

by a Kentuckian, 1843.

One of his last acts in the Senate has raised to his fame a monument more enduring than a statue of marble. From every part of the country petitions were sent to Congress, praying for a law prohibiting the transportation of the mails on Sundays. These petitions were referred to a committee, of which Col. Johnson was chairman. On behalf of the committee, he drew up that luminous report, commonly called "*The Sunday Mail Report*," which was presented to the Senate in January, 1829. This is unquestionably the best document ever written on the subject of religious liberty, as it best defines the rights of conscience, and where the just power of human legislation ends. The world has been so long and so generally subject to legislative control in matters of religion, that the right has scarcely been questioned where the truth of the religion which it imposes is admitted. Most persons who oppose legislative interference, oppose it on the ground of disbelief in the religion which it recognizes; and most persons who believe in the religion which the State recognizes, admit the right of that recognition. But the report which Col. Johnson prepared, takes a more correct view of the subject. It admits any system of religion to be true, or untrue, without any power on the part of the legislature to

inquire; and it requires the legislature to protect every person in the faith and obedience of any religion, whether true or false; but it denies the right of the legislature to provide for the furtherance of any religion. It confines the legislative power to the regulation of civil institutions, without the right of intermeddling with religious institutions of any kind, whether true or untrue.

This report was received by bursts of applause in every part of the Union. It was published in every newspaper. It was elegantly printed on satin, and set in frames for parlor ornaments; and since the Declaration of Independence, it is doubtful whether a public document was ever issued which received equal approbation and applause.