

ON THE  
LIBERTY OF MINISTRY  
IN THE  
CHURCH OF CHRIST.

---

BY A. N. GROVES.

---

"We having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, I believed, and therefore have I spoken; we also believe, and therefore speak."—2 Cor. iv. 13.

"Stand fast, therefore, in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage."—Gal. v. 1.

SIDMOUTH:

PUBLISHED AND SOLD BY J. HARVEY, FORE-STREET.

LONDON:

NISBET & CO. BERNERS-STREET, OXFORD-STREET; AND  
BAGSTER, PATERNOSTER ROW, AND VERE-STREET,  
CAVENDISH-SQUARE.

---

1835.



ON THE  
LIBERTY OF MINISTRY  
IN  
THE CHURCH OF CHRIST.

---

MY DEAR FRIEND,

As I am required by the Apostle to give an answer to every man that asks me a reason of the hope that is in me, with meekness and fear; so also I feel bound to give an answer to a Christian brother who asks me my reason for departing so widely from the rules and maxims laid down by a large portion of the Christian church. I proceed therefore to fulfil the promise I made to you at parting, of stating to you as distinctly as I can, by what authority I minister. Certainly no inquiry can be more worthy our holy and dispassionate consideration, than that which is involved in the question, whence comes the authority to minister in the church of Christ? is it of God, or of man? and how those who are authorized to minister are to be known?

I have long felt that the time would come, when the following explanation of the grounds of my liberty would be necessary, as a duty I owed to those whom I loved and valued in the Lord; and I should perhaps have given the answer earlier, only that I dreaded even to seem to encourage the spirit of insubordination which I lament to see is so prevalent, and from which

the saints of the Most High have by no means kept themselves free. I dare not join the bands of those who by political efforts would strip the church establishment of her wealth and temporal dignity; but I would rather assume to myself the task of comforting such as fear that Christ's church is herself in danger, if the enemy rob her of these things. I desire to show such persons, that as she approaches poverty, shame and contempt, she approaches that apostolic position, from which, in this dispensation of humiliation, she ought never to have departed; that when she is a contented sufferer with her Lord, her false ministers will fly her, who care only to bask in the sunshine of her temporal glory; and that then her true episcopacy, instead of being lords over God's heritage, will delight to remember their Lord's precept, "It is more blessed to give than to receive;" and willingly working with their own hands, will learn to support the weak, and be ensamples to the flock. Now after seven years' anxious consideration of the question, I have been enabled to contemplate the subject in such a point of view, as to encourage me to bring it before you and the Christian church, not only, I trust, without endangering, but so as to ensure due subordination, by placing it on a basis from which nothing can shake it, viz. unlimited submission and allegiance to him who is King of kings, and Lord of lords. On him let all eyes rest,—to him let all knees bow, for he is thy Lord; and worship thou him. Sit at his feet, and pick up the very gleanings of his wisdom, for his word giveth light to the eyes, and maketh wise the simple. What he commands, do; whom he sends, obey; what he forbids, fly; where he leads, follow,—whether it be to poverty, shame, or death; knowing that if you suffer with him, you shall also reign with him. But let him

be Alpha and Omega, the all and in all. Let the eye dwell only on him, till by the Holy Ghost proceeding from glory to glory, you reflect the image of your Lord.

This then appears to me the immoveable basis, on which true loyalty, true subordination and unlimited and child-like obedience can repose, whether it be for life or death; and though some of the principles advanced in this letter may perhaps appear at first startling, and rather tending to promote than quench that disobedient spirit which I so deeply regret has gone abroad; yet I trust, a deeper view and more mature deliberation will convince you that the principles herein developed are scriptural, practical and safe, because they simply lead you to be and do all that Christ was and did.

Feeling that the traditionary history of the church is only valuable to prove what *was* done, not what *ought* to be done; and above all, feeling neither from direct precept, nor from the way in which our blessed Lord treated the traditions of the Jewish church, that it is his pleasure I should pay any regard to tradition, *I refer only to Scripture* as at once the basis and superstructure of the Christian edifice. For although any form of church government were proved to me to have been in use up to the day subsequent to the completion of the canon of Scripture,—nay, though practices could be proved to have been in existence in the churches of Jerusalem, Galatia, Corinth, or in any other, during the lifetime of the apostles,—yet if they agreed not with the doctrine of the Spirit and the general analogy of the faith, I should no more feel constrained to follow them, than to follow the disorders of the Corinthian church, the Judaizing tendencies of

the Galatian or Jerusalem churches, or the weakness of Peter at Antioch.

On the subject of tradition let us for a moment dwell on our Lord's remarks in Mark vii. 3—13 : " For the Pharisees and all the Jews, except they wash their hands oft, eat not, holding the tradition of the elders. And when they come from the market, except they wash, they eat not ; and many other things there be which they have received to hold, as the washing of cups and pots, brazen vessels, and of tables. Then the Pharisees and Scribes asked him, Why walk not thy disciples according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with unwashen hands ? He answered and said unto them, Well hath Esaias prophesied of you, hypocrites, as it is written, This people honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me ; *howbeit, in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.* For, laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men, as the washing of pots and cups ; and many other such like things ye do. And he said unto them, Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition. For Moses said, Honour thy father and thy mother ; and whoso curseth father or mother, let him die the death. But ye say, If a man shall say to his father or mother, it is corban, that is to say, a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me, he shall be free. And ye suffer him no more to do aught for his father or his mother ; making the work of God of no effect through your tradition, which ye have delivered ; and many such like things do ye." Here you see the charge is, that they render God's word nugatory by their traditions ; and the Lord alludes to it as an evil and weak

thing; a thing not to be followed, but resisted. Now, in connexion with this remark of our Lord, consider the Holy Ghost's declaration in 1 Cor. i. 17—31 : " For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel : not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect. For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness ; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God. For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. Where is the wise ? where is the scribe ? where is the disputer of this world ? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world ? for after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom : but we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness ; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men ; and the weakness of God is stronger than men. For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called ; but God hath chosen the *foolish* things of the world to confound the wise : and God hath chosen the *weak* things of the world to confound the things which are mighty ; and *base* things of the world and things which are *despised* hath God chosen, yea and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are ; *that no flesh should glory in his presence*. But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption : that according as it is written, He that

glorieth, let him glory in the Lord." And ii. 1—8, "And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God : for I determined not to know any thing among you save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing (or persuasible) words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power : *That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.* Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect : yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, that come to nought : but we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory : which none of the princes of this world knew : for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory." God therefore, in calling to the ministry, calls not many wise after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble ; but chooses the *foolish* things to confound the wise, *weak* things to confound the mighty, base things and things *that are not* to bring to nought the things that are, *in order that no flesh may glory in his presence.* But in most of the established churches of Europe, and it is to be feared in many not established, these decisions of God's Holy Spirit are despised. Nay, it is said, but we will have a genteel, literate, collegiate, gentlemanly, endowed order of men, and none other. Is this obedience and submission, or is it rebellion against the letter and spirit of the word of God ? Man, when he sets up a claim to obedience, thinks it very proud in those who will not obey : is it nothing that he sets the example of rebellion by treating with contempt the commands of



his heavenly Prince, and he so gracious, so loving and so humble? Are not men ashamed to ask so much obedience from their fellows, when they yield so little to Him who is the head of all principality and power? Not as though the apostle excluded wisdom, but *the wisdom of this world*. We are to be full of the hidden wisdom, which God has ordained for our glory. The opposition of our mind to the mind of God consists in this: that we regard certain natural disadvantages as disqualifying for profitable ministry; while God regards them as ordinarily facilitating his purpose, of edifying the church without leading it to glory in man. There may be a sort of casuistry that will gloss this over; as I dare say there were some among the Jews, who would have found a way of proving that their traditions did not invalidate God's word: but those children of the kingdom who have not taken a bribe of any kind to blind their eyes, will see how far these things agree at once; for others we must wait patiently, under the humbling recollections of our own unnumbered acts of disobedience, to work their way out more slowly. The apostle says in 1 Cor. iv. 6, "These things have I in a figure transferred to *myself* and Apollos for your sakes, that ye might learn in us not to *think of men above that which is written*, that no one of you be puffed up for one against another." This is a text of considerable importance, and on which I shall a little dwell. In remarking that our translation does not perfectly convey its force, it is not that I conceive the general sense to be thereby altered, nor its applicability to my present purpose affected. Paul has been laying down at large, in the first three chapters, the vanity of all human distinctions or accomplishments *to make a valuable minister*; that he himself would not make use of the earthly wisdom or eloquence which

he actually possessed ; that God throws contempt on all such advantages ; that while *faithfulness* in ministers and stewards is to be expected, we must not look to the accomplishments of individuals, as though these had been productive of the success they had met in their ministry ; but look to God, who had given the increase. Now, says he, all these principles I apply to the case of Apollos and myself, that you may learn not to have higher thoughts and ambition after such accomplishments, than I have been writing you above ; and that you may not think any inherent dignity vested in us as individuals, nor be disposed to anticipate the Lord's judgment of us, by undertaking to settle whether Paul or Apollos be greater. I see then WRITTEN, that no stress is to be laid on human wisdom, talent, eloquence, wealth, rank ; and if it is handed down by TRADITION that these things are important for a minister of Christ, which am I to believe ? The apostle admonishes me, Col. ii. 8, " Beware lest *any man* spoil you through philosophy or vain deceit, after the *traditions* of men, after the rudiments or *elements of the world*, and not after Christ." I appeal to you again solemnly to consider, whether those things against which I have objected as the test of a man's fitness for the ministry of Jesus, be elements of the world or after Christ : if you will still say, " After Christ," I then ask, How is it that I see thronging the same path, those who are seeking this world's glory,—the soldier, the statesman, the lawyer ; men of every class and every calling ? Again the apostle says, Col. ii. 20—23, " Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, 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* ? Which things have

indeed a *show of wisdom* in will-worship and humility and neglecting of the body ; not in any honour to the satisfying of the flesh." Here I apprehend that the apostle, as our Lord, in reprobating the commandments and doctrines of men, warns me, not against any special class of traditions, but against tradition, as such. This, then, my dear friend, is my earnest prayer, and this my solemn purpose ; the Lord helping me :

1st. Not to think of the natural qualifications of men, as the apostle says, above what is *written*.

2dly. To disregard all ordinances built upon *man's commands and doctrines*.

3rdly. To hold fast the *Heart* in holy, humble, prostrate adoration, without a desire to do my own will or think my own thoughts. And do not think this self-willed and proud ; but rather consider that as the word of God says, submission to these assumptions of man in the things of God, would have but a show of wisdom in will-worship and humility. Remember what the Lord says in Isaiah xxix. 13, 14, " Forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me, and *their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men* : therefore, behold, I will proceed to do a marvellous work among this people, even a marvellous work and a wonder ; for the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid." After this then, let us determine to come to the law and the testimony ; and if they speak not according to this word, let us feel assured it is because there is no light in them.

#### ON THE APPOINTMENT OF MINISTERS.

Understand then that I shall not meddle with that

which mere tradition has declared about the apostles ; I shall confine myself to that record of them which God has been pleased to indite by his Spirit for our use. I say then that *herein* you will never find the apostles pretending to any peculiar power of appointing to the ministry in Christ's church at large, nor to any power at all of excluding : you will find that they never assumed nor exercised this power themselves ; nor ever transmitted it to any : that the only method for distinguishing a true from a false teacher, recommended in Scripture or used by the apostles, is, *by inspecting his life and doctrine* : and that the idea of apostolic appointment or any other, is never alluded to even as *conjointly* required. Thus it stands, as far as what is *written*, to this day. The minister of Christ presents himself before the church, as moved by the Holy Ghost to take on himself any ministry in her, on *his own* responsibility ; and the church, after trying him by the rules laid down in God's word, and by those *alone*, receives him or rejects him on *hers*.

It is important that I should not be misunderstood here as to the apostles not appointing to a general ministry in Christ's church. I do not mean to imply, but that in new churches which Paul had gathered from among the heathen, Paul did himself, or Titus in his stead, appoint men to *particular* ministries ; nay, but hence I judge, that should the Lord allow any one the honour of becoming a spiritual father to a church from among the heathen, he would be at liberty to do the same *during their infancy* : but the thought that he had any *exclusive* right or power of *limiting others* never would enter my mind, nor did it, as I believe, the minds of the apostles.

