

THE SABBATH.

A

DISCOURSE

ON THE

DUTY

OF

Civil Government,

IN

RELATION

TO THE

SANCTIFICATION

OF THE

LORD'S DAY.

“Blessed is the man—that keepeth the Sabbath from polluting it.” *Isaiah.*

BY JAMES R. WILLSON, D. D.

NEWBURGH :

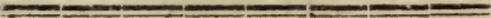
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THE GENERAL UNION

FOR PROMOTING THE OBSERVANCE OF THE CHRISTIAN SABBATH

AND THE ADVANCEMENT OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD



TO THE

General Union for promoting the observance of the Christian Sabbath: The following Discourse is respectfully inscribed by its

THE AUTHOR.



BY

WILLIAM A. WALKER

THE SABBATH.

“Hear ye the word of the Lord, ye kings of Judah, and all Judah, and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, that enter in by these gates : Thus saith the Lord ; take heed to yourselves, and bear no burden on the Sabbath day, nor bring it in by the gates of Jerusalem. Neither carry forth a burden out of your houses on the Sabbath day, neither do ye any work, but hallow ye the Sabbath day, as I commanded your fathers.”
Jeremiah xvii. 20—22.

The revolutions of day and night, and the changes of the seasons, by which time is measured, are ordained by the God of Heaven. The heavenly bodies perform their circuits at his command ; for they are all his servants. Our times are wholly in the hand of the Lord Jehovah. To him, then it belongs, to decree in what manner time of which he is the author, shall be appropriated by the inhabitants of the earth, who are the subjects of his moral government. This decree he has issued. “Remember the Sabbath-day to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour and do all thy work. But the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God ; in it thou shalt not do any work.”* As by the movements of the orbs of heaven, he has divided time into measured portions of duration, consisting of days, months and years ; so, by the statute recited above, he has established a moral division. The natural admeasurements of our time, refer to the wants of our animal nature chiefly, while the moral arrangement of weeks estimated by the weekly return of a day of sacred rest respects our moral nature, and enforces the observation of the moral and religious duties, which we are bound to perform.

Every human being on earth, whatever station he occupies in society, is compelled by the necessities of his nature, and the relation he sustains to the natural world which he inhabits, to accommodate his course of labours to the natural revolutions of day and night, and to have respect to summer and winter, seed time and harvest. The God of creation has so ordered it, that not only the comfort of man, but even his

* Ex. xx. 8—10.

continuance in life, necessarily requires such an accommodation to times and seasons. The moral obligation to act agreeably to the moral division, is as great as the natural obligation to attend to the natural divisions. He would act madly who should neglect the one, and he acts wickedly who despises the other.

In relation to these, the king and the peasant, the civil ruler and the subject, are equally bound, to have respect to the will of God, whether that will is made known as it is recorded in the books of creation and providence, or in the Bible. "Hear the word of the Lord, ye kings of Judah, and all Judah, and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem."

It is with pain, we observe that all this has been lately questioned and solemnly denied by one of the most respectable legislative bodies at present existing among the nations. It is known to all, that many thousands of the friends of moral order have of late petitioned both houses of the Congress of the United States to cease from the transportation of the mails, and the transaction of post-office business on the Lord's day. There never has been by petition so general an expression of the public will. It was not confined to any one denomination of Christians, nor even to professors of religion alone. There has been, on the part of the Senate, not only a refusal to grant the request of the petitioners, but this refusal has been accompanied by reasons of a very novel and extraordinary character, which must be deeply deplored by every true patriot. Reserving the examination and refutation of the doctrine of that state paper for another part of this discussion, it is sufficient at present to state, that the report of the committee, which was adopted by the Senate, and of which 3000 copies were ordered to be printed, utterly denies that legislators are bound to know, ascertain, or regard the law of God.

This renunciation of the divine authority, is received with applause by the ungodly in the land, while the good are filled with grief and sorrow. That noble efforts for the preservation of moral order, may still be encouraged, every good man should speak out boldly, and contribute his portion of aid, to awaken still more vigorous and persevering exertions in the best of all causes. It is with this view, fellow Christians, that we address you at present, on this great topic. As the ground of such a discussion, nothing could be more appropriate than our text, which records the command of God to rulers and people, to carry no burden either out or in by the gates on the Sabbath day. It is proposed to prove that civil rulers should promote the sanctification of the Lord's day.

I. From the nature of their office.

II. From the testimony of Scripture; and

III. Apply the argument to the existing controversy respecting the transaction of post-office business, and the transportation of mails, on the first day of the week.

I. *From the nature of the office of civil rulers.* That the moral and pecuniary interests of society are closely connected with the character of the civil institutions of any country, must be admitted by all intelligent men. Here the energies of society are concentrated, for the preservation of peace, plenty, and social order, or for the destruction of all these. When this institution is established on a proper basis, it is the ordinance of the God of heaven. We argue then in favour of our proposition:

1. From the fact that the civil ruler is God's minister. "The powers that be are ordained of God." "For he" (the civil magistrate) "is God's minister."* By this we do not intend to intimate that the divine right of hereditary kings to reign over nations, without the consent of the people, is to be maintained. Under pretence of such a right tyrants and usurpers have enslaved, trampled under foot, and degraded the nations of the old world for ages. For this there is no ground either in reason or revelation. The delegation of power to rule, by the free suffrages of a majority of the people, is the only medium, through, which at present, any one can be lawfully invested with civil authority. On this great principle, depends all the security of human freedom and human right. This is the citadel of liberty in civil concerns; in which our fathers of the revolution entrenched themselves; here they fought; here many of them bled; and here they were nobly victorious. But should any one adventure farther, and maintain, as some do, as the ungodly generally do, that civil government is the ordinance of man only, that the majority of the people are the ultimate fountain of social law and social order, and that the ruler of men when thus inducted into power, is not in his official character, under law to God; against such an unholy maxim, we must protest most solemnly; as adverse to all scripture and reason.

That God, having created man, and sustaining him in existence, has an absolute right, of which it is impossible he can ever be divested, to govern him, none, it would seem, but an atheist can deny. "The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof," is a maxim, of common sense and conscience, as well as of revelation. The property which an individual possesses, is still God's; for he who holds it belongs to God, and so is

* Rom. xiii.

bound to manage it, as Heaven's steward. Were it true then, that the magistrate is not the minister of God, and that the powers that be were not ordained of God, it must still be affirmed, that the people, no one of whom has a right to his possessions, independently of God, could not delegate to the ruler, that which they have not themselves. Besides, every citizen is himself God's property and subject. To deny this, would be to burst asunder all the bands of moral obligation. It would be no less than an attempt to dethrone Jehovah, and break his sceptre. The allegiance which all naturally and necessarily owe to Jehovah is not transferable. To argue propositions like these would be to insult a civilized, not to say a christian people. He who cannot free himself from law to God, has no power to delegate a right to another to govern him irrespective of the laws of God. The whole business of representation, when lawfully acted on, proceeds from God. Were it not so, there could be no legitimate delegation of power. No one legally and righteously held to the service of another, can delegate to a third party the control over his time or labour, without the consent of his master or employer. Unless authorised by the parents, no child can transfer any part of the parental authority to others. How is it to be conceived that any one can have a right to exercise authority over the subjects of God's government, unless it be derived ultimately from the Supreme Ruler? Hence the lawful magistrate is God's minister, "The powers that be are ordained of God."

Beside all this, "where there is no law, there is no transgression." If it be true that the magistrate is not clothed with authority from God, and is not bound to regard his law, then it follows, that as a civil functionary, he can commit no sin against Him, who is Lord of all. If he is not bound by the laws of Heaven, he never can be called to an account for any deeds of misrule. How convenient a doctrine this for tyrants! For their cruel acts of oppression, and persecution, for all the oceans of human blood which they have wantonly shed, they can never be condemned or punished by the judge of all the earth. Can any intelligent man, in a land enlightened by all the great lights of literature, morality, and religion, really believe and gravely utter such sentiments as these—sentiments which shock every virtuous feeling!

To all these arguments adduced from reason and natural conscience, abundant testimony is furnished in the Holy Scriptures, that such is the relation which civil government sustains to God Almighty. Eternal Wisdom, the second person of the God-head, in his Mediatorial character, speaking in the book

of Proverbs, * says :—" By me kings reign and princes decree justice. By me princes rule, and nobles, even all the judges of the earth." " Be wise therefore, O ye kings, be instructed, ye judges of the earth, serve the Lord with fear.—"Kiss" (the token of subjection) "ye the Son." † " Jesus Christ—prince of the kings of the earth," ‡ " And he" (Christ Jesus) " hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, king of kings and Lord of Lords." || If any proposition in morals can be established with the evidence of demonstration, both from Scripture and reason, it is the maxim, that magistracy is God's ordinance, and as such is bound to be subject to his laws. On this topic, it seemed necessary to protract the discussion, and exhibit it under various aspects, as the whole stress of the argument for the transportation of the mail on the Lord's day, rests on the denial of the principle, which we have endeavoured to establish. If we have succeeded, which must be left to the reader, then it follows, as plainly as any conclusion can from any premises, that civil rulers are bound to carry no burden in or out through the gates on the Sabbath. The law being clear, plain and direct they are bound to observe it, and see that it be respected by others. The Lord is their master, they are not, they cannot be ignorant of his will in this matter.

2. It is the province of civil rulers to provide that what is the duty of a nation to perform shall be done. In this discussion it is taken for granted that the Sabbath is an institution of Heaven, that God Almighty has appointed one day in seven to be an holy Sabbath to himself, and that the duty of observing this day as a day appropriated by divine authority to religious rest is perpetual. These truths have been so abundantly demonstrated, by numerous late publications, they are so generally believed by all who profess to be the friends of revealed religion—an overwhelming majority of the citizens of this Christian country—that any additional argument on that branch of the subject is thought altogether superfluous. The general belief of the citizens on these points is engrossed on the statute books, among the laws for the suppression of vice and immorality, of nearly all, perhaps of all the states of the Union. Taking this then for granted ; all the individuals in the nation, are bound as individuals to attend to the performance of this great duty, in a visible manner. No rank is excepted. All are under law to God. It must be observed by the mass of the people together, as a great social act of homage to Almighty God, and out of respect for each others peace and edification. If it is not so observed the body of the people must neglect it altogether. If it be a dictate of nature, and embodied in all the

* viii. 15, 16. † Psal. ii. 10—12. ‡ Rev. i. 5. || Rev. xix. 16.

religions of the world as the Senate in the report of their committee say, that some portion of time must be set apart for the service of Almighty God, their obedience to this dictate of nature must be rendered as a social act. There is an intimate and inseparable connection among the pursuits of the citizens, in all the great departments of human labour. Merchants, mechanics, farmers and professional men, transact business with each other; and a suspension of labour and business in the whole of any one of these departments, is calculated to derange the movements, and disconcert the operation of all the others.

The nature of the service, which we are to render to the Lord our God, requires a general state of repose in society; that undisturbed by the noise and tumult of business, we may without annoyance, and in tranquillity attend to the profitable performance of those duties to which we are called, at the seasons so set apart. It is not then a mere duty of personal or family religion to which the return of that holy day invites us, but a great, social one, which must be performed socially or not at all.

