

THE COVENANTER.

JANUARY, 1849.

THEOCRACY; or, the Principles of the Jewish Religion and Polity adapted to all Nations and Times. By the Rev. Robert Craig, A. M., Rothesay. 12mo. pp. 309. John Johnstone, Edinburgh, 1848.

THE science of civil government is still very imperfect. Questions of long standing are still unsettled, and new ones are constantly coming up. Some are even calling in question the justice and the wisdom of existing business and social relations. On no subject have the minds of men been so actively employed in the most enlightened countries for, at least, the greater part of a century—perhaps we should say for three centuries—and yet little has been definitely and finally decided. The whole of Christendom is intellectually a Babel, and, socially, a boiling caldron, on political questions—questions of organization; and before they are brought to a just and permanent issue, many nations will become, it is to be feared, an Aceldama—a field of blood.

Why is this? Is the subject really incapable of any definite settlement? Is it impossible to reduce civil government to a science? Has it no principles? or, if there are any, is it altogether beyond our power to arrive at them, and so to state them as that they shall commend themselves to the understanding of all intelligent and good men? Must the nations for ever be organized and governed according to the notions and mere caprices of struggling and fluctuating factions? for ever be subject to all the uncertainties and evils of changing constitutions and laws?

To these inquiries, some may, possibly, answer in the affirmative; holding the opinion that there are no fixed principles of national action, and, especially, no laws of national organization possessing any intrinsic superiority; and, of course, believing that the most we need ever expect is a wise system of changes, adapting constitutions and laws to the progress of society, and the shiftings of popular sentiment.

There is, in views like these, we readily admit, a grain of truth. National institutions are not, like those of the Church, altogether invariable. Civil government is an "ordinance of man," not because men are employed in setting up governments, and in administering national affairs—for in both these ways they are concerned in the actual being and operations of the government of the Church—but because there is in such matters a margin within which expediency has a lawful range, while in ecclesiastical arrangements there is none—these having been prescribed in detail, even to the rules of discipline, or terms of Church fellowship, by the supreme authority of the Head of the Church. Still,

civil government is something better than a weathercock. It has fixed principles. Nations are moral subjects of Jehovah, and will be judged by the unalterable principles of the moral law. Civil government is an "ordinance of God," and must have, like every other divine ordinance, a leading design and definite limits. Indeed, we know that it has these. The magistrate is "the minister of God for good" to man and to the Church; while there are certain limits in regard to personal rights, and in reference to the Church and the family, which he cannot, without usurpation, transcend. And besides, where divine revelation exists, and even in pagan lands—for reason should trace them—there are certain divinely established principles in regard to the proper depositories of political power. To define the ends, limits, and depositories of civil authority, is not our purpose just now. Such there are; and, if men had not themselves raised obstacles by their pride, their passions, their vices, they might, long ago, have been as well understood as the ends, &c., of the domestic relation are in enlightened Protestant lands.

This brings us to the inquiry, Why is it that civil government is so unsettled? Why are the most enlightened commonwealths rather groping in the twilight than walking in the clear light of open day? We answer, because they have chosen to do so—they have preferred darkness to light, and that for the only reason that will ever make human beings do so—because their deeds are evil. They have followed the deceitful glimmerings of their own minds, and have refused to seek instruction in political rules and maxims, where it can be had with sufficient clearness and infallible truth! in the scriptures of the Old and New Testament, *especially in the Old*. There have been a few instances in which these fountains have been resorted to, but we question whether at any time since the extension of Christianity among the Gentiles, a sufficient, and, in every respect, proper use has been made of the civil enactments, properly so called, of the Mosaic code, illustrated as they are by the inspired record of God's providences towards the descendants of Jacob and the neighbouring nations. Probably the nearest approach ever made to the "full proof" of the benefits to be derived from the study of the Israelitish system, was in Scotland, during the ascendancy of the Covenanters, from 1638 to 1649; and, for a time, among the Puritans after their settlement in New England. At both these periods the Bible was exalted. It occupied the first place. The whole Bible was not only acknowledged to be, but was treated as, the Word of God. In both, however, there were defects. In the latter, the application of the scriptures to civil affairs, was associated with congregationalism in the Church—an element, as it proved, of weakness and confusion, which went far to counteract the happy influences of the scriptural civil element. Notwithstanding this, we appeal to the history of New England, and, with all her declension, to her present state, as an illustrious argument in behalf of Bible political regimen. In regard to the Covenanters of Scotland, they failed to see the anti-monarchical and anti-aristocratic, or, in other words, the democratic element of the Mosaic institutions. They saw clearly enough that kings have no divine right to rule; and, hence, they did not hesitate to prescribe conditions on which the lineal heir to the throne was obliged to conform, as the only means to attain the actual possession of power. Still, they were not aware, to the full extent, of the scriptural principle of the elective franchise in the commonwealth—they saw it in the Church. As to the