These then are the three distinct propositions that

I deny can be shown either from the writings or from the actions of the apostles :

1st. THAT THEY EVER ASSUMED ANY ESPECIAL RIGHT OF APPOINTING.

2dly. THAT THEY EVER ASSUMED ANY RIGHT OF EXCLUDING AT ALL, OR LIMITING OTHERS IN APPOINTING.

3rdly. THAT THEY EVER PREVENTED ANY FROM GOING OF THEIR OWN ACCORD, WITHOUT ANY APPOINTMENT AT ALL BUT OF GOD ; EXCEPT ON THE GROUND OF FALSE DOCTRINE OR SCANDALOUS LIVING.

And even though it could be proved, as I conceive it cannot, that the apostles ever set up such a claim, either in whole or in part, as that their approval or appointment was necessary to minister ; still, unless the Holy Ghost gave them instructions to delegate this power to others, it would prove nothing for the pretensions of their supposed successors. For granting that men who were *inspired*, and by the laying on of whose hands *miraculous powers* were imparted, possessed an exclusive right of delegating the power of preaching ; and this, at a time when *the scriptures of the New Testament were incomplete* ; this gives not one feather's weight towards a similar claim on the part of men who are *not* thus inspired, the laying on of whose hands *no* manifest power follows, and at a time when the canon of the New Testament is *complete* : a time, when we must not go to the rulers of the church, but to the written record of the Spirit, for pure truth ; so that without the intervention of such rulers, the preacher may be taught how to preach, and the babe in Christ how to judge. But if I see no such claim set up, when there was the greatest necessity, by those apostles and prophets on whom the church was built ; the pretensions of other men are to me at once

sad and wonderful. O that there were more of Moses' spirit among us! For when they would grieve his heart by telling him there were some entrenching on his prophetic dignity, this good man's reply simply was, *I would to God all the Lord's people were prophets*. How easily then would all these questions be settled!

To exercise the power of appointing to minister in congregations where you have been acknowledged by the Holy Ghost as a spiritual father, in leading them from the bondage of Satan into the liberty of God's dear children, is a totally different thing from assuming to be the exclusive fountains of appointment to all lawful ministry in the church of Christ. For instance, if it now became a question on what footing Dr. Bell's schools were left at his death, and by referring to his papers it could be proved that after having made an extensive tour for the purpose of extending his school-system, he appointed schoolmasters over every school; if letters were found, where on another occasion he gave directions to two of his friends to place schoolmasters over some other schools he had collected, giving them a description what kind of men they should select; would any one ever suppose that he meant to set up the pretension that his appointment was necessary for any man to become a schoolmaster at all, irrespective of similarity of circumstances? and that no one else who had raised a school might appoint schoolmasters or become schoolmaster without his sanction? and that he arrogated this power, not to himself only, but to his heirs for ever; when not one word appeared to show the necessity of his own appointment during his life, or his intention to delegate the power after his death? It would not even prove that every one of them were not schoolmasters before, and that there-

fore his appointment was not in *consequence* of their being schoolmasters, rather than to make them so. It is one thing my assuming a right to *appoint my own* servants, and another to assume the right of making a *class of men called servants* for myself and for *every body else*, so that no one could be a servant without my sanction.

And supposing you heard it *reported* of him that he possessed this power of exclusion as well as the sole power of admission, and you yet found that his schools were continually troubled by persons teaching on other principles than those he laid down; and that in all his correspondence on the subject of receiving or rejecting schoolmasters (especially those disturbers of his plans), while he continually refers to their qualifications and character, he never refers to his authority, as the ground of their admission or exclusion: would you not say that the pretension was never set up, and the report must be unfounded? At all events, since his letters showed that if he had such power, he still steadily declined to employ it, in circumstances where, if it existed, it seemed to be urgently called for; you would confidently infer that he could never mean to transmit that which he would not himself exercise.

If this would be a natural inference in considering the conduct of *a man*, where weakness and oversight might have had much to do; how infinitely powerful does the conclusion become, when the omission, if it be such, is that of One, whose arm established the universe, and whose eye at a glance scans the extremes of eternity; who cannot be deceived, nor overlook the minutest tendency of the most complicated events: of One, who in his holy, humble life put to everlasting shame priestly supremacy by his example, and in the preceptive record of his will by the doctrine he has trans-

mitted to us. O let us rally again round our King, and his principles of loyalty ; our great Melchisedec ; the *only Priest*, the *only King* of his family ; in both offices alike, without predecessor and without successor. Let us humbly, reverently drink in all his words, follow all his ways, and be engaged in all his works. If there are difficulties in his words, do as Mary did, treasure them up in your hearts ; but wherever you see the print of his holy footsteps, there tread fearlessly and act boldly. Christ, I say, exercised no jealous exclusion, such as men have since claimed for themselves. He appointed indeed twelve, and he appointed seventy ; but when one went casting out devils in his name, but followed not with the apostles, and when the zealous John wished to forbid him because not ordained to this work, the Lord rebuked him : “ Forbid him not,” says he, “ for he that is not against us is on our side.” Here there is no jealousy ; no command to come and receive official sanction. It is enough for Christ that the man is on his side : shall it not be enough for us ? “ Yea,” says the apostle of the Gentiles, “ if Christ be but preached, though of envy and strife, I therein do rejoice, and will rejoice.”

Should you ask whether the apostles assumed an exclusive right of appointing teachers, so as that none could become teachers lawfully and fitly, except by authority flowing from Christ *through the channel of the apostles*,—my answer, fearless of contradiction, is, NEVER. No ; not even when great trouble had arisen from false teachers, never did Paul object to their want of official right to teach. Never did he warn his converts to inquire by whom these teachers had been ordained, and whether they had proper testimonials of their lawful ordination. Never did he allude to appointment by himself, or by any one of the apostles, or



by any body else, as an *element* in the question ; much less as *the whole* question, as it is with those who say a man is to be received for his office, though to be detested and abhorred for his character. How different this from the apostle's rule, to be applied to *himself* and to *all the brethren who were with him* ! Gal. i. 8, 9, "Though we," says he, "or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you," (does he say, Let us be received still for our apostolic office' sake ? nay, but) "let him be accursed : as we said before, so say I now again, if any man preach unto you any other gospel than that you have received, let him be *accursed*." 1 Cor. x. 15, "I speak," he says, "as to wise men : *judge ye what I say*." Again, 2 Cor. vii. 2, "*Receive us* ; we have wronged no man, we have corrupted no man, we have defrauded no man." They were to judge with whose authority he came, by what he said and what he did. So in ch. xi. 23, in contrasting his apostleship with that of false apostles : "Are they ministers of Christ ? I am more ; in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep ; in journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren ; in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches." Had Paul been unable *thus* to vindicate and prove his apostolic mission by his apostolic labours,

he would have been put to shame in his own church, and could never have stood up for his authority, undoubtedly divine as his mission was. But such being his character and work, he claimed to be received and honoured and *esteemed very highly in love for his works' sake*; according to his own instructions to the Thessalonians. (1 Thess. v. 13.)

Again, when James, Peter and John met Paul at Jerusalem, (Gal. ii.) and were desirous of investigating his claims to be regarded as an apostle, they did not inquire into his miracles, his visions, his trances. To them it was immaterial how he got his knowledge or his grace; they sought only to know what grace and what gifts for the ministry he had. First we learn, *Paul communicated to them the gospel which he preached among the Gentiles*; then, *they saw that the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed to him*; and finally, *perceiving the grace given to him, they gave him and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship*. And this very same apostle, when called by the Spirit to a particular service, submitted most humbly to receive a brotherly and holy dismissal to his work from those who were in *spiritual dignity below him*. Yes, my brother, when the question was about *authority* to minister, he denied any regard or respect to Peter or all the apostles, and opens his epistle to the Galatians with these emphatic words, "An apostle *not of man, nor by men*, but by Jesus Christ and God." Yet when it was a brotherly commendation to his Lord's gracious keeping, he submits to those who were no apostles at all. If now an apostle of Christ, taught through no human channels, gifted with miracles and tongues and prophecy; after he had by apostles been acknowledged an apostle; after he had been set aside at the voice of the Spirit and by the hands of the church to preach

to the Gentiles ;—if such a one bids these very Gentiles, his own converts, reject him, and count him accursed, should he preach to them a false gospel ;—are we not much more bound to try and reject those who have no such pre-eminent and miraculous claims ? And if this same Paul never frees his converts from the responsibility of judging *the fruits* of their teachers, as he might do by taking the responsibility on his own single shoulders, what am I to think of the assurance of those who in modern days would so ease the disciples ?

Do not let it be thought pride in us to reject man's jurisdiction in the things of God, unless he can show a divine warrant for the assumption of a divine power. If he shows it, I promise, the Lord enabling me, not to be rebellious, but submit, thankful indeed to be freed in the matter from care and responsibility. For as I gladly, at the Lord's bidding, submit to the rulers of this world, without reference to their moral characters as individuals ; so am I willing to submit in spiritual matters to spiritual rulers, if they show me a like warrant. But if he commands me to *try* and *examine* all who say they come from him claiming my obedience in spiritual matters ; the same submission to his will which compels me in the one case to suffer, in the other compels me to act. In allegiance to my Lord, I desire unhesitatingly to acknowledge his appointments, whether I discern them under the garb of a poor itinerant preacher, or the mistaken minister of a popish hierarchy ; and I cannot see that there is manifested a greater humility of mind in submitting to men who assume the state and power of princes, than when those who are in every external circumstance inferior to ourselves, receive our recognition, merely because we feel they bear the credentials of our heavenly king. To submit to be taught by a

poor carpenter or sail-maker, or by a fisherman so vulgar in his habits, that like the poor Indians he would go to his work naked, believe me, would be harder to our proud hearts, than to attend to a well-educated and polished modern preacher.

If I see the Lord's commission, I will acknowledge it, reverence it, and bend my ear to their instruction or reproof; but I will only take the leaf of the book that has received the stamp of the royal signet, and not all that may be bound up with it. I would desire to prove all things, and hold fast only that which is good; to follow all, as far as they follow Christ. I may here conclude with this remark, as to the appointment of ministers. Whatever questions there might be, *who* should appoint bishops or elders, there can be none from Scripture, whom *they* are to appoint; since there is no instance of their exercising, nor intimation of their possessing, the power of appointing so much as the lowest officer of the church.

#### ORDINATION.

But some may be disposed, and naturally, to inquire, What, then, is the meaning of the term *ordination*, so frequently recurring in our Bible? I can more easily say what it does not mean.

1st. It does not mean any thing about laying on of hands.

2ndly. It does not mean that a man then *first* began to preach, or to pray, or to administer the bread and wine at the Lord's table, or to baptize.

3dly. It does not mean that a man was brought into a situation which he was *always* to retain. In fact, I think you will see by the evidence which I shall immediately adduce, that this pompous term has just as much real meaning, as though you were determined

to use the same term *ordained*, where other persons use *placed*, or *put*, or *made*; for example, in Mark iii. 14, "And he *ordained* twelve, that they should be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach." The Greek is simply ἐποίησε, *made*, as in Matt. xxi. 13, "Ye have made (ἐποίησατε) it a den of thieves." Again, in John xv. 16, it is written, "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and *ordained* you;" the original is simply, ἔθηκα, *placed* you. Again, Acts i. 22, it is written, "Must one (*be ordained to*) be a witness with us of his resurrection." The Greek has simply γίνεσθαι, *become*, or *be*, with us, a witness. Here we see the word *ordained* is actually inserted into the passage, without the least shadow of pretence from the original, and is not even printed in Italics. When again the apostle Paul writes to Titus, he says, according to our translation, "Ordain elders in every city." Here again the Greek has simply καταστήσεις, *place over*, as in Luke xii. 14, "Man, who made, κατίσθησε, me a judge or a divider over you?" Again, in Acts xiv. 23: "And when they had *ordained* them elders in every church;" here it should be *chosen*, as it is translated 2 Cor. viii. 18, 19, "And not that only, but who was also *chosen*, χειροτονηθεῖς, of the churches to travel with us." See also Acts. x. 41; "Witnesses *chosen*, (προεχειροτονημένοις) before of God." Now it is worthy of remark, that while they have translated five different Greek words by one word *ordained*, a word to which have been attached the ideas of laying on of hands, separating from secular callings, commencement of lawful preaching, baptizing, and administering the Lord's supper; yet, in not one of those five Greek words, is any one of all these ideas really contained; neither is any one of them rendered by these very same translators by that term any where else, though many

of them occur, such as ποίω, to make, γίνομαι, to become, and ῥίθηναι, to place, in passages too numerous to be capable of reference here.

