

the Episcopalians of England, and the Roman Catholics of Germany. The confusion which prevails in all lands professedly christian, arising on the one hand from the puerilities and absurdities which have been substituted for the teaching of the doctrines of the cross, and on the other from the value set upon human tradition, and human ecclesiastical organizations, in preference to the simple frame-work of the early church, and the inspired teaching of the word of God, has led every where to the enquiry, what shall be done to restore order in the religious world? What means can be employed to unite its broken and scattered fragments into one glorious whole—into a church in which all the graces of the divine spirit will be developed, and over which Christ alone shall reign as its Sovereign and Head.

The portentous aspect of the times commands the devout and wakeful interest of every christian to prepare for the spiritual conflict which is drawing near. Either God or man must be chosen as our director and guide in the great warfare of hearts and minds, and happy is he who takes the God of Jacob for his refuge—who is prepared to follow Christ even unto death. The interests which are involved in the issue of this moral warfare, the peace of the church of God, the growth of divine knowledge and holiness in its members, the conversion of sinners, the salvation of the world, and the glory of Christ, demand the highest efforts of Christian philanthropy for their attainment. The mere interests of party must be merged in the interests of the kingdom of God. The fear of man which bringeth a snare,—the fears, hopes, and interests of power must be put aside with all courageousness in the battles of the Lord. "Fear not them who kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul; but fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." "There is one lawgiver who is able to save and to destroy." "The Lord is our judge: the Lord is our Lawgiver: the Lord is our King; he will save us." The language of our Lord and lawgiver previous to his death should be engraven upon the hearts of all who profess his name, and should be as a sign upon the hand, and as frontlets between the eyes, that it may be remembered by them for ever, "He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me; and the equally important instruction of the Divine Spirit, "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have a right to the tree of life and may enter in through the gates into the city."

I have, Mr. Editor, in common with all who value the principles and blessings of the Gospel felt a high degree of satisfaction in observing the praiseworthy efforts which you are now making to enlighten and purify the portion of the Church which comes more immediately within the range of your influence. The cause is one which is worthy of the christian, and the manner in which you have conducted the journal under your care—the calm reference which you have made to facts and principles, and examples from scripture, in your appeals to the intelligence of the brethren, even in the face of secret vituperation, and personal calumny, commands the respect of every virtuous mind. "If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, much more shall they call them of his household."

You seek to put away the errors and evils which have ininuated themselves into the Church through a departure from the primitive organization of the Government established under the Apostles of Jesus Christ, and to do this not by references to human usages or authority, but to the alone infallible ecclesiastical standard and rule—the word of God. The internal working of the laws of Methodism—the despotic restraint set upon the spirit of enquiry; but particularly the more public evils which have befallen us, should long since have taught the Church that there has been a departure from the broad line of Christian duty—otherwise it would not have been a prey to the wicked devices of politicians and statesmen as it has been.

It requires, Mr. Editor, no superior clearness of perception to discover the source of all our difficulties and inquietude. We have received for doctrines the commandments of men. We, in common with many non-conformist churches, have by our organization, as a religious community, held out as it were a premium for worldly policy, political stratagem, and state interference, and we ought not therefore to be surprised that

We have calmly tolerated the concentration of the entire power of the Government of the Church into one focus distinct from and independent of the membership. We have sanctioned a power having no precedent in the New Testament—a power not merely to administer laws which have been approved of by the community as laws of Christ, but actually to legislate for the Church as well as to govern it. Like Samson, we have thus been shorn of the locks of our strength and have been bound, humbled, and tortured by the Philistines.