nobility, they still allowed them, unquestioned and on principle, their position as hereditary legislators, magistrates, and military leaders. They never even attempted any measure for the extirpation of the feudal system, that "iron wheel" under which the masses have for generations been grinding to powder. Still, we say, and with much stronger emphasis, that what the Covenanters of Scotland accomplished by their regard, doctrinal and practical, to the politics of the Old Testament scriptures, supplemented by the New, produced fruits which remain to this day, enduring monuments of the sound principles by which they were guided. And we add, as confirming our position, that just so far and so fast as their posterity have departed—and, alas! how grievous have been their defections—from the noble platform occupied by their godly ancestors, the evil consequences have been seen in the deterioration of public and private morals, in growing infidelity, disorder and crime.

Something to awaken attention to this subject has been much needed. Mr. Craig has sought to supply this, and, we are prepared to say, with some good degree of success. The design of his work, as stated by himself, is "to show that the Scriptures, from their beginning to their close, contain what is intended by God for all men, of whatever class and office; that they are sufficient as a rule for man's whole moral life; that they bind the faith and obedience of all men; and that they direct and command statesmen, rulers, judges, and communities, no less than private individuals."

In carrying out this general design, Mr. C. first enters upon a wide range of discussion, for the purpose of showing the unalterableness of divine government and administration in relation both to morals and religion. We present his doctrine in his own words.

"God's *first* acts and communications must not only be in harmony with all that shall ever after follow, but must also be germs, specimens, and models in their kind; according to which he will conform all his future proceedings; and these, again, being but developments, enlargements, and completions of what he introduced at the beginning, will be as the first water from an opened spring, not only revealing the existence of the fountain, but making known, also, what sort of waters will flow from it ever after. Thus, if he speak a truth to Adam, it will be, and remain a truth, and in harmony with all other truths, for ever. Or, if he declare to Adam his love of anything, it must not only be lovely, but what he will love, for ever. Or, if he perform towards Adam an act, it must be holy, and just, and good, and remain an instance of what is holy, and just, and good, for ever."

"The same principle will hold in regard to the administration of law and government, or of providence, which is the same thing. The very first instance in this department must unfold and establish the rule which God, through all time, will observe, in that same department of his kingdom. His treatment, therefore, of the first case of obedience or disobedience, on the part of man, must declare, and that in all its essential features, what his treatment of like cases shall ever afterwards be. It must be the permanent establishment, as well as the opening up and application, of a *principle of the divine government*—the registration and promulgation of an unchangeable law of his providence."—Pp. 24, 25.

The formal statement and deliberate discussion of a principle so plain as this, that the judgments, and laws, and institutions of the Most High must ever be morally in harmony, may, by some, be regarded as unnecessary. We think otherwise. We have no question, that there is a lurking notion in many minds, even in the Protestant Church, that we have now to do with another God than the Jehovah of the Old Testament, or, at least, that he has altogether changed in his manner of work-

ing and governing. We cannot otherwise account for their attempts to heap odium upon the laws, but, particularly, the penalties of the Mosaic code. Surely, if they believe God—their God and Saviour—to be the author of those enactments, and that he is ever the same in his perfections and judgments, they would not dare to utter these revilings. Our author thus deals with this kind of people :

“Those enemies of revelation, then, who have spoken of the character of the God of Israel, as less perfect and venerable than that of him of whom Christ spake, have only betrayed their prejudice or ignorance on this grand subject. They manifestly differ in this point from Christ himself. The severity which they would ascribe to the character of God, as he is represented in the Old Testament, is not greater than that which is manifested in Christ, whom he sent into the world to suffer and die for sinners—is not greater than Christ will show, when he shall awfully punish, in the end, the impenitent and unbelieving. The plagues which the God of the Hebrews brought on Pharaoh and the Egyptians, do not exceed in greatness and terror those which the New Testament denounces on mystical Babylon in the latter days. And Christ’s descriptions of the last day, and of the final judgment, are even more terrible than any thing we read of respecting the divine vengeance in the Old Testament. All the wicked shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power.’ Hear the Psalmist, in Ps. ix. 17 : ‘The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God ;’ and Christ, ‘The wicked shall go away into everlasting punishment ;’ ‘their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.’ The appointed and commanded destruction of the Canaanites, by the armies of Israel, is not more awful than that which Christ pronounced and sent on the inhabitants of Jerusalem. Both are similarly terrible descriptions of the character and actings of the same God. In the one case, the Romans did the work of vengeance on the wicked Jews, which the Jews in a former age had executed on the Canaanites who occupied the same land. The same character of God is thus maintained throughout.”—Pp. 48, 49.

