

APPENDIX K.

On the need of Authority in the Church as well as in the State.

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I have long observed, that the chief cause of all our divisions in religious matters is to be found in the want of a proper understanding of the authority which God gives to His Church. The real fact is, that ecclesiastical authority is well nigh lost among us. Hence it is that every man does as it seemeth good in his own eyes. However evil, or ignorant, or prejudiced, the conscience may be, conscience is the infallible ruler in all religious difficulties. *You understand the Bible one way and I understand it another way*, said a man to me once, *but you know we are both right for all that*. Is it not true, that if all Protestants do not say so in so many words, they nearly all do so practically? It is the prevailing idea abroad, and it requires but little reflection to see the fearful evils which must ensue. It would be all well enough if the conscience of man were always good and true, but in that case man could not be a fallen creature, and if he were not a fallen creature, we would have everything straight and perfect upon earth, both in civil and in ecclesiastical matters.

It seems to me, that men are forgetting that God has graciously provided two great systems of government for His creatures; one is for the body and the other for the soul; one is the civil and the other is the ecclesiastical government; one is the State, the other is the Church; and this is so plainly revealed in the Bible, and the Bible is so generally distributed among us, that it is truly astonishing that this part of Holy Scripture can be so generally overlooked or neglected. Does it not show that the clergy are too apt to make more of one portion of God's word than of another, and that the people do the same as a