**that be** (the existing powers which we see  
about us), **have been ordained by God.**  
We may observe that the Apostle here  
pays no regard to the question of the  
duty of Christians in revolutionary movements.   
His precepts regard an *established  
power*, be it what it may. *It*, in all matters  
lawful, *we are bound to obey.* But even  
the parental power does not extend to  
things unlawful. If the civil power commands   
us to violate the law of God, we  
must obey God before man. If it commands   
us to disobey the common laws  
of humanity, or the sacred institutions  
of our country, our obedience is due to  
the higher and more general law, rather  
than to the lower and particular. These  
distinctions must be drawn by the wisdom  
granted to Christians in the varying circumstances   
of human affairs: they are all  
only subordinate portions of the great  
duty of *obedience* *to* LAW. To obtain, by  
lawful means, the removal or alteration of  
an unjust or unreasonable law, is another  
part of this duty: for all authorities among  
men must be in accord with the highest  
authority, the moral sense. But even where  
law is hard and unreasonable, not *disobedience,*   
but *legitimate protest,* is the duty of  
the Christian.

**2.**] **shall receive to  
themselves condemnation**, viz. *punishment   
from God*, through His minister,  
the civil power.

**3.**] And the *tendency  
of* these powers is *salutary:* to encourage  
good works, and discourage evil. Tholuck   
observes, that this verse is a token  
that the Apostle wrote the Epistle *before  
the commencement of the Neronian persecution.*   
Had this been *otherwise*, the  
*principle* stated by him would have been  
*the same:* but he could hardly have passed  
so apparent an exception to it without  
remark.

**4.**] **the sword,** perhaps  
in allusion to the dagger worn by the  
Cæsars, which was regarded as a symbol  
of the power of life and death. In ancient  
and modern times, the sword has been carried   
before sovereigns. It betokens the  
power of capital punishment: and the reference   
to it here is among the many testimonies   
borne by Scripture against the  
attempt to abolish the infliction of the  
penalty of death for crime in Christian  
states.

**for wrath** seems to be inserted  
for the sake of parallelism with “*for good*”  
above: it betokens the *character* of the  
vengeance,—that it *issues in wrath.* The  
wrath is referred to in “*the wrath,*” ver. 5.

**5.**] **Wherefore,** because of the divine  
appointment and mission of the civil officer.

**ye must needs submit yourselves—**there is a moral necessity for subjection:—  
one not only of terror, but of conscience:  
compare “*for the Lord’s sake,*” 1 Pets ii.