All this effort to fix one definite and complex idea, on such a variety of the most general and simple terms in the language, shows how much we must be on our guard on subjects of such inveterate prejudice, in admitting the accuracy of the most able translators.

I think no one can fail to feel, that if, in writing a letter relative to the appointment of schoolmasters, in some places I were to say I had *appointed*, in another, *placed*, in another, *put*, in another, I had *made* such an one a schoolmaster, in another, I had *placed him over*, in another, I had *committed* the school *to his charge*;—if any man translating this, were to use a word equivalent to our word *INSTALL* in every case, it would convey an idea of pomp and circumstance and peculiar mode of appointment, which the original did not, and never was intended to convey. This is precisely the way in which the translation of the above various and general terms has been executed in the English translation: and there are but too many indications that prejudice, and not honest simplicity, dictated all this. In Acts xx. 28, a simple-minded person would have stated, that *the Holy Ghost ordained them bishops*. If such rendering of ἱερεῖς and ἐπισκόπους was elsewhere natural, equally so was it here. But here it would have offended a yet stronger prejudice, by showing that the elders named in ver. 17, whom Paul was exhorting, were all of them bishops. Here then they translate ἱερεῖς, *made*, and ἐπισκόπους, *overseers*; a humble and expressive term, instead of the more pompous one of bishops. So, in 1 Pet. v. 2, ἐπισκοποῦντες is rendered by them, *taking the oversight*; lest, again, the elders be thought bishops: while, in Acts i. 20, they give

Judas a *bishopric*. I do not complain that “made overseers,” and “taking the oversight,” have been used, but only that these simple and adequate renderings have been elsewhere displaced by others, and have been thus allowed to throw dust into our eyes.\*

#### LAYING ON OF HANDS.

Next, with regard to laying on of hands, what did it mean? and what was it a sign of?

1st. Of benediction; as, when Jacob dying blessed the sons of Joseph, he laid his hands on them. Gen. xlviii. Also, when our Lord blessed the little children, Matt. xix. 15, “he laid his hands on them.”

2ndly. When confession was made by the priests over the victims, their hands were laid on them. Lev. iii. 2, “And he shall lay his hands upon the head of his offering, and kill it at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation: and Aaron’s sons the priests, shall sprinkle the blood upon the altar round about.” Lev. viii. 14, “And he brought the bullock for the sin offering: and Aaron and his sons laid their hands upon the head of the bullock for the sin offering.”

3rdly. Hands were laid by our Lord on sick people; as in Luke iv. 40, “Now when the sun was setting, all they that had any sick with divers diseases brought them unto him; and he laid his hands on every one of them, and healed them.” Mark vi. 5, “And he could there do no mighty work, save that he laid his hands

---

\* This desire, again, is shown in the apocryphal appendages to Timothy and Titus, “ordained first bishop of Crete and of Ephesus;” though Whitby confesses that, for three centuries, he cannot find the slightest trace of any such pretension for them.

upon a few sick folk, and healed them." And Paul laid hands on Publius's father, Acts xxviii. 8; "And it came to pass, that the father of Publius lay sick of a fever, and of a bloody flux; to whom Paul entered in and prayed, and laid his hands on him and healed him."

4thly. When entering on an important work. As when Joshua was taking the generalship of Israel. Deut. xxxiv. 9, "And Joshua, the son of Nun, was full of the spirit of wisdom: for Moses had laid his hands upon him; and the children of Israel hearkened unto him, and did as the Lord commanded Moses." When the seven took charge of the charity of the church, the apostles laid their hands on them. When Paul and Barnabas went on a missionary tour. Acts xiii. 3, "And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away."

5thly. When imparting the gifts of the Holy Ghost. Acts viii. 17; xix. 16, "Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost." "And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied."

6thly. Another object was, that the church might hereby identify themselves with the person and work of him, whom they thus not only commended to God, but recommended to all men. They thus testified to his character and doctrine, and became fellow-workers with him; so that, while they had a sort of fatherly interest and authority over his work, if the Lord prospered him, they also ran a risk of "becoming partakers of another man's sins, if they laid hands suddenly" upon any: see 1 Tim. v. 22.

But that it ever was REQUIRED previous to preach-



ing the gospel or baptizing or administering the Lord's supper, is never mentioned in Scripture; nor does Scripture present one instance of it in these connexions. Nor does it appear that when done, it had abiding consequences on the history or character of him who submitted to it, (except when the gifts of the Holy Ghost were communicated,) any more than now, when a man is commended at a prayer-meeting to any work of the Lord on which he is entering. Modes of commendation differ;—laying of hands was a Jewish mode on all interesting occasions; prayer-meetings are ours; so they were commanded to kiss, where we shake hands;—and as it may be done (as in Paul and Barnabas's case) to those who have been years in the ministry before; so, for aught that appears to the contrary, it may apparently be repeated, as often as an individual should undertake important missions or offices. Indeed the apostle seems to have received imposition of hands the *second* time he left Antioch, as well as the *first*; for he is said to have been “recommended to the grace of God,” (Acts xv. 40,) which is the very phrase used in Acts xiv. 26, of his dismissal with the laying on of hands upon the former occasion. It also appears that it may be done by inferiors to superiors, as by the prophets and teachers of the church of Antioch to the apostles, while never in any single instance is it alluded to as conferring *authority*, though in some cases *power*, as in giving the Holy Spirit, or in commendation to the Lord's care, as in the case of Barnabas and Paul. But it is never in one single instance appointed or alluded to as the ordinance of God that stood at the *ENTRANCE into the Christian ministry*: no one was ever required to submit to it, nor blamed for not, nor were any indivi-

duals appointed to do it. When the apostles laid on hands, and men received the gifts of the Holy Ghost, *the gifts*, not the apostles, determined what the man was to be. If he had the gift of prophecy, he prophesied; if of healing, he healed; if of tongues, he spoke; the Holy Ghost dividing unto every man severally as he would. Paul, in 2 Tim. i. 4—6, “Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the *gift* of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands.” Again, 1 Tim. iv. 14, he says, “Neglect not the *gift* that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery.” The particular *gift* is not mentioned, whether of tongues, or prophecy, or exhortation; but it probably related to that of an evangelist, which, 2 Tim. iv. 5, he is commanded to make full proof of.

Observe then distinctly, what I am urging. I do not deny that hands were sometimes laid on; but I do deny that such a ceremony was more appropriate to those ENTERING ON the work of teaching and ministering, than to those who had long been teachers, preachers, and ministers of the sacraments. I say, there is no instance in Scripture, where any one *waits for this*, as requisite to authorize him in ministering; while in the case of Paul and Barnabas, it is incontestable that they had been eminent preachers long before hands were thus laid upon them. This leads me to think that it is as necessary to be thus commended to God at the commencement of *every* important work, as at the very commencement of ministry; and while I do not think the *form* of commendation to be of any essential importance, (else it would have been enjoined,) I believe that the commendation itself is of value, just in proportion to the

holiness and truth of the saints from whose hearts and hands it proceeds, and in proportion to the power of their faith to prevail with God.

I have not yet named the case of the appointment of the seven to take charge of the charity purse of the church. (Acts vi.) We here read that the multitude chose out seven men, full of the Holy Ghost and of good report; and then the apostles laid their hands on them, and instituted them to the office. But that this was not to give them *authority to preach*, is manifest in the narration itself; for it is expressly declared to be a mere *service of tables*, to which the apostles will not give themselves, when it is their place to attend to the ministry of the word and to prayer. Thus, as Joshua, so did Stephen and the rest, receive appointment to an especial *secular* charge by the laying on of hands.

And whereas some lay great stress on Paul's words to Timothy, (1 Tim. v. 22,) "Lay hands suddenly on no man, neither be partaker of other men's sins; keep thyself pure;" as though it proved some exclusive prerogative in Timothy; nothing can be more unfounded than such a deduction. Out of the words themselves, nothing can be extracted that might not equally be said to every individual, elder or prophet or simple disciple, who might under any circumstances be invited to lay on hands. That, at least, all the elders laid on hands, is manifest from 1 Tim. iv. 14; and in the Church of England it is both professed and *practised* at every ordination of a priest. How then can we found any exclusive right for Timothy on such a charge? "Lay hands suddenly on no man," says the apostle: *therefore* (says the episcopalian) *it is evident that Timothy had a peculiar right and duty to lay on hands.* As justly, if I entreat a friend not

to send out men with his sanction or support before he knows them, I may be supposed to recognize some divine authority in him. But of the meaning of the text none need doubt, who study the connexion of the words, "Do not send him forth so commended suddenly, lest he should walk disorderly, and you share his guilt, by having added your sanction to him." And that this is the meaning, I think we shall see pretty clearly by a reference to 2 John 9—11, where he is saying, "If any man transgress, and bring not the doctrine of Christ, do not receive him into your house, neither bid him God speed; for he that biddeth him God speed, is partaker of his evil deeds." Now here I think both the apostles, Paul and John, are referring to the same custom of commending the saints to the care of God; but Paul alludes to it by the *form* in which it was done, and John\* refers to the *sentiment* conveyed by it; and both draw a common conclusion, that should he turn out ill, they would be partakers of his evil deeds. Much stress is laid by many on 2 Tim. ii. 2: "And *the things* thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be *able to teach* others also." Men refer to this passage, as if it contained within it the embryo of transmitted apostolic *authority*. Yet the idea of *authority* is not found there at all. He bids him only look out for men who are apt to teach, and seek to instruct them with more than usual care, in order that a supply of teachers in the church might not be wanted. The very same advice he would have given, had he been showing him how he was to provide

---

\* But it may be that the difference merely arose from the circumstance that John was writing to a lady, with whom it might not be the custom to lay on hands.

a race of schoolmasters, carpenters or tent-makers, and perfectly parallel to the principle developed in the Hebrews, where the apostle says, "*When for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God.*" In the very spirit of this blessed apostle's words, 2 Cor. iv. 13, "*We, having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, I believed and therefore have I spoken, we also believe, and therefore speak.*" Thus, after all the search I can make in God's word, a divine authoritative right residing in any man or men, apostles or others, of appointing to the ministry in Christ's church, I find no where assumed, or so much as hinted at; but whosoever believes let him speak, and whosoever knows let him teach; and if there are any who, after having had much teaching bestowed upon them, are not able to teach others, let them be sharply reproved, after the example of Paul to the inattentive Hebrew converts.

#### LIMITATION OF MINISTRY.

I proceed to adduce scripture evidence, that there was positively no limitation whatever on the right of every individual brother teaching, preaching and administering the sacraments, without asking leave either of the apostles or any one else. I know things were different then; there was no wealth to be attained, no worldly honours to be shared, few things that could be a temptation to carnal and unholy men, and therefore greater freedom might be allowed than now. Yet the ill effects of this change are not beyond the hope of cure, while we stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free. Take away the wealth, trample the worldly distinctions connected with the present system in the dust, leave the Spirit's work

free, and see who will open God's doors for nought, or for nought kindle fire on his altar, as the Lord says by the prophet, (Mal. i. 10;) and such esteem very highly in love for their works' sake; yea, nourish and cherish them as the jewels of the kingdom; but if you want to allure doves to your windows, do not hang carrion on the bars, which is the vulture's food. Do you not feel we have doubly sinned against our Lord's precept, "Give not that which is holy unto dogs?" We have not only given our holy ministries to ungodly men; but as if that were not enough, we have enticed them by sweet morsels from the flesh-pots of Egypt, by surrounding our holy ministries with the riches, rank and respectability of this world. My prayer is then—preserve the liberty of ministry in the church of God, and as for all the earthliness that the devil has attached to her, throw it back to those who are now gaping for it. They may then perhaps leave us in quiet possession of our true riches, as the vulture, gorged with his foul fare, leaves the harmless dove to pick up its wholesome grains in peace. The world will never envy your enjoyment of any thing a saint should care about—holiness, love, self-denial, devotedness, fasting, and prayer; and Christ, in whom you have all things present and to come, because you are his, and he is God's. Who, the most hostile to church endowments, would envy you these? He may hate you, but he can neither covet your riches, nor with biting irony expose your ill-disguised love of the world. Hear then what our Lord says, "He that is not against us is for us; therefore let him minister." Here is neither the principle of *follow us* nor *submit to us* acknowledged, nor any principle of limitation at all. It is not that Christ did not appoint whom he liked, but he *excluded* none, nor made either his own or the

*apostles' appointment necessary.* Nay, he prohibited such a requirement; so that any one now has liberty to minister from his Lord's recorded sentence, *if he be on the Lord's side*, without seeking or receiving the sanction of any man or men living; yea, though there may be many occasions where this might be both lovely and right, yet never necessary.

