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Miscellaneous Articles.

HINTS ON THE DUTIES OF MEMBERS OF A VOLUNTARY CHURCH

In soliciting the attention of the readers of the magazine to the subject thus indicated, we feel convinced that it is one of vast importance in itself, and hence most worthy of their regard, and especially demanding notice here, as it has, generally speaking, been treated somewhat shily, if not overlooked in the Pulpit. Although the term *Church*, as occurring in the New Testament, and as employed at once in common and theological language, is used in various senses; it is unnecessary to enter upon any particular definition of it on the present occasion. But it is important to observe that every body deserving the name of a *Christian Church*, must hold, as a fundamental principle, that the *authority of Christ* in it is to be supreme; exclusive of the authority of men. No matter whether it be the authority of *one man* in the Church, as the authority of the Pope, or of Councils, modern Conferences, Presbyteries or Synods, it must not approach to competition with the prerogative of Christ. To attempt for instance to frame any new article of faith, or to increase or diminish the sum of any moral obligation, is to invade his province, and assume a paramount power. But many churches professedly holding this fundamental principle, have *practically set it aside*. This has been done in every instance in which there has been admitted into the Church's constitution, the recognition of any civil power or influence whatever. In all connections between the Church and governments of this world, there is, of necessity, an invasion upon the prerogative of Christ. For all such alliances are formed upon the principle of concession on the part of the *Church*: a yielding of something, in return for the favor and protection of the State. True, many have dreamed of such protection and favor, and of the Church's independence remaining unimpaired. But the case is *hypothetical* and in the nature of things, will remain so. If the Church assert, practically, her entire independence of governmental *influence*, she will in no case long enjoy governmental *favor*.

A voluntary Church is one standing in contrast with all, in *any way allied*,