But are the nations obliged to adopt, in form and in detail, *all* the enactments of the Jewish polity? Certainly not. These enactments are of three classes. In the first place, some of them were altogether peculiar, having principally a religious or typical character. Such as *some* of the laws relating to cities of refuge, and to the Sabbatical years, and certain provisions in regard to wearing apparel, &c. There were, in the second place, other laws embracing a moral principle, but which, on account of the different circumstances in which nations are ordinarily placed, are not binding in the letter : such as those relating to the tenure of property, the reaping of the corners of the field, &c. Besides these there are others, such as the laws relative to high crimes, and the punishment of them, to usury, &c., which are *mostly*, essentially, moral still, and of course binding. It follows from all this, that human legislatures have a two-fold duty to perform in regard to the Mosaic code. They must first classify these laws, and then, make the right use of them : ever remembering that for every step they take, even in the regulation of such matters as admit the greatest latitude in the exercise of discretion, they are under the eye and supreme control of the Almighty Sovereign. Here again, we resort to the pages of our author. His views are sound. The subject is of the highest importance.

“And as man has no right to make supreme laws for himself, but is bound to learn and obey those of his Creator ; so neither can he have the right to make laws for other creatures, without profoundest respect had to the will and law of God. And if there be, as there undoubtedly is, allowed by God a sphere within which men may make laws for their fellow-creatures, that sphere is by no means marked out, and placed beyond the dominion of God, so as that any law which they may please to enact may there have right and authority. Whatever is enacted by men, in such a sphere, must, in its principles, its ends, and its obligations, be derived from the laws

which God has established—must be in harmony with them; and must, therefore, be merely adaptations and applications to the ever varying circumstances of the creatures of what has originally proceeded from God. For lawgivers among men can never, especially in a matter so important, be supposed to be set free, and that by God himself, from the superintendence and direction of his supreme will; and if, in any respect, or to the smallest extent, they were so set free, they would, in so far, not be responsible for the most important acts, affecting widely and deeply the whole society over which they preside. Laws of men would, in that case, be withdrawn from the kingdom of God, and of his providence; or if they were to be regarded as admissible and receiving the divine sanction, then this absurdity would follow, that men might become lawgivers to their Maker, and that, too, by his own consent, which would, indeed, be the most monstrous of all instances of an ‘imperium in imperio’—a thing which the Supreme will never suffer to exist in his universe.”—Pp. 107, 108, 109.

A prevailing error, and an exceedingly hurtful one, is, that the Jews were under the divine government in some extraordinary and inimitable manner: that God was partly their self-constituted, and partly their elected chief magistrate: that he was their king in some other way than he is king of other Christian nations: that the Jews were under a peculiar *Theocracy*. This error Mr. C. ably combats.

“We do, indeed, hold that the Jews were under a Theocracy; but so also are all baptized nations. They are as truly taught of God, and as firmly bound to serve him, as the Jews ever were. They have, at least, as great advantages for knowing his will and for doing it as the Jews ever had; and it is difficult even to imagine how Christianity could ever relax the obedience of nations, or remove farther away from them the eye and the hand of that providence which so intimately superintended the affairs of the Jews. ‘Is he the God of the Jews only, and not of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also,’ who have a greater abundance of his oracles and law than the Jews, before the coming of Christ, ever enjoyed.”—P. 131.

But was there not something in the manner in which that government was managed; altogether unlike that which obtains in other nations? Our author thus solves this query.

“Besides, it must not be overlooked, that God’s government of the Jewish nation was carried on by the usual and visible instrumentality of *human government*. All the orders of men were employed, as agents in his government of the people, which have ever been employed in any civilized and well-ordered state. There was among them a written statute-book of primary essential law. There were successions of supreme rulers. There were judges, priests, ministers of religion, prophets, teachers of the law, schools, places of worship, &c. God never was their King, in the sense of appearing in person, sitting on a throne in the midst of them, and dispensing with the usual agents and instruments of government. So far was this from being the case, that all the while God was their King, the people had *complete forms of government*, in which they took part, and which they could, and did, change at their pleasure. At one time, they were ruled by a military chief, as Joshua; at another, by judges; at another, by a pontificate, as Samuel; again, by an elective monarchy, as under Saul; and afterwards, by a hereditary monarchy, from David down to the time of the captivity in Babylon, &c. But whatever form the supreme magistracy assumed, the law by which it was to be guided was still the same.”—Pp. 131, 132.

One step further. Had not these rulers extraordinary helps of such sort, and to such an extent as to render the whole administration, God’s and not man’s? Mr. C. is aware of this objection and thus meets it.