Observe now the language of the sacred historian in Acts viii. 1—4; here it is stated, that they who were scattered by the persecution that arose about Stephen, went about preaching the gospel. That only the "ordained" were thus scattered, it is ridiculous to suppose; it was a promiscuous multitude of believers, fleeing from the sanguinary fury of Saul and the chief priests. Yet this mixed multitude went about preaching the gospel. How striking a comment this on the principles above adduced from the Scripture; and how encouraging the result! "Now they which were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen, travelled as far as Phenice and Cyprus and Antioch, preaching the word to none but unto the Jews only. And some of them were men of Cyprus and Cyrene, which, when they were come to Antioch, spake unto the Grecians, preaching the Lord Jesus. And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number believed and turned to the Lord."—Acts xi. 19—21. But there are some other passages to which I must refer, and first to 1 Co. xii., xiv. You will perceive that even where the apostle is engaged in reprov- ing disorder, he yet lays no stricter injunction upon them, than that those who were teachers in the church should be of the male sex; and that those who spoke (whether they had a prophecy, or a psalm, or an exhortation) should speak one at a time, should wait for each other, and pay that courteous deference which

love and humility will suggest. And the apostle, in arguing the question of the constitution of the church at Corinth, tells them that they are a body ; that one man is a foot, another a hand, another an eye, &c. &c., and that God had set them in the body as it hath pleased him ; and (xii. 19) that if they were all one member, there would be no body. In fact, - neither here nor in the 14th chapter, nor in Eph. iv. 4—14, is any idea of human limitation or human appointment, but simply the Lord's appointment, and every man's duty is to minister according to the ability that God giveth.

But while I hold it is by Christ's appointment alone that any one becomes a minister of Christ, absolutely, or an apostle, or a prophet, yet I fully admit that to constitute a man *bishop*, (a word which implies union with a *special flock*,) human authority is needed ; that is, no man can, with good sense, assume to be bishop over a particular flock, if he have not, at least, the good-will and consent of that flock : and similarly, the deacon's office can be assumed by none, without the approbation of those whose money he is about to dispose of. But this leaves my assertion untouched, that no human authority is needed to confer the abstract right to teach and preach or administer the sacraments. If any one choose to designate apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers, as so many *orders*, I have no objection to this. But I contend these *orders* come not of the will of the flesh, nor of man, but entirely of God ; and contrariwise, that bishops and deacons had *offices*, just like our churchwardens or overseers of the poor. To suppose that a deacon chosen to administer the alms of the Jerusalem church, could go to Corinth, and claim a control over the funds of the church there, would argue a want of com-



mon sense ; and equally ridiculous would it be for one of the bishops of the church at Philippi to seek to exercise an official character at Corinth. The office is *made for the work* ; and it is only in reference to the special work that an officer is officer at all. And these officers might be chosen out of any spiritual order, as far as we know ; but the right of speaking, in the church or out of the church, was not confined to the officers.

It may be well here to notice an objection which one class of readers may found on the fact, that in Acts xx. the overseers or bishops are said to have been appointed by the Holy Ghost. They may interpret this to mean, that they were called to the work by the voice of a prophet ; and hence infer that no one is a true and lawful overseer, who is not thus peculiarly appointed. Accepting the interpretation, I reply, that though *these* elders were thus called to the work, it is not to be inferred that *all other* elders were similarly called. Paul and Barnabas were called by the Spirit to preach to the heathen ; those scattered by Saul the persecutor, went of themselves, as the result of their circumstances and the dictate of their hearts. While we would not exclude the Spirit's miraculous agency, we must exceedingly beware of making it essential to profitable and lawful ministry.

If I be asked, how it came to pass that church officers so soon gained *rank*, and were constituted into an order ? I reply, *first*, Because the respect which is naturally and fitly given to elders, especially to those who rule well, soon accumulates, until an inherent dignity is vested in the individuals, and a hierarchy results, which is to the church what an aristocracy is in a nation : *next*, I should say, Through the same source of corruption that destroyed her simplicity on

every other subject, by *looking to Moses instead of Christ*. They saw that in his dispensation the priesthood was an order, as well as officers and rulers; and soon becoming weary of the subordinate and dependent situation in which their Lord had left them, they assumed the same high ground, without reflecting that they were no priests at all, nor are even once alluded to as such, apart from the whole church; in which sense we are all priests to God.

In fact there is no act of ministry to be performed in the Christian church that was not common to all the tribes of Israel. *Preaching in the synagogues and temple*. This our Lord and all the apostles did; and not only were never accused by the Jews for so doing, but were invited so to do. "If thou hast any word of exhortation, say on," was the invitation to Paul and Barnabas, (Acts xiii. 15.) Nay, when the Sanhedrim were seeking an accusation against the poor ignorant fishermen, they never by one word intimated that by *preaching in the temple* they had invaded the priest's office; an offence which would have been punished with death. As to *the Lord's supper*, its counterpart is found in that of the *paschal lamb*. But the administration of the paschal supper was not only common to all the tribes, but was to be performed in every family in Israel, and therefore was no part of the priest's office. As to *circumcision*, which was the initiatory rite into the natural church, as our *baptism* is into the spiritual, we see that Zipporah circumcised Moses' children, and Paul, who was no priest, circumcised Timothy. Shall we then be bound with more than judaical bondage? If it be contended that this freedom would lead to disorder, how was it then that our Lord and his apostles set such an example, by giving their sanction in the synagogue to the very same

principles of disorder? Every argument that applies against this freedom for the Christian church, tells with the same or greater force against the Jewish.

The apostle, in 1 Cor. xvi. 15, says, "I beseech you, brethren—ye know the house of Stephanas, that it is the first fruits of Achaia, and they have *appointed* themselves, ἐράξαν ἑαυτοὺς, to the ministry of the saints—that ye *submit yourselves to such*, and to every fellow-worker and labourer." Here, then, we see men *appointing themselves* to the ministry, and the apostle commanding the Corinthians to *submit to all such*. It plainly shows the ministry was one of *rule*, that it involved *subjection*; and was not, as some would make it appear, a ministry of *pecuniary* or other *similar service*. In our translation, the word *addicted* has been chosen, as if to render the original as indefinite in its meaning as possible. I need only add, that though used in all forms in innumerable places, it is never rendered any where else by this word, but as you will see it rendered in Matt. xxviii. 16. "Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain "where Jesus had *appointed*, ἐράξατο, them;" also Acts xxii. 10, "And there it shall be told thee of all it is appointed, ἐτέτακται, thee to do;" Ro. xiii. 1, "The powers that be, are *ordained*, τεταγμέναι, of God." I think this will be enough, in the absence of any proof to the contrary, to establish the two following points:—

1st. That, from the Lord or the apostles, there is no limitation to ministry left in the power of man, but such as an ungodly life or false doctrine establishes.

And 2ndly, That the whole church at Jerusalem, the household of Stephanas, and I may add Apollos, exercised the liberty of ministering on their own responsibility, and were blessed by God, and commended by

the apostle Paul in the exercise of it. And to *all such* fellow-workers and labourers, he *commanded* men to submit.

Being then thus made free by the Lord, let us give utterance to our exhortation and thanksgiving in the words of 1 Pet. ii. 1—9, addressed to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia. “Wherefore, laying aside all malice and all guile, and hypocrisies and envies and all evil speakings, as new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby : if so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious. To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God and precious. Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. Wherefore also, it is contained in the Scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner-stone, elect, precious : and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded. Unto you therefore which believe, he is precious : but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, and a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient : whereunto also they were appointed. But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people ; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light ;” and conclude with Rev. i. 5—6 : “Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father ; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever, Amen :” because he has kept the keys of admission into his own church, in his own

brands, with whom is the residue of the Spirit—who has ascended on high and received gifts for men, and given every one his place in the body, as it hath pleased him.

But perhaps you will say, If all may minister, how are the hearers to judge? I would say, as the Jews judged those who spoke in their synagogues and temple; by referring, as they are commanded to do, to the law and to the testimony, and by knowing, if they spoke not according to this, it was because there was no light in them. Or, as the Bereans received Paul, proving whether the things he said were verily so, or not. Yet perhaps you will say, If he who has received man's ordination, has no greater *authority*, as an ambassador for Christ, than he who has not received such ordination, how is any one to know, 1st. His own call. 2nd. The call of another man whom he is to receive. 3rd. The falsehood of the claims of those whom he is to reject?

1st. As to his own call to minister, it rests alone on his own conviction, that he is "inwardly moved by the Holy Ghost." Be of this fully persuaded in your own mind. Contemplate your call, as leading to suffering, privation and holy service. Embrace it in this spirit; and then, should you be rejected, like your Lord and the apostles, you will not be discouraged that a man is without honour in his own country; and you will be ready to reply to those who would hinder you, though it be the Sanhedrim and rulers of your people, "Whether it would be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye, for *we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.*" Yea, must not we all judge with Peter and the apostles, "We ought to obey God rather than man?"

Should you ask, May not people be greatly deceived about being inwardly moved by the Holy Ghost? Cer-

tainly; yet I think it must be allowed, fewer will be deceived (on any known principles of human nature) who have no hope of rank among men, or of respectability in the world, or of any settled provision, to be attained by such self-deceit, than when there are rank and respectability to all—wealth to many—and a princely pre-eminence to a few. If they should mistake their call, it would much more easily and simply get corrected; and if they dared to offend the decencies of their holy calling, they would starve, or give themselves simply to those occupations which alone suit their characters or tastes, and which they never ought to have left. Yet while every man is the sole responsible judge of his own gifts and calling of the Holy Ghost, the individual, or the church, on *their own* responsibility, receive him, or reject him. Yet, in forming their decision, *God's rules*, and not *man's*, must be regarded. To these none can add,—from these none can take away.

#### WHOM WE ARE TO RECEIVE.

How are we to know whom we are to receive? The Lord says, "He that receiveth whomsoever *I send*, receiveth me." Does he send false teachers, and ungodly livers? no—for he warns us in Matt. vii. 15, to beware of false prophets, and tells us how we are to know them,—by their fruits. In Rev. ii. 2, also, he commends the church of Ephesus, for trying those who said they were apostles, and were not, and finding them liars.\* The apostle Paul says, that Stephanas,

---

\* Some make a distinction between the angel and the church, as though he were made exclusively responsible. But to whom is the Spirit's voice addressed in inviting the attention of those who have ears? not to the *angel*, but to the *churches*. And the

(who had appointed himself to minister,) and all similar fellow-labourers, were to be submitted to, if they preached the truth; otherwise, accursed. And that you may not doubt that it was the Lord's intention to help you in your judgment, he says, "My sheep hear my voice, and a stranger they will not follow, for they know not the voice of strangers." And in perfect accordance with this recognized principle of internal consciousness, enabling us to decide on what to receive and what to reject, is the Lord's condemnation of the Jews, relative to himself. They received him not, because they were not God's children; but while they rejected him who was the image of God and spoke the truth of God, yet if another came in his own name, whom the Father had not sent, him they would receive. But John tells us more simply, by what power we are to judge aright; the *anointing we have received* teacheth us all things, and is truth, and no lie. And Paul says the *spiritual* man judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man. It is, then, by the Holy Spirit, indwelling in the children of God, that they are enabled to discern those things which the natural man perceiveth not, and therefore esteems foolish.

Wherever then you see the question of judgment referred to, it has reference to the spirituality and anointing of the person judging, as applied to the character and doctrine of the person judged. On this

---

charges are evidently not personal. It was not the *angel* of the church of Ephesus, who is specially charged with having left his first love, who was to remember from whence *he* had fallen, and repent, and do his first works, but the church; and therefore the threat was not personal, but against the church, to take away their candlestick. And the same with the other churches; The angel appears nothing more than the vehicle of communication to the church.

ground the Lord stood with the Jews, and to this ordeal he has submitted every minister in the church; demanding of his people to try the spirits.

