

of imagination and sensibility, he could not have been the preacher that he was, without his profound scientific training, his logical power, his rare common sense, his genial humility, above all, his heartfelt piety. But what we contend for is, that he might have been just as scientific, as logical, as benevolent and pious as he was, and yet he would not have been the orator that he was, without his strong imaginative sensibility.

Nor in the presentation of our argument, should it be forgotten that the most popular and useful religious book in the English language, probably the most popular and useful book ever written by man, in any language,—the *Pilgrim's Progress*,—a book equally welcome to the philosopher, the poet, the theologian, the Christian and the child, is nothing but one continued figure from the beginning to the end. This book is more made on the Bible model, it is more deeply tinged with its peculiar poetic spirit, and tinted with its heavenly hues; its figures are more purely Scriptural than any other volume of any uninspired man. It is enough to add, that of all religious books, it is most easily understood and most indelibly impressed, most poetical in its spirit, and yet, most practical in the character of its teachings. Or all uninspired books, the *Pilgrim's Progress* is most like the Bible in style, in structure, in spirit and in sentiment. It is the genuine product of the Word of God in conscious contact with the simple, but profound and poetic soul of John Bunyan. It is a faithful record of his religious life, under the action of the truth and spirit of the Bible.

THE AUTHORITY OF ECCLESIASTICAL RULERS.

1. "The Constitution of the Presbyterian Church, in the United States of America," contains a passage which we have long admired, for the clearness with which it asserts the great principle on which every ecclesiastical question must be determined :

"That all church power, whether exercised by the

body in general, or in the way of representation by delegated authority, is only ministerial and declarative; *that is to say*, that the Holy Scriptures are the only rule of faith and manners; that no church judicatory ought to pretend to make laws, to bind the conscience in virtue of their own authority ; and that all their decisions should be founded upon the revealed will of God. Now, though it will easily be admitted, that all synods and councils may err, through the frailty inseparable from humanity; yet there is much greater danger from the usurped claim of making laws, than from the right of judging upon laws already made, and common to all who profess the gospel; although this right, as necessity requires in the present state, be lodged with fallible men.”

To this passage we entreat the earnest attention of every reader,—especially every Presbyterian reader.—None, we presume, can fail to observe that it resolves all the official power of ecclesiastical rulers into “the right of judging upon laws already made” by Christ. If this doctrine be correct, it follows that all ecclesiastical offices not instituted by Christ are unlawful,—that every claim to ecclesiastical office must be tested by an impartial application of the law of Christ to facts existing in the case of the claimant,—and that no man may do officially in the church of Christ, any act which cannot be proved from Scripture to be legitimately connected with his office.

Before proceeding to other topics, it will be proper to exhibit (though with great brevity,) the evidence—at least a part of the evidence,—by which this doctrine is supported. Here we notice,

1. *The Relation of the Church to Christ.*—He is her Head. Her members, *as such*, “are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.” The same persons, it is true, sustain other relations, and in those relations are, like other men, subject to human authority. But their character, as members of the church, is identical with their character as members of Christ; and to suppose that *in that* character they may be rightfully subjected to human authority as such, is an absurdity, little, if at all, less monstrous than to suppose that their exalted

Head owes subjection to human authority. To Him it belongs to determine what shall be the mutual relations subsisting between his own members, and what the duties corresponding with these relations; and it is inconsistent with the honour due to Him, to imagine that any authority distinct from his own can have any lawful application to the subject.

She is his kingdom. Membership is formed by baptism into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; and inspiration has taught us to describe the same transaction by the equivalent phrases "*baptism into Christ*," and "*baptised in the name of the Lord Jesus*." The inference from these facts must be obvious to every one who remembers the sense uniformly attached by the sacred writers to baptism into a person, or in his name: We are made members of the church by being brought under a covenant obligation to the evangelical service of the triune Jehovah,—that is, by being brought under a covenant obligation to the service of Christ. No obligation distinct from this—no obligation to anything, in any other view than as a part of the service of our God and Saviour, is implied in the relation, or can by any possibility grow out of it. Every member of the church is, *as such*, a servant of Christ.—*On the ground of that relation*, he may not do anything, whether as an officer, or as a private member, which is not an act of service to Christ, or for any other reason than that it is a part of his service. But the service of Christ includes all that Christ has commanded, and nothing else. It follows that there can be no lawful ecclesiastical act, and especially no lawful exercise of ecclesiastical authority, which cannot be proved to be required by the law of Christ.