“It may be objected, that the Jews had the Shechinah, the Oracle, prophets, &c., to consult, which no other nation ever had, or can again expect. It is answered; that Christian nations have the real Shechinah—the true Urim and Thummim—the whole word of God or of Christ, speaking most clearly, wherever he is consulted, on any matter which it really concerns an individual or a nation to know. They have in *one book*, of easiest access, all the oracles, all the writings of their prophets, all the divine hymns, and all the wisdom of God which the Jews ever had. They have them as near at hand, spoken in as plain a language, accompanied with as much solemn and impressive grandeur, verified by as many instances of performance, and assigning as clearly the reasons for the providential acts of the same God. In fine,

what did the Jews of old know of God and of his government, that we, under the full light of the gospel, have not the means of knowing greatly better than they?"—Pp. 132, 133.

To this, we would add, that we never find the Jewish magistrates consulting Urim and Thummim in their ordinary civil transactions. We have not an instance in the whole period of the Judges, four hundred years, and very few during any period. And, besides, of what use could Urim and Thummim be; or even their prophets, who now and then appeared among the people—of what use could any of these be in the ordinary administration of justice, and adjudication of local affairs in the thousands of villages and towns and cities, with which the land of Judea was so thickly crowded? of what use could they be to the inferior officers and judges in these different localities? or even to the Sanhedrims and chief rulers of the various tribes? The Chief Magistrate might have Urim and Thummim at his hand on an emergency, and it might, with difficulty and inconvenience, be consulted in a few instances, by the heads of the tribes, but most assuredly the ordinary business of government was carried on without any other resort than this written law among all "the thousands of Israel." This difficulty about the Theocracy may be summarily dismissed. It is an insult to the Most High to imagine that he became the *civil* magistrate of the Israelitish commonwealth; and a wicked disparagement of the New Testament dispensation to suppose, that, after all, the nations are now and must remain in a more unfavourable condition, as far as the knowledge of the will of God is concerned, than the nations under the Old: we say, "the nations," for prophets were sent to others besides Israel.

(To be continued.)

ROMANS XIII. 1—7.

The following criticism on this much controverted passage is from the pen of a distinguished *Seceder*, REV. WM. MCCREA, minister in Scotland. We commend it to the attention of those in the same *nominal* connection, who will have it that this passage means the then existing Roman authority. Mr. M. considers such an application of it "absurd." It occurs in a foot note to page 63 of his "Defence of Civil Establishments of Religion."

"In this text we have obviously a general sentiment laid down of what magistracy *ought to be*. This has been denied by writers on the other side (against establishments) in order to evade the confounding argument with which the sentiment assails their scheme. 'The Apostle,' says Dr. Heugh, 'speaks very evidently of the powers that then were.' (Constellations, p. 66.) But how this is so very evident, it is not easy to perceive. I appeal to any plain unsophisticated man, if there is not abundant evidence in the passage itself, that the Apostle speaks *generally* of the character and duties of magistracy, and not with particular reference to the tyrannical and wicked rulers, who at that time swayed the sceptre of Rome. The Apostle says, 'Rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil.' Did Nero answer this character? The Apostle says, 'Do that which is good and thou shalt have praise of the same.' Had the Christians this? They were the best subjects of the Roman empire. But had they 'praise' for being so? Why the merest tyro in ecclesiastical history knows that in spite of all the loveliness of their conduct, and their distinguished benevolence towards their very enemies, on the simple ground of their being Christians, they were deprived of their civil rights, and persecuted even to imprisonment and death. Was this on the part of the magistrates to be 'the minister of God' to them 'for good?' And yet with such evidence of the *absurdity* of this view of the passage, we are coolly told that the Apostle speaks 'very evidently of the powers that then were.'"

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(Continued from p. 166.)

THERE is one topic to which Mr. Craig recurs very frequently—viz: the singular neglect with which the bible laws and institutions of government, are treated by professed Christians. We do not wonder at this: for, to employ his words,

“There cannot be a greater solecism than for a Christian to believe that the laws of Solon, the Republic of Plato, the politics of Aristotle, the Tables of Numa Pompilius, the Pandects of Justinian, or any mere human system of legislation or government, can be equal, in any respect, to the institutes of law prescribed, and the actual government conducted by, the all wise God: or that a history of the government of any nation can be found so full and correct, or so useful in highest instruction on this subject, as that of the Jews.”—Pp. 139, 140.

We are fully prepared, strange as it may appear in an age when the Old Testament has come to be regarded by multitudes, as little better than a mere obsolete monument of the barbarous past, to endorse the following high commendation of the Bible as a rule for magistrates:

“That book is as full of all principles, rules, and examples of government for *their* benefit, as it is of doctrines, precepts, and examples for the regulation of the faith and life of a private Christian. It provides for them a large amount of most striking precedents to follow or to shun. It records most affecting and appropriate instances of the good and bad effects of the right and wrong action of human governments, and it marks out and defines to them their special departments of duty, by setting before them those things which God committed to the charge of human government among the Jews. The divisions and extent of their powers, the manner in which they should exercise them, the means they should employ, the objects they should contemplate, the institutions they should set up, the way of supporting and applying these institutions, and the consequences that may be expected to follow, may all be easily traced, and ought to be studied, in that great storehouse and model.”—Pp. 133, 139.

