

CHRISTIAN BANNER.

"If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God."
"This is love, that we walk after his commandments."

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HUMAN DISCRETION AND CHURCH GOVERNMENT.

From the Christian Baptist.

It is said that "church government is obviously left by the bible for the exercise of much discretion." How this can be I cannot conjecture. Whatever is left for the exercise of much discretion is obviously a discretionary thing. If, therefore, church government be a matter obviously of human discretion, I see not how any form of church government, though principally of human contrivance, such as the Papistical or Episcopalian, can be condemned.—Each of these forms takes something from the bible and much from human discretion. We may think that what their discretion adopts is very far from being discreet; but in condemning their taste, we cannot censure them as transgressors of law; for obviously where no law is there is no transgression. If there be no law enjoining any form of church government; if there be no divinely authorized platform exhibited in the bible, then why have the Baptists contended for the independent form, except they suppose that they have more discretion than their neighbors!

What is called "church government" may, perhaps, be entirely a matter of human discretion, such as fixing the time of day on which the church shall meet; also, the hour of adjournment; the place of meeting, whether in a stone, brick or wooden building; the shape and size of their house, and the seats and conveniences thereof. On these items the bible, indeed, says but little. Or, perhaps, under the terms "church government," you may place synods, councils, associations; the duties of moderators and clerks; rules of decorum and parliamentary proceedings in deliberative bodies; all of which some think as necessary to the well-being of the church as "the scaffolding is to the house." If you embrace all these items, and