

ed by Himself under a system of regulations, having in view His own supreme dignity and honour, and His people's happiness and comfort. As, in this world which lieth under the power of the wicked one, the authority of the Redeemer is despised and disowned, and as those who are believers in Him were once like others, giving all the homage they could render, not to Him, but to his enemies, it was manifestly necessary, just and right, that in giving laws for the regulation of the belief and action of this redeemed Society, the first thing should be, to proclaim on his part, and to have recognised and acknowledged on the part of His people, the supreme authority of Him who had called them out of darkness into His marvellous light. And it is obvious that as this was necessary at first, so it is no less necessary still, in as much as there remains in every individual believer a tendency which nothing but death shall sever from him, and which nothing but the favour of Him who hath called him can restrain, to give that worship and service to the creature, which is due only to the Creator; and as the spiritual enemies of God's people, mysteriously permitted to have great power, and never in want of human instruments to attempt the accomplishment of their purposes, are ever striving to win them back to the service of Satan—Knowing that the renunciation by believers of this initiatory and fundamental truth must lead to the renunciation of many more truths, which flow from it—believers, having vowed supreme homage to their Divine Master, and having been called by His authority, to form themselves into “a Congregation of faithful men,” are constantly reminded of their danger and their duty, by the warning cry of the Bible—“To the law and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.” And hence every separate portion of the one Church of Christ, in which there is apt to spring up, and to show itself, that tendency to sin which exists in every individual member thereof, ought also very frequently to institute an examination as to whether there be a correspondence between its belief and its deportment, as a community, and the Divine Rule of Him, under whose sole authority it has been constituted.

The first thing then which is to be believed and acknowledged, in connection with the government of the Church of Christ, is the supreme and absolute authority of the Divine Governor himself. He is the source of all authority and power—and His people must not only believe this in their hearts—but must openly and publicly, as a community, or “Congregation of faithful men,” acknowledge it. But Christ is not now personally on earth, to administer His laws to His people: He does this by the instrumentality of men; and it is very remarkable that in those parts of the Bible in which the Redeemer speaks to and of the persons to whom the administration of His laws should be entrusted, He

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