any part of the duty or office of the civil magistrate to support religion, or to take it under his official patronage and protection. This I conceive is the most rational account which can be assigned for the origin of this doctrine, so far as it is founded in principle, or a conviction of judgment; or with respect to those who are honest in their professed belief of it.

But it is to be presumed that the clamors which have been so frequent, and vehement of late against the interference of the civil magistrate in religious matters, and the alarms of a conspiracy of church and state in Connecticut, for the subversion of civil and religious liberty, and the establishment of an aristocracy in the state, and hierarchy in the church, which with so much zeal and assiduity have been propagated in pamphlets, and in certain newspaper publications, proceed from a different source. The manifest tendency of such productions, together with that acrimony and virulence which they breathe towards the clergy, leave no room to entertain a

doubt with regard to the principal object their authors have in view. That under a pretended zeal for civil and religious liberty, the propagators of such productions are really exerting their utmost endeavors to subvert the foundations of both. Were the authors of such publications actuated by an honest zeal for the cause of civil and religious liberty, it is hardly to be supposed that they would make use of such disingenuous and sinister means to promote it. The cause of truth and righteousness doth not require the aid of falsehood and misrepresentation for its support; nor does it derive any advantage therefrom. Whereas, every person of any tolerable degree of knowledge and information with regard to the subjects of those clamors, and hideous complaints, which for a number of years past have been so constantly teeming from sundry presses, knows them to be mere chimeras, or phantoms, conjured up to frighten honest, though less informed people, with groundless imaginations, that their liberties are in danger; with a view to the accomplishment of objects very different from the liberties of the people--viz. the purposes of private or personal ambition, and the subversion of that civil and religious order which hath from the beginning been established in this State, and under the influence of which it hath so happily flourished in both its civil and religious interests. But whatever be the origin of the doctrine above mentioned, viz. that the civil magistrate hath nothing to do in his official capacity in matters of religion; that the doctrine itself is erroneous, and without any foundation, either in reason, or scripture; it is presumed will be made sufficiently manifest in the ensuing Dissertation.



A  
D I S S E R T A T I O N  
ON THE RIGHT AND OBLIGATION OF THE CIVIL MAGIS-  
TRATE TO SUPPORT RELIGION,

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**T**HE right and obligation of the civil magistrate to interpose in matters of religion, is a subject of no small controversy at the present day, many zealously contending that it is no part of the office, and duty of civil rulers, in their official capacity, to make provision for the support of religion; or to exercise their authority in any respect relative thereto. Nay, some even go so far as to deny the authority of the civil magistrate to protect religion; excluding the teachers of it from the benefit of the law for the recovery of their dues for their official services, from those to whom they have officiated pursuant to explicit contract. As I apprehend this to be a subject of great importance, so I conceive it will not be deemed an improper subject of discussion. And shall accordingly endeavor to maintain,

That the civil magistrate hath not only a right, but is indispensably bound, as an essential duty of his office, to protect and support religion.

This position I shall endeavor to establish in the first place, by adducing positive and direct proof of the point; and that both from reason and the sacred

Scriptures; and then by obviating the several objections which are usually alleged against it.

Previous to which, however, it may be proper to intimate, that by the above position; it is not intended to affirm that the civil magistrate hath a right, much less that he is in duty bound, to enforce by penal laws, a subscription or assent to any particular creed, or articles of faith, or a conformity to any particular ceremonies, or modes of religious worship, upon any subjects of the government, contrary to their avowed conscientious belief. The rights of conscience, and private judgment in matters of religion, are doubtless sacred and unalienable; and cannot be lawfully restricted, or infringed, by any human authority whatsoever. This concession, however, may require some explanation; that is, that it respects those religious sentiments, or such religious systems only, as are not incompatible with the safety of civil society. For when any particular members of a civil community maintain opinions inconsistent with the safety of the community, I conceive it a very clear point, that such civil society is not bound to tolerate such members. Agreeably to this sentiment, Mr. Locke in his treatise on toleration, observes, that a protestant state is not bound to tolerate roman catholics, in as much as it is one express article of their religion, that faith is not to be kept with heretics, as they stile all denominations of christians, who are not of their communion; and as they acknowledge subjection to a foreign jurisdiction, v. z. the roman pontiff; who challenges a power to absolve them from all oaths of allegiance, or any engagements, however sacred, which they may be under to their own government. And by parity of reason, I see not why the same observation will not apply with equal force to atheists, and all others who deny a future state of retribution, or who maintain any principles inconsistent with the nature and obligation of an oath.

Having made these preliminary observations; the way is prepared to attend to the eviednce, in support of our position above stated; which was proposed to be derived; both from reason and the sacred oracles.

And in the *First* place, reason teaches that the grand object and design of the institution of civil government, is the good and happiness of the community: The truth of this position is so obvious, and so generally conceded, that to attempt to prove it, would be nugatory and impertinent. And consequently, that whatever hath a manifest tendency to promote the public good, belongs to the province of the civil magistrate. But that religion hath a tendency to promote the public good, or the civil benefit of society; is a point so evident, that none who are not infected with the late French mania, can pretend to doubt; or call it in question. In so much that it is presumed, that history does not afford an instance of a nation, who have attempted to support civil government; without the aid and intervention of religion, till the late mad attempt in France; which, however, after a very short experiment, hath proved abortive; and the projectors of a government founded in atheism, have been convinced by dire experience of the folly, absurdity, and madness of the attempt.

The necessity of religion for the support of civil government; or its tendency to promote the good of society, appears from two considerations.

1st. As it is the grand nexus or bond of union, which binds civil society together; without which; the social compact would want its principal force and validity; as it is the only foundation, upon which the sacredness, and obligation of oaths, and every kind of engagements, which are essential to the existence of civil society intirely depend; and without which government could not subsist, truth be investigated, or justice administered to the

proper subjects. For where these fundamental articles of all religion, are denied or disbelieved, viz. the existence of a God, the immortality of the soul, and a future state of retribution; what imaginable foundation can there be left for the obligation of an oath, or the most solemn engagements, or declarations which a person could make? or what dependance could be rationally placed thereon? on supposition of the disbelief of the above mentioned articles, a person would have no possible motive to speak the truth, rather than the contrary, or to pay the least regard to his most sacred engagements, but what is derived from a respect to his temporal interest or honor; which in innumerable instances would predominate in favor of falshood, and consequently be productive of correspondent effects; all motives from conscience, and the fear of God, being by the supposition precluded. From the above observations, it appears, as I conceive, very manifest that religion is of essential importance, not only to the well being, but even to the very existence of civil government and society, and consequently, that according to the above position, it is what civil rulers have not only a right, but are indispensably bound, to make an object of their attention, as an essential part of their official duty. Indeed, religion and government have evidently a reciprocal dependance upon each other, and one cannot ordinarily subsist without the other; at least the latter without the former. As a confirmation of this truth, it is observable, that the champions of infidelity at the present day, are no less opposed to the restraints of human laws, than those of religion; contending for universal licentiousness, or following the dictates of nature as essential to liberty, and the acme of human perfection.\* But,

\* Not to mention Godwin and the modern French philosophers, the author hath been credibly informed that a certain personage of distinguished eminence in America, hath declared, that we never

d. That religion is conducive to the benefit and well being of civil society, and consequently that it is an object of civil government, is evident from its salutary influence upon the morals of mankind, or its tendency to prevent those vices, crimes, and enormities, which are destructive to society, and which are inconsistent with its safety and happiness.