If we may be allowed to offer a reason for the “solecism” so aptly presented by Mr. C. in our first quotation, we would ascribe it to the extraordinary and almost incredible method in which the sons of Christian men and women have been trained in the schools—their whole time being occupied, during their most impressible years, in a course of study whose direct influence *must* be and *is*, to magnify Roman and Grecian warriors and statesmen, and legislators, at the expense of those whose acts and enactments are recorded in the Bible. It is no wonder that Solon and Justinian are, *as legislators*, more revered and studied, than Moses—Moses is nearly unknown to the growing youth; or if known, little pains are taken to explain the Mosaic code, to show its immeasurable superiority to *all others* of its own time, and to point out

to the eager mind of the youthful politician, its inherent excellencies. If Moses is referred to at all, it is as the author of some abrogated ceremonies, not as the medium through which the Most High imparted to his "chosen Israel" the most admirable set of laws, all things considered, ever enacted. "He showed his word unto Jacob, his statutes and his judgments unto Israel: he hath not dealt so with any other nation:" Ps. cxlvii. 19, 20.

Mr. C. next enters upon the subject of "Power and Right of Government;" taking as his text, Rom. xiii. 1—7. Our readers do not need to be told that this passage is *locus vexatissimus*—that it was the great stronghold of the abettors of despotic, arbitrary rule in the conflicts in reference to the rights of governors and the governed which followed close after the Reformation. Their interpretation of the phrase, "the powers that be" was, that it meant all existing governments; and, hence, that the resistance so strenuously denounced by the inspired apostle, is any opposition, particularly any forcible opposition, to the laws and acts of such existing governments—and this, independently of any consideration of their moral character. Indeed, all inquiries as to the lawfulness of their rule, were, in the estimation of such interpreters, absolutely unlawful. Of such interpretations, we are not in any danger now. By the unanimous consent of all *freemen*, the injunctions of Rom. xiii. are to be understood as applicable only to *lawful* rulers. But how is that lawfulness to be determined? Is it enough that they are not usurpers—that they do not rule by the sword? or must we, in the examination of this question of the lawfulness of a government, look a little further and measure it by the law of God in which magistracy is instituted? This last is, if we can understand him, the view of Mr. C.* He says,

"It is not to physical or moral power itself, as existing in human society, but to the distribution and use of it, that human law applies; so that when we speak of lawful authority, we mean, that human law assigns it to the person to whom *God's law* as well as his providence has given it, and that it is used by that person as God directs."—P. 145.

Again, in his exposition of Rom. xiii. he says,

"The greatest princes are as plainly and as firmly bound by this law to submit to the higher powers—the powers of creation and of God, which are *all higher than they*—as the lowest among their subjects. If God places dominion in their hands, it is not that they may use it at their pleasure, or in any other way than according to the rule which he, the *HIGHEST* of all powers, has prescribed for them. The Eternal King, the highest Power, sits enthroned above them. His will is their law; and under him, and for him, must they sway their sceptres. They are bound to know and loyally to own, 'that by Him kings reign, and princes decree justice.'"

"Thus all men, of every rank and condition, rulers and ruled, are put under higher power, and taught to stand in reverential, conscientious, and obedient fear of it; and thus only can the grand and holy order of the divine government and the universal good of the world be either firmly established, or fully enjoyed."—Pp. 148, 149.

And again, in regard to the setting up of governments, he makes some statements which are of no little moment in fixing upon our path in this difficult field of Christian duty.

"But not only is the will of God to be obeyed in the exercise of power on the one hand, and in submitting to it on the other, but that will is to be *consulted* ere the distribution of it is made, and ere the person in whom it shall reside is chosen; that is, no individual is to arrogate any power to himself, or to be by others promoted to it, unless either express revelation or clear providential indications have pointed him

* Mr. C. is not a Reformed Presbyterian.

out for this purpose. 'The whole matter, being in its very nature purely moral, must be dealt with by all according to the original laws of morality; and must be so conducted, as that an enlightened conscience, both in the possessor of dominion and in him who is placed under it, shall feel bound to sanction the arrangement. It is thus only that every soul *can be* subject to the higher powers, 'not only for wrath'—that is, for fear of the wrath or punishment of those who have the power—'but also for conscience' sake.'—P. 150.

