

receive with humble submission those things which their teachers declare and which their rulers sanction, unless they bring higher and positive authority against them, there is at once an end of all authority, and of all profitable teaching, because an end of all subordination of mind or conduct.

Mr. Brown.—You are perfectly correct, Mr. Secker, and as I love to see a man acting honestly up to what he knows to be right, if I were not already a Methodist I would never, in any degree, leave the church, even if I thought she was in error, unless I was first able, from God's Word, to prove her so; which I begin to think it would not be very easy to do. I have long been convinced that the principles of the Bible require that a child should, in every thing, and especially in religion, follow in the steps of its parents, and never dare to leave the religious denomination to which they belonged, and in which, if they did their duty, they educated him, unless, by after inquiry, he becomes conscientiously convinced, from authority even higher than theirs, that in so far, they were in error. Now I feel that of course, the very same principle requires that we should in like manner reverence the authority and teaching of those to whom God has evidently given parental authority over the community at large, telling us that "the powers that be are ordained of Him;" and that "they that resist the power, resist the ordinance of God, and shall receive to themselves damnation;" (Rom. xiii. 1, 2) and particularly should we submit in these things to those spiritual rulers, respecting whom, the same high authority commands us, saying, "Obey them that have the rule over you, for they watch for your souls as they that must give account." (Heb. xiii. 17.) I confess therefore that I am fully satisfied that according to the principles of God's Word, the authority alone of our rulers, civil and religious, ought to be quite sufficient to prevent our forsaking the church of the land and the faith of our fathers; and therefore that to do so, however many may be the evils which we suppose we see in her, unless *we are ourselves able to prove beyond a doubt* that she is not the Church of Christ, is a heinous sin against both the unity of the Church and those principles of obedience to constituted authority with which the Sacred Scriptures everywhere abound. Still, correct as I have no doubt these views of religious subordination are, are they not in some danger of leading to that latitudinarian notion, entertained by some who are little impressed with the real importance of religion, namely, that the *civil power* has the right to dictate forms of faith to its subjects, to which they are bound to submit, and hence, therefore, that it is the duty of a man to be a Presbyterian in Scotland,—a Churchman in England,—a Papist in Italy,—or even a Mahomedan in Turkey? And yet such doctrine is as repulsive to common in-

tegrity, as it is to the scriptural unity of the Church of Christ, and the purity of God.

Mr. Secker.—No, Mr. Brown; I cannot see that there is any tendency in those sound principles to that latitudinarian nationalizing of religion of which you speak. What I believe Holy Scripture, and indeed the Church also, teaches us is, that the people are bound to obey their rulers, civil and religious, in matters of faith, unless, as you have just observed, they can bring some *positive precept* of God's Word against it, one that is so plain that "the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein" (Isaiah xxxv. 8): but in all matters of opinion or doubt, it would appear that the voice of the Church is to be listened to with humble submission. And I say "rulers civil and religious," because it is evident that the very same principles of scriptural submission which require us to obey the voice of the true Catholic Church, also teach us that we should esteem *that* form of faith to be such to which the rulers of the nation have given their sanction, until after the most mature examination, we have the most unquestionable evidence from the bible and the testimony of the Primitive Church, that our rulers have allied themselves to a corrupt church or to a religious sect which has no scriptural foundation. But having once made such a discovery, it is clear, inasmuch as we ought "to obey God rather than man," that it is then our duty to leave even the national religion, and return to the bosom of the Apostolic and Catholic Church, however despised or persecuted it may be. And we may well believe, my dear friend, that—after a sincere, humble, and prayerful searching of the entire sacred Scriptures and of the writings of the Primitive Church—the Scotch Presbyterian, the Italian Papist, or even the Turkish Mohammedan, would not fail, aided by the light of the Holy Spirit, to see their errors, and then, because commanded by God, seek for communion with our own or some similarly pure branch of Christ's Catholic Episcopal Church. But because submission to authority is the great means by which even divine truth must be conveyed to the people at large, what beautiful propriety is there in the numerous prayers of our Liturgy, that our civil rulers and clergy may themselves be sanctified by the Holy Spirit! and how fervently should we join in such petitions, and not only for our own rulers, but that the rulers of all nations may be brought to the acknowledging of the Truth of Christ!

Mr. Brown.—You have stated the nature of religious submission with clearness and accuracy; but in admitting this I cannot but feel that I condemn myself, or at least my former doings.

Mr. Secker.—Ah, my dear sir, I wish all the Methodists were as open to conviction as you are. But still I think that you are inconsistent; or, how could you remain a Methodist, after the acknowledgment you have just made? Do you