It cannot be denied without manifest absurdity, contradiction, and the plainest dictates of reason, and the common sense of mankind, that vice and immorality, or crimes of almost every denomination, such for instance, as murder, robbery, piracy, theft, perjury, forgery, rape, adultery, and innumerable others, needless to mention, have a most direct tendency to prevent the prosperity and happiness of civil society, and to involve it in misery and ruin. Nor is it less evidently a dictate of common sense, that even the speculative belief of the great doctrines of religion, such as the being, and perfections of God, and the future accountability of mankind, for their conduct in this life, hath a very powerful tendency to restrain men from the commission of such crimes, and the practice of such vices; and in many instances, a more powerful tendency, than can be derived from any other considerations. Especially when these solemn truths are frequently held up to their view, and pressed, and urged upon their minds.\*

shall enjoy liberty in this country, till religion and government, and the marriage institution, are abolished! Which is the quintessence of the Godwinian system.

\* The truth of the above observation is clearly illustrated in the example of the patriarch Abraham, who, as an apology for calling his wife his sister, alleges that he thought surely the fear of God was not in that place, and that therefore they would slay him for his wife's sake: plainly intimating that he did not consider his life secure from violence, amongst a people who were not under the influence of the fear of God. The same truth is also exemplified in another celebrated character of antiquity: who from the influence of the same principle, was enabled to withstand the solicitations of a lewd woman in whose power he was; saying, how shall I do this great

There are few persons under stated and public religious instruction, who can so far divest themselves of the checks and restraints of conscience, as to be able to counteract its admonitions, without sensible pain and remorse; and who from that consideration alone, are not restrained from the perpetration of many crimes, and enormities, which notwithstanding any other restraint, they would not hesitate at all to commit. The truth of this observation being admitted, the truth of which, I conceive needs nothing to be said by way of confirmation, the consequence is undeniable, that religion hath a manifest tendency to the benefit, and happiness of civil society, and consequently that it is an object pertaining to the province of the civil magistrate, to make provision for its support.

Having taken a brief view of some of the rational arguments in favor of the right, and duty of the civil magistrate to support religion, we may in the

*Second* place enquire, what evidence, in support of our position, may be derived from divine inspiration? And,

To this purpose, we may observe in general, that it was the universal practice of the civil rulers of the

wickedness and sin against God? Very pertinent to the same purpose also is the declaration of Nehemiah, the pious governor of the Jews, who speaking of the oppression of his predecessors in office, observes: but so did not I, because of the fear of God: It is not a little curious, however, to observe the contrast between the sentiment of the above mentioned patriarchs, and a certain modern philosopher; who supposes it of no consequence, or no injury to him, that his neighbor should be an atheist, or a believer in no God: that it would neither break his leg, or pick his pocket! But with due deference to so high an authority, it may, it is conceived, admit a query, whether the hymental bed of a certain gentleman, might not have been less exposed to violation, had his neighbor been under the influence of a reverential belief of one God, instead of no God? As this belief operated as an effectual restraint upon the patriarch Joseph, above referred to, from a compliance with the seductions of a lascivious woman, doubtless the same principle would have been no less prevalent in restraining him from acting the part of a seducer.

Israelitish and Jewish nations, sanctioned with the most unequivocal expressions of divine approbation. This observation holds emphatically true, with respect to those, who stand characterised on sacred record, as good rulers: particularly David, Solomon, Aza, Jehosaphat, Hezekiah, and Joliah, who are celebrated as eminently good kings, and represented as having been very assiduous in the care and attention which they exercised, relative to matters of religion, preserving it from corruption, and restoring its institutions in their purity, when they had been depraved, and neglected, and making provision for the support of the public worship, and ordinances of God, and the ministers of the temple and the altar; proclaiming fasts, and days of humiliation, for national sins, and to deprecate national judgments, and to implore national blessings; for which they are handed down to posterity, with honor, and emphatical tokens of divine approbation, and as examples for the imitation of other rulers, in all succeeding ages.\*

\* To which may be added the example of the king of Nineveh, who upon the denunciation of destruction upon his kingdom, for their great wickedness, by the prophet Jonah, proclaimed a fast, and enjoined the observation of it with the utmost rigor. Upon which the anger of the Deity was placated, and the threatened calamity averted. But he lived in the dark ages, and was a poor ignorant pagan! had he been as wise, and had understood the limits of his own prerogative as well as the illuminated legislature of Rhode-Island, he would not have presumed to have meddled in such matters, even so much as to have recommended a fast; and Nineveh would consequently have been destroyed. But his conduct met the divine approbation; and all those who deny the right of the civil magistrate to support religion, consequently stand confuted. No less pertinent to this purpose are the examples of Cyrus, Darius, and Artaxerxes, kings of Persia, in the provisions which they made, and the orders and commissions which they issued under divine influence, for rebuilding the temple, and restoring the worship of God, and the institutions of religion at Jerusalem; of which we have an account at large in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah. Had they lived and done the like in this enlightened land and age, the Tatnais, the Gobiabs, the Shetherboznais, the Sanballats, the Geshams, and the Gashmues' of the present day, would doubtless with great zeal and patri-

And on the other hand, those kings and rulers, who have been of an opposite character, have been handed down to posterity, stigmatized with marks of infamy, and divine displeasure; as Jereboam, Ahab, Ahaz, Manassah, Ammon, &c. To cite all the particular passages calculated to illustrate the foregoing observations, would be to transcribe a great part of the books of Judges, Samuel, Kings, Chronicles, and indeed of the whole of the old testament. But there is one passage in the book of Nehemiah, the pertinency of which, to the present subject, is such, as demands particular attention. The passage I refer to is contained in the 13th Chapter, 10th, 11th and 12th verses.