These paragraphs embrace the seminal principles, at least, of a right interpretation of the passage before us. That the *character* and *origin* of the "powers that be," are to be looked to in determining the question of conscientious submission, is, we repeat, admitted now by all expositors. There has been so much gained by the controversy about the time of the Revolutionary Settlement, with the devotees of "passive obedience and non-resistance" principles. It is now held, in all free countries, that the "powers" meant in this passage must be neither usurpers nor tyrants. But how do we know this? and, provided we admit as a proviso that the existing powers to which we are to be subject, rule by the consent of the people and for their good, why must we stop there, and not go one step further, and ask, whether they come up in other and equally important respects to the divine institution of magistracy? Observe, the passage says nothing about the will or consent of the people. And, hence, the advocates of passive obedience &c. must have triumphed over their opponents, had the latter permitted themselves to be held to the 1st and 2d verses only. They would not be held in any such unreasonable limits. They would and did go further. They looked into the character of the power as described in the text. They compared the passage with other scriptures. They scrutinized the character and acts of the Roman government. Now, all this was right, as we think. But how does it affect the inquiry as to the applicability of the passage to the Roman government? We answer, very materially. For 1st, The Roman government was not a government of the people. The Emperor was elected. But by whom? By the Prætorian cohorts: not by the people. But whatever may have been the case in Rome itself, none can dispute that the government of Rome was, in the provinces, which constituted, perhaps, nineteen-twentieths of the empire, a mere naked, arbitrary, military government. But 2d, The Roman government was, essentially, a despotism, and in Paul's time, the administration was monstrously tyrannical.* But to return, we assert that, upon the principle on which the passage is now universally interpreted, we are bound to apply not merely one test,—their ruling by the will of the people: but to go further and measure the government by the whole of that description contained in the subsequent part of the passage:—and, still more, that in ascertaining the import of this part of the passage, we are at liberty to avail ourselves of all the teachings of the word of God so far as they throw light upon the institution of magistracy.

Another important topic treated by Mr. C. is the duty of the State to regulate its concerns "conscientiously." He holds that the State can

* In view of the facts of the case, we are disposed to dispute the right of those who apply this passage to the Roman government, to introduce the provisions to which we have alluded. In other words, if the Roman government be meant, we cannot see how the advocates of passive obedience can be met, as usurpers and tyrants, must have friends by whom they are kept in power, and the people must give at least, a silent consent, and by risking themselves to throw off their power.

and ought to interpret and apply the word of God in all matters which it directs within its sphere. He hits somebody pretty hard on this point in the following paragraph.

"To us it seems monstrous to maintain that the State has no conscience, and cannot know the truth; just because it would unquestionably be monstrous to conceive that God should set up men, his creatures, in an institution, and that for highest ends of law and government, in which he would have neither truth, nor law, nor conscience, to be found possessing any authority or operation, and which, consequently, he would have to treat as entirely irresponsible!"—P. 176.

The common objections against this principle, our author is well aware of.

"If it be alleged that the interpretation of the divine law, and the understanding of divine institutions, are exceedingly various and often contradictory, our answer is,—1. That the Jewish rulers might have made the very same objection in their time, the Old Testament, which was in their hands, being liable to similar varieties of interpretation. 2. It would imply that, after all, the Word of God is no rule, since it may be misunderstood and misinterpreted by every man. This would indeed be to defame and blaspheme it—to put it in a lower place than even the heathen oracles. And,—3. It would set aside the obligation of all laws, divine and human. For what law, human or divine, may not, by indolence or ignorance, prejudice or self-interest, be misunderstood and perverted?"—Pp. 177, 178.

But if these principles be true, will it not follow that Church and State must in some way or other be united? Mr. C. is ready here also. And having paved the way by a very clear statement of the principle that the church is an independent body, he proceeds to vindicate, as an equally important principle, the harmonious operation of both these divine institutions in promoting the glory of God, each in its own defined and appropriate sphere.

"But are these two institutions so different from each other in their elements and ends, have they provinces so remote the one from the other, that they either cannot, or must not, meet and unite? Must they necessarily wage war with each other, or set men at war if the attempt is made? Are they so utterly alien as that they can never dwell, or let society dwell, together in unity? Must they always be seen frowning on each other, or regarding one another with eternal suspicion and dread? Must they always be seeking the subjection and servitude, the one of the other? Is this their nature, or their position, or their necessary mode of acting? What these two institutions, under the management of men, have done in times past is not the question; but the question is, What is their nature? for what has God intended them in this respect? and what, by a right administration, may they be made to effect?"—P. 170.

But we find ourselves obliged to pass on to what was, in some respect, the most important part of Mr. C.'s work: we mean his examination of the Mosaic code. And, here, we are compelled to say that he has rather disappointed us. Not that he has advanced anything really wrong,—though we are not prepared to assent to all his conclusions, but he has not gone far enough. His researches have been too limited. He has made, however, a good introduction. He has opened a path in which he, or some other, may hereafter walk and gather gems and gold more precious than any that lie imbedded in the sands of the Sacramento.