2. *The nature of the official relation of ecclesiastical rulers to the Church, and the end for which that relation subsists.*

On these points, the teachings of the word of God are clear and perspicuous. Concerning our Redeemer, we are told, "When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men." * * * "And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the

perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ; till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.—(Eph. iv., 8, and 11-13.) The very highest ecclesiastical officers were a gift from Christ to his Church : certainly, then, he never gave her to them. He gave them to her “ for the work of the ministry”—that they might minister to her; surely, then, he did not intend that she should be subject to their will and pleasure. He gave them to her, because their ministry was among the means by which she was to be edified and perfected, strengthened in faith, and advanced in the knowledge of her glorious Head; surely, they could have no right to direct their official acts to any end not of his appointment, or to consult their own inclinations as to the nature of the services which they should render.

We next turn to Heb. xiii., 17, “ Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves ; for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you.”

The reason for obedience and submission to ecclesiastical rulers is here declared to be, that they watch for our souls; of course, the end to be sought by obedience is the salvation of the soul. Now, can it be needful to this end, that we obey any command which rests on no higher authority than that of man ? To answer in the affirmative, is to claim for ecclesiastical rulers the power to establish new terms of salvation.

3. *The sacredness which attaches to every legitimate exercise of ecclesiastical authority.*

Twice is our Redeemer recorded to have made the solemn declaration, “ Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth,, shall be bound in heaven ; and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven ;” (Matt. xvi. 19, and Matt, xviii., 18 ;) and in the latter instance, the connexion plainly shows that the declaration is intended to apply to the discipline of the church in all ages. Surely it will not be asserted, that God thus ratifies acts which originate in no higher source than the will of man. To

excommunicate one, is “*to deliver him unto Satan.*” It would be palpably absurd to imagine that Christ has left it to the wisdom or caprice of mortals to define the boundary between his kingdom and the dominions of the Prince of Darkness. When about to expel the incestuous person, the Corinthians were to be gathered together, *with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ.*” That is, they were to exert, in strictness of speech, no authority of their own. They were to be simply the instrument, the medium through which the Lord Jesus would exert this authority, and declare his sentence.

Other passages of Scripture exhibit the same principle in a more general form: “Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that receiveth whomsoever I send, receiveth me; and he that receiveth me, receiveth him that sent me.” “He that heareth you, heareth me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth me; and he that despiseth me, despiseth him that sent me.”—(John xiii: 20, Luke x: 16.) It can hardly be necessary to inquire, whether these declarations can be supposed to apply to any other acts, than those which are done strictly in obedience to the Lord Jesus. But, perhaps it will be said, they apply only to acts done by inspired men. We reply, the only consideration which connects sacredness with the official acts of inspired men is their accordance with the will of Christ. As to uninspired men, the accordance of their acts with his will, we readily admit, cannot be proved so easily, nor in precisely the same manner; but supposing this ascertained, the consideration to which the former owe their sacredness, applies with precisely equal force to the latter. The Scriptures contain not a hint of a legitimate and proper exercise of ecclesiastical authority to which the sacredness asserted in these pages does not belong; and a text already quoted (Heb. xiii: 17,) is in point to show that such a thing is impossible.

4. *Apostolic example.*—When “the apostles, and elders, and brethren,” decided the celebrated question about circumcision, (Acts xx,) they pointed out the authority on which their decision rested: “*It seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us.*” Paul expressly disclaimed personal authority in religious matters over those who had been converted through his ministry; and when ap-

proaching a subject on which he had no message from God to deliver, was careful to state that he merely gave his judgment, as one that had obtained mercy of the Lord to be faithful.—(See 2 Cor. i: 24, and 1 Cor. vii: 25.) Not a single example of an opposite kind is recorded in the New Testament for our imitation ; *one* is recorded, however, for a very different purpose.—(See 3 John 9 and 10.)

5. *Inspired warnings against ecclesiastical usurpation, on the one hand: and submission to it, on the other.* Elders are exhorted, “ feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly ; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; NEITHER AS BEING LORDS OVER GOD’S HERITAGE, but being ensamples to the flock.”—(1 Peter v: 2 and 3.) Here, elders are reminded that they are not lords over the church, and solemnly forbidden to do anything that might imply a claim to that character. The reason of the prohibition is very clearly intimated—that the church is God’s heritage ; and every claim advanced by a creature to dominion over her, is an invasion of his prerogative. Elders must show obedience to God in all their official acts, as well as in their private conduct; and thus they will be “ensamples to the flock.”