And I perceived that the portion of the Levites had not been given them: but the Levites, and the singers that did the work (that is, the work of the sanctuary) had fled every one to his field. Then contended I with the rulers, and said why is the

otism have sounded an alarm, that the liberties of the people were in imminent danger, from a conspiracy of church and state. The form of government under which Jerusalem and the temple was rebuilt, and the temple worship restored after the Babylonish captivity, was monarchical; and therefore the infidels and enemies of religion of that day, with a view to frustrate the pious attempts of the Jews, and to deprive them of the royal patronage and support, without which, they knew they could not succeed; represented to the Persian monarch, that if he suffered them to proceed to build the city and temple, and consequently to restore the Jewish religion; it would endanger a diminution of the royal revenue: and for this purpose they wrote to the king in these words. Be it known unto the king, that if this city be builded, and the walls thereof set up again; then will they not pay toll, tribute, or custom; and so thou shalt endanger the revenue of the kings. Ezra 4th, 13th. Had the government been popular, or republican, the mode of attack would doubtless have been like that of their present successors, viz. by insinuating that for government to meddle with, or patronize religion, would endanger the liberties of the people. But in either case falsehood and misrepresentation would have been of essential importance. As it is a doctrine of the roman catholic faith, that it is lawful and commendable to lie for the good of the church; so it is esteemed no less lawful, and meritorious by the infidels, and minute philosophers of the present day, to lie for its destruction.

house of God forsaken? And I gathered them together, and set them in their place. Then brought all Judah the tithe of the corn, and the new wine, and the oil into the treasuries. From this passage; it is evident, beyond controversy that Nehemiah, the pious governor of Judah, upon his arrival at Jerusalem, to take upon him the civil government of the Jews, makes it one of the first objects of his attention, to provide for the regular and instituted worship of God, and the support of the ministers of religion; censuring the subordinate rulers, for their neglect of their duty in this respect; imputing all the blame of the house of God's being forsaken, to them (*then contended I with the rulers,*) saying, why is the house of God forsaken? And from a consciousness of having herein, faithfully discharged the duty of his office, he prays, as verse 14<sup>h</sup>. Remember me, O my God, concerning this, and wipe not out my good deeds, that I have done to the house of my God, and the offices thereof! What clearer demonstration can be exhibited, that it belongs to the office of the civil magistrate to take care of religion, and provide for its support, than the example of a civil magistrate of God's peculiar people, under divine direction and inspiration, actually taking upon himself the discharge of this office, censuring, and reprehending subordinate rulers, for their negligence in this respect, and solemnly appealing to heaven for his fidelity, in the performance of this service, as a part of his official duty? Indeed it must be acknowledged, that the proof from the new-testament, that it is the duty of the civil magistrate to support religion, is not quite so abundant, and explicit as from the old. But if nothing had been said, relative to the subject in the new-testament, directly nor indirectly, except it had been in direct opposition, and contradiction thereto; that would not have invalidated the arguments, in support of our position from the old-testament. As no

reason can be assigned, why it should be the duty of the civil magistrate, to support religion under the old testament dispensation, which doth not operate with equal force under the new; (as may more fully appear in the sequel) as there is nothing in the nature, or complexion of the thing itself, to lead us to conclude; that it was a part of the ceremonial law; or that it was peculiar to the Jewish economy. On the contrary, that it is evidently of a moral nature, resulting from the nature, relations, and fitness of things. That it is founded in reason; and conducive to the happiness, and well being of civil society; as hath been made sufficiently manifest, in the preceding observations. But there is one passage in the prophecy of Isaiah; though an old testament writer, which may yet be considered, as affording direct proof, that it is the duty and office of the civil magistrate to support religion under the gospel. The passage referred to, is in the 49th Chapter, at the 23d verse. Where describing the happy state of the church, in gospel times, the prophet declares, that she shall be the subject of the fostering, nurturing care of civil rulers, in these memorable words. Kings shall be thy nursing fathers, and their queens thy nursing mothers.

I am not insensible of the gloss put upon these words by those who deny it to belong to the office and duty of civil rulers to support religion in their official capacity, viz. That they signify no more than that civil rulers shall protect christians in the enjoyment of their natural rights, allow them liberty of conscience, and the free exercise of their religion, &c. But that this cannot be considered as the true construction of the prophecy, I conceive must be evident from several considerations. As first, that according to this construction, the words are expressive of no peculiar privilege which the church or christians should enjoy in distinction from the rest of mankind. For protection against external injury,

and in the enjoyment of natural rights, is what all men are entitled to expect from civil government, and which under every good government they will enjoy. But the words under consideration evidently import something more than this, viz. some special privilege which christians should enjoy above, or in distinction from mankind in general. Again 2dly. That the above construction cannot be the true one, is evident; in that it does not comport with the idea which such a representation naturally conveys to the mind; or with the character and office of a nurse; whose office and duty it is not only to guard and protect the child from external harm and injury, but also to provide for it proper and wholesome food, and medicine, together with the means of instruction and discipline, according to the age and exigence of the child; which is a very proper and natural metaphor when applied to civil magistrates and the church, to represent the duty of the former with respect to the latter; or in other words, to teach us that it is the duty and office of the civil magistrate to protect, cherish, patronize, and support religion; and also, that it is a privilege which the church should eminently enjoy in gospel times. From which a thought naturally occurs as a further confirmation of the truth of the position; I have been endeavoring to establish, viz. That if it is not the duty and office of the civil magistrate to support religion under the gospel-dispensation, then it will follow that the privileges of the church are diminished under the gospel; and that the old-testament church enjoyed a privilege superior to that of the new; or rather that the former enjoyed a privilege of which the latter is deprived: unless it should be said that it was no privilege at all for the civil magistrate to take care of the interest of religion, and provide for its support under the old-testament dispensation; which to say, I conceive, would be nothing short of an arrogant and impious impeachment of the wisdom

of Him who was and is the divine head and lawgiver of his church, both under the old testament and under the new.

But furthermore, though it hath been conceded that the proof of our position from the new-testament is not so explicit, direct, and abundant as from the old, yet taken in connexion with the old, the arguments in confirmation of the same general truth, are amply sufficient to put the matter beyond all reasonable doubt.

One probable reason why the writers of the new-testament, or rather that divine Spirit by whom they were inspired, did not see fit to be more explicit upon this subject, is, that it was so clearly and abundantly evident from the old-testament, as not to require to be largely and particularly insisted upon under the new; and also as the reasons upon which the duty is founded appear evidently to be of a moral nature, and consequently of perpetual obligation. Hence our Lord declares, that he came not to destroy the law and the prophets--and that not one jot or tittle thereof shall fail, till all be fulfilled.

