

Europe, adopted that mode of church government which recognises, as of Divine authority, equality amongst Ministers of the Gospel—which ever of the various names used in the Bible to designate these office-bearers in the church might happen to be employed. In thus deciding in this important matter, there was a solemn rejection of the error which had been so long committed and cherished, and which, having grown into a firmly compacted system of prelatical and despotic power, had produced such fatal effects among the nations—an error which, notwithstanding the solemn warnings of God in His word, attempts to establish, on the footing of civil delegation and authority, a gradation of titles, ranks, authority and power, among those who are expressly debarred by a voice from Heaven from being lords over God's heritage. Prelacy, an essential feature of the Papacy, or the system of gradations of rank and authority amongst the Ministers of Christ, was declared to be a merely human contrivance, having no warrant or sanction from the word of God.

It is also worthy of notice—and the fact speaks to the praise of those to whom it refers, that the civil Rulers of those countries on the continent of Europe, within which these churches of the living God, witnesses for Christ, were thus established and organised, kept aloof and interfered not, when the Rulers of Christ's house, acting in His name, and by His supreme authority, proceeded to determine in what way Christ's house should be governed. But it was felt by all the Rulers of the nations; the Rulers of the churches, and the various members of the churches which had thus been formed, that the papacy had, through prelatical and hierarchical usurpation, intruded into the province of the civil magistrate; and it was therefore deemed requisite, by the various churches, through their proper functionaries, the pastors, to collect, within a comparatively small compass, the various truths which lie scattered throughout the Bible, for the purpose of affording a guarantee, on the part of the churches, that what had been done by the papacy would not be done by them—and also with the view of ascertaining from civil Rulers, who, as well as the churches, have a duty to perform to Christ, whether they would afford to them that protection and support which one Divine institution, having no carnal weapons to defend it, ought to obtain from another institution of the same Lord, which is empowered and commissioned to wield such weapons, with the special view, as Christ's Ministers for good, of restraining all His and His people's enemies. The churches felt that the presenting to civil Rulers, in a regular form, the essential truths of the Bible, was what the necessities of the times demanded of them—they acknowledged the right of such civil Rulers as recognised Christ's supreme authority to require this—and their right also to call together meetings of the various office-bearers of

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