It may not be irrelevant here to refer to the case of Apollos, in Acts xviii. He is there represented as a zealous Jew, knowing only the baptism of John. From the case in Acts xix., where Paul has the disciples re-baptized, who had been baptized only with John's baptism, and who consequently had neither received nor heard of the Holy Spirit, it is manifest that Apollos was at this time, in the eye of Paul, an unbaptized person, and therefore also unordained. For it will not be pretended, that Apollos, a disciple of John only, had been ordained immediately by Christ; nor yet that the hands of any of the twelve had been laid upon him, while he was not yet baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Yet this man has no sooner learned the way of the Lord more fully from Aquila and Priscilla, than, in the absence of Paul, (who was in the upper provinces of Asia,) he is received by the churches at Ephesus, and immediately afterwards in Corinth; where he preaches boldly the things of the Lord, helping the saints, and convincing the gain-sayers. As he came preaching without ordination, so he departed preaching without ordination, as far as we see to the contrary; and this unordained disciple is acknowledged by the apostle Paul as a brother minister; nay, he is content to leave it quite doubtful, whether Paul or Apollos be the greater. For when there arose a division in the church of Corinth, through some saying, *I am of Paul*; others, *I of Apollos*; and others, *I of Cephas*; does Paul question the MINISTERIAL AUTHORITY of Apollos, or assume any control over him? Not at all; but humbly and simply says, "Who is Paul, or who Apollos, but ministers by



whom you believe? therefore, let no man glory in men, for all things are yours, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's." "For," says Paul, "I have transferred these things to myself and Apollos, that ye might learn in us, not to *think of men* above what is *written*." He says, Paul may plant, Apollos water, but God gives the increase; for, says the apostle, "he that planteth, and he that watereth *are one*." How unlike the language that would be thought to suit a modern bishop's dignity, to an unordained interloper, according to all the rules of traditionary Christianity!

Unless then there be some precepts to the contrary, which I do not know, I am required to submit to all who minister in holy things, (without considering whether they take it on themselves, or are chosen by others,) providing they minister in truth and righteousness, according to the gospel of Jesus. And as we shall now see by a further consideration of the subject, if he do not, or when he cease to do it—though he were an angel from heaven, or the most blessed and distinguished apostle of the Lord—should he ever change the gospel of Jesus, and preach another, he is only to be doubly accursed; as the apostle himself most solemnly assures us, when he says in Gal. i. 8, 9, "But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, if any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed." Finally, the apostle says, Phil. iii. 17, "Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so, as ye have us for an ensample."

The above, then, will show us the kind of men we are to follow, come how or from whence they may ; and the subsequent verses will serve as a general introduction to the second part of this inquiry, how false teachers are to be known.

#### HOW ARE FALSE TEACHERS TO BE KNOWN ?

“ They are such,” says the apostle, “ of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the *enemies* of the cross of Christ : whose end is destruction, WHOSE GOD IS THEIR BELLY, WHOSE GLORY IS IN THEIR SHAME ; WHO MIND EARTHLY THINGS : whereas we,” says the apostle, “ have our conversation in heaven, from whence we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.”

If you find men whose conversation is in heaven, follow them :—but if you find men, who prove themselves enemies of the cross of Christ, and who are to be destroyed, because their God is their belly, their glory their shame, and their care after earthly things ; fly them, as you would the desolating vengeance that swept away Sodom : give them no countenance, lest ye be partakers of their evil deeds. Beware of dogs, beware of evil-workers, beware of the concision, for we are the circumcision ; which worship God in the Spirit and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.

Again, our Lord shows us of whom we are to *beware*. He says, “ Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing,” (in the external dress of ministers of righteousness) “ but inwardly they are ravening wolves . Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles ?” And see Matt. vii. 15—21 : “ Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit ; but a corrupt tree bringeth

forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit, is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them." Here, then, is another most important test, establishing by our Lord's testimony the same principle of judging of teachers, as Paul laid down. Paul specifies one or two fruits of the flesh, and the Lord states the question broadly. You shall know of whom you are to beware, by their fruits; if then you see the fruits of the flesh, though they may cry *Lord, Lord*, ever so loud, prophesy, cast out devils, do even wonderful works; reject them as the Lord says he will do *in that day*, declaring he *never* knew them. Consider, again, 2 Cor. xi. 13—15—"For such are false prophets, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed, as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works." Now just for one moment consider the position of the apostle. He was writing to a church, over which he had every claim that could well centre in one man: he had been the instrument in the hand of the Lord of founding their church, of imparting to them most especial spiritual gifts, in evidence of his apostolic mission; and had laboured most zealously among them. In this his own little flock, evil men had transformed themselves into apostles and ministers of Christ. Now if these were orders which none could *assume* without the apostolic appointment, the apostle's path was clear; simply to tell the Corinthian church, that those who came without apostolic sanction, were not to be received. This would have effectually ex-

cluded these, and been a simple guide to the church on all similar occasions. But since the apostle did not assume this authority, which if any man living, in any period of the church, had a right to assume, he had ;—their father—their apostle,—their minister ;—one in whose hands it would be so safely and so naturally lodged, however dangerous in the hands of those who would be his successors ; I say, if under all these circumstances the apostle did not assume it, we may conclude it was the Spirit's intention it never should be assumed at all. For if it seemed not good to the Holy Ghost to give such power to such a man, and at such a time, who can claim it now ? The apostle, in defending his own pretensions, shows that in judging who are true and to be received, who are false and to be rejected, the church has to do with their respective *works* and *doctrine*, and with nothing else. "Are they ministers of Christ?" says he, "I am more : in labours more abundant," &c. But those who now claim apostolic power, not only think their appointment necessary to *make*, but that their suspension is enough to *silence* a minister. How strange, then, that the apostle never got himself out of his troubles in this easy way ! for if their coming in was disorderly, nothing could excuse his not dismissing or suspending them from their functions forthwith, seeing how they were using their usurped authority ; yet he lets not a hint fall that he possessed such power.

We can only, then, conclude that the sin of those teachers did not consist in wanting the apostle's appointment to the ministry, but in wanting truth and integrity before God in their ministry ; and that the apostle's power did not extend to suspending them officially, but to exposing them on the principles which he, as well as our Lord, gives for others' guidance, viz :

by reference to their *fruits*, &c., and leaving the church to decide. See also Acts xx. 29, 30: "For I know this, that after my departure shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them." Now as the preceding passage referred to teachers, who had assumed to themselves wickedly the functions of the ministry; so this is a prophetic warning that such should arise in the Ephesian church, both from without and from within. Yet in the exhortation to these bishops by the apostle, there is not one word of exhortation to them to prevent this evil by taking care whom they *ordain*. And yet, if the exclusive right of appointing or suspending teachers was with *them*, it was the most natural and necessary injunction. But the fact is, as he never assumed to himself the power of exclusive or authoritative appointment to or suspension from the ministry, so he never transferred these powers to any, for he did not possess them.

In his second epistle to Timothy, ii. 2—4, while contemplating the same class of teachers as he had been guarding the bishops of Ephesus against, does the apostle, in order to obviate these evils, charge Timothy to exclude all irregular and non-official teachers? Nay, but he bids him preach the word, be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all long-suffering and doctrine; endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, and make full proof of his ministry. This was the apostolic way of stopping false teachers,—by being themselves true; dispelling darkness by light. See also Titus i. 9—11. Here it is by holding fast the faithful word, that the bishop is to stop the mouths of gainsayers and unsound teachers; not by his own exclusive authority to appoint or sus-

pend, or by alleging that they are not ordained or apostolically sanctioned.

Peter again alludes to the same false teachers who were to arise, 2 Pet. ii. 1—3, and strikingly portrays various features by which they were to be detected and known. One feature was, that they were to make merchandize of God's people; the care of their souls was to be put up to auction, and sold like meat in the shambles, without reference to the wants of the people, or the fitness of the buyer. Let us see what John also in his first epistle says, ii. 19—27, relative to these seducers. He shows the doctrines for which they are to be condemned, and the anointing of the Holy Ghost on those to whom he writes, enabling them to judge; by which they knew all things, and needed not man's teaching; and concludes by saying, "Abide in Christ; for if ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him;" whereas "he that committeth sin is of the devil." Here, then, the whole determination rests; not on human commission, but on the question whether the teacher be sound or not in doctrine,—holy or not in life; and of this question the apostle constitutes not *himself* a judge, to determine by apostolic power, but simply refers to the Holy Ghost's teaching within those to whom this general epistle is addressed.

Nevertheless, to avoid the danger of that presumptuous enthusiasm which pretends a teaching of the Holy Ghost separate from and (practically) superior to that of the apostles, John explicitly lays down, iv. 6, "He that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us: hereby know we the spirit of truth and the spirit of error." Yet even while he thus so signally makes a conformity to apostolic *doctrine* the test of a true spirit, it does not drop from him that an

apostolic or any *commission* was of importance. “*Try the spirits,*” says he, “whether they be of God, because many false prophets are gone out into the world.” See iv. 1—6. The apostle refers precisely to the same principle in his second epistle, 7—11: “For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver, and an antichrist. Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward. Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed. For he that biddeth him God speed, is a partaker of his evil deeds.” Here, referring to the deceivers that were gone out into the world, he tells those to whom the epistle is addressed, that if any one *transgresseth* and *abideth not in the doctrine of Christ*, they were neither to be received nor bid God speed at parting, on pain of participating in their evil deeds. Now, my brother, I would ask, *who* is it that is called upon, under such a penalty, to exercise this high office, of sitting in judgment on the soundness or error of those who come as God’s ministers? Not learned men—not a convocation of clergy or bishops—but a *lady and her children*. Here then I take my stand; that we are *all* responsible—men, women, and children—for the *exercise* of our judgment; and though we are none *infallible*, we are all *responsible* judges, according to our ability. It is then at our peril that we receive a false teacher, or wish him God speed. If we countenance him as a minister of Christ, when in our own judgments we are convinced he is not, we sin against Christ; and what?

ever evil he may do in beguiling and misleading souls, we are partakers in his guilt ! Neither is it a singular requirement of God, for it is precisely analogous to what was required by him of his Jewish people in the reception of a Jewish prophet. That which was to accredit the prophet to them was, *what God had made him*. Man had no power to add one whit to his authority. And with whom are the *teachers* in the New Testament compared ? with these very prophets ; *never with the priests*. See 2 Pet. ii. 1 : “ But there were false *prophets* also among the people, even as there shall be false *teachers* among you ; and many shall follow their pernicious ways, who shall with feigned words make merchandise of you.” Read the full-length portrait of these teachers, as given there, and by Jude. Their peculiar iniquity is, that, first, like Cain, they reject and slay the man owned and accepted of God ; secondly, like Balaam, they act the prophet for hire ; thirdly, like the sons of Core, with priestly ambition they thrust themselves into an office belonging to another. Again, our Lord says, “ Beware of false prophets.” And again, “ Many false prophets shall arise ;” using the terms as synonymous with teachers. Again, John says, “ Beloved, believe not every spirit ; but try the spirits ; because many false *prophets* are gone out into the world.” Now you may say, that God would not expose the weak ones of his people to so heavy a responsibility, as that of judging between true and false teachers. But I reply, that you, being a protestant, do fully admit that each of us is responsible to God for discerning, loving and receiving *the true doctrine*. The state of the case is this :—The Romanist says that you and I must receive from “ the church,” (and not from Christ and the apostles directly) both our doctrine and our teachers : I am urging that



we are responsible to God for choosing both the one and the other, and that no dictation of man will free us. Will you now say, True, I must take my doctrine from Christ, but my teacher from the church, because it is too heavy a responsibility to have to judge of my teacher? Again, I repeat, Paul threw on his converts the responsibility which you consider so grievous. Christ threw the same on the Jews, in the case of John the Baptist, though he wrought no sensible miracles. And mark the result: the publicans and harlots (little as you might think them qualified to judge) *justified God*, being baptized with the baptism of John; while the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptized of him, Luke vii. 29, 30. Neither did Isaiah nor Jeremiah come with miracles to accredit their ministry, yet the Jews were made responsible for receiving them. Harken to what the Lord says by Jeremiah, ch. xiv. 14—16: “The prophets prophesy lies in my name. Therefore thus saith the Lord, By sword and famine shall those *prophets be consumed*. And *THE PEOPLE* to whom they prophesy shall be *cast out in the streets of Jerusalem*, because of the famine and the sword; and they shall have none to bury them, *them, their wives, nor their sons, nor their daughters*: for I will pour their wickedness upon them.” As, then, the prophets of the Old Testament are placed in a point of view analogous to the teachers in the New, and the same kind of cautions against being deceived are applied by our Lord and his apostles to both; I do not see how we, more than they, can escape our responsibilities. Indeed our Lord’s words are very distinct: “If the blind lead the blind, *both* shall fall into the ditch.” Neither, when we have the book of Scripture complete, does it appear at all so hard to be made

responsible for judging of those who are called prophets, as for the Jews to have to receive or reject them, whose communications in so great a measure referred to things as yet and long after unfulfilled. But those who are spiritual judge all things, though they are judged of no man: and God knows what measure of help and of the spirit of judgment he has imparted to each, and whether they have power to discriminate, and to what extent. Therefore his demanding this exercise of judgment from them, is better evidence to me of their possessing the power, if they would exercise it, than ten thousand arguments that man might adduce to prove their incapability. And I feel assured that God will prove to all our satisfaction, in the great day, that the inability has arisen out of this, that "men have loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil."