Another probable reason of this omission is, that when the new testament was written, the civil powers of the world were opposed to christianity. For the Apostles, therefore, to have explicitly insisted upon the duty of the civil magistrate to support christianity, would have tended greatly to incense, and incur the resentment of civil rulers against christians, and to bring their vengeance upon them with redoubled fury.

But notwithstanding this apparent caution of the sacred writers of the new-testament, relative to this subject, they have yet taken sufficient care to establish the general principle; that when the rulers of the world, or any of them, should become christian, they might find their duty clearly designated, and pointed out, viz. to be nursing fathers to the church, and to take religion under their official patronage

and protection. This is sufficiently intimated 1 Cor. ix. 13, 14. Do ye not know that they that minister about holy things, live of the things of the temple? and they that wait at the altar, are partakers with the altar? Even so, hath the Lord ordained, that they that preach the gospel, should live of the gospel. In these words, the right of the preachers of the gospel, to a maintenance and support, is not only clearly and positively asserted, as being of divine ordination and appointment; but there is an allusion to the provision made by the law under the old testament, for the support of the ministers of the temple, and the altar; which, provision was under the direction of the civil magistrate, as hath been made abundantly evident in the preceding part of this dissertation. And the Apostle having referred to that institution as a truth which the Corinthians *very well knew; do ye not know, &c.* proceeds to apply it to the ministers of the gospel as to the general principle; *even so* hath the Lord ordained, that they that preach the gospel, should live of the gospel. It is not indeed pretended that the words *even so*, denote a perfect pallel or similarity between the provision made by the law for the ministers of the old-testament, and that which the Lord hath ordained for the ministers of the gospel. In several circumstantial respects there is a material difference. Particularly, with respect to the mode in which they were to be respectively supported. But doubtless the expression imports thus much, viz. that with respect to the principle upon which they were respectively entitled to a support, there is a perfect pallel, viz. the principle of moral rectitude, or justice and equity; and also that with respect to both, their support was of divine institution and appointment. As the Lord ordained that the ministers of the temple and altar should be supported by the people, so he hath ordained the same with respect to the ministers of the gospel. From which the consequence is obvious by genuine construction, that as the obliga-

tion in both cases is the same, resulting from a principle of moral rectitude, justice, and equity, (as may be more particularly considered hereafter) and being both the subject of divine injunction; and as the provision for the old-testament ministers belonged to the province of the civil magistrate, so it is also with respect to the ministers of the gospel. As the obligation in both cases was and is legal, so in both cases it is subject to the cognizance and jurisdiction of the civil magistrate, whose office and duty it is to see all legal obligations fulfilled, or justice administered to the proper subjects. As it was the duty of the civil magistrate, to make provision for the support of religion, or the ordinances, and ministers thereof, under the law, even so hath the Lord ordained it should be under the gospel. This conclusion, I conceive naturally follows, from the passage which we have been considering by genuine construction.

Thus I have endeavoured to fulfil the first part of the task, I took upon myself to perform, viz. To adduce some positive proof, both from reason and scripture; that it is the right, and duty of the civil magistrate in his official capacity, to protect and support religion.

And, I flatter myself that the evidence which hath been exhibited, will be deemed sufficient to establish the point, I undertook to support, unless the objections, or arguments on the other side of the question, should be judged sufficient to invalidate it. Whether they are or not, is the next thing proposed for our consideration and enquiry. And,

1st. It is objected against the doctrine, which we have attempted to support, that there is no occasion for the interference of the civil magistrate, for the support of religion, because, religion will support itself. If it is of divine origin, its divine author will take care of its preservation and support without the feeble aid of the civil magistrate. To which it may

be replied ; that this is arguing against undeniable fact, admitting the truth of divine revelation. For it is a fact, beyond all controversy, as hath been already evinced, that it belonged to the office of the civil magistrate, under the old testament dispensation, to take cognizance of the interest of religion, and provide for its support, according to the representations contained in the sacred volumn. To say, therefore, that there is no occasion for the civil magistrate to interfere in matters of religion, is either to contradict plain and demonstrative fact ; or else to charge the divine author of that dispensation, with adding the sanction of his approbation, and the seal of his authority, to a useless and unnecessary institution ; for there can be no reason assigned, why it should be more necessary, or expedient for the civil magistrate to take cognizance of religion, and provide for its support, under the old-testament dispensation, than under the new : not to insist upon what hath already been alleged and proved, from the scriptures, which have been adduced, that this is in fact a duty belonging to the office of the civil magistrate, under the gospel. To say, therefore, that God is able to take care of the interest of religion, and provide for its support, without the aid of the civil magistrate, is saying nothing to the purpose ; as it is saying no more than what may be said with equal propriety, with regard to civil government ; viz. That God is able by his own immediate power to accomplish all the ends of that institution, without the aid and instrumentality of men ; that he is able to inform the judgment, and influence the heart of men, in such a manner, as to dispose them to do equal justice to one another, and to behave in all respects as good members of society, to that degree, as to supercede the necessity of civil government. Nay, it may with equal propriety be alledged, and with equal force of argument, that God is able to accomplish all the effects, and events which take place

in the natural and moral world, by his own immediate efficiency, which are produced by the intervention of second causes, means, or instruments. As for instance; he is able to cause the earth to yield spontaneously, or without cultivation, all those productions, which are necessary for the sustentation, preservation, comfort, and delight of human life. But shall we conclude from hence, that civil government is a useless and unnecessary institution, and that all the beneficial and salutary effects, which are derived therefrom, would actually take place without it? or that the labor of the husbandman is altogether vain, and that the blessing above mentioned, would be enjoyed by mankind, without their own exertions as well as with them? The falshood and absurdity of such conclusions, are obvious to every person, not totally void of reason and common sense; as they are not only contrary to the express declarations of divine revelation, but to the universal experience of mankind. Again, it may be observed that God is able to communicate the knowledge of the gospel, to all mankind, and the saving efficacy of it upon the hearts of men, without means or instruments. But, whosoever should infer from hence, that the gospel ministry and the means of grace, are useless and unprofitable institutions, would argue against universal experience, and the general tenor of the gospel: particularly to that declaration of the Apostle Paul; faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God, for how shall they believe on him, of whom they have not heard; and how shall they hear without a preacher? In a word, the objection under consideration, depends for all its weight and validity, upon the supposed truth of this position, viz. That whatever the Deity is able to effect by his own immediate power, without the intervention of means, or second causes, He evermore does, and will effect without them; and consequently, that He never does, or

will make use of any means, in the production of any effects whatsoever, either in the natural or moral world! Than which nothing can be more absurd, and repugnant to fact and universal experience.