In the homage which man renders to his Maker on the Sabbath, he seeks for instruction; and it has been truly said that the instructions which are imparted on that day, do more to render him a good citizen, to say nothing of his preparation for immortal felicity, than all the other means of intellectual and moral improvement, taken together. Who are they that are dragged in crowds before the tribunals of justice, that people our gaols, houses of correction, and penitentiaries? Not those who weekly resort to the temples of the living God, to be instructed in the nature of the duties which they owe to God and man, and in the holy and solemn sanctions of that law which prescribes those duties. The manner in which the great body of the labouring classes of the community, acquire this knowledge, requires a social observance of the Sabbath. They must assemble and listen together to those who instruct them in duty, or this mode of instruction must be utterly abandoned. The consequence must then be, that as relaxation from labour, to the amount of one seventh part of our time, is required by our constitution, this cessation will be forced on individuals, and the time occupied in folly and dissipation. Habits of ignorance, vice and profligacy would thus be confirmed and gather strength from week to week; as is now the case with many thousands of our citizens, who are in weekly training for the cells of the work-house. To avoid these evils, and for the promotion of the greatest good of all, the citizens of the commonwealth should agree together as a people, to improve the necessary and divinely appointed seasons of rest in the general

cultivation of knowledge, morals and religion. Does not a regard for the laws and government of God, and for their own dearest interests imperatively demand this course? This is socially, civilly to sanctify the Lord's day, and demonstrates that it is the duty of civil rulers to observe it themselves, and enforce the observance of it on others.

Infidel France aimed a very skilful thrust, at the very vitals of Christianity, when her government attempted to abolish the weekly Sabbath, and substituted the tenth instead of the seventh, as a day of rest, thus disregarding the divine institution, and subjecting it to their common decimal regulation. Thus they made an effort to remove the key stone from the arch which sustains the great edifice of moral duty, when they took measures to eradicate all reverence for the day of rest, as ordained by the authority of God. After all, they did not adventure so far, as to aim at the entire eradication of the principle, that some stated portion of our time should be devoted to rest, and employed in seeking socially for instruction. Temples, by a sad misnomer called the temples of reason, were opened and instructors appointed to teach men the principles of what they denominated natural religion. They were soon forced to abandon the impious project, which remains on the page of history only, as a monument of their folly and impiety. It is for sober and reflecting men to decide, how far different this act of deistical phrenzy was from that which denies that a nation, as such, that the civil government of an enlightened and christian people should have any Sabbath, or acknowledge any law of God. What a contrast does all this display to that of a nation, considering itself bound to act in conformity to the law of the God of nations, and nationally and devoutly observing every week, a day which Jehovah has consecrated as his own, and to be dedicated to his service! What a sublime moral spectacle is exhibited by a free and great nation, consisting of twelve millions of citizens, spread over a territory, extending from the Atlantic to the Pacific ocean, making weekly a solemn pause in all the labours and toils of life, to unite in rendering holy homage to Jehovah as their king! On such a spectacle the morning sun, looks forth from the gates of the east rejoicing, at the moment when he bids adieu for a night, to the millions of Asia's sons, whom he had seen degraded by despotism, buried in ignorance, and on whom the holy Sabbath never sheds its benign influences.

3. God has annexed a penalty to the violation of the Sabbath.* Wherever Jehovah has appended to any law a penal sanction, there it is the duty of the civil ruler to enforce the ob-

* See Ex. xxxi.

servance of the law ; for to him alone it is competent to inflict the penalty. It is on this principle, undoubtedly, that in nearly all christian commonwealths, laws have been enacted, with annexed penalties, to promote the observation of the Sabbath, and to deter from its violation. Such laws have for ages existed in every christian nation in Europe, and do now in the codes of, we believe, all the states of this great American confederacy. Those who enacted these laws considered the breach of the Sabbath an immoral act, tending to harm the peace and interrupt the good order of society. It would be a curious and important question, and it is one which ought to be tried, whether those who are employed in carrying United States burdens, in the transportation of mails, openly and directly violating the state laws, might not be arrested by the state authorities, and compelled to observe the Sabbath. Ought not the breach of the Sabbath by the agents of the United States' government, to be considered as also a violation of the national compact and an invasion of state prerogative? In the United States constitution, the states certainly have not delegated to the United States' authorities a power, to bind any of their citizens by oath, compel them to violate this precept of the law of God, and set at defiance the laws of the states for the suppression of vice and immorality. Will it be maintained that the spirit of the United States government not only contains no guarantee for the security of moral practice, but that it also requires of those who administer it to disregard those state enactments which are designed for the preservation of morality? Its friends will not, surely, maintain such a position. If the Federal government may, at pleasure, violate the penal laws of the states in this case, they may, on the same principle, in all. To ascribe such a prerogative to the general government, would be most preposterous.

Many arguments advanced of late years, relative to penal sanctions, if they have any force, would prove that the civil power, can, in no case, be endowed with authority, to inflict any punishment on offenders. This remark refers to the arguments generally used against capital punishment. It is said that all the power of rulers is derived from the people by delegation. No man, it is added, has power over his own life ; and therefore cannot delegate to his representative a power to take it away in any case. That no man has a right to rule unless elected by the suffrages of a majority of those whom he governs, we have before stated, must be held to be a fundamental maxim of free government. But if the argument against the punishment by death avails, then it follows, that every infliction of suffering as the penalty of law, is an act of usurpation. No man

has a right to punish himself, and consequently cannot delegate to another a right to punish him. But it is the common sense of all nations, the principle is embodied in the United States constitution, and the government has acted on it; that offenders may be punished. As the right to punish cannot originate with the people, it must be referred to the sanctions of the law of God. They who deny that any regard is to be had to the laws of God, it would seem, on their own maxims must also deny that they can annex any penalty to their statutes or inflict any punishment on the subject for their violation.

What would be the consequence of all this, we need not reason; as every one knows that it would reduce all government to a mere shadow—to a mock pageant to amuse and not to govern. Besides, there is no reason to fear, whatever a few visionaries may maintain, that any nation will ever act on the principle in all its extent. Men will continue to believe in all christian, and perhaps it might be added in all heathen countries too, that Almighty God has annexed penalties to his laws, that the infliction of punishment is essential to the preservation of social order, and that the power to inflict it must be lodged in the civil government.

Thus we trace penal sanctions to be inflicted for Sabbath violation, to the same origin with those that are annexed to robbery, murder, counterfeiting, theft and treason. The same reason exists in relation to all—the decree of the supreme law-giver; and the principle on which they proceed is the same in all—crimes disturb the repose of society, they interrupt the course of social order, they lead to disorder and confusion, they injure the citizens in their persons, or property, or morals, they are calculated to bring down the judgments of God on a nation; and so for the glory of God, the honour of his law, and the good of society, they should be restrained by the terror of penal sanctions.

It is not true that the Sabbath is merely a religious institution, which many suppose. The ordinance of the Lord's day is, indeed, of a holy nature. "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy." The spiritual blessings flowing from its right observation are transcendently great. It commemorates the completion of the old creation, and calls the fearer of God to meditate on the glory of the Creator, as it is expatiated in the universe, in its beautiful order, benevolent arrangements, and stupendous magnitude. It commemorates the resurrection of the Son of God, from the tomb, when he finished the great work of man's redemption, by the shedding of his precious blood, as a ransom for sinners; and thus, by its return, and religious services, invites attention to the mercy of God in devising

and accomplishing, a great salvation for sinners, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. It is its nature to lead the devout worshipper to meditate on and prepare for that everlasting rest that remains for the people of God. But while all this and much more is true of its religious character, it has also a direct bearing on the civil interests of the commonwealth. A suspension of all the labours of the people, not embraced in works of necessity or mercy, the seventh of our whole time, is a relinquishment for one day in every week of all the means ordinarily employed for the accumulation of wealth. Under this aspect, it is related to all property and all worldly business, and so far it is a civil institution. This consideration alone, even on the principle of those who oppose its governmental observation, brings it under the cognizance of the civil ruler, furnishes the same reasons for enforcing its penalties, as those which relate to robbery, theft, murder, &c.

After all, should there be no force in any of these arguments, God who knows what crimes ought to be restrained by civil pains, has ordained that the violation of this day, is of that character, and such restraints can be imposed by the civil government only; it is, therefore, its duty to employ them, under pain of the displeasure of him, by whom kings reign, and princes decree justice. To all this we are aware of only one objection that can be urged, which is, that this penal enactment was under a former dispensation, was peculiar to the Jews, and is now abolished. This objection shall be considered at large, in the discussion of another branch of this subject, and is therefore omitted for the present.

4. Civil rulers are the conservators of the public weal. If it shall appear that the sanctification of the Sabbath is intimately connected with national prosperity; and if, on the other hand, it is true that its desecration tends to harm the interests of the commonwealth, then the powers that be are bound to watch over its sanctification. Those considerations which relate to the intellectual and moral improvement of the citizens, resulting from the keeping of the Sabbath in a proper manner, will be recollected, and appreciated here. If it be impossible, as it certainly is, to prevent the prostration of virtue, and the desolation of every thing excellent by the prevalence of vice, immorality and every specie of crime, where the Sabbath is generally violated and its institutions disregarded, then the officers of the government are bound not only to sanctify it themselves, but to enforce its observance on the citizens.

It should be deeply impressed on the minds of all, that the Almighty Creator, and Supreme Judge will certainly avenge by national calamities, the neglect of his Sabbath. If

men refuse to appropriate to his holy service that portion of time, which he claims as his own, he will signally punish them for the infraction of this precept of his law. "I will scatter you among the heathen, and will draw out a sword after you; and your land shall be desolate, and your cities waste. And the land shall enjoy her Sabbaths, as long as it lieth waste—and then shall the land rest and enjoy her Sabbaths. As long as it lieth desolate it shall rest; because it did not rest in your Sabbaths, when ye dwelt upon it." * This denunciation took effect during the seventy years of the Babylonian captivity.— "Did not your fathers thus, and did not our God bring all this evil upon us, and upon this city? yet ye bring more wrath upon Israel, by profaning the Sabbath." † The desolations of Jerusalem, of the other cities of Judah and of the land generally by the armies of Assyria, such as have been rarely experienced by guilty nations, and the distresses of the captives in Babylon during a captivity of seventy years, are expressly declared by the Holy Spirit, in these texts to have been brought upon the nation of Israel, as the tokens of God's wrath for the violation of his Sabbaths. Other and great sins, indeed, the nation had committed—sins, many of them growing out of the breach of the fourth precept of the law, and for which, in part, they suffered these great national tribulations. But their abuse of the holy day of rest stands at the head of the catalogue of their iniquities, and was more signally avenged than any other.

Some, indeed, have denied that, under the New Testament dispensation, the sufferings of cities and nations are tokens of the displeasure of God against sin. But is it not an everlasting truth, that God afflicteth not willingly, nor grieveth the children of men? "That affliction springeth not of the dust?" That the iniquities of men cause God to hide his face from them? Were there no sin, there would be no suffering. On this topic, however, we are not left to the inductions of reason, as our guide. The apostle Paul ‖ enumerates the calamities that befel the Israelites in the wilderness, and the sins of which they were the consequences; and affirms that such examples of the divine wrath are certainly to be expected under the new dispensation. "But with many of them God was not well pleased; for they were overthrown in the wilderness. Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted. Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them; as it is written, the people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play. Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand. Neither let us tempt Christ as

* Lev. xxvi. 33—35. † Neh. xiii. 18. ‖ Cor. x. 5—10.

some of them also tempted and were destroyed of serpents." Were public calamities not ascribable, under the new dispensation, to the divine indignation against public sins, as they were under the old, the examples here adduced by the apostle, and all his reasoning from them, would be quite impertinent. The infidel will say so, the professed Bible believer cannot. Heathens knew better. When the barbarians of Mileta saw the serpent fasten upon Paul's arm just after his escape from shipwreck they say:—"No doubt, this man was a murderer, whom, though he hath escaped the sea, yet vengeance suffereth not to live."* The same work of the law was written on the hearts of the heathen mariners, in whose ship Jonah had embarked. "Then were the men exceedingly afraid, and said unto him, why hast thou done this? For the men knew that he fled from the presence of the Lord." "Let us cast lots that we may know for whose cause this evil is upon us."† In times of pestilence and other great calamities, the ancient Greeks resorted in crowds to their temples and altars, where they thought to propitiate their offended gods, by prayers and victims. An illustration of the work of the law written on their hearts, in relation to this business, we have in the tragedy of Sophocles, entitled *Oedipus Tyrannus*. The whole plot is founded on this doctrine. The Indians of our own forests, in times of distress, sacrifice to the Great Spirit. The Philistines of Ashdod acknowledged the principle in general, though loath to admit the application to their own particular case. The doctrine, on which we found this argument, is affirmed by the decision of conscience in all nations—Christian and Pagan.