Let us next examine Matt, xiii: 8, 12. “ But be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren. And call no man your Father upon the earth : for one is your Father, which is in Heaven. Neither be ye called masters: for one is your Master, even Christ. But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant. And whosoever shall exalt, himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted.” This passage, as the context shows, relates to the affairs of the church, not of civil life. So far as the church is concerned, all her members are brethren; no superiority is to be sought or acknowledged, but that which consists in humble and self-denying service. We have no Father but God; no Master but Christ. Nothing is to be believed on any other evidence than that Christ has declared it; nothing done for any other reason than that God commands it. A man does not exalt himself above his brethren, when he merely

communicates to them what the Lord has commanded him to communicate, or does for them what the Lord has commanded him to do; but *he* cannot be acquitted of this charge, who requires them to believe the mere dictates of his own understanding, or to do the mere dictates of his own will. From this passage, therefore, it is evident that no mortal has any rightful authority in the church, in any other sense than this, that the *Head of the church* may be pleased to exercise *His* authority through him. Accordingly, we are taught in other portions of the Word of God, that in religious affairs,—and the government of the church can lawfully have nothing to do with any but religious affairs,—a merely human origin is a decisive ground of condemnation against every thing of which it can be truly affirmed. “In vain do they worship me, *teaching for doctrines the commandments of men?*” “Why are ye subject to ordinances, (touch not, taste not, handle not, which all are to perish with the using,) *after the commandments and doctrines of men?*”

In maintaining what we conceive to be the radical principle of ecclesiastical polity, we are anxious to be correctly understood. We are far from demanding an *explicit warrant* for every official act. “We know, indirect proof may be as decisive as direct. Every duty includes all the necessary and proper means of performance; but it would be unreasonable to expect that he who enjoins the duty would give, in every instance, a full and minute enumeration of the means. A general precept must, necessarily, include a variety of particular acts. Inspiration has authorized us to describe the duty of certain officers by the phrase *to govern the church*. Concerning some acts, we can readily decide, by merely considering their nature, that they are acts of ecclesiastical government. Let it be shown that an act of this kind must be done, and unless we can find authority for making it an exception to the general rule, its nature decides who must do it. In order that the law of Christ may be executed, it must be applied to existing circumstances; and this often requires a knowledge of many other things besides the law. Hence ecclesiastical rulers must decide many questions authori-

tatively in behalf of the church. In every such case, the members of the church are bound to *submit* to the decision, even though they may think it erroneous, provided they can do so without committing sin, or omitting duty. The reason is, that while *every* duty must be performed, and every sin avoided, we must not attempt to decide for ourselves any matter which God has appointed others to decide for us; nor in this case, are we responsible for the decision that may be given. But our doctrine is, that ecclesiastical officers are not to be submitted to, in the exercise of powers which God has not given them,—that they may not decide any matter which it cannot, be shown from Scripture that it belonged to them to decide,—nor do officially any act which cannot be proved from Scripture to belong to their office. Of course, it is acknowledged that they may properly avail themselves of the confidence of the church, which they must be presumed to enjoy, for the purpose of giving judicious and pious advice. To give such advice to those to whom we have reason to think it will be acceptable and useful, involves no claim to authority. It is merely the exercise of a common right of humanity.

II. The word of God contains no *formal* specification of the powers of ecclesiastical rulers. It describes them as *governments*, and *those that have the rule over you*, and defines their duty by the phrase *to take care of the church of God*; and if, in interpreting these expressions, we pay due attention to the nature of the church, and to the warnings against ecclesiastical usurpation already noticed, we shall be led to correct views of the whole subject.

It is true, the church, while she exists on earth, must unavoidably be concerned, to some extent, in secular matters. Hence, there are some services, the need of which, is common to her with every other organized and public body. Accordingly, deacons are appointed to render these services; but deacons are not rulers.

The whole duty of the church is to serve Christ, to do his will. This remark applies equally to her officers and her private members. Holiness, as a moral attribute, belongs only to persons in their individual capacity. It can be truly ascribed to a public body on no other

ground than that of its existence in the individuals composing the public body. The usefulness of public religion consists solely in its subserviency to personal religion. Ecclesiastical rulers, therefore, have no power for any other purpose than to secure obedience to Christ from individuals; and all that can be officially done by mortals for this purpose is comprehended in teaching and discipline. You may proclaim the character, offices, work, and law of Christ—all the truth that God has been pleased to reveal for the sanctification and salvation of men: you may inflict on the violators of his law such censures as his word prescribes. But when you have done these things, there is nothing more to be done officially. Prayer and a holy example are all the remaining means adapted to the end, and within the reach of creatures, who have no direct control over the heart.

It is readily admitted, that to teach is not an act of rule. But there are various acts of rule which must be done, in order that instruction may be duly communicated. Suitable persons must be invested with the office of the gospel ministry; of course, due inquiry must be made as to the qualifications of candidates; and whatever is needed to be done by public authority, must be done by ecclesiastical officers, for securing to aspirants to that sacred office the advantage of suitable training. To designate ministers to their respective fields of labor, and to hold them responsible for their official conduct, are acts which must be done; and in their own nature they are acts of ecclesiastical rule.