A 2d. objection, which is often brought against the position which I have endeavoured to maintain, is,

That to admit that it belongs to the office of the civil magistrate to support religion, is to invest him with power to support a false religion; which the objector supposes to be absurd, and sufficient to prove, that such a power cannot be truly lodged in the hands of the civil magistrate.

In reply to which, it may be observed, that it is conceded, that under a pretext of supporting religion, the civil magistrate may prostitute his power, for the support of a false religion. That under a pretext of supporting the worship of the true God, he may support idolatry, or the worship of false gods; as was in fact, the case of the kings of Israel, from Jereboam the first, to the final dissolution of that kingdom, and the great part of the kings of Judah. But this was a perversion and abuse of their power, and not the proper exercise of it. It is no proof that a person is not invested with power for certain purposes, because he is capable of perverting it to very different purposes; and that he actually does so pervert it; even to purposes directly contrary to those, for which it was given. If this objection, or argument proves any thing, it proves too much; viz. That no man or body of men can be lawfully, or actually invested with any power, which they are capable of abusing, or perverting to bad purposes. But this goes to deny that any man, or body of men are, or can be invested with any power whatsoever. For what power can be conceived of, with which men can be invested, which cannot be thus abused, and perverted? This argument, or objection, if it proves any thing, proves that no man, or body of

men can be invested with the power of legislation, or enacting laws, for the equal administration of justice, and the protection and security of men in the enjoyment of life, liberty and property; or their just rights, and privileges; because, under such a pretext, they make laws of directly the contrary nature, and tendency; or as the prophet expresses it, *frame iniquity by a law*. It proves also that no men may, or can be lawfully invested with the power of executing the laws, or administering justice between man and man; because, under the pretext of such authority, they may be guilty of great injustice, and oppression; by perverting judgment, condemning the innocent, and acquitting the guilty, &c. It moreover proves, that no man may lawfully be invested with the power to teach the doctrine, and inculcate the duties of christianity; because, under the cloak of that power, he may teach doctrines, directly contrary to those of christianity; and inculcate for duties, things most opposite to those enjoined in the gospel. I say the objection under consideration, if there be any force in it, goes to prove all the absurdities above mentioned, and innumerable more; and therefore, according to an established rule of reasoning, proves nothing at all; or hath no force or validity in it.

A 3d. objection against the above position, is, that it is an infringement of religious liberty, or liberty of conscience, for the civil magistrate to take cognizance of, and support religion. In answer to this objection, it may be observed,

1. That it is superceded by the concession in the preliminary part of this dissertation, viz. That by the position which we have been endeavouring to establish, it is not intended to affirm that the civil magistrate hath a right, to enforce upon any of his subjects, a subscription, or assent to any particular creed or articles of faith; or a conformity to any particular modes or forms of religious worship, or

to prohibit them the free profession of those religious opinions, and that religious worship, which they believe to be most agreeable to the will of the Deity, and most acceptable to him; provided those religious opinions and worship, be not such, as to be inconsistent with the safety of the state, or the community of which they are members. Under these restrictions, it is conceived there can be no just ground to object against the doctrine contained in the above position, on account of any infringement of liberty of conscience, therein implied. For what imaginable ground, can there be to complain of an infringement of liberty of conscience, or of religious liberty, when every person hath full liberty to profess just such a religion, and to perform just such acts of worship, as he is persuaded in his own conscience are most acceptable to that Being, whom he professes to worship: except only when the religion professed, is such as is subversive of the state, or the peace and safety of the community, of which he is a member? But,

2. In reply to this objection, it may be observed, that the rights of conscience are equally sacred, and inviolable in all ages; and whatever can be justly considered as an infringement of the right and liberty of conscience now, was equally so four thousand years ago. Whatever is inconsistent with liberty of conscience under the gospel dispensation, was no less inconsistent therewith under the law. But that it was not inconsistent with the just rights, and liberty of conscience, for the civil magistrate to protect and support religion under the law, is abundantly evident from the sacred oracles, as hath been already evinced. From whence it appears beyond all contradiction, that the civil magistrate under that dispensation did according to divine appointment, and with the most manifest tokens of divine approbation, exercise authority in matters of religion; making provision for its support, protecting it from its adver-

ries, &c. And, therefore, this objection also, if it be of any force, proves too much, viz. that God did authorise the Jewish magistrate to do that which was an infringement of the just rights and liberty of conscience. and manifested his approbation of his so doing. That is, that the God of truth and righteousness, with whom it is impossible to do any thing but what is perfectly just and right, did approve of that which is in its own nature unjust, and repugnant to the eternal rule of rectitude, or the moral law! And consequently this objection appears to be without any just foundation. But,

4thly. It is alleged as a further objection against the arguments which have been advanced in support of our position, that the civil government of the Jews was a theocracy, or a divine government, and therefore that there is no arguing from the duty and office of the civil magistrate of the Jews in matters of religion, to the duty of christian magistrates in the same respects, or with regard to similar matters.

Upon which it may be observed, that if by the Jewish government being a theocracy, is meant, that the administration of that government was by the immediate hand of God, without the instrumentality of men; we know this to be directly contrary to fact. Or if it be meant that the Jewish rulers were by divine influence guided, and directed by such an infallible impulse as to be thereby effectually secured from all errors, or maladministration in matters of religion, so that the people might be assured that whatever religious opinions, or forms of worship were patronized by their rulers, were infallibly right, and consonant to the divine mind and will---I say, if this is what the objector would infer from the Jewish government being a theocracy; it may be replied, that this also is a most palpable mistake, being repugnant to plain and undeniable fact: there being nothing more evident from the history of that nation, than that their rulers did in a variety of instances, by their authority, countenance and support

very great errors and corruptions in religion, both in principle and practice; even the grossest idolatry and polytheism. Or will it be alleged as an inference from the theocracy of the Jews, that the true religion, and which is agreeable to the mind and will of God, was more clearly defined and delineated under the Jewish dispensation than under the christian, and attended with less darkness and obscurity; and consequently that it was more safe to entrust the support of religion in the hands of the civil magistrate under that dispensation, than under the present? The bare stating of this hypothesis is sufficient to confute it; as it is in direct opposition to the doctrine of the Apostle Paul, and the whole tenor of the gospel; which represent the evangelical dispensation, on account of the superabundant light which it contains, and exhibits, with respect to religion, as transcending that of the law as much as the meridian splendor of the sun exceeds the twinkling of the stars. The above are the only inferences, which I conceive of, from the theocracy of the Jews, tending in the least degree to invalidate the arguments from the old testament in favor of its being the duty of the christian magistrate to support religion. And these being evidently false and chimerical, the argument thence arising stands in its full force, the theocracy of the Jews notwithstanding.