In our own country and in all others, the punishments inflicted, by the judgments of criminal courts, are considered as the rewards of crime, and why should men be unwilling to admit that to be a principle of the divine government, which forms the very basis of all proceeding in criminal causes in the courts of justice?

The case, then, of the Israelites, in the national sufferings which they endured in the desolations of their land by the Assyrian armies, and during the seventy years of their captivity, and the law which denounced these judgments, were not peculiar to that age or nation; but for a warning to all nations, wherever their story shall be read. The manner of the judgment and the means of the inflicting it may be different, but the principle of the law is the same every where—when a nation, and emphatically, when rulers profane the Sabbath, they bring the wrath of heaven on the commonwealth.

* Acts, xxviii. 4. † Jonah i. 7.

Rulers, therefore, have not performed all their duty, when they have attended to those details of legislation, which give security to property and personal right. They must beware of provoking the wrath of Almighty God, whose anger dries up the sources of national prosperity, and overspreads, at his will, a nation with mourning, lamentation and woe. Let those who represent the nation beware lest they become liable and render their constituents liable to the charge: "ye have robbed me, even this whole nation," and thus provoke the wrath of heaven to send blasting, and mildew, war and pestilence; "When his wrath is kindled but a little; Blessed are all they that put their trust in him."

Again, the blessedness of a nation consists in their enjoyment of the favour of God. "Happy is that people whose God is the Lord. In keeping the commandments of Jehovah, there is a great reward. He it is who "sends rain and fruitful seasons," and "who crowneth the year with plenty." When the devout worshippers of the Lord seek him on his Sabbaths, in his house, and behold and admire the beauty of the Lord, in his temple, while in the vision of the Almighty by faith, they are changed into his image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord, the whole nation reaps the fruits, in the general prosperity. "Bring ye all the tithes into the store-house, that there may be meat in my house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open unto you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing that there shall not be room enough to receive it. And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of the ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, saith the Lord of hosts. And all nations shall call you blessed: for you shall be a delightsome land saith the Lord of hosts."* "If there be a power above us, and that there is all nature cries aloud through all her works; then, he in whom he delights in must be happy." The Sabbath is his rest, in it he delights, and in those who keep it sacred, out of respect to his supreme authority, and for the promotion of his glory.—"Blessed is that nation that keepeth the Sabbath from polluting it." For such a nation he opens up, and makes wide and large the paths of commerce, pours into her lap the wealth of every clime, sends peace in all her borders, satisfies her with the finest of the wheat, teaches her senators wisdom, and blesses her sons in the midst of her.

If these truths are hidden from any, it is from them that perish; from those whom the God of this world hath blinded that they should not believe. That the duty of sanctifying the Sab-

* Mal. iii. 10—13.

bath has been enjoined for the declaration of the glory of its author, and for the good of his creatures; and that he who has required its sanctification, should not be displeased with those nations who trample it under foot, and punish them, is incredible.

5. Civil rulers, stand to their subjects, in the relation of parents to children. In the exposition of the fifth precept of the decalogue—"Honour thy father and thy mother," all divines refer to the relative duties of magistrates and their people, as embraced in the provisions of the statute.* "The powers that be" are not inducted into their office in the same way that natural parents are; but when in office, their relation to their subjects, is strikingly and beautifully analogous to that of fathers to their children. There cannot be a more enviable distinction acquired by the governor of a nation, than that he is truly the Father of his people. This embraces every thing which constitutes a great and good king, who enacts wholesome laws, administers them wisely, justly and impartially, and enforces them by his own paternal example. Of this title the ancient Roman senators were ambitious. They assumed, and for ages were known as a distinct branch of the government by the appellation, *patres*, fathers of the commonwealth. Many writers, with little reason we fear, have applauded the administration of the government of China, as truly paternal. In the early ages of the world, the governments of the nations were patriarchal. The father was the civil ruler of all his offspring, and of all those associated with them. In allusion to the paternal relation of the ruler to his people, nations are called families.

A father is under the highest obligations to sanctify the Sabbath himself, and to enforce its sanctification on his household. What ought we to think of the father, who would plead that he is not bound to respect the laws of God in the government of his family, and that to know, or acknowledge them, is to usurp the divine prerogative, and of very dangerous tendency? Many parents even in this christian land do, indeed, very sinfully disregard the laws of God in the education and discipline of their offspring; but no one, we presume, has adventured on such boldness in impiety as gravely to assert and argue that he is under moral obligations to rule his family, without any reference to the will of God made known to man as his reasonable creature. Such adventurous immorality would be little less preposterous, than the unholy maxim of the Senate of the United States, unblushingly published in their report on the subject of the Sabbath. It is with perfect astonishment

* For a good illustration of this topic, we refer to Dwight's sermons on the fifth commandment.

and shame for our common country, we learn that some respectable men, we do not say Christian men, adopt the maxim, while others seem to hesitate. Against such doctrines, the religious and moral sense of the whole community must rise in one magnanimous burst of holy indignation. What! the *patres*—the fathers of the Commonwealth announce solemnly to their children, that they mean to govern them, without any regard to the laws of the God of heaven, that Almighty and gracious being, who has so signally blessed in *His* fatherly kindness our highly favoured land. Heathen Rome, in her worst days, would have blushed at the thought of offering such an indignity to her Jupiter Stator, whom she considered as the founder of her city. Her Conscript Fathers would have thought such an avowal a forfeiture of all claim to their paternal dignity.

That father who would announce to his children, that they were to consider themselves free from all restraint on the Lord's day, and that he would never exert any authority to enforce its sanctification; must soon expect to see, and would in fact see, his household reduced to a frightful moral desolation. Were he to add to such an annunciation his own example of a total disregard of the Sabbath, and of course of all religion, and to order a part of his family, and bind them by oaths and penalties, to prosecute their ordinary labours in some of his departments of business, how greatly would he accelerate the velocity of their downward course into the depths of moral ruin! We imagine that the author of the Senate's Report, whether he be the chairman of the committee, or a much more distinguished personage, would himself be shocked at such a dereliction of parental duty. With such a dereliction are those civil rulers chargeable who proclaim a general licence to set at nought the Sabbath, and who themselves set the example of its weekly desecration. If there is any instance in the records of legislation of decreeing iniquity by a law, this surely is one. Let us now proceed,

II. To examine this subject in the light of revelation.

Whatever some may maintain to the contrary, we trust a very great majority of the citizens of this commonwealth admit, that there are certain unalterable principles of right and wrong, to which legislators are bound to conform. It is not for a moment to be conceded, as the prevalent opinion of our fellow-citizens, that there is no rule of legislation but expediency, and that every measure is proper for civil rulers, provided it be adapted for the immediate acquisition of property. Were this believed of us among the nations of the earth, what kingdom would consider it safe to rely upon those trea-

ties into which we might enter with them? Comparatively few, we hope and believe, have adopted so dangerous and impious a maxim. Whatever others may do, all the true disciples of the christian religion, not only believe in a permanent rule of duty for all, but that the will of God, most clearly made known in the Holy Scriptures, is that rule. By its decisions they are willing to abide. If the doctrine for which we contend can be decisively established from the book of God, they are but a small minority who will adventure upon its open rejection.

As several of the arguments to be adduced, are derived from the Old Testament scriptures, and as many affirm that these are of no force in the times in which we live, it becomes necessary to examine this subject.

The government of the Israelitish commonwealth is said to have been a theocracy, i. e. a divine government; the civil institutions of the nations, under the New Testament dispensation, are affirmed to be mere creatures of man. Hence it is inferred, that the statutes enacted of God for the government of the kingdom of Israel with their annexed penalties, were binding on the Jews only. Were this reasoning correct, still the conclusion deduced from it would be unwise and unsafe. The Israelites were men, endowed with all the common social principles of human nature; they were the chosen and highly favoured people of God, who knew what was best calculated to promote their national morality, glory and prosperity, and who, out of his love to them as his peculiar people, did certainly govern them by such laws as were best adapted to secure these beneficent results. The conclusion is irresistible, that the legislators act most wisely who copy with the greatest accuracy those laws which emanate from the fountain of wisdom and benevolence. Would that statesman be thought to act judiciously who should reject all aid from the wholesome provisions of the Justinian code, of the code Napoleon, or of the statutes enacted by the parliament of Great Britain, though none of these are formally obligatory on the commonwealth for which he legislates? Who is he that would extinguish all the lights which have been kindled by antiquity, and by foreign nations, in the firmament of political power? Is it not a wise practice of the courts of justice, in the adjudication of causes, to derive all accessible aids, from the enlightened decisions of judicial tribunals in other ages and nations? Surely, then, he who believes that the statutes recorded in the Old Testament, were enacted by God infinitely wise and good, for the benefit of his chosen people, will not close his eyes on the divine light which they shed on the duty of the legislator.

The reasoning, however, of those rejectors of the laws of God is utterly inconclusive and erroneous. The Hebrew common-

wealth was, indeed, governed by a theocracy, but not in the sense in which the adversary uses the term in his reasoning. The God of the Jews is the God of all nations. "The Lord hath prepared his throne in the heavens; and his kingdom ruleth over all." * The same doctrine is taught by the prophet of the Lord to the Babylonian monarch. "Till thou" (Nebuchadnezzar) "know that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will." † However unwilling, that monarch was brought to acknowledge, and by an imperial edict, to proclaim this truth; "And I blessed the Most High, and I praised and honoured him that liveth forever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom is from generation to generation. And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, what doest thou?" ‡

The God of heaven did rule in Judea, and enacted laws for the government of the nation. But his government was not, as is alledged, immediate. Between him and the people, there were civil rulers; and when revelations were made, promulgating his laws and decisions, they were made to the lawfully constituted civil authorities, who were authorised to apply them in the government of the people. But such revelations were comparatively rare after the complete organization of the commonwealth and their settlement in Judea. Their laws were recorded in the Bible and to that they ordinarily resorted for instruction, as rulers should do now. Hence their kings were each commanded to write out for himself a copy of the law. They had their grand sanhedrim, which was their parliament, congress, or house of assembly, whose duty it was to legislate, according to the general principles of law, equity, and justice, recorded in the scriptures. They proceeded according to the ordinary forms and principles of legislation. All this was not an immediate government of God, as is contended, but a government under God administered by regularly constituted authorities. Their courts of justice were organized in a manner similar to those of modern civilized nations, with the exception of the jury. They had *judges*, *officers*, answering to the modern sheriffs and constables, *pleaders* and *notaries*, or clerks. || Before these courts witnesses were cited, and causes tried in a manner very similar to that of our own times.

Crimes, then, while they were sins against God, as they still are in all countries, were committed against the majesty and

* Peal. ciii. 19. † Dan. iv. 25. ‡ Ibid 34—35. || Godwin's Moses and Aaron, page 136.

peace of the commonwealth, and as such were punished; and not as immediately against God, who has always reserved in his own hand, the infliction of punishment upon sins as committed against himself. When civil rulers enforced, as we shall presently see they did, the observance of the Sabbath, the direct object was to preserve moral order, and to prevent infractions of the peace of the community. Civil pains had then the same object which they now have, and they were inflicted on precisely the same principles. Any other view of the penal laws of the Jews is absurd and inconsistent with the whole history of their civil polity. Many of those who reason against the application of the moral laws of the Israelitish code to other nations, do not seem to be aware that their arguments tend to the demolition of the whole fabric of truth and law contained in the Old Testament Scriptures. If the penal sanctions of those laws of God were of no force, but among the Jews, and among them, only until the organization of the New Testament church, then the laws too, became obsolete with their penalties, and the truths revealed to the people of Israel, were, by the same process of reasoning, peculiar to that age and nation. If the truths revealed in the Old Testament have still the impress of the divine authority, why not the laws? And if the laws, why not their penalties? The laws contained in the decalogue were given to the Jews, and recorded among their other statutes. Is any Bible believer prepared to say that the laws of the ten commandments, have no more force now than those of the Roman twelve tables? None, we are sure.