Moreover, the duties of a public religious instructor include all that is included in conducting the public worship of God. Indeed, it is here, principally, his duties are to be performed. The sacraments are divinely appointed modes of exhibiting the leading truths of the gospel, by the aid of symbols. Prayer and praise, we admit, are not, in themselves considered, acts of either teaching or learning. But to lead others in these exercises, is an act of teaching, and to be led by another, an act of learning. Now, in connexion with the public worship of God, there are necessarily, a variety of particular circumstances, about which a common understanding on the part of those who are to unite in it is in-

dispensable, but which are variable in their nature, and which God has left to be determined by Christian discretion in conformity with the *general principles* of his word. Of course, the determination of these is included in the duty of ruling the church.

For reasons formerly assigned, we believe there is an extensive class of human beings who, according to the will of Christ, are entitled to be regarded as members of the church, while they are not to be regarded as regenerate persons, nor admitted to the Lord's table. The reception of the sacred supper is a means of instruction, not applicable indiscriminately, to all hearers of the gospel, nor even to all members of the church. To judge of the qualifications of applicants is, therefore, a duty necessarily included in ruling the church, and in the department of ecclesiastical government we are now considering, that which consists in providing for the due communication of religious instruction.

Here we offer a remark to which the special attention of our readers is earnestly solicited. *The authority of ecclesiastical rulers, in reference to the ministry, comprehends the whole of their official power for the propagation of the gospel.* They may direct the *variable circumstances* of public worship. They may make such distinctions as the word of God authorizes, in view of the knowledge and apparent religious state of the worshippers. They may induct men into the office of the gospel ministry, and may appoint such previous training and trial as, in the exercise of a sound Christian discretion, they may deem pre-requisite. They have, and must exercise a limited authority over ministers in their official character. But whatever, not included in this enumeration, is to be done for the religious instruction of men, rests on grounds entirely distinct from *their* appointment. Once admit that the public worship of God is a duty of the church as a visible and organized society: and that the minister of the gospel is an ecclesiastical officer, to whom pertains the duty of ruling, in common with other officers, with the additional duty of giving religious instruction, and for that purpose conducting the public worship of God, and it is too obvious to require argument, that the duty of ruling the church compre-

hends all the particulars now specified. But neither in this way, nor in any other, can it be proved from the New Testament, that the duty of ruling the church, as committed to mortals, implies the exercise of any official authority for the propagation of the gospel, of which the immediate subject is not either the ministry, or the public worship of God, which ministers are appointed to conduct.

It will, probably, be asked whether, in consistency with this doctrine, we can approve the Presbyterian practice of licensing persons to preach the gospel as candidates for the holy ministry. Unquestionably. Such persons are not appointed to do anything not included in the functions of the ministry. Their case differs from the case of ministers in these respects only, that their appointment is temporary, because intended for trial, and extends to only a part of the duties of the ministry. Now, that the Scriptures contain no explicit mention of such a limited and temporary appointment, is readily admitted; but we maintain that it is an appropriate mode of performing a duty which they do enjoin. They require that a bishop be *not a novice*, that he be *a faithful man, and able to teach others also*. To those intrusted with the power of ordination, they address the solemn admonition, *Lay hands suddenly on no man*. Thus it is evident, that candidates for the sacred office must be tried, not only as to their knowledge and piety, but as to their aptness to teach. And it is for this purpose they are licensed to preach. This mode of trial is certainly relevant. It imposes no unreasonable burden. It interferes with no man's rights ; nor do we perceive that, employed merely for the purpose here specified, it involves anything inconsistent, with either the spirit or letter of any portion of the word of God. And since God has been pleased to enjoin the duty of trying candidates, but not to point out the precise mode of trial, these considerations afford an ample vindication. Let it be distinctly observed that, in this case, no authority is exercised which does not relate to the ministry, and no means are used for the propagation of the gospel, distinct from those which it is the official duty of ministers to employ.

We are prepared to have it objected that we limit the agency of the church to a narrow sphere. This would be true, were there no higher authority in the church than that of created office-bearers. But be it remembered, the reverse is true. Immanuel is her Head. Immanuel is her Lord. The duties of her officers, and the duties of her private members are alike prescribed by Him. Shall we say, then, that she is concerned in an act, because it is done under the authority of her created rulers; but that she is not concerned in an act done by a private member, simply in obedience to the will of Christ? What is this but to deny that private persons have anything directly to do—are under any direct responsibility, or owe any direct subjection to the Lord Jesus as Head of the church? The agency of the church comprehends the whole agency of every member, so far as it has relation to the honor and authority of the Redeemer; and to decide what portion of her agency is to be exerted by human rulers or under their official direction, the only appeal is to his word.