A 5th objection or reason assigned by certain persons against the truth of our position, is that the gospel is free; by which they seem to suppose that the external dispensation of the gospel, or the means of religious instruction, ought to be without expense to those who enjoy them; or at least that every one ought to be left to his own opinion, whether he will contribute any thing to this purpose or not. But this opinion, I scruple not to say, hath nothing to support it, either from scripture or reason. Indeed, the grace and spiritual blessings which the gospel exhibits, are free; nothing can be freer; and all are

invited to come and partake of them freely, without money, and without price. But this by no means implies, that those who labor in the external dispensation of the gospel, should not be supported by those for whom they labor. Hence says the Apostle, if we have ministered to you in spiritual things, is it a great thing that we should be partakers of your carnal things? As if he had said--if we have spent our time and strength in laboring for your spiritual benefit, is it an unreasonable or unjust thing, that you should impart to us of those temporal good things, which are necessary for the support and comfort of temporal life? By no means; it is altogether just and reasonable. Hence says he, let him that is taught in the word communicate to him that teacheth in all good things. There is no more evident dictate of reason and common justice, as well as of the sacred oracles, than that the laborer is worthy of his hire, or his reward; which are the express words of our Saviour, relative to this very subject, viz. The right of the ministers of the gospel to a compensation for their ministerial labors. But if they are worthy of their reward, as other laborers are, then it is their just due: And if it is their just due, then they are entitled to some effectual means, whereby to obtain it; which can be no other than the power of the civil magistrate, whose duty and office it is, to see justice duly administered between man and man; or that every man hath his just due. So that it is evident to a demonstration, that it is not left to every one's option, who sits under the dispensation of the gospel, and enjoys the benefit of ministerial labors, either directly, or indirectly, whether he will contribute any thing to the support of it or not. In this respect the gospel neither is, nor ever was designed to be free. But doth not our Lord, when he sent forth his disciples to preach the gospel, say, freely ye have received, freely give? I answer, this refers to those miraculous operations which they

were empowered to perform. Matt. x. 8. Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils; freely ye have received, freely give. These gifts were to be dispensed freely, being properly the works of God and not of man. Hence to have taken a reward for them, would have been highly impious; as is particularly evident from the instance of Simon Magus, who offered money to the Apostle Peter, for the power of communicating the miraculous gifts of the Holy Ghost; to whom Peter replies, *thy money perish with thee, because thou thoughtest that the gift of God might be purchased with money.* But with respect to preaching, the direction was *take neither purse nor script &c. for your journey, for the laborer is worthy of his reward.* But it is objected,

6thly. That our Lord declares that his kingdom is not of this world; and, therefore, says the objector, it is not to be supported by temporal means, or the power of the civil sword, or secular power, as is the case with respect to temporal kingdoms.

This declaration we have, John xviii. 36. Jesus said, my kingdom is not of this world; if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight for me, that I should not be delivered to the Jews. But now is my kingdom not from hence. But I conceive it must be by a very singular kind of logic to infer from the above declaration, that the civil magistrate in his official capacity, hath no concern with religion, or that it is not his duty to protect and support it. Christ's kingdom being not of this world, might be a very good reason why he had not an army, or a life guard to defend him against his enemies; and yet be no reason at all why the civil magistrate should not protect and support religion. The force of this objection seems to depend upon the supposition that no human means, or instruments, were to be employed in the propagation and support of Christ's kingdom; which would exclude ministers as well as magistrates, from

having any concern with it. But more directly in answer to this objection, it may be observed, that Christ was the king of the old testament church as well as the new. He was then set as king upon God's holy hill Zion. And his kingdom was no more a kingdom of this world under the former dispensation, than under the present. Though the administration, and positive ordinances, and modes of worship, &c. were different, yet the essential nature, and grand object of Christ's kingdom, under the old testament dispensation, were, doubtless, the same as under the new. Christ's kingdom, therefore, being not of this world, affords no stronger argument against the right and duty of the civil magistrate, to support religion under the latter, than under the former. And consequently, as it is evident beyond all reasonable controversy, that it belonged to the office and duty of the civil magistrate under the old testament dispensation, so it does under the new, notwithstanding the above objection, that Christ's kingdom is not of this world. But after all, it is probable that some tender conscienced objectors may still insist that they cannot in conscience part with their money, for the support of religion or the teachers of it, in obedience to the civil magistrate. There are hardly any two words of more dissimilar signification, than conscience and money: and yet it seems they are some times used as synonymous terms. Or perhaps, to speak more correctly, it is to be feared, that persons often mistake that inordinate love of money, which is the root of all evil, and which renders them extremely loth to part with it, for the support of religion, for a conscientious scruple with regard of the lawfulness of so doing. One reason assigned by certain persons, why they cannot in conscience part with their money for the support of religion, in compliance with the requisition of the civil magistrate, is that the money is like to be applied, or at least is liable to be applied to the

support of a religion, or form of worship, which they suppose to be erroneous, and in which they cannot in conscience join. But this plea, if it be of any validity, will operate against paying any taxes whatsoever, which we as individuals suppose will, or may be applied to any purpose we do not approve, or think to be wrong, or not conducive to the public good. The civil magistrate, the Apostle tells, is a minister of God for good, and that we are bound to be subject not only for wrath, but for conscience sake. I would not be understood to suppose, that this declaration of the Apostle can justly be alleged in support of the doctrine of passive obedience, and non-resistance; or that there is no case in which a person may be under conscientious obligations to withhold obedience to the requisitions of the civil magistrate. Doubtless, where such requisitions run counter to the plain revealed will of the Deity, the rule is express, that we ought to obey God rather than man. But with what reason or propriety can this rule be alleged in justification of our withholding our money in compliance with the requisition of a lawful magistrate, or civil government, under a pretence that such a demand is an infringement of the rights of conscience? as where do we find that a compliance with such a demand would be to counteract the plain revealed will of God? On the contrary, doth not our Saviour's express approbation of paying tribute to Cæsar, put the matter beyond all reasonable doubt? Especially if it be considered, that there was strong reason to apprehend as the money was paid to an idolatrous emperor, it would, at least in part, be applied to the support of an idolatrous religion?

