

charms for the great majority of minds. Thus that which was at first conceded as a privilege, because of the confidence of the people in the honesty and disinterestedness of the ministers of Christ, was at length claimed as a right by those who held the pastoral office in the Christian church. They had altogether forgotten the spirit of Christ, when He said, "Man, who made me a judge, or a divider over you?" Those in places of power claimed the right to think, judge, and act for the people in spiritual matters; and often employed, at least indirectly, bribery and intimidation to secure their objects. In proportion as these claims were granted, all power passed out of the hands of the people into the hands of their spiritual rulers. Hence that subordination which God ordained to be founded in respect and love to those holding office in the church for their works' sake, and which, when it flows forth naturally, as honor due to excellence and usefulness, is simply an acknowledgment of the wisdom of God in His arrangements, and a token of submission to His authority, has proved a blessing to the human family; but that subordination, perverted, becomes a source of degradation, intellectual and social, and at the same time of undue exaltation to the rulers of the church. The education of the people was no longer fostered; they were no longer taught to read and think for themselves; to compare, like the Bereans in the days of Paul, the teachings of their spiritual guides with the Word of God. They were, on the contrary, taught to leave the whole matter of searching the scriptures, and ascertaining what God had revealed to men, to their pastors and teachers. Yea, gradually, they were led to leave the whole matter of intercourse with heaven to the management of the priesthood. Thus light and liberty passed away from the people, and those who sought to enlighten them as to their rights and duties, or that defended their rights, as did several presbyters of the church, were persecuted and forced into exile. Those who loved power and wealth more than the favor of God, or the good of the people, secured the entire control of the more public machinery of the Christian church. By this and other means the church was perverted from its original design; which was to teach men the way of salvation through faith in Christ, to admit them to the ordinances of God in their purity, and to secure to human society the blessings of light, liberty, peace, and prosperity. For some centuries, almost equal honor was