The very frequent references, which are made in the New-Testament, both by Christ and his Apostles to the laws and doctrines of the Old, abundantly testify that the whole body of moral statutes, and of moral and spiritual truth, remains with its force unimpaired. Christ himself says:—"Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil."* It would seem that some who attended on his ministry, had entertained licentious views similar to those of our own age, against which we argue. They seem to have thought he would abolish the laws respecting moral duty which had until then been obligatory on their nation, and set aside the truths which had been revealed by their prophets. He corrects their error in the declaration of this text; and adds:—"For verily, I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot or tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled." The Sabbath remains in its full force. "It was made for man;"† not for the Jew peculiarly, or for any one age or nation, but for all ages and for all nations.

* Math. v. 17. † Mark ii. 27.

That the laws of God, of which the Israelites were the depositories, have not been abolished, nor their penalties rescinded, is a doctrine taught by the doings of enlightened legislators in all Christian nations. Sometimes this truth has been uttered by a feebler voice, and at other times in louder and more distinct accents, but it has been uttered by all. Whence have the penal statutes respecting theft, damage, &c. derived their origin? Undoubtedly from those of God contained in the Old Testament. Often, indeed, they have been misapplied, often misunderstood, and often in part neglected, but that a salutary tone of comparative health has been imparted to the penal codes of Christian nations, must be acknowledged by all who have any respectable knowledge of the subject. Why then retain the wholesome penalties of the laws of God in relation to other precepts, and reject those which relate to the sanctification of the Lord's day? Why empower the magistrate to enforce, by divinely enacted penalties other laws, and disarm him of all power in relation to this one?

Are, then, it will be asked, all the laws which were enacted for the Jewish polity, obligatory on other kingdoms which have access to the Word of God? Certainly not. There are peculiarities in the condition of every commonwealth, and modifications of law adapted to them are indispensable for the promotion of the public good. The Jews had theirs. By a few specifications, the Supreme Legislator taught the statesmen of that nation what was their duty in relation to these. The law prohibiting the raising of swine, some provisions respecting the care of the poor, and various enactments designed to preserve them a distinct people, were of this class. These have been called by divines, judicial laws. It is rare that any difficulty occurs in distinguishing these peculiar statutes, from such as are of perpetual moral obligation. In many of them, the principle on which they are founded, is of a permanent nature; such as of those which provide for the wants of the poor, for whose comfort the unchangeable law of charity requires the opulent to make provision. When the moral principle of the judicial law is discoverable, legislators in every christian country are bound to attend to its application.

We need hardly remark, in this connexion, that all the laws regulating typical ordinances, which were shadows of good things to come, and among these the Sabbatical year, and the year of jubilee, having fully accomplished the object for which they were instituted, are not obligatory under the New dispensation.

After replying to an argument drawn from the declaration of Christ to the woman caught in adultery, we shall dismiss this

topic. "Neither do I condemn thee." It has been often said that our Lord, in that case abolished the penalty annexed to adultery. His permission of him who was without sin in this respect, to cast the first stone at her, evidently implies that he considered the penalty of the law as still in force, and that if the woman was indeed guilty she deserved to suffer. If that act of Christ set aside the penalty, it set aside the law also, and was, on the assumption of those whom we oppose, equivalent to licensing the breach of the seventh commandment. "Neither do I condemn thee." Surely, he condemned adultery as a sin. In this case, as he had done before in that of David, and as he does in that of every sinner who receives him by faith, he, as a Saviour dispensed pardon to a believing and penitent offender. By these gracious acts, every one knows, he does not set aside his laws. Long after that period, Paul speaking by his Spirit says:—"The law—was made for whoremongers;"* thus declaring it still to be in force. For he adds, this is "according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust."

We now proceed to prove that by the law of God, civil rulers are bound to sanctify the Sabbath and enforce on others the same duty.

1. It can be demonstrated from the fourth commandment. The precept is in the singular number—Thou. This form of expression is used not merely to indicate that every *individual* who hears this law is bound to obedience, but also that every christian nation as a body politic, or moral person, is addressed by the lawgiver, and commanded to obey. To the nation in its national capacity the decalogue is emphatically directed. "I am the Lord *Thy* God who brought Thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage." Whom did he bring out of Egypt? the nation and to it he addressed the decalogue. To the nation, he says, "The seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God in it thou shalt not do any work." It is to superiors too, emphatically to the government, that the command is given—"Thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy man servant, nor thy maid servant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger, that is within thy gates." While by this style, the holy duties of this sacred day are enjoined on the head of every household, and he is formally and solemnly endowed with authority to enforce them on all who are under his jurisdiction, as a father; the civil head of the great national family is charged with its observation, and with the duty of inculcating it on his civil children. If this be not correct, then he must be exempted. Who sees not that great absurdity would be involved in such

* i. Tim. i. 9—10.

an exemption? On this supposition, the tenor of the command would be, all heads of families must sanctify the Sabbath with all their households, except the ruler of Israel, and the heads of the houses of the fathers. I give them licence to disregard the Sabbath in the transaction of all the public, secular affairs of the nation. They may employ their servants in the army and in all the other departments of state to labour and do any work. They may put the soldiers on drill, and carry all public burdens on the day of rest, which the common citizen must observe as a day of devotion. The beasts of burden that are in the service of the government, may be employed in any manner of public labour, whenever, and wherever, the king and the legislature shall see meet so to appoint. While fathers of families are made responsible for the observance of the day, by their sons, daughters, servants, and the stranger who lodges in their house, the constituted authorities of the nation, are to take no measures that the sons, daughters and servants, of the commonwealth, and the stranger within its territories, shall remember the Sabbath to keep it holy; that—but why trace any farther the absurdity and impiety of this scheme of interpretation? No one who regards with any reverence the authority of the holy and dread Lawgiver, or who calls the Sabbath a delight, and the holy *day* of the Lord honorable, will for a moment believe that there is such a licence granted to the rulers of the land. Whatever may be thought of the argument drawn from the precept itself, for the enforcing of Sabbath sanctification, by civil pains, none who believe it to be a part of the law of God, can entertain a reasonable doubt, that the transportation of mails, the opening of post offices, and the transaction of other secular business in that department are forbidden. Every clerk in the general post office, at Washington, and in the subordinate offices, all the carriers of the mail, and all the post masters are the servants of the post master general. That the business transacted in the offices, and by carriers, is work—is servile labour, all know. To the postmaster general, the God of heaven says:—On the Sabbath of the Lord thy God, Thou shalt do no work: Thou,—nor thy thousands of servants within the limits of thy department. The post master general is the servant of the President, to whom God says, thou shalt do no work, Thou, nor thy servant in thy cabinet. All are the servants of congress, who represent the people. To congress the commandment addresses itself, thou shalt do no work, Thou nor thy servants. That all this is in the precept cannot admit of a doubt.

But it embraces more than this. No good king in Israel would have doubted that the fourth commandment authorised

him to arrest strangers within his territories, in the violation of the Sabbath. In the trade carried on by the Tyrians and Zidonians with the east, through the Persian Gulf, and that of Ormus, had those heathen merchants, attempted to drive their caravans, laden with merchandize, through the land of Judea, to the annoyance of devout worshipers, when attending to the worship of God on their day of rest, a conscientious ruler would never have hesitated that the clause, "thy stranger within thy gates," authorised him to restrain them by compulsory measures. If he might do so in the case of strangers, much more would it have been proper in relation to Israelites, openly violating their own law, by these or similar practices. Few, we trust will entertain any doubt that the precept authorised such interference by the Jewish magistrate. With all those, if this is granted, who believe that the moral duty enjoined in the precept is of perpetual obligation, it would seem that our argument might be here closed; for if the precept is obligatory on us to the same extent as it was on the ancient people of God. the inference is irresistible that it binds all classes and ranks of men to the same extent, as when first enacted. It extends to the magistrate its obligations now, as much as it did to the ancient patriarchal ruler, before and after the flood, and to the kings of Israel. But we need precept upon precept, therefore,

2. Such was the understanding, and such the practice of the body of the people, and of the rulers of Israel. When in the case of the manna, a question arose respecting the Sabbath, the rulers of the congregation, took cognizance of the affair and referred it to Moses. "And it came to pass, that on the sixth day they gathered twice as much bread, two omers for one man, and the rulers of the congregation came and told Moses. And he said unto them, this is that which the Lord hath said, To-morrow is the rest of the holy Sabbath unto the Lord."*

Again, when the people found an individual violating the Sabbath, they refer to the civil authority and call an assembly of the people, "And when the children of Israel were in the wilderness, they found a man that gathered sticks on the Sabbath day, and they that found him gathering sticks, brought him unto Moses and Aaron, and unto all the congregation."† They did not think the violation of the Sabbath, merely an affair between God and the offender; but also an offence against the peace and morality of the commonwealth of which cognizance should be taken by the civil authorities. God approved of their doings. They thought it a crime, to be adjudged by the proper tribunal, as much as the theft in the case of Achan. This was, undoubtedly, the result of the instructions which they

* Exo. xvi. 22—23. † Num. xv. 32—33.

had received, and of the practice of their civil rulers, which they had been accustomed to witness.

3. From our text itself we are furnished with an argument, plain and decisive. "Hear the word of the Lord, ye kings of Judah—Take heed to yourselves that ye bear no burden on the Sabbath day.—neither do ye any work—but hallow ye the Sabbath day, as I commanded your fathers." Among the kings of Judah, it is evident that some practices, similar to the transportation of mails on the Sabbath, had obtained. They transacted public business of such a nature as required the carrying of burdens, out and in through the gates of Jerusalem. This is rebuked by the prophet, as a violation of the fourth commandment. Jeremiah thought it his duty to reprove the sins of civil rulers, as well as the sins of the common people. The breach of Sabbath, he charges directly on the reigning king, probably Jehoiachin or Zedekiah, wicked rulers who would be likely thus to set at naught the law of the Lord and to contemn his Sabbath. The prophet very plainly intimates that the commandment which they violated was addressed to kings under the character of fathers; for God by the prophet says, what I now command you who are the kings of Judah, is according to that "*which I commanded your fathers,*" at the giving law. Here is a clear demonstration that the commandment is obligatory on kings. It is the kings themselves who are commanded by the prophet to bear no burdens, which they undoubtedly did by those officers of the crown who were in their employ. The violation of the Sabbath by the inhabitants of Jerusalem, under the eyes of their kings, was also justly chargeable upon the kings of Judah, who, while they were bound to prevent them, encouraged them by their own corrupt practices.

The examples set by men in high stations whether good or bad, have a powerful, almost irresistible influence, in determining the conduct of a large portion of the community. It was evidently so in the instance before us. As children copy the example of their parents, so the inhabitants of Jerusalem copied the example of their rulers. Under the pretext, doubtless, of promoting the general welfare, the kings of Judah had trampled under foot the fourth commandment, and the people for their own gain did so too.