The above objections are all that I recollect to have heard advanced against the doctrine I undertook to establish; the invalidity of which I humbly conceive hath been sufficiently manifested in the

foregoing observations, and consequently the truth of the position remains unshaken.

There are several Corollaries which seem naturally to result from the position I have endeavoured to support, which I conceive require some particular consideration. As,

1st. That one important qualification of magistrates or civil rulers, is that they should be men of religion. Certainly, if it is an important, not to say an essential duty of their office to patronize and support religion by their authority, and thus perform the part of nursing fathers to the church; it is no less their duty to do the same by their example. The former without the latter, will commonly be but to very little purpose. Hence the fear of God, a phrase frequently made use of in scripture, to express a religious character, is represented by the Psalmist, as an essential ingredient in the character of a ruler. He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God. Here justice and the fear of God, or a devout reverence of the divine majesty, are considered as inseparably connected; and it is intimated that we can have no security for the justice of a ruler's administration, who is destitute of the fear of God. Agreeably hereto, an unjust judge is characterized by our Saviour as one that feared not God, and, consequently, regarded not man. The same qualification Moses is directed by his father-in-law Jethro, to respect in the appointment of rulers over the Israelites, no doubt under divine direction. Look ye out from among all the people---Men that fear God, &c. and make them rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens. A wicked ruler is represented in the sacred oracles a great judgment upon a people, and as a token of divine displeasure. Hence, says the Most High, with respect to Saul, I gave them a king in mine anger. And says Solomon, as a roaring lion, and ranging bear, so is a wicked ruler. And again, says he;

when the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice, but when the wicked beareth rule, the people mourn. He also observes, that a king sitting upon the throne of judgment, scattereth iniquity with his eyes. By which it is evident he means a good king, one who is a terror to evil doers, and a praise and encouragement to them that do well; for the opposite effects are ascribed by the Psalmist to the influence of wicked rulers, viz. that it gives the wicked courage to come forth out of their lurking places, and show themselves with boldness and confidence, without fear or shame. The wicked walk, says he, on every side, when the vilest men are exalted. Under the administration of infidel and irreligious rulers, men of similar characters, become prime favorites at court, and engross the honors and emoluments of the state, and are the only men who stand candidates for posts of dignity and profit in the government---In which case nothing can be expected, but that infidelity, and immorality, and all those vices, which are destructive to society, will come in like a flood, and deluge the land, and involve it in misery and ruin.

Corol. 2d. It is also obvious from the preceding observations, as a genuine conclusion naturally flowing therefrom, that it is the duty of those who are entrusted with the appointment of rulers, to have a respect to the religious character of those for whom they give their suffrage. To say that it belongs to the office and duty of the civil rulers to patronize, and support religion, and consequently, that they ought to be men of religion themselves; and yet at the same time to say, that they to whom it belongs to invest them with their official character, are under no obligation to have a regard to their religious qualifications, is an absurdity, and little, if any thing short of a contradiction. To commit the most important interests of the community, as well as our own, both civil and religious, into the hands of men,

whom we have no reason to apprehend, have the fear of God before their eyes, is a most irrational and preposterous as well as criminal piece of conduct; a betraying the public trust, and a vile prostitution of a talent, for which we must give an account. What security can we have, that infidels, or persons who have no regard to religion, or reverence for the Deity, when advanced to places of public trust, will not at every opportunity sacrifice the interest of their constituents, to their own private passions, or emolument? To administer an oath of fidelity to persons of the above description would be perfectly nugatory, not to say a profanation.\*

\* As an illustration of the truth and propriety of the preceding corollaries, the happy influence which such a principle would probably have upon the practice of duellings, it is conceived, may pertinently be adduced. How low in the scale of degradation must the state of society be reduced, when such nefarious crimes, such horrid abominations are perpetrated with the connivance, and implicit approbation of public authority; and become so prevalent, that to support the character of a gentleman and a man of honour, and avoid the imputation of cowardice, a man must divest himself of his reason, that godlike faculty, by which principally he is distinguished from the brutes, throw away that life which is the only substratum of all enjoyment of a temporal nature, counteract the dictates of his own conscience, and bid defiance to the vengeance of the Almighty! Alas, can no method, no expedient be devised to expel this horrid monster, this hydra, this gorgon, this complication and consummation of irrationality, barbarism and impiety from this land of boasted civilization, and refinement; in which reason and philosophy are so much cultivated, and in which the light of divine revelation shines in its meridian splendour! Can there be a stronger demonstration of a woeful degeneracy, and corruption of principle and morals amongst a people; or that the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint, and that the whole body is full of wounds and bruises, and putrifying sores? In point of rationality, Empedocles, who to obtain an apotheosis cast himself headlong into the flaming crater of mount Etna, hath vastly the preeminence when compared with him who fights a duel on the usual grounds. For the former, according to the doctrines of the pagan theology in which he had been educated, and in which he doubtless firmly believed, expected to receive an ample compensation for the loss of his temporal life, viz. an immortal and exalted felicity in the future world. Whereas the utmost that the duellist can expect as a counter balance for the loss of his life, and his soul, is to escape the jeers and scoffs of the infidel, and un-

From whence it follows as a

3d. Corol. That it belongs to the duty and office of the ministers, or public teachers of religion, to inculcate these duties, and make them the occasional subjects of their public preaching. It is doubtless the duty of the ministers of the gospel to declare the whole counsel of God; otherwise they could not exonerate themselves from the guilt of the blood of souls. The Apostle Paul declares, that he was pure from the blood of all men; and as a proof of it, observes, that he had not shunned to declare the whole counsel of God. Acts xx. 26, 27. But whatever is enjoined in the sacred oracles as a duty incumbent upon any man, class or discription of men, constitutes a part of the counsel of God. And, consequent'y, it is incumbent upon ministers of the gospel to make such duties occasionally, the subjects of their preaching, as they would not be guilty of shunning to declare the whole counsel of God. All moral, relative and social duties are to be explained, and inculcated by the public teachers of religion: such are the duties of husbands and wives, parents and children, rulers and subjects, &c. And one class of these duties are no less properly the subjects of a minister's preaching than an other,

principled part of mankind, which may properly be termed the laughter of fools, and to be by such persons dubbed a man of courage. A noble and heroic courage! The courage of a madman, who trembles at the shaking of a leaf, a mere phantom, an ignis fatuus, a nonentity, and dashes out his brains against a wall, and bids defiance to that almighty Being whom to fear is an argument of the highest wisdom—and whom not to fear is an evidence of the most stupid folly and madness! Which shews the vast importance of the fear of God, or a principle of religion as a qualification of a ruler, and also of a consciencious regard to this qualification in those by whom they are invested with their official character; from the want of which principle it is that the practice of duelling derives its origin; and the predominance of which in our several branches, or departments of government, would effectually annihilate this enormity, so vile and horrible in its nature, and in its consequences to society, so fatal and pernicious.

