

On Church Government.

"Thus saith the Lord, stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said we will not walk therein." Jeremiah vi. 16.

It is a favorite idea with the framers of Church Government, and the advocates of irresponsible church power, that the Scriptures furnish no model or standard for the Government of Christian churches, but have left this to be determined by man according to the circumstances of the age in which he lives. Thus we have imposed upon us a variety of self-constituted authorities—1st. **POPE** assuming the place of God—an imperial and universal despotism—2nd. **DIOCESAN EPISCOPACY** or a mixed hierarchical and pervading despotism—3rd. **Wesleyan Methodism** the absolute government of an irresponsible oligarchy of Preachers.—4th. **Presbyterianism** and some forms of **Methodism**—a government of Religious Teachers over many congregations partially tempered by popular representation—besides **Congregationalism** or the self-government of each congregation.—All of these are said to be wise and right—the New Testament it is alleged having left us no rule to guide us in this important matter.

Now, let us ask our readers, whether it is not a solemn reflection upon the Wisdom of the Head and Law-giver of the Church, Jesus Christ, to suppose that he would establish a Kingdom without laws to regulate communities as well as individuals? It may as well be said that because the New Testament gives us *no creed or digest of truths* to be believed that there is not any standard of doctrine given us; as to say that because we have *no digest of laws* for church government that therefore there is no standard or rule for the government of Christian communities! Yet the Word of God furnishes *the only rule* for individual faith and practice—and also, *the only rule* for the government of Christian communities;—but neither of these are to be found in the shape of a formal constitution, but are simply interwoven with the lessons taught by Christ;—the narrative of the acts of the apostles; and the epistolary communications sent by them to churches and individuals.—The following truths bearing upon Church government are clearly taught in the New Testament; and altho' they may be *"of very subordinate interest"* in the eyes of men, they are deemed of very great interest by Jesus Christ:—

1st. That all Lordship or irresponsible government over Christian churches is utterly condemned by the Head of the Church.—Mark x. 40 to 45, 1st Peter v. 3.

2nd. That to guard against this gigantic and desolating evil, **EVERY CHRISTIAN CONGREGATION** in primitive times, *was invariably, constituted AN INDEPENDENT RELIGIOUS FAMILY*, with its own elected "Bishops and Deacons."—The former was the President of the Society, the latter its Treasurer:—the former was appointed to assist in teaching and administering the laws of Christ,—the latter also in teaching and looking after the wants of the poor. Acts xiv. 23.—Paullipians i. 1.—1st Tim. iii. 2, 8.

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