I do therefore earnestly entreat you, as many as say that men are to be received for their office, regardless of their doctrine and life, hear what your Lord says:—"Beware of false prophets." Hear what his apostles say:—"Though we, or an angel from heaven, come preaching any other gospel, let him be accursed." "Yea, let him be accursed," says Paul. "If any come unto you transgressing, or abiding not in the doctrine of Christ, receive him not, bid him not God speed; that ye be not partakers of his evil deeds," says John. Again, Jude tells us in his epistle, that men, corrupt men, seeking *after reward*, had crept into the church unawares; and how does he contend against them? by charging them not with want of ordination, but with their personal wickedness; and above all, by exhorting the church to contend for the faith *once* delivered to the saints. If in Jude's time, things were so fast hastening to

corruption, that the pure times of the faith were looked back upon as past; (which we see also so affectingly manifested in our Lord's addresses to the seven churches; and, as Paul was constrained to say when he said, All seek their own, not the things of Jesus Christ;) who would take either the faith or the practice of the church fifty years later, as a model?

Our Lord commends the Ephesian church, Rev. ii. 2, for not bearing those which were evil, who said they were *apostles* and were not; but found them liars. Would not the Lord equally commend any congregation now, who should try those who call themselves *successors to the apostles*; and if they found them minding earthly things in their conversation, and abiding not in the doctrine of Christ in their teaching, forsake them as liars? There is in this no idea of respecting a man for his office; but, if he prove (as John says) by his unrighteousness, that he is of the devil, he must be esteemed (as Jude says) a spot, a cloud without water, a tree without fruit, twice dead: dead in themselves, and killing all who hear them.

The sum of the whole matter, then, is this:—If any man be unholy in life—unsound in doctrine—or wishes to be considered above what is written—both he and his claims are to be rejected, though an apostle or an angel; whereas those, who, like the apostle, have their conversation in heaven, are to be received. And of this fitness or unfitness, congruity or incongruity, every man, woman and child, to the utmost of its capacity of judging, is responsible. If they commend an evil man, they share his guilt; if they support a good man, they share his blessings. For aught that Scripture shows to the contrary, a man is not one whit the more *entitled* to minister, for any thing man can do; nor less, for any thing he can withhold;

though he would be more *enabled*, if there were *apostles* now sent us of the Lord, to communicate again those blessed gifts of the Spirit, the visible glory of the church; in the absence of which she ought to mourn, just as the Jews who saw the second temple, wept when they remembered the departed glory of the first. It was our *shechinah*; the visible sign of God's presence.

#### SETTING APART FROM SECULAR PURSUITS.

Nothing, I think, can be clearer, than that the apostle Paul never designed to constitute separation from worldly callings and hard labour, either as essential or desirable for the bishops. For he says distinctly to those of Ephesus: "These hands have ministered to my necessities, and to those that are with me. I have showed you all things, how *that so labouring ye ought to support the weak*; and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, who said, It is more blessed to give than to receive." These then are his commands to the bishops at Ephesus. But that we may not think it a mere passing remark, he refers to this subject again, 1 Thess. ii. 9, where he says: "Ye remember, brethren, our labour and travail; for, labouring night and day, because we would not be chargeable unto any of you, we preached unto you the gospel of God." And for fear they should be disposed to think this was very well for him, but not intended for them, he concludes his 2nd epis. iii. 7—9, thus: "For yourselves know how ye *ought to imitate* (*μιμηθετε*) us: for we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you; neither did we eat any man's bread for nought; *but wrought with labour and travail night and day*, that we might not be chargeable to any of you; not because we have not power, but to make ourselves an *ensample unto you to imitate us*." The apostle saw

that there was more moral power in manifesting thus evidently his disinterestedness in supporting himself by his hands, than in accepting from them their bounty ; as he wished them to imitate *him*. This ability and willingness at least, to live by our hands, seem the only hope of escaping the two evils, of seeking the ministerial offices for a piece of silver and a morsel of bread on the one hand, or on the other, of giving up our independence into the hands of those who voluntarily feed us. Thus also we take away occasion, as the apostle says, from those who desire an occasion to accuse us as mercenaries and not volunteers. While the church seeks our labours and demands our service and feeds us loving with things convenient for us, we willingly work for her and live by her ; but if the heart cools, we, like our Lord, love not that which is given grudgingly or of necessity ; should this ever become the case, we will work for them, and live, like the apostle, by our own hands. On other occasions also we might feel it our privilege ; as, if the poor be in great distress, or the church in great need ; but if for the support of the weak or to adorn the gospel, it can never be contrary to the Scripture.

Remember, I do not say a labourer is not worthy of his hire. He is most richly worthy ; and woe be to that church which disregards the claim. If also a pastor be worth having, he is worth paying ; and wherever there is much spiritual work to be done, it is bad economy to let much of his valuable time be employed in mere labouring for his earthly sustenance. But these considerations are not such as *he* is to urge on *them*, but which *they* are to urge on *him* ; and I would have the minister of Christ infinitely above a thought about it ; nay, selfish and indolent as our nature is, I would delight in seeing the sheep of his flock encour-

aged to labour hardly and give freely, by seeing him who preached the precept, manifest the example, like the apostle Paul. Nor must *he* count his time badly spent thus; for God can cause it to impart a ten-fold power to all his teaching.

I am fully convinced that the church has been an infinite loser by dividing the labouring *hands* into one class and the preaching *mouths* into the other, instead of allowing them to remain as they were intended, and as they were in exercise among the Jews, united in service, for the mutual exhibition and illustration of each other. If we lived more in the moral power of the gospel, and were in our daily converse more intelligible epistles, "known and read of all men," short sermons would go a great way. For instance, if Christ bids us love our neighbour as ourselves, love our brethren unto death, what a sufficient sermon from Christ! Yet what a long sermon it would take to prove *it did not* mean what was said; but that it meant and was quite consistent with your wallowing in luxury and profusion, while your brethren and sisters are houseless and their children uncared for!

When will the day come, that the church will be persuaded that her Lord is wiser than she? He sends an apostle to teach her bishops to work with their own hands and set them *an example*; this they declare cannot be. He sends the same apostle to point out those by whom he chooses to overcome the world; and those she determines she cannot receive.

I cannot tell how, nor where, from the New Testament, arose this idea that manual labour is not only inexpedient, but unseemly and unlawful, to bishops. Who are we, that we decide not only against the apostle's conduct, but against his inspired instructions? For I contend the apostle worked with his own hands,

not because he *could not* get support without it, but because he *would not*. It was a principle which he wished to manifest for the edification of others; not an accident peculiar to himself. And this way of teaching the church is rendered only the more remarkable by his so fully knowing his own right to demand support. See 1 Cor. ix. 6—18; where, on the one hand, the *lawfulness of receiving*, and on the other, the *glory of not receiving*, are put in contrast. But should any be disposed to make a *law* either of receiving or refusing, I would again refer them to Paul's example in making this, as every other act, subservient to a moral purpose, by exhibiting to each church its proper lesson—take, for instance, the way in which he reprov'd the disorder of the Thessalonian church, many of whose members “worked not at all,” 2 Thess. iii. 11: was it not by labouring three years among them with his own hands? see 2 Thess. iii. 7—9, and again, 1 Thess. ii. 9. How did he witness against the false teachers at Corinth, giving the saints he loved a sign whereby to know him?—was it not by refusing to be chargeable to them? 2 Cor. xi. 9—15; and lastly, how did the exception he made in favour of the Philippians, whose money he took, honour the grace given to that church! Phil. iv. 15—17. The whole of these scriptures I commend to your prayerful consideration, as illustrating the *principles* on which I ground the desirableness of leaving that free, for which there is no rule (in *Scripture*); and the important use Paul made both of his power to use and *not* use the bounty of the church, both in taking and leaving, teaching most needful lessons, and showing how much above the question of bodily support his whole service was. It is obvious that had Paul been under the necessity of ordering every church, whatever its difference of grace,

on the same model, or obliged to enforce his power by requiring for his support the equal or regular payments of churches, the whole of this varied instruction would have been lost to the church.

It really appears to me that all established churches have been led to heap upon themselves every possible encumbrance and difficulty; and when they have piled them up, they bind them on with hoops of iron and brass. Their *professed* object is to draw out the most holy, most spiritual and most unearthly men into the bosom of the church. Would any man in his senses believe, that to this end they would annex to their ministries those very things which carnal, earthly and sensual men seek after? namely, wealth and gentility, power and rank. Too late they find that by baiting their hooks with carnal allurements, they have caught the devil's servants and not the Lord's. But this is not all. The same crafty enemy has completed his victory by instituting these two cursed appendages: first, *once in the fraternity, always so*: (lest, forsooth, the devil's ministers be too easily ejected when discovered; or lest some new and more luscious bait tempt them back into that which both is and is called the world; secondly, *Office sanctifies the ministrations of a false prophet, and of one whose sins go beforehand to judgment*: so that in the face of the Lord and his apostles it is decreed that we are *not* to judge false prophets by their fruits; we are knowingly to acknowledge Satan's ministers as our pastors; we are reverently to receive their admonitions and lend them our countenance; helping their evil deeds, *for their office's sake*! Thus Satan soon became master of the field; and Rome and all her apostate sisters became evidences of his power. He led the church to hold out lures to his ministers, and then got her to sanctify their abominations till the



Lord became banished from his church, and his faithful servants were cast out, and fed with their flesh the fowls of the air.

O what a blessing would it be for the church, if her children were in their generation as wise as the children of this world !

In the army, where courage and honour are the qualities most held in esteem, if a man is found defective in these essential requisites of a soldier, he is broken, dismissed and degraded. But in the church, where piety and humility are the essential qualities that should distinguish the characters of her officers, if these are wanting, they are neither broken, dismissed, nor degraded. Thus the present constitution of establishment is such, that they first by false motives allure corruptions into their bosom, and then by false principles keep them there, to spread their pestiferous poison wherever they can reach.

I see not how the church can ever be free from this withering evil, till she return to the New Testament rule of enforcing on her own members to judge by the written word and by the Spirit, who is a minister of Christ and to be supported as such ; who is not, and therefore is to be left to work his own way in the world. This can do no harm even should you be mistaken ; for if he whom you would reject be really called of the Holy Ghost, it would give him an opportunity, which would be his glory, to show his truth and calling, as the apostle did, by supporting himself cheerfully.

My most earnest, anxious prayer to God for the church, is that she be independent of every thing that is of the *flesh* ; simply hanging on her Lord in holy loyalty, as her husband, from whose lips alone she is to gather precepts, to guide her in her way to his favour, which is better than life. And I am persuaded

that she never can enjoy this independence, but in proportion as she seeks nothing which man can give or withhold; but hangs like a weaned child on her Lord, never desiring to be wise above what is written. If her Lord tells her it is for her honour appointed her not only to *reign* with him, but also to *suffer* with him, she should be content so to do; and if she hears him say, "The servant is not to be greater than his Lord," she should not only believe, but joyfully follow him in his humiliation.