Mr. C. first takes up the general scheme of government—the distribution of powers and of offices. He finds in them, readily enough, the three great departments into which the best modelled governments have been distributed. But he does not find, what we would have found very soon, the complete model of a great representative republic. Having satisfied himself on this point, Mr. C. proceeds to consider, "The

division and tenure of land," a most important topic, and, particularly, in the British Isles just now; where it is becoming a practical and a pressing question whether a few families may, lawfully and rightfully, be the sole proprietors of the soil of an empire, having the mass of the people tributary to them in the form of an annual rent, which is expended mostly in luxury, while the chief burdens of the state are thrown by a course of class legislation upon the already burdened masses. Like every intelligent man in Great Britain at the present time, Mr. C. has looked at the question in this aspect, but he has also looked at it in the light of scripture; and there he finds an arrangement directly the reverse of this.

"God directed that the whole of that country should be divided into as many portions as there were families of the Israelites, the tribe of Levi excepted; and that these portions should be assigned by lot to each particular family, to be its possession by a fixed and unalterable law—thus making the number of landed proprietors in the kingdom, and that throughout all time, equal to the number of families among whom it was first divided. (Numb. xxvi. 22—26, and xxvii. 1—11.)"—P. 243.

The benefits of this law, our author thus sums up :

"The direct and necessary effects of this law are very obvious and striking. It kept the nation essentially agricultural; it prevented any great accumulation of landed property in the hands of individuals, and any family from permanently losing its standing in the community; it secured the strongest attachments of the people to their paternal inheritance and to their country; it placed a strong check on the growth of excessive wealth, and secured all classes against the extremes of poverty; it presented but few inducements to over-refinement and luxury, while it afforded the strongest motives to industry, and the improvement of the soil; and the sound of the jubilee trumpet, heard throughout all the land, set every man free at the same moment of time, and on the same day restored him to the possession of his own or his father's inheritance. What a universal thrill of simultaneous joy must have been felt on such an occasion! what a sense of benefits from this law! and what a strength of attachment to their native land, and to its institutions, must it have produced! The very prospect of its periodic return must, on the one hand, have wonderfully sustained the spirits of the poor and oppressed; and, on the other, have restrained the rich and the proud from oppressing their poorer brethren."—P. 244.

In the United States, this is not likely soon or ever to become a practical question. The whole framework, and spirit of the institutions of the country, are adverse to large accumulations of property: and if any great accumulations do accrue, the laws of succession to property in force here, and the operation of causes that are always at work in an active and intelligent community, unless counteracted as in Britain by iniquitous legislation, soon break them up and redistribute them.

Mr. C. proceeds to consider the law of succession to property, the laws for the support of the poor, the law of marriage, the temporal support of religion, and, finally, the administration of judicial law. We have not space to enter upon the examination of each of these. In regard to the support of the poor, the grand principle of the Jewish polity is truly asserted to be,

"That the utmost precaution should be taken to prevent persons from falling into abject poverty; and then to grant to every one who had fallen into that condition a share with his neighbour in the produce of the soil, and in the fruits of the general industry."—P. 255.

Mr. C. might have said, and with great emphasis, that one of the grand and peculiar, and, of course, distinguishing excellences of the Jewish code, was that it aimed, on all points, to prevent evil, in the first place; in this respect differing very widely from most other governments, and maintaining a certain and marked superiority to all, in the

wisdom of its arrangement for the accomplishment of so important an end.

The last chapter on the subject of the judicial law is highly important,* and is, upon the whole, well treated. The principle of the whole penal system of that code is thus stated.

"When we survey the justice of God, and the penalties for transgression He has prescribed in the Scriptures, we find the principle lying at the foundation of all to be, that an offender against law must either make compensation, by rendering an equivalent for his offence—that is, by replacing what his transgression has taken away, or restoring all things to the state in which they were before he transgressed; or, if that be impossible, that he must forfeit all opportunity of offending in like manner, and be made to suffer the very thing which his conduct was intended to make the innocent suffer."—Pp. 280, 281.

In regard to the capital punishment of adultery, Mr. C. is thus bold,

"Or, if we take the case of adultery, the history of many nations proves that they regarded and treated it as deserving death. It is also clear, that the unvitiated sense of right and wrong in human nature prescribes the very same punishment; since the jealousy of the husband instantly prompts him to destroy the life of the man whom he finds violating the sanctity of his marriage bed. The same natural sense of justice in the minds of human lawgivers, has led them to hold the husband excused, who has inflicted death on him whom he finds in the guilty act. Of such importance to religion and morals, to peace and happiness, is faithfulness to the marriage relation, that God, both in the law which he has written on the conscience of men, and in the Book of Revelation, has guarded and defended it by the very highest penalty. It is a thousand times more cruel for a man to practise, or for a government to overlook this crime, than to punish it with death; for the taking away of a life cannot, for atrocity, be put in comparison with the destruction of virtue, and peace, and family ties."—P. 288.

