

traditions of the Church of Rome, another forbids me to acknowledge any authority in that Church. One teaches me that, if I feel a disposition to take upon me the functions of the Christian ministry, I must do it forthwith; another forbids me to do it without an authoritative commission through the instrumentality of men. One commands me to seek the assurance of divine forgiveness through direct impressions upon the soul,—another requires me to look for it in sacramental ordinances. One requires my obedience to his authority, because he bears a commission from the Bishop of Rome,—another, because he is commissioned by a bishop who has received his authority in a direct line from the apostles,—another, because he has been ordained by those whom the rules of his Church empower to ordain,—a fourth because he has received a direct commission from Christ. So that it is impossible to obey one without disobeying another; and if the one I disobey be indeed placed over me by Christ, in disobeying him I disobey his Master and my own Judge.

The question then is, how are we to know a true minister of the Gospel? whom are we to receive as such? whom must we obey for Christ's sake and our souls' sake?

In discussing this point I purpose, first, to consider the answers which are most commonly given to this question, and to show that they are erroneous,—and afterwards to point out a track by following which we may arrive at the right answer.

I. 1. One answer very commonly given is that the person who thinks he has an inward call, who feels within him a strong and vehement desire to proclaim the message of salvation, is a true minister of Christ. But this answer is not a sufficient one: first, because some of all the parties I have mentioned will profess that they have this call, and yet they contradict each other in their teaching: so that we are left just where we were before. But, further, what we observe in the Bible is in opposition