I would have the church to realize Christ to be her all in all—her crown and blessing—the fountain of her honour—and esteem all but dung and dross beside. I desire to see a bright exhibition of her graces, entwined with a bright profession of her heavenly principles, like apples of gold in pictures of silver; men set apart from the world, not by the puerile mimicry of man, which can never affect the heart, but by the overpowering realization of the eternal weight of glory, constraining the soul to declare, "We cannot but preach that which we have seen and heard;" though (as I have observed before) the whole sanhedrim and rulers of the people arise and forbid. It is the setting apart the body, soul and spirit to the Lord, as a holy, reasonable and lively sacrifice in all its exercises, that God desires in his ministers; not the hands set apart from the needle and the canvas, as Paul by example shows us.

#### TENDENCY TO JUDAISM THE FOUNTAIN OF ALL THIS CARNALITY.

It may be asked, If these things are not the institution of God, how did they creep in? Nothing could be more natural, nor is more obvious, than the tendency of the early churches to judaize. Against this

tendency to corrupt the doctrine of the church, the whole force of the apostle Paul's zeal and energy is directed, and with but partial success, even in the Gentile churches: in Jerusalem it overwhelmed every thing but the foundation, so that even the intrepid Paul himself was borne down by the current there.

In writing to Titus, he says, that those false teachers of the circumcision must be stopped, who subvert whole houses. To Timothy he says, that some have swerved from the truth, having turned aside unto vain jangling, desiring to be teachers of the law. Necessitated as he was to oppose the evil principle of *enforcing* the law of Moses, he found the irritation so great, that he was led *voluntarily* to submit to the law in his own person; and on the same ground he induced Timothy to submit to circumcision. And in Gal. ii. 10—14, the tendency in those days to judaize and the power of the Jerusalem church to enforce it, are lamentably exhibited in the case of Peter himself; for, as we there learn, when Peter first came down to Antioch, he exercised his Christian liberty by eating with the Gentiles, as the Lord had expressly, on his visit to Cornelius, commanded him: yet no sooner did certain brethren come down from James, than both he and Barnabas were drawn away, fearing them of the circumcision. Now if this tendency to judaize was so strong that the very pillars of the church were bowed down under it, can we be surprised that others were borne away likewise?

The whole epistle to the Galatians appears to be but one grand effort of the apostle to root out this judaizing tendency from the Galatian church.

In fact, the tendency to judaize in the Christian church, appears to have been just what the tendency to idolatry was among the Jews; who made a calf

under the very mount of God, after his presence and power had been manifested before them.

If then during the personal ministry of this most devoted apostle, and in the face of his plainest declarations, they were so ready to turn away to those beggarly elements of bondage from the glorious liberty of the children of God, in matters which involved the very essence of Christianity;—if the apostle had to cry out, *Stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made you free, and be not entangled again in the yoke of bondage*; and if this strange infatuation seized alike inspired apostles at times, and Gentile churches during the lifetime of the apostles, and that, in things relating to doctrines concerning which the declarations of the Spirit were so clear;—can you be surprised that immediately after the apostles, in things relating to discipline, of which Scripture says so little, their eyes should have reverted to the old ruin, for materials to build their new house with?

Indeed, I think we can without any difficulty trace every stone to its place in the temple; so little has it been altered; as, for example:—

High priest, with supremacy among priests.	Bishop, with supremacy among priests.
Priests, inferior in dignity to the high priest.	Priests, inferior in dignity to the bishop.
Levites.	Deacons.
High priest, consecrated to his office.	The bishop, consecrated to his office.
High priest's handsome vestments.	Bishop's handsome vestments.
Priest's peculiar vestments to minister in.	Priest's peculiar vestments to minister in.
Levites to help the priests in the temple service.	Deacons to help the priests in the church service.

High priest had a mitre.

Separation between laity and clergy, so that for the other tribes to interfere in the priest's office was profanation.

Temple consecrated and separated from common use.

Altar in the temple.

Jewish clergy tithes.

The high priest had functions he only could perform.

The bishop a mitre.

Separation between laity and clergy, so that the former have been excluded from various ministries.

Christian places of worship consecrated and set apart from common use.

Altar in the church.

Christian clergy tithes.

The bishop assumes functions he only could perform.

The bishops, priests and deacons, after the example of the high priest, priests and Levites, soon considered themselves as orders, instead of two sets of officers, viz: overseers and servants, with probably but local or temporary authority.

To say that it can be traced up to the apostles' time, is nothing; for it can evidently be traced up to the Jewish dispensation, just as much as the traditional additions to the Jewish ritual might be traced into Egypt, as washing of cups and pots. And yet as a fact, the earlier we can trace back the history of the church, the less traces can be found of external conformity between the Christian and the Jewish church. But the principle having got admission, it grew up step by step.

By going a little into the history of the church of Rome and the eastern churches, it could easily be shown that this tendency to judaize went yet farther, as for instance in the Armenian; where crimes, *natural* and *unnatural*, are no disqualification for the priesthood; but should the holiest among them have *lost a*

*tooth*, in vain does he seek his desired pre-eminence. The Coptic churches observe circumcision, (which was doubtless of older date with them than their Christianity,) while those of Abyssinia have circumcision and the sabbath, divorce and polygamy, distinctions of meats, priestly purifications, and various other rites. This will, I think, be sufficient to establish that the systems we now are enveloped in are not the offspring of the new testament in the blood of Jesus, the divine legacy to the Gentile church, disencumbered of all the pomp and all the separation between holy and unholy among the saints, as well as clean and unclean among animals; but they are clearly of the dispensation of Moses.

If then we are obliged to confess from Sacred Writ that the overwhelming tendency to judaize corrupted the church, as well as bore away apostles, in the purest and most spiritual times of the church; we need be but little surprised at finding in after ages those things copied which every natural mind pursues after and cleaves to.

Had they confined themselves to the New Testament, what would they have found? Poor bishops or overseers, recommended to work for their bread and to give to the poor; one and the same with elders, only one name showing the nature of the office, the other the kind of men to fill it; and simple deacons to manage the charity of the church. They would have found a marked prohibition to be called doctor or teacher, for *one* was their teacher, even Christ; or to sit in the chief seats in the synagogues, or to exercise dominion or authority like the Gentiles: but if any one wished to be great, he was to become as the younger; and if he would be chief, he was to be a servant; even as the Son of man came not to be served,

but to serve others ; and that whosoever would exalt himself, should be abased. And Peter says, the elders in exercising their episcopal office or oversight, are not to be lords over God's heritage, but ensamples to the flock. And they were not to be called father, because one was the Father of the church, even God.

This would have been but sorry fare for those who wished to enjoy the good things of the world,—its wealth—its pageantry—and its distinctions. And Satan, who endeavoured to destroy the efficacy of the atonement which bruised his head, by leading back the heart to ceremonial confidences, and thus cheating the soul of its solid peace, led back the increasing carnality of the church to a judaical polity, to corrupt its true ministers and ministrations ; and put in (as the apostle says,) his own ministers, transformed as the ministers of righteousness.

But when the desire of this world's power and wealth and glory infested the church of the lowly emptied Jesus, where could the soul seeking these things find repose or encouragement ? If the eye rested on the King of saints, the Lord of life, the great Exemplar of the church ; it recoiled, and the half-formed thought of ambition was extinguished. If it wandered from him to his apostles ; they were the off-scouring of all things. If again it strayed through all the sacred pages, left for the direction of the Gentile church in after ages ; here again were lamentation and mourning and woe to every earthly thought and ambitious hope. Wearied at last in the vain pursuit of sanction from the testament in the blood of the Son of God, or from the example of him or his disciples, they fly to Moses as their patron. For it is Moses who makes priests to be earthly princes, their houses palaces ; and makes it appear congruous that the followers

of the humble Jesus, the houseless, homeless wanderer, (who, while the foxes had holes and the birds had nests, had not where to lay his holy head; who said, The servant is not greater than his master, but it is enough that he be as his master,) should be thus exalted among the princes of the earth.

What but an eye averted from Christ's institutions, and resting on those of Moses, can make an overseer or elder or bishop (call him what you may) be content that his house shall be called a *palace*, as if in derision of his Lord—his seat in the cathedral a *throne*, in defiance of his precept to his apostles, not to take, like the Pharisees, the chief seats in synagogues? Moses also gives them their tithes,—he gives them their vestments—their supremacy,—their peculiar holy and privileged character—their mitre, their lordly dignity altogether.

I cannot sometimes help thinking that the present titles assumed by ministers of Christ, were designed by Satan, and in proof of his own power, in derision of Christ, were fastened by him upon so many of (must we call them?) the churches of God.

The Lord says, Be not called doctor, nor teacher, nor father, nor be a lord over God's heritage.

Now when you see one individual uniting every title forbidden, and whenever he goes to worship, doing the very thing his Lord said he should not do,—officially assume the chief seat; the heart is overwhelmed at the extent of disobedience, and cannot but say, You have made the law of God of none effect by your traditions. For against all that the Lord has said, men are called doctor, right reverend *father in God*, *lord* bishop; their very seats called thrones, and their houses palaces. It appears to me most absurd for such men to claim exclusive authority



in deciding on the fitness of others to explain God's word. For the greatest enthusiast on earth cannot do worse with God's word, than make it flatly contradict the Lord ; leading men to do those things which he has forbidden, and opposing those which he has enjoined. Remember also Christ's words : " Whoever shall break one of these least commandments, and teach men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven ; but whoever shall do and teach them, shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven." Would he then thus honour the laws of Moses during its continuance, and less honour his own all perfect precepts ?

It may be said this lordship is but a name. Had it been so, this would have been rebellion enough against the word and example of the Prince of life. But a lordship equal to that assumed by the episcopacy of England over the curacy, is exercised in no department of the state.\* A curate may be suspended from ministry, himself and his family left to starve, and the bishop who suspends him need neither give an answer to inquiries nor an explanation of his conduct ; and the sufferer may die, without even knowing why this visitation has befallen him.—Is this being lords over God's heritage, or is it not ?

If you ask me then, how the things came in that I grieve over, my answer is, that they are the illegitimate offspring of the natural worldliness of the professing Gentile church, united, without the sanction or blessing of the Lord, to the worldly principles and earthly glories of the Jewish that has passed away. And I

---

\* It may be said this is seldom exercised. It is sufficient that it is held in *terrorem* ; and any real lenity that exists is due chiefly to the current of public opinion setting against such arbitrary exercise of power.

feel assured, we shall never see the church in spiritual purity or power again, till this unholy intercourse is stopped: till the Lord Jesus Christ becomes the sole object on whom every eye rests—until his example is looked upon as the *perfect model*—his precepts as *perfect wisdom*—and what he *literally acted*, if he commanded it to be followed, *literally followed*—or, at least, in holy truth, *aimed after*;—when, as the aristocracy in the state is based on *birth* and *fortune*, so the aristocracy of the church shall be based on *holiness* and *humility*, as the Lord has definitely commanded.

Believe me, I am contending not against dutiful obedience to lawful power, but against undutiful submission to unlawful and forbidden power; which is, both in form and in fact, a positive usurpation,—the dethronement of the King of saints, and the exaltation of man. The cases of civil and of spiritual authority are quite different; inasmuch as to a weak or wicked civil ruler I am commanded to submit, in things external to the soul; while a *wicked spiritual* ruler is that which cannot exist; for the Lord our king has assured me, that he delegates spiritual power to no evildoers nor false teachers, and has laid each individual among us under a personal responsibility to try and examine all who pretend to such power.

#### PRELATICAL ORDER CONTRASTED WITH TRUE ORDER.

As it is nowhere laid down in Scripture, that several congregations and their bishops are to be put under the superintendence of a *prelate*, I am unable to believe any such arrangement essential, or generally desirable. Under proper men indeed, as a personal mark of love to deep and aged piety, or under peculiar circumstances, it may doubtless be submitted to; and where the obedience is within scriptural limits, the superintendence may produce mutual profit, and de-

serve gratitude. But that churches are disorderly, because independent of other churches, and because subject to their own bishops and not to prelates, is an idea that could occur to no one, whose views are founded on the Scriptures.