The truths of the gospel are not secrets. There are various relations, not ecclesiastical in their nature,—that of parent, for example,—which bring along with them an obligation to impart religious instruction. The duties of these relations ecclesiastical officers are to point out and enforce, on the general principle, that they are to point out and enforce all the duties that God has enjoined. Every man ought to use all the proper means at his command for the diffusion of religious knowledge, and every means is proper, which is really adapted to the end, provided it involves no neglect or violation of the duties of his station, and no invasion of the rights or prerogatives of others. There may be those who condemn all efforts for the extension of the Redeemer's kingdom, made voluntarily by private individuals, whether singly, or conjointly. But assuredly, the Bible does not sanction such indiscriminate condemnation. It declares that the church—not merely her ministers, and other office-bearers,—but *the church* is the *pillar and the ground of the truth*; and requires all her members to *hold forth the word of life*.

Of course, we do not plead for any unauthorized as-

sumption of ministerial functions. The minister is, *by ecclesiastical office*, a teacher of religion. He claims to have been called of God to that office. This claim has been duly examined on behalf of the church, and found to be supported by proper evidence. He is a teacher of the church. When she meets to worship, and to receive instruction, it is his duty to teach her, and to lead her devotions. He sustains the office of teacher to her members severally. On her behalf, he is appointed likewise to impart religious instruction to those who, as yet, are not members, with a view to their becoming so. Every man has a right to apply to him for this purpose; and if the application is made seriously, respectfully, and in proper time and place, he is bound to pay it all suitable attention. This is not a personal favor, but a duty of his office. The layman is in very different circumstances. To teach the truths of revelation to certain individuals may be his duty, on the ground of certain relations which are not of an ecclesiastical character; but if he teaches them to others, it must be merely in the exercise of a right common to every man, to tell what he knows to whom he will, on every subject on which secrecy is not obligatory. To mention a parallel case : The State may establish a Professorship of Law. No man not duly appointed, may attempt to fulfil any of the duties of that Professorship; but it by no means follows that any man is forbidden to express his opinion on any question of law, on any suitable occasion.

Let our position be distinctly understood. It is evident from the Word of God, that religious instruction must be given officially, by men ecclesiastically appointed, and set apart to the work; and we have ample means of determining what are the peculiar duties of the office. On the other hand, it is equally evident, that not only ecclesiastical officers, but Christians, without distinction, must let their light shine,—must hold forth the word of life,—must exhort one another,—must be the light of the world,—and while the general duty is enjoined, the Scriptures contain no minute enumeration of the means of performance. It will probably be admitted (by all, at least, who are likely to take an interest in this discussion,) that for the purpose here specified, much must be

done by individuals without reference to any other authority than that of the Lord Jesus, much about which they are no more to wait for an appointment from created rulers of the church, than they are to wait for such an appointment to search the Scriptures, or to pray in secret. These things He within the appropriate province of individual piety; and ecclesiastical rulers have to do with them, in no other way than as they have to do with every branch of practical religion. Now, the question is, what are the proper limits of this field of action? We reply, it includes every proper effort to bring men to the knowledge of the truth, which is not included in the peculiar functions of the gospel ministry. Within the limits thus defined, ecclesiastical rulers as such have no more rightful power to appoint and control, than over the devotions of the closet. The proof is easy: As has been shown already, all their claims to authority must either be made good from the law of Christ, or rejected as usurpations. *Now, while the New Testament abundantly declares the authority of church government in relation to the ministry, it contains not the most remote hint or implication of the extension of that power to any mode of making known saving truth which is not ministerial in its nature.* This, indeed, is little, if anything more than saying, that *we have no authority to introduce new offices unto the church; and that Christ has given her no teaching officers except ministers.*

Let us turn to the other class of duties. Those who are appointed to rule and take care of the church, must exercise discipline on violators of the law of Christ. Of course, this has exclusive reference to members of the church. So common sense teaches, and the word of God decides. "For what have I to do," says Paul, "to judge them also that are without? Do not ye judge them that are within? But these that are without God judgeth. Therefore, put away from among yourselves that wicked person." From this passage it is evident that, in some cases, the offender must be utterly cut off from the communion of the church; but this is the highest penalty she may inflict, in any case whatsoever. Of course, a power to receive persons into the church is pre-supposed. Moreover, there must be power to do

whatever is needful for the suitable and convenient performance of these duties. Churches, for example, must be organized. In some instances, one congregation must be divided into two or more; in others two or more congregations united into one. Charges of disorderly conduct, preferred against members of the church, must be investigated. For this purpose, witnesses must be cited and examined, and their testimony duly considered. Ministers must be held amenable to discipline, in reference to their official, as well as their personal conduct, especially in reference to the doctrines they teach. As a transfer of ecclesiastical relations frequently becomes necessary, there must, of course, be a power to certify to the ecclesiastical standing of the person concerned ; and this bears just the same relation to discipline as the power to receive persons into the church.