For this reason, abstaining from the violation of the Sabbath, becomes a duty doubly imperative on those who occupy elevated stations in civil society. It is not, however, merely the personal or family attention of the king and his household to the day of rest which the prophet here enjoins—It is the duty of the ruler, in relation to his subjects; for when a king is addressed, designated by his official title, and a declaration of his du-

ty made, respect must be had to what he is to do as a public functionary. When the constitution of the United States says, the President shall have power to transact any business, it is in the character of chief executive magistrate that he is endowed with the authority specified. When the prophet, as the messenger of the Lord of hosts, says: ye kings of Judah, ye shall carry no burden on the Sabbath day, he instructs them in this duty as kings, and it is equivalent to saying, ye must not allow the people over whom ye reign, to pollute the Sabbath, by openly attending to the transaction of secular business on that day. To the national sanctification of the Sabbath, the prophet offered a promise of great national blessings, "And it shall come to pass, if ye diligently hearken unto me, saith the Lord, to bring in no burden through the gates of this city on the Sabbath day, but hallow the Sabbath day to do no work therein: there shall enter into the gates of this city, kings and princes, sitting on the throne of David, and this city shall remain forever."* Calculations, we doubt not, they had made of the profits which trade, agriculture, and the royal revenues would derive from the bearing of these burdens on the Sabbath; but the prophet teaches them that their true interest, and the best means of securing the continuance of their government, and the peace and prosperity of their city, must be sought in the divine favour. In vain would they hope for the blessing and protection of him, who sets up and dethrones kings, while they disregarded his holy law. He taught them that the throne is established by righteousness.

On the other hand, if they refused to be obedient, he denounces against them the wrath of God. "But if ye will not hearken unto me, to hallow the Sabbath day, and not bear a burden, even entering in at the gates of Jerusalem on the Sabbath day: then will I kindle a fire in the gates thereof, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem, and it shall not be quenched."† All those promises and threatnings were disregarded by the kings of Judah, and of course by the people. They did not, indeed, adventure on such boldness of impiety as to say, we will not acknowledge it a duty to obey the laws of the Lord God. But they denied that God spoke by Jeremiah, though all that he uttered was recorded in the law which had been given to their fathers. Their love of present gain prevailed. They said the public interest requires these burdens to be borne on the Sabbath, and we will bear them. "Oh! foolish people, and unwise," how transient were the gains which ye made by robbing God of his time! Little did ye think that at the moment when you were calculating the profits of commit-

* Jer. xvii. 24—25. † Jer. xvii. 27.

ting the robbery of God, he was bathing in heaven that sword which soon after drank the blood of your slain! How soon were ye taught, in a way which ye could not refuse to hear! The Assyrians were mustering those armies, which speedily wasted your lands, slaughtered or led captive your kings and princes, and kindled a fire in those gates that ye had polluted by bearing through them burdens on the Sabbath. Where now were those treasures which you had amassed as the wages of sin! Be wise, O ye rulers, and cease to provoke the wrath of the Lord, by your disregard of his laws.

4. We further strengthen our argument by the example of Nehemiah. That distinguished servant of God was raised up in his providence and endowed with wisdom and zeal to rebuild Jerusalem, and reorganize the Israelitish commonwealth, after the long desolations of the Babylonian captivity. Like the depraved race of men who wrought iniquity with greediness immediately after the ruins of the general deluge, many of the people who had returned from the captivity, soon forgot the tribulations which their sins had brought upon them and their fathers, and recurred to the iniquitous practices of the preceding generation. In the correction of these abuses, Nehemiah, the Tirshatha, set to posterity a noble example, worthy to be followed by magistrates of all succeeding ages. When the people violated the Sabbath he restrained them. The history of the transaction, as recorded by himself, with the pen of inspiration, though the quotation is long, may be profitably recited here. "In those days saw I in Judah, *some* treading wine presses on the Sabbath, and bringing in sheaves and lading asses; as also vines, grapes and figs and all *manner* of burdens, which they brought into Jerusalem on the Sabbath day: and I testified *against them*, in the day wherein they sold victuals. There dwelt men of Tyre also therein, which brought fish, and all manner of ware, and sold on the Sabbath, unto the children of Israel, and in Jerusalem. Then I contended with the nobles of Judah, and said unto them, What evil thing is this that ye do, and profane the Sabbath day? Did not your fathers thus, and did not our God bring all this evil upon us and upon this city? Yet ye bring more wrath upon Israel by profaning the Sabbath. And it came to pass when the gates of Jerusalem began to be dark before the Sabbath, I commanded that the gates should be shut, and charged that they should not be opened till after the Sabbath: and some of my servants set I at the gates, that there should no burden be brought in on the Sabbath day. So the merchants and sellers of all kinds of wares, lodged without Jerusalem once or twice. Then I testified against them, and said unto them, Why lodge ye a-

bout the wall? if ye do so again I will lay hands on you. From that time forth came they no more on the Sabbath. And I commanded the Levites that they should cleanse the gates, and that they should come and keep the gates, to sanctify the Sabbath day. Remember me, O my God, concerning this, and spare me according to the greatness of thy mercy."*

This narrative is so perspicuous, and the duty of rulers inculcated by the example of the Tirshatha, or civil prince of Israel, so direct, that it requires little commentary. He pleads no immediate inspiration to authorize these measures; there was no Urim and Thummim, which he could consult; for that altogether ceased from the time of the captivity. In all this, there was nothing peculiarly theocratic. He acted on the ordinary and known principles of public law, and, unquestionably, according to the usages of the best kings in Israel. From these, and especially from the fourth commandment, he derived his authority for imposing restraints so salutary on Sabbath breakers. It is evident, too, that he had read our text from the prophecy of Jeremiah, on which we have commented in the preceding article of this argument. For he refers the wrath of God which had brought judgments on the city and nation to the breach of Sabbath. As Jeremiah had reproved the *kings* of Judah, together with the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so Nehemiah contended with the *nobles* of Judah and testified against them, as well as against the people. This remonstrance against the nobles, or inferior officers of the government, was probably both on account of their own sin in participating in the sinful traffic, and other secular labours, and on account of their not restraining the people, who under their eye, indulged in these immoral practices. Against these faithful and severe rebukes, the nobles do not appear to have remonstrated. They knew he was acting legally, and not by the usurpation of the divine, or any other prerogative. Their consciences, too, which were not "seared as with a hot iron," condemned them, and approved of the proceedings of the Tirshatha. Had they considered the measures tyrannical and dangerous to their liberty of conscience, their avarice would have prompted them to a vigorous resistance. But there is not the least intimation of any thing like this.

The clause of the precept—"the stranger that is within thy gates," he applied against the Tyrians who sold fish and other articles of merchandise, to the citizens. This corroborates our interpretation of that part of the law. His proceedings were also mild. He did not think the law required that its penalty should be inflicted on any but obstinate and irreclaimable offen-

* Neh. xiii. 15—22.

ders. He issues the prohibitory mandate, warns them of their danger, and threatens them with seizure by his officers, unless they desisted. They did desist, the disorder was corrected and there the affair terminated. What an excellent commentary do the measures of this wise and good prince, furnish for the illustration of the precept!

The example of a ruler deservedly of so high reputation as Nehemiah, must have had a salutary effect upon his successors in the government for many years. The exertion of political authority, in favour of the sanctification of the Sabbath for more than four hundred years, from the time of Nehemiah, until the appearance of Christ in the flesh, as it had been generally in times antecedent to the captivity, was according to the common and universal principle, on which such acts should proceed.

In the Confession of Faith of various Christian denominations, this passage from Nehemiah is quoted in proof of the duty of sanctifying the Sabbath. We have, thus, the authority of all those bodies of Christians for the application which we have made of this, and indeed most of the other passages of Scripture that have been adduced in this argument.

From all this mass of testimony we trust it is established beyond contradiction, that civil rulers, under the Old dispensation, were by the law of God authorised and bound, to enforce on their subjects the observation of the day of holy rest. God never warranted the usurpation of his prerogative, nor any invasion of the rights of conscience. For many centuries, the civil authority relative to the sanctification of the Sabbath, for which we plead, was exercised with the divine approbation, over millions of men. It is plain, then, that in its nature, it is not inconsistent with the legitimate claims of conscience. God is the Lord of conscience, which has been called his vicegerent in the breast of man; and whether it is entitled to that high honour, or not, of one thing we may be certain, that when its decisions are just, it speaks the voice of God. The righteous Lord cannot issue awards by conscience inconsistent with the laws which he has enacted for the government of individuals, and of nations. On the other hand, when conscience approves what God's law condemns; when it accuses and condemns where the divine law acquits; and when its decisions are contrary to the public weal, they are to be disregarded. The precepts of God are paramount. Had the Tyrian, or Jewish merchants, who vended their wares on the Sabbath in Jerusalem plead the claims of conscience against the edict of Nehemiah, would the plea have been sustained? Though the Jews could not, the Tyrians might, no doubt have affirmed with truth, that their conscience approved what they did. Their

right to put in such a plea was as good as that of those who dispise the Sabbath in our own age and nation.

What good reason can be assigned, for enforcing Sabbath sanctification by civil authority, in the Hebrew commonwealth, that will not apply with equal force now ? The Sabbath is as holy now as it was then. The command enforcing it binds now as much as then. Its violation now is as disorderly, and immoral as it was then. Its consequences are as dangerous. The disturbance of the solemnities of devotion, by public breach of Sabbath, is not in the least diminished. Search and find all the reasons, many good undoubtedly, for the civil guardianship of the day of rest, among the Jews, and we pledge ourselves to show that they all now exist, in their whole extent. If it shall appear that God who established once this principle of civil policy, has not abolished it, all must, then, admit that its divine sanction remains unimpaired.

5. The declaration of the Apostle Paul, respecting the penal laws of the Old Testament scriptures is direct, and plain in proof of our principle. "But we know that the law is good, if a man use it lawfully; knowing this, that the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, for whoremongers, for them that defile themselves with mankind, for men-stealers, for liars, for prejured persons." It is evidently the penal law to which the Apostle here refers; for he says, it was not enacted for "the righteous man." Elsewhere, the same inspired Apostle affirms that "we are under law to God." They who are righteous, through the righteousness of the Redeemer, which they receive by faith, and on account of which they are justified, and who are made inherently righteous, by the sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit, are not freed from their obligations to obey the law of God, as a rule of life. Noah was a just man, and Job was upright, but they were "under the law of God." Simeon was a righteous man, and he gave evidence of his righteousness by "walking in all the commandments of the Lord blameless." The law, then, as it is preceptive, was made for "the righteous man." "The seat of the law," in this sense, "is the bosom of God and its voice is the harmony of the universe." † The good man loves it for he "delights in the law of the Lord, after the inner man;" it is enthroned in his heart, and engraven on the tablets of his mind, and its living image, and heavenly beauty are reflected in his outward deportment. Evangelical obedience to its holy dictates distinguishes the righteous man from "the lawless and disobedient." By

* i. Tim. i. 8—10. † Hooker.

walking in its light, a nation attains to that righteousness, by which it is exalted, and by disobeying it, commits sin which debases a people. It is not, then, the *precepts* only, of God's law, which the Apostle affirms to be good, but the *penalties* which are annexed, to bridle the licentiousness of "the lawless and disobedient."

Nor is it merely the penal sanctions of the second table of the law. By "the ungodly and sinners the unholy and profane," he evidently designates profane swearers and Sabbath breakers. He who takes the name of the Lord in vain, is a profane man, and he is an unholy man who does not remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Can any man doubt that the Apostle considered Sabbath violation, ungodly, sinful, unholy and profane? For it, then, the penal laws were enacted. That by "the ungodly, sinners, unholy and profane," he does not intend those who violate the second table is certain, for these he enumerates in the subsequent clauses. "Murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers," such transgressors as violate, both the 5th and 6th precepts, in one act. "Whoremongers, &c.," violators of the 7th. "Menstealers," sinners against the 8th. "Perjured persons," the breakers of the 9th. "The ungodly &c.," certainly then include those who disregard the Sabbath. That the penalties which the magistrate was authorized to inflict on the profaners of the Sabbath, were good, when enacted, is certainly true, but this is not all that Paul affirms. "The law is good"—the penal code of the Old Testament, with the means of executing it, is good now, under the New Testament; if it be administered in a legal manner. Its righteous application is calculated to promote the general welfare of society; for this purpose it was anciently good, and it is good still. The restraints which it imposes on profane men, are as salutary now, as they ever were. Their application will not invade the rights of conscience, nor be inconsistent with a wholesome degree of human liberty. All this, he adds, is "according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, committed to my trust." He was emphatically the apostle of the Gentiles. These penalties then, were good for the Gentile nations, and accordant with the mild and most benevolent spirit of that gospel which he was commissioned to preach and to make known to all the families of the earth. As if he had said; my gospel is not intended to destroy, but to confirm the law, in its divine and holy sanctions.

