

In Presbyterian Churches it is well understood that every minister and congregation must obey the highest court. If a minister see fit to disobey there are only two courses open in which he may be dealt with. He may be declared to be no longer a minister of the Church, or he may be subjected to a regular trial for contumacy. The aid of the civil law is required at no stage of the proceedings. Questions of property and pecuniary rights may arise, but these can easily be disposed of in the ordinary course of law. To a Presbyterian there is something startling in the idea of opposition to a Synod on the one hand, and an eager pressing for legal sanction on the other. Equally painful is the thought of jealousy between "clergy" and "laity."

It has been solemnly stated by a high legal authority (himself an Episcopalian) that the powers sought by the Bishop of the Episcopal Church are of such a nature that if granted he would be able to rid himself of every Evangelical clergyman in his diocese! This shows what an enormous distance there is between Synods in the Prelatic sense, and the Synods which we as Presbyterians prize so highly.

While the true and radical cure of the evils felt in the Church of England can be effected only by giving up "Prelacy," we believe that diocesan Synods properly regulated are a step in the right direction. Union gives strength, and once that "clergymen" and "laymen" are accustomed to meet and discuss church affairs they will gather courage and self-possession, and perhaps learn by degrees the wisdom of still further curtailing prelatic power. Prelacy may thus fall as it arose—slowly and almost imperceptibly. Of this we feel sure, that the day for the exercise of autocratic power in any church is passing rapidly away. Christ alone is head of the Church and he has made no man his representative on earth; and to be "lords" over His Church should not be looked upon otherwise than as a daring and injurious usurpation. As surely as the political world has flung off the yoke of the "divine right of kings," so surely shall the religious world learn that there is no divinely appointed "Lord Bishop," head, or

King of the Church excepting Him who redeemed the Church with His own blood.

To meet in Christ's name and discuss and determine questions relating to the interests of the Church was one of the first rights claimed and exercised by the apostles and elders: it is a right which the Church should never have relinquished at the bidding of Pope or Emperor: it is a right of which Presbyterians should avail themselves to the utmost seeing that it was established for us at the expense of our fathers' blood. The courts of the Church have a *divine right* to meet, to deliberate and decide: and the devout christian will regard the decisions of these courts as binding on his conscience. There is no appeal except to God the judge of all. As there are cases in which rebellion and revolution may be justified in the civil community; so there are cases in which a christian may lawfully disobey ecclesiastical courts, but these are rare and extreme. When the Presbytery or the Synod opposes itself to the truth of God's Word, then the path of the christian is clear: let him obey God rather than man.

The danger to which we Presbyterians are at present most exposed is want of due regard to ecclesiastical authority. Decisions of Synod and Presbytery are all very well if they coincide with our own views and feelings; and we think those who complain very unreasonable. But as soon as a decision clashes with our own pet notions we too murmur and are in danger of becoming "disobedient children."

The more we study the Word of God and the history of the Church, the more thoroughly convinced shall we become of the soundness of the Presbyterian system of government—the more cordially shall we yield obedience to those who are over us in the Lord, and the more thankful shall we be to see other denominations seeking to attain to that standpoint which Christ by His grace has enabled us to reach.

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### SMALL CONTRIBUTIONS.

Some christians will not give to the cause of Christ because they are too poor and their contributions would of necessity be very