Every public society ought to afford to all whom it may concern, ample means of information as to the principles on which she is organized, and the rules by which she is governed. Without this, it is manifest, the ends of discipline cannot be secured. In the present state of the nominally Christian world, no particular church can perform this duty by merely referring us to the Bible. For there are a variety of subjects on which a common understanding is essential to the harmony of a particular church, but in reference to which the Bible is differently interpreted by different public bodies, equally professing subjection to its authority. Every church, therefore, ought to have such a document as we are accustomed to describe by the phrase, A WRITTEN CONSTITUTION. And the adoption of such a Constitution is a very high exercise of the power to rule. For just the same reason, such questions of **principle**, as may at any time arise, affecting the church as a public society, ought to be decided by her rulers in her behalf.

But there may sometimes arise difficulties of a different kind. Questions of which the immediate subject is neither doctrine, discipline, nor order, may agitate a church, disturb her harmony, and even threaten her dissolution. It may be manifest that neither official teaching nor discipline can remove the evil, and yet that it must be removed by the public authority of the

church. That authority, then, ought to be executed. The principle is that of self-preservation. And the power exercised we shall describe as *the power of visitation*.

The ministry is not the only office in the church ; and it is too obvious to require argument, that whenever any ecclesiastical office is to be conferred, there is some thing to be done by some person or persons already in office. The remark is intended as a general one; whether any exception is to be made in favour of extreme cases, is a question on which, at present, we express no opinion.

We are now prepared to state our doctrine in general terms. *The rightful authority of ecclesiastical rulers extends to the ministry, public worship, and the discipline of the church, to every thing connected with these, so far as it is of such a nature as to require the intervention of created rulers, and to nothing else, otherwise than in virtue of its connexion with these.*

Hitherto we have confined our attention to the general truth, that the church is the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ; from which we have sought to deduce an answer to the question, what is it to rule and take care of her? Our conclusion will be either confirmed or disproved, by an examination of those portions of the word of God which describe more **particular** the duties of ecclesiastical rulers.

The circumstances in which the office of deacon originated, and the purposes for which it was instituted, may be learned from Acts vi. All other ecclesiastical officers, whether ordinary or extraordinary, are elders. This title is given to apostles. "*The elders which are among you,*" says Peter, "*I exhort, WHO AM ALSO AN ELDER.*" On the other hand, it is given to men who are not preachers.—"*Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, ESPECIALLY THEY WHO LABOUR IN WORD AND DOCTRINE.*"

From this latter text it is evident, that the whole duty of the eldership consists in ruling and teaching: the elders are divided into two classes; to rule is the function common to them all, and the only official duty of one class; while the other class are charged with the additional duty of labouring in word and doctrine. For the sake of convenience, we are accustomed to describe

the one class as *ruling elders*, (though, in strictness of speech, this title is applicable to both ;) and the other as *ministers, or preaching elders*. Whatever, then, is included in official teaching, as distinguished from ruling, belongs to ministers only. Whatever is included in ruling, as distinguished from teaching, belongs to all the elders, both those who preach, and those who do not; and should ordinarily be transacted in an assembly of elders. As has been remarked already, the administration of the sacraments is an act of teaching, and therefore belongs exclusively to preaching elders; but to judge of the qualifications of candidates for sealing ordinances, is an act of ruling; and, therefore, belongs to both preaching and ruling elders. It is true that, in the New Testament, there are recorded instances of the admission of persons to baptism by a single officer; but in every such case, it was an extraordinary and inspired officer, appointed to plant and organize churches, and prepare them for a settled course of action. It is not at all surprising that such an officer should have power to do acts which might not be done in a settled state of the church, by any single person who was merely an ordinary and uninspired officer. The same explanation applies to every other instance in which it can be shown that an inspired man did *singly* an act which, according to the doctrine just stated, ought ordinarily to be done by two or more officers *jointly*.

After the remarks just made, it will not be necessary to cite particular texts in reference to the agency of elders in receiving persons to membership in the church. Every person tolerably acquainted with the New Testament will at once recollect such passages. Of certificates of ecclesiastical standing, we have examples in the cases of Apollos and Phebe.—(See Acts xviii., 27, and Rom. xvi., 1.) Of discipline for immorality, in the case of the incestuous person at Corinth; and for heresy, in the cases of Hymeneus and Alexander.—(See 1 Cor. v., 13, and 1 Tim. i., 20.)