If any additional reasoning were necessary it might be added, that he connects the unholiness and profanity of violating the fourth commandment, with such crimes as parricide, man-stealing, &c. which, as all admit, merit punishment. The ma-

gistrate then should be "a terror," not only to those "evil doers," who murder, steal, and commit perjury, but also to those who rob God by sabbath profanation," and should be "a praise" not only to those who "do well," in honouring their parents, &c. but to those too, who keep the sabbath holy.

6. Our Lord Jesus Christ gives not the least intimation, that the penalties enacted to enforce the sanctification of the Sabbath are abolished. He corrects, indeed Pharisaical abuses, and demonstrates the propriety and duty of attending to the performance of works of necessity and mercy, and proves that they are proper from Old Testament authority. But, though very many opportunities offered, he never utters the slightest intimation, that either the nature of the Sabbath, or the laws enforcing its observation, were to undergo any change. He sanctified the day himself; for he entered into the synagogue on the Sabbath, and taught the people. He claims Lordship over the Sabbath as a day which he had instituted, to be devoted to his service. As he, then, leaves the ancient code untouched, can there be a more presumptuous usurpation of the divine prerogative, than that which adventures on the abolition of what he thought proper to leave in all its force? Cease proud mortal "to plot against the Lord and his Anointed:" cease your vain attempts to burst asunder his bands, and to cast his cords from you.

III. Let us now proceed to the last topic, which we have proposed in this discussion—the application of our argument to the question respecting the transportation of mails, &c. on the Sabbath day.

Deep and powerful movements of the public mind, especially on great moral questions, are interesting to every true patriot, and enlightened christian. Rarely has any moral subject called forth so general, and so correct an expression of public sentiment, as that which has been lately uttered against, the violation of the Sabbath, by the Federal government in the transportation of its mails, and in the transaction of all the other business of the post-office department, on the Christian Sabbath. On the other hand, the enemies of the religion of Jesus, are not idle spectators of the moral aspect of the times. They are uniting and concentrating their most vigorous efforts in opposition to the sanctification of the Lord's day. The Senate of the United States, several members, of the House of Representatives and a large majority of the editors of the public journals have published sentiments, such as, we believe, few good men could have supposed they would dare utter.

Around the report of the United States Senate, all these have rallied their forces, and under this banner, displayed for Sab-

bath violation, from the capital of the commonwealth, the "armies of the aliens" are mustered. On the flag is inscribed, all that has been, and probably all that can be said, in favour, of this immorality, against which the moral sense of the nation has so loudly remonstrated. Let us examine the contents of this manifesto.

1. The Senate say:—"If the observance of holy day, becomes incorporated in our institutions, shall we not forbid the movement of an army; prohibit an assault in time of war; and lay an injunction on our naval officers to lie in the wind upon the ocean on that day? Consistency would seem to require it. Nor is it certain we should stop here." Again—"The precedent will then be established" (by stopping the mail) "and the foundation laid for the usurpation of the divine prerogative in this country, which has been the desolating scourge to the fairest portions of the world." And, can any man gravely maintain, that "*the observance of holy day,*" by abstaining from carrying burdens, on the Lord's day will be followed by all these alarming consequences? Then, all the states are in the high way to desolation; for they all observe and enforce to some extent, "*holy day.*" In them all, the legislatures and courts adjourn for the Sabbath, and on that day the executive officers cease from the public transaction of the business of their department. They go farther. They inflict fines on the violators of the Sabbath; and many of them employ and pay out of the public funds, chaplains to instruct them on the first day of the week, in religion, in the laws of God and their duty, and to offer up prayers to heaven for them as legislators. The argument of this discourse, may be considered as a vindication of those state measures for the promotion of the public morality. The Senate charges them all with the guilt of "usurping the divine prerogative." On the principles of this report, the courts of justice should be opened, the legislatures, and the executives of the states should transact their ordinary business, monies should be paid into banks, and drawn from them, taxes should be assessed and collected, clerks should write, and printers work their presses, for their accommodation. To omit to do all this, or any part of it, according to the doctrine of the Senate, is to put in jeopardy the rights of conscience and the liberties of the nation! These "*observances of holy day,*" they maintain, are the sure means of overspreading this fair portion of the world with desolation! "*Proh curia inversique mores.*"*

But congress itself adjourns, and hires chaplains to preach on the Sabbath and pray daily; the courts of the United States are closed; most of the public offices are shut, the workmen in

* Alas! for the Senate and depraved morality.

the navy-yards, on the fortifications, and on the public roads are all permitted to rest. The committee acknowledge this, but they do it with symptoms of alarm and apprehension, lest perchance some great evil may lurk under these observances of "holy day." "If" say they, "kept within its legitimate sphere of action, no injury can result from its observance." They are here speaking of the suspension of public business by the Federal legislature. This principle, admitted with hesitation indeed, demolishes utterly the whole argument of the Senate. For if their reasoning have any weight, it proves that the carpenters, blacksmiths, masons, and sail makers, should carry on the whole of their labours on the public works, that all the offices of state should be thrown open, for the transaction of public business, that the federal courts should proceed in the trial of causes, and that both houses of congress, should transact their ordinary business on the Sabbath. Unless it proves all this, it proves nothing. All "the observance of holiday" in the various departments of the government, already practised, the Senate say, they "do not wish to disturb." It is true, the whole tenor of the report is directly adverse to this admission, and should its doctrines be admitted by the citizens generally, it requires little foresight to predict the result. Congress will hold its sessions, all labouring men employed by the government, will be tempted to work, the United States Bank will be opened, and the whole influence of the general government will be exerted in the desecration of the Sabbath, to the ruin of morality, and all religion. Let the friends of good order see to this in time. That we should look for all, in the Federal government framed for general purposes, that we have a right to demand of a state, or consolidated government, would be unreasonable; but, that it should not itself violate the laws of God, nor employ its influence and resources, to tempt the citizens to iniquity, ought to be demanded.

It is intimated that ceasing from the transportation of the mails, would violate the spirit of the constitution. Were congress to erect temples to Juggernaut, employ priests and pay them out of the public treasury, were they to establish gaming houses and vest in them the public funds, erect houses of worship for the adoration of the Virgin Mary; and the citizens should petition for the discontinuance of these practices, as contrary to the law of God, and destructive to the public good; it might with as good reason be plead, that to abandon them would be inconsistent with the spirit of the constitution. These doings are supposed, not because it is at all probable that congress will ever perform such acts; but to shew the fallacy of the argument of the committee. They would be violations of

the first, second and third precepts of the decalogue, as the transportation of the mail is of the fourth. Were such measures taken, and found to be lucrative, the reasons urged for Sabbath violation, would apply to them as forcibly, as to that which they are said to justify.

2. They say:—"Under the present regulations of the Post Office Department, the rights of conscience are not invaded. Every agent enters voluntarily, and it is presumed conscientiously, into the discharge of his duties." How does this argument justify the conduct of the government? It assumes what is not correct in point of fact. We have an opportunity of knowing, that many post masters who are detained from church to attend to the assortment of mails, express deep regret at such detention, and look to congress for relief from the transaction of business, which wounds their consciences. Is it right to employ the funds of the nation, in holding out to the citizens temptations to sin, which many cannot resist? This argument of the Senate is based on the principle, that no moral duties are obligatory on civil rulers. That this doctrine is erroneous and most pernicious, we trust has been abundantly demonstrated in the preceding arguments of this discourse.

3. It is argued that all professors of religion, are not agreed as to the day of the week, to be observed, nor as to the source whence the obligation is derived. To this we reply, that the stoppage of the mail would not wound the conscience of the Jew, or of the Seventh-day Baptist. The argument is, there are a few citizens who adopt the seventh day of the week, as their Sabbath; therefore the government and post office agents should have no Sabbath. They would reason as logically, were they to argue thus: some citizens prefer monarchy; therefore there should be no government; or some citizens prefer Mr. Adams to General Jackson, therefore, we should have no president.

There are, it is believed, in the various branches of the Presbyterian church, in the Baptist, Methodist, and Episcopal churches, about *one million five hundred thousand professors of religion*, which will amount to about *one million of families*, or *six millions of souls*—more than half of the free population of the United States. Besides these, there cannot be less than *one million* who are connected with these various branches of the church, as pewholders. Now, whatever may be thought by irreligious statesmen, we do not hesitate to affirm that the great body of these, accounting as they do the first day of the week sacred to Almighty God, are opposed to the transaction of post office business on the Christian Sabbath. If the voice of the majority ought ever to be heard, when clearly expressed, it

is in this case. Is the peace of their Sabbath devotions to be disturbed, and are their moral feelings to be outraged, merely because a few prefer to keep Saturday as their day of rest? Should the Hindoo widows be encouraged to burn themselves on the funeral pile of their departed husbands, because they do not invade the rights of conscience in others?

4. It is said:—"To prevent this," (the conveyance of intelligence by mail) would be of immense injury, *both* in its commercial, political and moral bearings." What injury would result in "its moral bearings," we are not told, unless it is that mail contractors would expedite passengers and news by private conveyances. That can hardly be meant; for it would be an admission that travelling on the Sabbath for secular purposes is an immoral act, and so a concession of the whole question to the petitioners. But whatever is meant, surely it is adventurous to assert, in this christian community, that to cease from carrying burdens on the Lord's day, in obedience to the command of God, would be productive of immense injury in "*its moral bearings.*" In one word, it asserts that obedience to the law of God would demoralize the nation. "Nay, but who art thou, O man, that repliest against God!" "Some respite" they say, "from the ordinary vocations of life is an established principle, sanctioned by the usages of all nations;" and yet to grant that respite to the many thousands of the citizens whose "ordinary vocation," is to labour in post-office business, would be productive of immense moral injury. If any class of men need respite from labour it would seem to be those, who through the week drive mail carriages day and *night*. To deprive them of the rest of the Sabbath, seems to us, to be an act of cruelty, irrespective of its moral bearings. It ill befits those who oppress the bodies of men, and expose their souls to ruin, to talk of "moral bearings."

As to the political bearings, do they mean to say that God enacts laws which produce "immense injury" to those who obey them? This they do, unless they deny that he has enacted the fourth commandment. Indeed, from the whole complexion of the paper, we have no doubt that its writer is an infidel.

But the commercial interests would suffer. This argument would be as available in the mouth of any labourer in the commonwealth, against the suspension of his labours on the Sabbath. Indeed, it would seem to be more appropriate to the labouring classes of little property, than to opulent mercantile men, engaged in extensive speculations. The reasoning of this remarkable paper goes to the total abolition of the Sabbath, and consequently of all true religion. It is to be feared that it will be productive of immense moral injury, especially, applaud-

ed as it is by so many ignorant and ungodly editors of newspapers. The Senators of the United States gravely in this part of the argument, teach the people, that when property can be acquired by the violation of the Sabbath, it may be done with impunity and ought to be done. Those who have been taught to reason in this manner, will soon carry out the argument to its full extent, and apply it to all the other laws of God and to those of man. Men are here instructed that property is the paramount object of pursuit, and that every thing, even the law of God must give way to its acquisition. Was ever the axe applied more effectually to the root of the tree that bears the fruits of morality? All this, too, is represented as dictated by the spirit of the constitution.