for they all equally constitute a part of the counsel of God ; being particularly, and explicitly enjoined and inculcated in the sacred scriptures. One character under which ministers of the gospel are represented, and from which their duty may be inferred, is that of watchmen. *Isai. lii. 8.* Where the prophet speaking of the promulgation of the gospel, says, thy watchmen shall lift up the voice &c. And *Chap. ii. 6.* I have set watchmen upon thy walls, O Jerusalem, who shall not hold their peace day nor night. In which passages, it is evident that by watchmen, the ministers of the gospel are to be understood. In conformity to the same representation, the Apostle speaking of ministers, says, they watch for your souls, as they that must give an account. But the office and duty of a watchman, every one knows, is to give warning of an approaching enemy, or danger. And, consequently, it belongs to the office of ministers of the gospel to warn their people of those enemies and dangers, with regard to which they are styled watchmen. which, indeed, it is conceded are spiritual enemies and dangers, or which endanger the loss of their spiritual, or religious privileges, and consequently, their salvation. But what can have a more direct tendency to the production of this effect, than the prevalence, and propagation of infidelity, immorality, and a corruption and depravation of manners amongst a people ? And what can tend more effectually to promote these effects than the example and patronage of rulers of infidel, and irreligious characters among them ; under whose influence and connivance, infidelity, and impiety may stalk in open day-light, without a mask or disguise, shame or remorse ? This being the case, it must surely be an important part of the duty of the ministers of the gospel, whom God hath set as watchmen upon the walls of Jerusalem, to warn their people of the dangerous, and fatal consequences, resulting from the election of men of the above description, for

rulers over them, and the consequent obligation incumbent on electors to pay a strict, and conscientious attention to the opposite qualifications of those, for whom they give their suffrage. The same inference is equally deducible from another character under which ministers of the gospel are designated, viz. that of pastors or shepherds, a part of whose office it is to defend the flock from the ravages of wolves, and other beasts of prey.

From which it follows as a

4th Corol. That the censures passed upon ministers by many at the present day, for occasionally making some of these duties the subjects of their preaching; stigmatizing them as political preachers, &c. is very unreasonable and injurious. If for ministers to make the duties and qualifications of rulers and subjects, and particularly of electors, the occasional subjects of their preaching, is to preach politics, then I scruple not to say, that it is no wise out of character for a minister to preach politics. Nay, it is an essential part of the duty of his function to preach politics; and which he cannot neglect but at the peril of shunning to declare the whole counsel of God; for the bible is full of such politics. Preaching politics, or political preaching seem to be phrases of ominous import, or cant phrases designed to fix a stigma upon the clergy, or to possess the minds of the more illiterate and undiscerning, with an idea that ministers have abandoned the appropriate duties of their function, and combined in a machivailian plot to support one political party merely as such, in opposition to another. Whereas, was the truth properly stated and apprehended, the phantom would vanish, and it would appear, that the grievous cry against the clergy for preaching politics, amounted to no more, than that on certain special occasions, they explained and inculcated the duties and qualifications of rulers, as delineated in the sacred scriptures, viz. That they should be men friendly to re-

ligion; men that fear God and hate covetousness; and that electors ought to have a respect to these qualifications in the persons whom they designate to places of rule and authority in the government. Which every person tolerably acquainted with the bible knows to be an important part of ministerial duty.\*

The inculcation of the duty of subjects towards their rulers, is expressly enjoined upon ministers as a part of their official duty. Put them in mind (says the Apostle to Titus, a minister of the gospel) to be subject to principalities and powers, and to obey magistrates. Tit. iii. 1. But the duties of subjects and rulers are reciprocal; and consequently an explanation, and inculcation of the one, naturally involves the other. Hence the Apostle in his epistle to the Romans, chap. xiii. at the beginning, after enjoining upon them the duty of subjection to rulers, or the higher powers, as an ordinance of God, adds as a further reason for this subjection, that rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil, and that they are ministers of God for good, that is to the people; and that for this cause they paid tribute, because they (rulers) were God's ministers attending continually upon this very thing, viz. the public

\* Perhaps the real ground of the grievous accusations against the clergy, which are exhibited by many at the present day, for preaching what they call politics, may not be their simply explaining and inculcating the duties and qualifications of civil rulers, and those of electors, but rather the particular sentiments relative to those subjects which they endeavor to impress upon the minds of their hearers.—Should ministers adopt the other side of the question, and boldly assert and maintain from the desk, that civil government has nothing to do in matters of religion; and that electors are under no obligations to respect the religious characters and qualifications of those whom they elect to places of power and trust in the government; that it is a matter of perfect indifference to society whether their rulers believe in one God, in twenty Gods, or no God; it may be queried, whether they might not probably escape those severe censures, and that volley of calumnies which are so liberally bestowed upon them by a certain class of men for preaching politics?

good. Which is not to be understood as a declaration that this *de facto* is the real character of all such as sustain the nominal office or occupy the place of rulers; and that unconditional, and implicit obedience is to be paid them accordingly. For this would be to revive the antiquated and exploded doctrine of passive obedience and non-resistance, to which it is presumed, they who are so clamorous against ministers for preaching politics at the present day would be among the last to subscribe. But these representations, are doubtless to be understood as descriptive of what rulers ought to be, rather than as a declaration of what they really are. And consequently when ministers undertake in obedience to the apostolic injunction, to put people in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, and to obey magistrates, the character of rulers, or magistrates, naturally comes into view as a subject of discussion; and also, the nature and extent of that subjection and obedience which is their due, together with the ground and reason of it, viz. their being ministers of God for good to the people over whom they preside. But this is that preaching politics which renders ministers so much the objects of obloquy from certain persons at the present day. On the whole, from the preceding observations, and particularly from the passages of scripture which have been adduced, I conceive it must be very manifest, that were ministers to be debarred preaching upon those subjects which are stigmatized by many under the obnoxious epithet of politics, or which are considered as political subjects, a great portion of scripture would be excluded, and condemned, as containing improper matter for ministers to make the subjects of their preaching. The consequence of which hypothesis would be, that ministers ought not to declare the whole counsel of God. But from this judgment the appeal of the Apostle Peter, in a case not very dissimilar, I conceive, may not imper-

tinently be adopted....Whether it be right in the  
fight of God, to hearken unto you more than unto  
God....judge ye.