As to investiture with ecclesiastical office, we have examples of their agency in the ordination of ministers, of elders, (both preaching and ruling, manifestly,) and deacons.—(See 1 Timothy, ;v., 14; Acts xiv., 23; Acts

vi. 6.) And as to their supervision of the training of candidates for the ministry, 2 Tim. ii., 2, is decisive.— Their agency in designating ministers to their respective fields of labour is very strongly exhibited in Acts xiii., 1-3. That the Holy Ghost had called Barnabas and Saul to the work on which they were now about to enter, was well known, both to themselves and their brethren. Yet even in their case, it was needful that before entering on the work, they should be formally set apart to it, by a public ecclesiastical act. Extraordinary and notorious as their call was, it did not supercede the necessity of honoring the order which God had established in his church.

We mentioned a power to settle questions of principle in which the church as a public society is concerned. The evident necessity of such a power is, of itself, sufficient evidence that it belongs to those who are appointed to take care of the church of God. And the decision of the question about circumcision, (Acts xv.,) affords a very clear example of its exercise. It is true, the decision was dictated by the Holy Ghost. There is not, however, a shadow of evidence that inspiration was required as a qualification for a seat in that assembly; but much to the contrary. To mention no other proof, we know there were men who sat there simply as elders ; and *that* office certainly did not imply inspiration. Moreover, had the sole object been to obtain an inspired decision of the question at issue, a sentence uttered by any one apostle would have been sufficient; and any possible doubt as to its authority could easily have been removed by miracles wrought in its confirmation. Why then, this public meeting and this formal discussion? There is but one answer. It pleased the Holy Ghost to exhibit a pattern to be imitated whenever a similar case should occur.

Here is sufficient authority for the adoption of what we are accustomed to call a written ecclesiastical constitution. Such a constitution is simply a collection of such decisions, authoritatively adopted for the guidance of future ecclesiastical action. We must remark here, that it is easy to carry the exercise of this power too far. There are many religious questions in which the church

is not concerned in the sense intended. A man's adopting one side or the other will not render his piety doubtful, nor lead to a violation of the rights of another, nor incapacitate him for the faithful and edifying performance of his ecclesiastical duties. With such questions the government of the church ought not to meddle. The rule is, let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind, and follow the things that make for peace.—(See Rom. xiv.)

We turn now to the power of visitation. An example of its exercise is recorded in Acts vi. A dispute arose between two numerous classes of people, broadly distinguished from one another already. The immediate subject was not strictly, of a religious nature, no *principle* was in question. It related directly to the distribution of alms. Still the whole church was concerned. Her harmony was disturbed; and, as we may reasonably suppose, an open rupture threatened. Hence the apostles interposed, and prescribed a remedy. It was, indeed, one that could not have been lawfully applied, had it not been prescribed by inspiration; for it involved the introduction of a new office into the church. In this respect, a similar case can never occur. But it is evident cases may occur, and do occur, resembling this in all those points on which depended the need for the authoritative interposition of ecclesiastical officers; and in every such case, this example is a sufficient warrant for such interposition.

This enumeration of particulars is probably sufficient. The Word of God, it has been shown, distinctly connects a variety of authoritative acts with the eldership; and those who admit these, will not be apt to object to anything formerly mentioned as included in ruling and taking care of the church of God.

But is not our doctrine objectionable for an opposite reason? Do the ministry, public worship, and church discipline cover the whole ground of church government? Does it not extend to some other things, for other reasons than their connexion with these? If any man affirms it, he is bound to prove his assertion; and this, we are confident cannot be done. Let the radical principle be borne in mind. *No man can lawfully do,*

in virtue of ecclesiastical office, any act which it cannot be proved from Scripture, that Christ has connected with his office. And under the guidance of this principle, let every act of church government mentioned or implied in Scripture, be examined with the strictest scrutiny. The result will be found to accord entirely with the position we have taken. If there is any exception, we may expect to find it, either in the first epistle to Timothy, or in the epistle to Titus. This expectation is fully justified by the circumstances in which these epistles were written, and the special purposes for which they were intended.

The first epistle to Timothy was intended to direct him in a very important work, which he had undertaken at Paul's request. A prominent part of the work is described in the phrase, "that thou mightest charge some that they teach no other doctrine;" but from other portions of the epistle, it is evident that this was by no means the whole. He was to correct such evils as already existed in the Church of Ephesus, take measures for preventing further evils with which she was threatened, and to do whatever it might be needful for him to do, to bring her to a healthy and orderly condition. As an extraordinary officer, he possessed all the authority that he could possibly find any reasonable occasion to exercise, in fulfilling this special and extensive commission ; and the epistle before us was intended to afford him the necessary instructions, including, of course, such as related to the ordinary work of the ministry. What then, were his instructions ? The epistle contains a prescription for his health, and some brief exhortations to exemplary conduct, and diligence in cultivating knowledge and piety. These, of course, have no bearing on our subject. The epistle, then, contains six chapters. The first, fourth, and sixth relate to the doctrines and duties to be inculcated, special reference being had to the maintaining of the purity of the gospel, in opposition to false teachers; the second to the order which must be preserved in the worship of God; the third to the qualifications of bishops, (or elders,) and deacons; the fifth to ecclesiastical censures, to ordination, and to the distribution of alms, or the duties of deacons. This last,

it will be observed, is entirely distinct from government, and pertains to a different office. But, whoever considers the extraordinary nature of work assigned to Timothy, will not be surprised that instructions as to the qualifications and duties of deacons were addressed to him. No part of this epistle, it is now evident, implies any greater authority for ecclesiastical rulers, than we have already deduced from the nature of the church.