5. We are told :—" Passengers in the mail stages, if the mails are not permitted to proceed on Sunday, will be expected to spend that day at a tavern upon the road, generally under circumstances not friendly to devotion, and at an expense which many of them are but poorly able to encounter." That men should despise the Sabbath, and travel on secular business on the Lord's day is bad enough, yes too bad; but that they should be furnished with arguments for this contempt of the good order of society, and of the law of God, by the Senate of the United States, is most deeply to be deplored. This, however, is in full keeping with every part of the report. If the government set at naught the Sabbath, and hire many thousands of the citizens to commit this sin, why should it not encourage others in the same course of iniquity? If it seeks the wages of iniquity, why should not others be formally taught to do so to?

But passengers would lodge in taverns, where their sanctification would be impeded, and their Sabbath devotions interrupted. The writer probably bit his lip in scorn when he penned this sentence. "Under circumstances not friendly to devotion." How could any one have the assurance to write this sentence, in a paper of which the professed object is to vindicate the practice of preventing thousands of stage drivers, and post office agents, from all access to the devotions of the Sabbath? Does the government put those thousands of its servants, into "circumstances friendly to devotion?"

6. Again it is said that neither the "Lord nor his disciples, though often censured by their accusers for a violation of the Sabbath, ever enjoined its observance." This argument, indeed, is put into the mouth of those who are called "many christians," and not used by the committee as their own. But it is designed to have effect. It has often been urged by infidels. If what is here said were indeed true, it would be of no weight in this matter; for he did not enjoin chastity in the case

of the woman taken in adultery. That he did not abolish the institution is equivalent to its ratification, as we have already demonstrated. But he does much more. "And he said unto them, the Sabbath was made for man:—therefore the Son of Man is Lord also of the Sabbath." It was made for man in a state of innocency, is for the good of man as a human being, and is a law binding on man in every station of life. He claims the Sabbath as his own institution, according to the tenor of the fourth commandment:—"It is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God." To claim it as his own day is to enjoin, most solemnly its observance.

In addition to all this, he drove from the outer court of the temple, those who profaned both the temple and the Sabbath at the same time by their merchandise. "And Jesus went into the temple, and cast out all that bought and sold in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the money changers, and the seats of them that sold doves."* This act of our Lord was done, when he came to Jerusalem, to attend on that passover, during the solemnities of which, he was crucified. It was on this occasion that the people conducted him to the temple, crying "Hosanna to the Son of David." The Evangelist John† informs us that he came to Bethany "six days before the passover; and that on the next day‡ he was conducted by the people with these tokens of triumph. The passover was celebrated on Thursday; for on the next day, which was Friday, he was crucified. He came to Bethany, then, on Friday, and on the day following, which was the Jewish Sabbath, or five days before passover Thursday, he entered into the temple and banished from its courts, by a signal exercise of kingly authority and miraculous power, the profaners of the day of rest. This act and its circumstances are all so similar, to one that he had performed three years before, at the first celebration of the passover, which occurred after he entered on his public ministry, as to leave little doubt that that also was on the Sabbath. Of that transaction we have an account John ii. 13—16. He went up to Jerusalem, when the Jews' passover was at hand, and drove out with a scourge of small cords those who were trafficking in oxen, sheep, doves &c. in its outer courts. The Sabbath preceding the passover was observed with peculiar solemnity, when great multitudes of worshippers were assembled from all parts of Judea, and from other countries. As Christ's entrance into the temple, at the last passover he attended, was on the Sabbath, so it probably was on this. On the former occasion, he employed a scourge of small cords, which he used as an instrument for chastising the transgressors, certainly

* Math. xxi. 12. † John xii. 5. ‡ v. 12.

to demonstrate that those who openly violate the laws of God, deserve, according to these laws, to be punished with civil pains. All that has been said of Christ's having abolished the whole penal code of the Old Testament, is clearly refuted by this memorable transaction. That he used the scourge of small cords in the second instance, is not asserted, though it is very probable that he did. The expression, "he cast out," and the corresponding Greek word, in the original ἐξέβαλε, indicate that he employed at least such threats as terrified those profaners of the Sabbath and the temple. The power which belongs to him, as he is God, was exercised, while he uttered his severe rebukes, in such a manner as to fill them with fear and dread. His, are not like many threats uttered by mortals, used to excite idle fears. He terrifies the impious only, where all their apprehensions may be justly realized. If he alarmed them, as he evidently did, with the fear of immediate punishment, it was because they deserved what they dreaded.

To all this it may be objected; how would the Pharisees have permitted these pollutions of the Sabbath within the court of the temple, who so often accused Christ and his disciples of its violation, when performing works of mercy? But we know that they strained at a gnat, and swallowed a camel.—Those who were themselves guilty of adultery, were the foremost to prefer an accusation against the woman brought before Christ. Besides, all that is commonly urged for the violation of the Lord's day, might have been plead by those whom the Saviour rebuked. They might have argued, that many strangers were there who had come from a distance, and who needed refreshment, that it was calculated to increase the opulence of the city, and that to abandon the profitable trade, in which they had embarked their capital, would be productive of great loss, in its "*commercial bearings.*" Nor do we know, that the Pharisees did not hire them stalls, for the accommodation of their traffic, and thus make gain by robbing God.

Does it not seem that our Lord, performed this public act, in the presence of many assembled thousands, among other important objects, with a view to refute the charges which the Pharisees brought against him of disregarding the Sabbath? Wantonly and grossly to profane the Lord's day, and vindicate deliberately the profanation is bold and highly aggravated iniquity; for civil rulers to do this is still worse; to pretend that all this is done with the approbation of the Son of God, is worst of all.

Let it be added that Christ's manner was to enter into the synagogue stately on the Sabbath for the purposes of devotion; that he met with his disciples after his resurrection on his own

day ; that to honour it, he revealed on that day to his servant John, the visions of the apocalypse : and that for nearly eighteen centuries he has blessed its observance and devotions for the conversion and edification of millions of men redeemed by his blood.

7. The committee contend that the petitioners are an extensive religious combination of dangerous aspect, threatening the destruction of liberty, intending to kindle the flames of persecution, and to confound the distinction between the church and state. " Extensive religious combinations" (say they) "to effect a political object, are, in the opinion of the committee always dangerous." Then, with a pen dipped in blood, they depict the sanguinary horrors of persecution. This is a direct attack on the sense, honesty, and patriotism of every religious man in this community. We have combinations of merchants, manufacturers, farmers, scholars, and politicians, formed to watch over the interests of these great classes of society, and to promote success in their various pursuits. Their petitions are not branded as proceeding from dangerous combinations. Are the professors of religion and friends of morality alone to be charged with evil purposes, when they unite their efforts for the attainment of a great moral object ! The general government in their violation of the Sabbath trample on the rights of all those who cannot conscientiously labour in the duties of the post-office establishment on the Sabbath. They are excluded from a lucrative branch of public business. May they not combine their efforts for the security of their rights ?

Those who cannot avail themselves of intelligence communicated on the Sabbath, to secure commercial profits, are placed in a worse condition, than others who do not hesitate to send advices to their agents on the Lord's day. If important news of a change in the Boston or Philadelphia market, arrive on the Sabbath in New-York, a Sabbath breaker may send off immediately instructions, to make purchases, and thus be one day in advance of a religious man, who does not receive the intelligence until Monday. May not good men combine to prevent the ungodly from enjoying such unrighteous advantages over them ?

Religious parents see their sons tempted to the violation of the Lord's day, by a lucrative station in the post-office department. May they not combine to resist the evil ?

Good men witness the laws of God trampled under foot, and many thousands of the citizens corrupted by a great and growing establishment ramified through the whole community. May they not unite their force to arrest the swelling torrent of vice ?

But this combination they insinuate is intended to lead to persecution, after having demolished the distinction between church and state. "All religious despotism" (the committee say) "begins by combination and influence." We believe it has been generally thought to proceed rather from the tyrannical exercise of power by ambitious rulers, than from the mass of the people. But what kind of reasoning is this? If they do not continue to violate the Sabbath, they will surely become persecuting despots! With what evils must they think the Sabbath pregnant, when the stoppage of the mails for its sake would convert the Federal Government into a religious despotism? Were this really true, the best policy for the general safety, would be for the civil authorities to exercise their whole power for its speedy abolition. Then, truly, the church which cherishes it with holy respect is a dangerous combination. For the refutation of these impious insinuations, we refer to the biography of persecutors. Were Nero, Louis XIV. Mary of Scotland, James Duke of York, remarkable for remembering the Sabbath day, to keep it holy? The most notorious persecutors have, in all ages, been the grossest Sabbath breakers. The friends of the Sabbath, it is intimated wish to confound church and state. It is possible that statesman who are ignorant of the doctrine of the Christian system, and of the religious views of good men may entertain some fears on this subject. They probably have in their eye, whenever they think of the law of God, and of the religion of Jesus, those unholy constitutions of Government, which, in the Old despotisms of Europe, do in part confound the distinction between civil and ecclesiastical institutions. They may have in their view a king as head of the church, from whom all ecclesiastical law and rule emanate; bishops ex-officio members of parliament; clergymen exercising civil jurisdiction over the people of their parish; pastors forced on congregations at the point of the bayonet; profane men led up to the altar to receive the sacrament, as a qualification for office in the army, and physical force employed to compel men to believe articles of faith. All this cannot be more abhorrent to the feelings of the senators of the United States than it is to those of all good men, in the land. We do not hesitate to assert, and we have had pretty extensive opportunities of knowing, that there is no sensible christian in the United States, who would wish the distinction between church and state abolished. We have never heard the sentiment maintained by any man. The most religious of our citizens, would be the most vigorous in their opposition to any unholy interference of the state, in the government of the church, and to the usurpation of civil power by the church.

Certainly if all, or the greater part of the petitioners, are the friends of religious despotism, the liberties of the nation are in danger. If the members of the Senate really labour under so monstrous an error, they ought to be speedily disabused. In that case they are to be pitied. After all, it is hardly possible that they can seriously entertain the fears which they express; and that all this declamation, for it really deserves no better name, against religious combination, is designed for popular effect. The petitioners are of so many religious denominations, and a great number of them of such reputation for good sense and patriotism, that those who thus denounce them can hardly be thought serious. A grave legislative body should never condescend———Spargere voces

In vulgum ambiguas,—to excite idle alarms as the means of attaining political objects. One would think, the Senate must know, that the fears they utter are altogether groundless. Let them learn, however, that all intelligent, all real christians, do wish to see Christian morality prevalent in the halls of legislation, as well as in the households and hearts of the citizens; that for the attainment of this object they fervently pray; that for this they exert their influence; and that for it they intend more and more to combine their energies.

8. The last topic of the report, to which we invite attention, is that which respects the obligation of the legislature to acknowledge their subjection to the law of God. "They" (the petitioners) "appear in many instances" (say the committee) "to lay it down as an axiom that the practice is a violation of the law of God. Should Congress adopt this sentiment, it would establish the principle, that the legislature is the proper tribunal to determine what are the laws of God.—If this principle is once introduced, it will be impossible to define its bounds. Among all the religious persecutions, with which almost every page of modern history is stained, no victim ever suffered, but for what government denominated the law of God. To prevent a similar train of evils in this country, the constitution has wisely withheld from our government, the power of defining the divine law." We quote the argument in full that there may be no misapprehension. The petitioners do more than "seem to intimate," they expressly assert, and believe that the practice is plainly and directly against the law of God. The committee, like many who have preceded them, speak of God's laws, as if they were as ambiguous as the oracular responses of the Delphic oracle. Under this pretext, which is more than seemingly intimated, they utterly reject the law of God as forming any part of the rule of their government; and affirm that the constitution has wisely prohibited them from know-

ing it, as obligatory on them. The law of God is falsely charged in this intimation. In morals, as in all other departments of human knowledge, there are many primary truths, which lie on the surface, and are so plain, "that he who runs may read;" while we arrive at the knowledge of others by a process of ratiocination, sometimes longer, in other cases shorter. The great leading traits of morality are so distinctly drawn in the laws of God, that offenders against them are left utterly without excuse. Who can doubt that profane swearing is forbidden, or that disobedience to parents, murder, adultery, and theft, are transgressions of the divine law. The transaction of secular business, except in cases of necessity and mercy is as plainly a breach of the law, as any of these crimes. Why then talk of the difficulty and danger of defining the law respecting the sabbath? Why all this attempt, at the expense of offering indignity to the Supreme Legislator, to throw a shade of doubt over the whole subject? "Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge!"