There are three forms of political and religious government in the world, under one or the other of which every community is regulated; and as happiness and prosperity are in no small degree dependent upon the form under which a community exists, it becomes a matter of grave and serious moment with every Christian, to enquire which of them is most in accordance with the spirit of the new Testament—whether the form under which we live, is consonant with natural or revealed law—and if not, whether it is not true wisdom to pause in our career, and with unfeigned lips and a true heart, to offer up the Psalmists' prayer. "Show me thy way O Lord! teach me thy paths: lead me in thy truth, and teach me for thou art the God of my salvation." The three forms of Church Government to which I have referred are, 1st. When one mind exercises undisputed, irresponsible sway over the multitude. 2nd. When a few minds virtually unchecked, legislate for and control the body; and 3rd. When the will of the membership freely and fully expressed, elects the rulers, makes or adopts laws, and determines the mode of administration for the good of the community. I should perhaps tire the patience of your readers Mr. Editor, were I to adduce Scripture proofs in opposition to the first of these, because no individual of ordinary intelligence, would attempt to establish from the New Testament, that a spiritual despotism, which is only another name for Popery, can have any place within the Church of Jesus Christ. But with respect to the second, the claims of an official aristocracy—officials elected by officials—a kind of non-conformist Apostolical succession—it is perhaps necessary, that I should particularly allude, as it exists so universally in our day in almost all popular Churches, and is tacitly recognized by many Christians without examination, as agreeably to the doctrines of the Gospel. Nothing, in my opinion, is more foreign to the genius and spirit of Christianity, than a government of this kind, in any body professing to be a Church of Christ; the whole examples and teachings of the Messiah and his apostles run counter to it. The lust of power so common to fallen man, was early manifested by the followers of the Redeemer, but was instantly quelled by his authoritative language. "If any man desire to be first, the same shall be last of all," and by setting a little child in the midst of them, he gave to his people in every age, an expressive example of what they should be, even when clothed with legitimate authority. On another occasion, when a similar spirit was manifested by two of his disciples, seeking to sit on his right hand, and on his left in his kingdom; he instantly repressed it by shewing that such a request was the offspring of ignorance. "Ye know not what ye ask," and by reference to the Lordship often exercised by earthly Governments he testified, "But it shall not be so among you, for whosoever shall be Chief among you, let him be your servant;" and finally, as if to present an eternal barrier to all this desire of vain-glorious supremacy among his followers, he presented his own divine character and example, for their imitation, and as forming the strongest motive to their grateful obedience. "Even as the son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." The professed teachers of the religion of the Bible, should, at all men, yield themselves to the Apostolic injunction, "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus," "neither as being Lords over God's heritage, but being as ensamples to the flock." There are no lords in the Church of God, there is no spiritual aristocracy. "One is your master even Christ, and all ye are brethren," in the emphatic language of Jesus to his disciples, when exposing and condemning the religious lordship of

his day, the proud pharisaic aristocracy which had sprung up among the Jews.

The concentration of power in the persons of a few individuals, enabling them to overrule God's heritage, is therefore most manifestly contrary to the spirit of the Gospel, and opposed alike to the example and command of Christ, and his inspired apostles; and the retention of such power in opposition to the rightful claims of the membership of a Christian Community, is a usurpation of the place which should alone be occupied by the Head of the Church; and in fact, is open rebellion against him.

When the venerable Mr. Wesley, began his labours of reformation, it is well known that he had no intention whatever of seceding from the National Establishment, but his design was, if possible, to spiritualize the working of that corrupted branch of Antichrist. We believe that he had no intention of rearing a new superstructure upon a scriptural foundation, and indeed it is quoted by a certain author from the minutes of the British Conference, vol. 1, page 58, that in carrying out the reformation which he originated, "he went on from step to step, impelled not by a plan or purpose of his own, but by the pressure of circumstances." In short, he informs us, that the economy of Methodism, does not owe its existence to an examination of the new Testament, to ascertain what is the Scriptural plan of Church Government, but to a train of providential circumstances over which he and his friends had no control." Indeed, it is well known, that until within the last year or two, the British Conference would not recognize the connection under the name of a Church, believing as Mr. Wesley did, in the Scriptural authority for the foundation of the hierarchy, and viewing themselves only as a purer section of that earthly colossus. The people knew the goodness of Mr. Wesley's motives, they loved him as a father, had the fullest confidence in his known wisdom and integrity; and being very unwilling to grieve or offend him, permitted him to do every thing he thought best, but this gave him no right but what was founded on the will of the people. Indeed, Mr. Wesley never claimed any right to the power which he exercised, but what was purely personal; he, being the person who under God, had raised the societies, formed their plan of discipline, and from the incapacity of the people in their infant state, it had gradually grown up into the authority and power which he possessed. These were the grounds on which he founded his claim to power over the preachers and the people. But the notion of his transferring his right to govern as he pleased, to others after his death, never entered his head. The claim therefore set up by the Conference, of inhering from Mr. Wesley, what could not be transferred, is idle, absurd, and founded in a spirit of usurpation. Mr. Wesley, reigned in his day, as an absolute monarch over the people; and even a free Conference, a meeting of all the preachers, by whom all matters should be regulated, was refused by him. At first he invited his "helpers" to advise with him, but afterwards, when they increased in number, he invited only such as he chose; but with respect to a free Conference, he remarked, "it is possible after my death, something of this kind may take place, but not while I live."

In 1784, about six years before his death, he executed a deed of declaration, constituting one hundred of the travelling preachers therein named, and their successors for ever, "the Conference of the people called Methodists," with power to fill up vacancies in their body. The design of this act was to give a legal definition to the phrase "The Conference of the people called Methodists," which is inserted in all the deeds of the "preaching houses" or chapels the property of which was vested alone in Mr. Wesley. The Conference at its first meeting not only took possession of all the Chapel property, but assumed also the right to control the body by power, as Mr. Wesley had done, chiefly by his moral influence over the people. The Societies in London and other places, after Mr. Wesley's death, sent letters, "expressing in general and respectful terms, the opinion of the people respecting the plan which might be pursued," but their addresses were destroyed without perusal and the first President, in a letter to one of the preachers, remarked "The Conference must be absolute masters." I need hardly remark, Mr. Editor, how utterly adverse this spiritual usurpation was