Let us examine the Epistle to Titus. Titus, like Timothy, was an extraordinary officer, who, at Paul's request, had undertaken to complete the organization of certain churches, and to bring them to an orderly, regular and settled course of action. "For this cause left I thee in Crete," says the apostle, "that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee." And this epistle was intended to give him the necessary instructions for his own work. The epistle contains three chapters. The first relates to the qualifications of elders, the second and most of the third to the doctrines and duties to be inculcated (specially in opposition to false teachers;) we have next a few words on the discipline of the church; and the epistle closes with some matters of a personal nature. It will be observed that no ecclesiastical matter is treated of in this epistle, which is not treated of in the epistle to Timothy, already examined, a fact of no little importance in determining what are the subjects with which the church, as a visible and organized society, has to do.

Thus we have examined those portions of the word of God which treat of ecclesiastical affairs, professedly and at large. "We have found that they clearly recognize the power of ruling the church to the extent previously specified, but afford no warrant for extending it further. Now, add to this, the numerous texts already noticed to which the same remark applies, and the argument deduced from the nature of the church; and, we imagine, the candid reader will think that we might safely stop here; the point is established, unless some passage of Scripture can be produced, which we have not yet noticed, and which clearly extends the power in question beyond the limits we have assigned: meanwhile the pre-

sumption against the existence of such a passage is violent.

But we have more to say. It has been shown that the power to rule is clearly recognized in the word of God, and that ecclesiastical rulers are solemnly warned against attempting to exercise any greater power than Christ has connected with their office. Of course, there must be some sure method of determining the extent of their legitimate authority. Now, what is that method? We have in Scripture no formal definition of their powers, and it would be clearly irrelevant to argue from the authority held by ecclesiastical officers under the former dispensation. We mean to say, that no office under the Christian dispensation is identical with the priesthood under the Mosaic dispensation. An appeal to the nature of the church is evidently relevant; and that appeal we have made. For further light we now go to the apostolic commission. It will be admitted, no doubt, that no mortal has any rightful power for the government of the church, which the apostles did not possess; and it seems equally clear, that they held no power for that purpose, which was not derived from their commission. Hence, so far as church government is concerned, no man can lawfully claim any authority not fairly deducible from that commission. It runs thus: "Go ye, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." This commission is to remain in force "unto the end of the world;" of course, it was not intended to be confined to the apostles or to inspired men. It contains not a word on the subject of church government; hence it can convey the power to rule, so far only as its exercise can be shown to be necessary and proper, as a means of performing the duties specified. The gospel must be proclaimed, in order that men may become disciples; when properly qualified, they must be admitted by baptism into the visible relation of disciples; and, in that character, they must be taught to observe all things that Christ has commanded. These things must be done

officially; and they are all the duties specified in the commission. In connexion with these duties, there are various authoritative acts, which must be done by mortals, unless direct communications are to be constantly received from Heaven. Various things must be done bearing direct relation to the office itself; as, for example, inducting men into it. There is need for arrangement in reference to various matters connected with their teaching; such, for example, as relate to the public worship of God. An authoritative answer, favourable or the reverse, must be given to every one who applies for admission to the visible relation of a disciple. Those who sustain that relation must be subject to discipline, so far as that shall be needful to the end for which the relation was formed,—that they may learn to observe all things that Christ has commanded. To each and all of these subjects the principle is, of course, applicable, that every duty includes all the necessary and proper means of its performance. The degree of authority here described, is clearly and irresistibly implied in the commission itself; and to common sense we appeal for the correctness of the assertion, no greater power to rule can be legitimately derived from it.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

ARTICLE VII.

NECROLOGY.

A BRIEF MEMOIR OF THE REV. JAMES EDMONDS, OF CHARLESTON, SOUTH CAROLINA.

The Rev. James Edmonds was born in the city of London, in or about the year 1720, and died in the city of Charleston, S. Carolina, in April, 1793, aged 73 years. It has often been a matter of regret and surprise to the writer, as well no doubt to others of the present generation, that so little has been left on record of the lives and characters of those eminent men, especially the