All the religious persecutions of modern times, are charged upon the doctrine, that civil rulers should obey the law of God. To stop the mails, on the ground that the law of God forbids their running, would establish, they assert, a principle leading to persecution. Here we have a very grave and deliberate disclaimance of all allegiance to God, and obedience to his precepts, on the part of the senate. The constitution, too, it is said, withholds from the government, the right to define the laws of God. The petitioners say to them: "Your transaction of secular business in the post-office department, on the Sabbath, violates the law of God; you are under law to God, and so should refrain from these immoral practices." They do not pretend that the charge of violating the divine law is groundless; but they put in the plea of irrelevancy. It may be true that we act contrary to the law of God; but we hold, according to the constitution, say they, that that law does not bind us as legislators.—That law may be proper for the private citizens, but we as a government are above all its claims, and without its jurisdiction. We cannot define it for the regulation of our proceedings, nor can we admit that it has any claims on us. Had they thought it possible to vindicate the practice against which the petitioners remonstrated, on the ground of its being a work of necessity or mercy, we may fairly presume they would not have resorted to an argument of this character. Perhaps there is not an instance in all the annals of legislation, in which rulers so solemnly and directly disclaim all subjection to the law of God. For the refutation of doctrines so monstrous, we refer to the argument on this topic, contained in a preceding part of this

discussion. Yet it is a subject of so awful magnitude, of so deep import to the prosperity of this republic, and of so vital interest to the cause of morality and religion, that we shall in this connection prosecute it a little farther.

We hope it will be conceded that private citizens are under obligation to render obedience to laws enacted by God as the Supreme Legislator. Can any man assign the shadow of a reason why legislators should be exempted? That God himself has ever issued such an exemption has never been pretended, and it never can. The very thought that he has done so, is almost too preposterous to be entertained by any intelligent being. The whole tenor of the Bible is full and express to the contrary. If he has not, by what right is it claimed? Is their conduct less important to the glory of the Law-giver, or to their own good conscience, or to the good order of society, than that of the private citizen? Has God given the lights of his law to guide his creatures in the humble walks of private life, and withheld them from the legislator, whose duties are so much more arduous and important? If a human legislator can do what is either displeasing or pleasing to Him who rules the nations, is it reasonable that he has given him no information as to what he delights in, or what is offensive to him? On the principle of this reasoning of the committee, the only sin which the most cruel, tyrannical, and persecuting despots have ever committed against God, was their falsely imagining that the Lord's law was obligatory on them; and even that, on this impious principle, could not be a sin against Heaven, as they were not under his law as rulers.

But the people, by their constitution, they tell us, have withheld from them the power of knowing or being governed by the divine law. This we deny. It is indeed to be greatly deplored, and good men do deeply deplore, that there is no formal recognition of the authority of him who is Prince of the kings of the earth, in the Federal Constitution; but the constitution has nowhere said that the government either shall or may disobey God. Every member of Congress, and nearly all the officers of the government are bound by oath to administer their office faithfully. We do not like the form of the oath usually taken by the book. But even in that corrupt form, borrowed from Pagan usage, what is meant by the concluding phrase, "So help me God." What do they mean by the "help?"—They do not take the oath as private citizens, but as public functionaries. In the very lowest sense it must involve a prayer, that God Almighty may aid them as legislators, as executive and as judicial officers in the discharge of their public duties, while they endeavour to be faithful to their trust. And on the

other hand, it must imply, that should they prove treacherous in the trust committed to them, he will abandon them to themselves, give them no aid, and leave them to their own folly and iniquity. It involves more than all this. They lay their hand on that Bible which reveals a future state of rewards and punishments, which if it mean any thing, must be intended as equivalent to the last clause of the oath by the uplifted hand. "As you shall answer to God at the great day." "So help me God," then is an invocation of the divine wrath upon their persons in case of perjury. But if they are not, as the committee affirm, to know the law of God as obligatory on them, nor to acknowledge him as their Lawgiver, or judge, in their official capacity, how come they to invoke him thus solemnly, at their induction into office? How is he to aid them if they renounce his law? By what law is he to judge them, if they violate their oath?—Perjury is a sin against the third commandment, as well as against the ninth. On the principle of the committee, should any one remonstrate with a member of the Senate who might be guilty of breaking his oath, that he was violating the law of God, what kind of reasoning would it be for him to plead, there is no harm in perjury? I cannot as a legislator define the law of God.

It is with real pleasure that we recognize in the report of the committee to the House of Representatives, a christian aspect, totally adverse to that of the Senate, which we have examined and we trust refuted. "The committee believe that a proper observance of the Sabbath is calculated to elevate the moral condition of society. In accordance with the recorded example of the Creator of the Universe, and enforced by Scripture precepts, one day in seven should be abstracted from ordinary business, and devoted to moral and religious exercises. Wherever these duties have been regarded in the true spirit of christianity, a moral influence has imposed salutary restraints upon the licentious propensities of men. It has made them better citizens, and better men, in all the relations of society, both public and private." It is with heartfelt gratification that we record this public acknowledgment of the being of God, of the truth and divine origin of the Holy Scriptures, and of the perpetual obligation of the Sabbath, and of its benign influence on society, in all its departments. It is an acknowledgment in principle of all for which we earnestly plead in this discourse, and for which the petitioners pray.

Besides, the committee seem to take pleasure in an enunciation of all those acts of the government, in which there seems to be a recognition of the binding obligation of the law of God, and of the christian system, and in which there is an acknowl-

edgment of the holy Sabbath. They enumerate the suspension of public business in most of the departments of state on the Sabbath, the employment of chaplains by the government, and the exacting of an oath "for the due execution of office." To all this they add:—"In thus recognizing, by official acts, the duties and obligations of religion, the National Government has acted in conformity to public opinion, and, as was believed, within the legitimate boundaries of its powers."

That there has been of late years a most deplorable relaxation of morals in relation to the Lord's day can be concealed from no one. That this is in part ascribable to the evil example set by the government is incontrovertible. The example set by those who occupy elevated stations in society perhaps exerts a greater influence on the morals of the citizens, than all human laws, apart from the effect which it produces. The mind of man in its present state of depravity, naturally prone to undue secular thoughts, words and actions, will seize on every plausible pretext to justify their indulgence. Fed by daily intelligence of the current secular transactions of the day, and waiting for the news which government furnishes on the Sabbath, the morning of the Lord's day, is occupied with the ordinary topics of thought and conversation. Thus men's minds are led away by governmental seductions from those devotional subjects which are appropriate to this holy season. The journals of the day arrive. Fresh stimulants are added to worldly thought and conversation. He, who observes the Sabbath in the true spirit of the institution, must regard newspaper reading as a violation of its holy nature. They who are not wholly lost to all sense of religion, but whose religious principles and habits are not firmly established, and there are many thousands of this description among us, will sometimes reason and reflect on the duties of the Lord's day. What may be supposed to be the tenor of their reflections, as regards the governmental transactions on the Sabbath? Wise and learned men they will say, have been elected to legislate for the nation. They know what is proper. They transport the mails, and open the post offices on this day. They have deliberated gravely and wisely on the measure, and have decided that newspapers and letters of business should be furnished to the citizens on this as on other days of the week. They think the public good requires all this. For this purpose they hire many thousands of the citizens to labour in this service, and thus deprive them of all opportunity to attend on the public services of religion. By all these doings, they instruct the people to read newspapers, and to think and hold conversation on their

contents. There cannot be much harm in this kind of reading, conversation and thought, when we are taught its propriety, and its necessity to the promotion of the public welfare. Should any compunctious visitings disturb the conscience, some such summary process of reasoning will soon dismiss them. The mind occupied with the news of the morning, and engaged in revolving projects of speculation, is totally disqualified for all the devotions of the Lord's house. The edification, which might be derived from the public service of the sanctuary is thus prevented and that by the government.

Perhaps it is impossible to conceive how by any other means, the interests of religion and good morals could be more insidiously and vitally attacked by the government, than by those which are thus employed. But the evil does not stop here. The temptation is great to abandon the outward forms of religion, and resort to clubs held in bar rooms, and reading rooms, for the purposes of discussing political topics, prices current, and the merits of play actors and actresses. Some are employed in maturing projects of speculation, others are trafficking in wares to be delivered on the ensuing day. To pass away, what they consider the dullness of the Sabbath, some resort to the card-table, and the cup of intoxication. Having been seduced from the worship of the Lord, and the paths of religion, many, who spend the Sabbath day in these sinful indulgences, are prepared to riot in profligacy on its holy evening, by resorting to those polluted haunts of infamy, which are the anti-chambers of hell.

When the habit of trafficking on the Sabbath is once confirmed, directly under the sanction of government, in the great cities and villages, the people of the country think it profitable to resort to these marts of commerce, with their produce on the Sabbath. They find on that day many merchants at leisure to bargain for their merchandize. Thousands of the citizens of our own state resort to our metropolis, on the evening of Saturday, or early on the morning of the Lord's day, to avail themselves of a Sabbath of barter and examination into the state of the markets. Instead of a season of edification, the first day of the week becomes, in this manner, to countless numbers of our citizens, a day in which their morals are blasted, and their religion blighted. They may and do say: the government transacts its business on the Sabbath, why may not we? If the large capitalists must be furnished with facilities on that day, in their gigantick speculations, why may not we avail ourselves, of the advantages offered for advantageously disposing of the small products of a year's hard labour? Good people, in the agricultural parts of the country, have long deplored these grow-

ing evils, to which the government gives direct encouragement. They set an example which is seduously copied by thousands to their everlasting perdition.

Every christian in the land is exposed to temptation, and in some danger of having his reverence for the Sabbath of the Lord of Hosts diminished. Let us not envy, when we perceive "the wicked sort enjoy prosperity." "Let us not fret in any wise, that we should do evil." "The tabernacles of robbers may prosper for a season." We may see their end in God's sanctuary. They stand on a slippery place, and unless they repent will be suddenly brought down to destruction. Let the people of God recollect that in keeping his commandments there is a great reward, and that this is very emphatically true of that precept which enjoins the observance of the Sabbath. How many millions will forever and ever bewail in hopeless despair, their folly and madness, in despising those blessings with which the grace of God enriches his people, through the medium of the Sabbath !

How different the condition of those "who in the true christian spirit" have remembered the Sabbath day to keep it holy !" The saints delight in the enjoyment of that spiritual rest and refreshment, which are found in the religious services which adorn the Lord's day ; these are but foretastes of that inconceivable felicity on which, after death they enter, in the heavenly mansions. Their Sabbaths on earth are spent in contemplating by faith the glory of the Lord Jehovah, as it is revealed through the one Mediator between God and man ; when they bid adieu to life, their blessedness is perfected in the unclouded vision of the same glory which sheds its effulgence on the realms of immortality. One day in seven here, they do not think too much to prepare for the kingdom of heaven ; and an everlasting rest hereafter, is not too long for the consummation of their joys. Sabbath-breakers "count gain godliness," the saints esteem "godliness to be great gain, having the promise of the life that now is, and that which is to come." Let us all then labour to enter to rest ; waiting for the day of deliverance, when the saints of the Most High shall enter into that land, "*where the wicked cease to trouble, and the weary are at rest.*"