He also touches upon another subject which is by many now numbered with things obsolete—we give his remarks in full.

"By many who have paid no attention to the subject, or who have formed erroneous conceptions of its nature, much ridicule has been cast on the capital offence of *witchcraft*. It ought to be understood, that under the general term of witchcraft, were included all the designs, arts, and practices of magic, charms, fortune-telling, and the like. The punishment of death which has been inflicted even in enlightened Christian States on those who were guilty, or even believed to have been guilty, of this offence, has met with many a sneer, to which the Mosaic law must also be regarded as exposed. It would have been much better if the shafts of ridicule had been spared till men had considered how the case really stood. It matters little, in this question, whether the persons accused of the offence really have or have not a power above the operation of ordinary natural laws. If they *think* they have such power, or employ means to obtain it, or if they wish and endeavour to make others believe that they actually have it, it is obvious, that should they be successful, first of all in producing such a belief in the minds of others, and then in turning it to their own purposes of securing gain, inspiring fear, or inflicting revenge, it is a crime of very great magnitude against God and against society. It is evidently fitted to subvert all faith in the supreme providence of God. It withdraws men from the direction and control of laws, both human and divine. It places society at the mercy of those who practise such arts, and it sets up the dominion of a terror of unseen, invisible, undivine powers, wielded at the pleasure of a fellow-mortal. It therefore cannot fail to prove a constant source of crime and misery. It is, moreover, a practical blasphemy against God, and an outrage on all religion, law, civilization and happiness. We might refer to the wretched state in which great tribes in Africa, for example, are constantly kept by rain-makers, and the like, who resemble so many infernal powers walking among the people, and keeping them tremblingly subject to their horrid will and purposes. No State in which such practices abound, can ever be prosperous or peaceful. The duty of rulers is, therefore, to encourage the spread

* We would use the epithet "judicial" in a sense more restricted than Mr. C. appears to do. In this case we would say "penal."

of that light of divine truth which banishes such darkness, and to hold as deserving the punishment of death those who continue obstinately and wickedly to follow such practices. This is a duty they owe to those under them, whose weakness and ignorance expose them to be the easy prey of such malignant or cunning propagators of a belief in such supernatural power."—Pp. 290, 291, 292.

We now pause. The work before us is upon a subject confessedly important; it professes to vindicate the claims of God speaking in his word: it presents principles of the highest moment. As we have already hinted, the work is rather an introduction to a regular examination of the Jewish Polity, and is in its style and arrangement somewhat cumbersome. Still it will amply repay perusal, and will, we hope, be the precursor of other works following in the same track, and illustrating more fully the details of that heaven-born system, under which, so long as they adhered to it, God's ancient people enjoyed an unparalleled amount of social, domestic, and national comfort. Could we banish paganism from the schools, we would have better hopes of recalling the public mind to the almost—in civil matters—forgotten book of God.

[For the Covenanter.]

A CATECHETICAL EXPOSITION OF

THE PECULIAR AND MORE PROMINENT PRINCIPLES OF THE REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH.*

(By REV. WM. L. ROBERTS, D.D.)

Introduction.

Question. 1. How many are the peculiar and more prominent principles of the Reformed Presbyterian church?

Answer. Eleven.

Q. 2. What are these?

A. The doctrines of

1. Christ's Mediatorial Dominion in general.
2. His exclusive Headship over the church.
3. The supremacy and ultimate authority of the word of God in the church.

* A catechism of Covenanting principles; explaining them, in their details, presenting the arguments by which they are supported, and replying to the leading objections urged against them, and pointing out their bearing in the way of a practical testimony against existing systems, so far as they are adverse in their constitution or administration, has long been a desideratum. Such a work would occupy a place in the training of our youth in reformation principles, similar to that so ably filled by McLeod's Catechism, for example, on the subject of Church government. It would also be found useful to put into the hands of inquirers. Such a work the author of the following article wishes, and will attempt to furnish. The present is the first of a series—each occupying about the same number of pages—illustrating the eleven topics enumerated in the introduction. Should the design meet the approbation of the Church, and the execution correspond to the importance of the subject, these articles will be gathered up, corrected, and published in a form, more permanent, and better adapted to answer the ends of such a compilation. Under these circumstances, and with these ends in view, we are authorized to call the critical attention of the church, and particularly of the ministry, to this series. We may add this, inasmuch as it is merely a compilation, the writer has held himself at liberty to make free use of all existing materials, and without giving the usual literary credit, which indeed, in a subject like this, it is, generally, unnecessary, and even impossible to do.

ED. COV.