As for the allegation that Timothy and Titus were *bishops*, it is (as far as the Scripture is concerned) a mere fiction. Timothy is called *an evangelist*, but not an overseer. He was not attached to a special church or churches, but to the person of the apostle Paul. In his second captivity at Rome, Paul writes to Timothy, "Do thy diligence to come shortly to me;" which is itself a sufficient proof that he was not *then* bishop of Ephesus. If ever he became such, it was after the apostle's death. For it is incredible, that Paul could in *five words*, thus unscrupulously summon the bishop of Ephesus to attend him at Rome, without one word of apology or explanation to the church, and without reflecting that Timothy might have an opinion of his own. It were equally uncourteous and unwise; and when contrasted with the mode in which Paul besought Apollos to come to Corinth, and received his refusal, (1 Cor. xvi. 12,) all doubt vanishes, that Timothy had made himself Paul's personal attendant, and that he was attached to no church at all, at that time, as its fixed officer. As an evangelist, as the substitute of St. Paul, as one, who though young in years, was old in service, he might doubtless be often called to advise, to instruct, and to rebuke. Hence the need of that admonition, to avoid *rebuking* elders, but rather to entreat them as fathers.

With respect to Titus, as he is addressed by the apostle in the same terms as Timothy, possibly he also might have been an evangelist; but at any rate we know that he was Paul's messenger, and did what he did at

Crete, by Paul's direct authority. When Paul charges him to *reject heretics*, this implies no more official power than Paul himself had and exercised; and we have already seen what this was (p. 42.) At the same time it is well to observe that the word *reject* does not imply authority, and has been translated *avoid* in 2 Tim. ii. 23; moreover the word *heretic* (which is Greek, not English,) means a partisan, as the word *heresy* means a party or sect; and is so translated, Acts v. 17; xv. 5; xxiv. 5; xxvi. 5; xxviii. 22. Indeed it should be so translated in all the remaining passages, Acts xxiv. 14; 1 Cor. xi. 19; Gal. v. 20; 2 Pet. ii. 1.

It seems to me strangely enough assumed, that because Paul and Titus are represented as setting elders over *newly* converted congregations, therefore it always was to be done, by an authority or persons *apart from themselves*, though one word of such a necessity is never alluded to. Now surely if it could be proved that a mother fed her child when it was a baby, no one, in the absence of some strong proof, would suppose this to be a sufficient basis for a never-dying custom; so that when he became a man, then also he was to be fed by others.

It appears to me the most natural and simple event possible in the *infancy* of churches gathered out from among the heathen, for their evangelists to judge who were fittest to be elders. But when they became established in Christianity, and their evangelists or apostles had gone away, perhaps never to return, the natural inference is, in the absence of any thing to the contrary, that they were to carry on what had been begun, only taking care to choose such men as the apostle, in his epistles to Timothy and Titus, described.

That the bishops succeed to one tittle of the apostolic power, is no where *written*, and therefore not to be received.

Nay, but we know that they could not be brought into the same position towards the churches in which they were born, as were the apostles who founded them. "For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers," says Paul, 1 Cor. iv. 15; "for in Christ Jesus, I have begotten you through the gospel." The apostles had to deliver to the churches the commandments of the Lord, as he had delivered to them; herein also they had no successors. The apostle of the Gentiles claimed no jurisdiction, except over the churches founded by his own preaching (2 Cor. x. 13—16); hence it is obvious that he *could* have no successor. The question about the limits of dioceses, involves as such, no question of principle, but rather of degree. The real question of principle between independent and episcopalian churches, is contained in this; whether out of the bishops a certain number are to be specially *consecrated*, in order to give them the exclusive power of *ordaining*. And of this I have spoken enough above. However, the Scriptures tell us often of many bishops in one church; of one bishop over many churches they tell us nothing.

The epistle to Philippi is directed to the *bishops* and deacons, Phil. i. 1. "Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons." It was not a bishop of the church at Ephesus that Paul sent for, but those whom the Holy Ghost had made *bishops* (*ἐπισκόπους*, Acts xx. 28) of that church. Also Titus was commanded to appoint elders or bishops,

(Tit. i. 5, 7,) in every city. "For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain *elders* in every city, as I had appointed thee:" . . . . "For a *bishop* must be blameless," &c. &c. Paul also appointed elders in every church, Acts xiv. 23. In every place where they are mentioned, there are many in one church, *and in no instance one over many churches.*

Of the angels of the seven churches we know nothing, save that there was one to each \* church or congregation; and the churches themselves were too near extinction, from their corruptions, to be other than *beacons*; but whether they appointed *themselves*, like Stephanas, or were appointed *by an evangelist*, such as Timothy, or by the apostles, nothing is *written*, and therefore we know nothing, and may conclude that it matters little.

To the mind accustomed to the machinery of an *external* order, proportion and beauty, and accustomed to associate, with its earliest recollections, almost a divine sacredness to the whole fabric of our national churches, it must, I know, seem hard indeed to admit that the basis of many of their pretensions are so shadowy from God's word, as I really feel that they are, and therefore have stated them to be.

---

\* Those who meddle with ecclesiastical history would do well to prove, that in the first two centuries a bishop did *not* mean the head of a *single* congregation. Even the epistles attributed to Ignatius, which are the grand repository of arguments for episcopal authority, distinctly acknowledge *one altar* and *one bishop* as uniformly connected. But as my own mind gives no weight to any thing but to the Scripture, I have no desire to enlarge on historical topics.

Believe me, there is much delusion spread over the minds of many, relative to the value of uniformity; infinitely more would be often lost than gained by it.

Suppose, for instance, the government of Great Britain, in love with some fancied views of the beauty of order, ceased to be satisfied that each family should govern its own internal concerns, according to the variety of circumstances, situations, ranks, and even dispositions of men: or, alarmed by some instances of gross disorder and domestic irregularity, published a law that every family should be governed in the same way and subject to the same rules: there might be much more of external order than now, when every house is left to follow its own way, only subject to the common law of the land. But would there be more happiness, or more national energy developed? I would venture to assert that if it were adopted in the most prosperous and energetic empire in Europe, every thing that is beautiful in social character would shortly wither away.

The tendency of forcing order in the Christian church is just the same. The order that God loved in his natural church was *natural* order; in his spiritual church, *spiritual*. In the church of Christ, the order that God loves is this, that every man be in the place where He has put him; and the most abominable disorder is where *unholy* men are attached to the ministry of holy offices. The profanation of the Old Testament was this: when any man not *typically* holy had to do with typically holy ministries. So in the dispensation of that Jesus, who banished by his light the *shadows* of righteousness and brought in *everlasting* and *real* righteousness in truth and substance; the true profanation lies in *really natural and unholy men* performing *really spiritual and holy functions*, trans-

forming themselves, while ministers of Satan, into ministers of Christ. Of such beware; from such turn away; neither countenance them, nor bid them God speed.

The only great general principle of order, in the internal regulation and government of the church, that I find laid down in Scripture, is the same as prevails in the kingdom of nature; which (however great in some cases the difficulty of application may appear,) the good sense of mankind, in their own concerns, has never felt it wise to violate, but in cases of extreme necessity. *This principle* is that the younger should obey the elder; the νεώτεροι the πρεσβύτεροι; and this is the very principle that the present system sets at defiance, and supersedes by its rules and its traditions. A beardless youth, often knowing neither the Lord nor himself, or at best a novice in grace, as a youth in years, by a fiction of man, becomes an elder in the church, and exercises authority over men who were in Christ before he was born. To *rule* seems to me in Scripture as essentially connected with *age*, as *teaching* is with *knowledge*. It was not *every* aged person who *ruled* the congregation, but none *ruled* who were not *aged*.\* When any violation of order becomes associated with our earliest thoughts, growing with our growth and strengthening with our strength, it is most difficult to perceive it; and that which may be abomination in God's sight, may become most highly esteemed among men; but if the principle be presented in some new form, we at once feel its incongruity. Let us then for a moment suppose that

---

\* If any think Timothy an exception, I would remind them that he was but acting in the apostle's name, and under the apostle's direction, in his own churches; and that extreme cases should not be considered as constituting any precedent.



an act of parliament were passed, enacting that any son, by going to college and taking his degrees, should displace his father from the head of his own family; would it not be felt to be a *monstrous principle* of social disorder? Yet this would not be one tittle more disorderly in God's sight, nor more opposed to his will in the government of a family, than the other in the government of a church. If the son be wiser than his father, let him strive to teach him, but not to rule him. What father would feel that God would recognise this as a sufficient reason why he should be subject to his son? Nay, I am deeply convinced that this very wisdom, willingly subject, whether in a family or in a church, would afford a most beautiful lesson on the true principle of obedience and reverence for an ordinance of God, even should it be exercised in much weakness. And surely this exhibition of grace would have more power to build up the church of God, than any pre-eminence he could aspire to or obtain by knowledge or talents; because God, who is the fountain of all honour and true influence, has declared that he who humbleth himself shall be exalted, and he who exalteth himself shall be abased. And again, if any man would be chief, let him be the servant of all. And according to the power of this manifestation of grace in a church, would be her power of begetting that spirit in the hearts of all, to which the apostle refers in his exhortation to be *subject one to another*, and to be *clothed with humility*; teaching it, like their Lord, not by a lecture on humility, but by being humble.

The only order to connect different churches that seems desirable or attainable, but by a force which loses more than it gains, (which popery aimed at and failed to attain,) is, that while all the family of Christ

walk within the general laws of their spiritual empire, as contained in the New Testament, every separate congregation, as a family in the great Christian family or nation, should exercise the liberty, which the Lord has not withholden from them, of managing their own concerns, as best suits their own circumstances, views and apprehensions; appointing their own bishops and deacons, as the Lord shall give them wisdom; considering that if they are children of God, they have received an anointing from the Holy One that teacheth them all things, and is truth, and no lie.

If any object that there is no Scripture warrant for the congregation choosing their own overseers or bishops,—*there is certainly as much* as for the king, or lord chancellor, or premier, or deans and chapters, choosing them; and there is a direct warrant for their choosing their own deacons.

It is, however, I conclude, of little matter who appoints, whether apostle, evangelist, or the congregation, so long as the man appointed is a man of God, fitted by the Spirit for the office, and acceptable (as in such case he ought to be) to the congregation.

It does not appear to me, from the perusal of the New Testament, that it was, in the mind of the Spirit, of the least consequence *how* a man got into an office, whether he took it upon himself, or was appointed to it by others; if only when he was in it, he discharged the duties of it as a man sent of God. I feel myself, that no invariable rule or order was ever proposed or ever laid down.

It appears to me, from the conduct of Paul and Barnabas, Timothy and Titus, that whoever is made instrumental to gather churches out from the heathen, will generally be necessitated to act for them. He might, during their infancy, appoint bishops and dea-

cons for them; yet without ever assuming the right of exclusive appointment or authoritative exclusion: and doubtless it should be his pleasure to see symptoms that they were no longer *babes*, but growing up to be *men* in Christ, able to act without his direction; and if after due time they proved unable, he would consider it to need reproof, such as is bestowed in Heb. v. 12.

It appears also to me, that though these bishops and deacons were appointed as the officers of the church, yet all may speak, just (as I have observed before) as the Jews might in their synagogue or temple, only one by one. Yet should any speak unadvisedly, the bishops should be ready, with sound words, to put to silence, or correct any error.

With respect to the Lord's supper, it appears, I think, that it was an ordinance which particularly was to distinguish the Lord's-day, and therefore should every Lord's-day be partaken of, as in the cathedrals in England and some few congregations besides. If any of the bishops were present, they would naturally preside; if not, any saint.

That it is not essential to have a bishop or elder to "consecrate" the supper, I should unhesitatingly infer from the perfect silence of the Scriptures. But this point is made clear beyond all reasonable contradiction, by the fact, that Paul, while rebuking the church of Corinth, (who partook of the supper promiscuously,) for their want of moral decency, does not rebuke them for any breach of *form*. If it had been "administered" by any ruler, bishop, or pastor, he would have rebuked the ruler for the disorder. But when he neither blames any individual for the disorder, nor blames the church for celebrating it without such "administrator;" when he sums up all by the admonition to "tarry one for

another;" it is manifest that the church had no one to administer or consecrate, and that Paul considered such omission quite immaterial. In short, that 11th chapter of the First Epistle to the Corinthians, is alone sufficient to give a fatal blow to the whole fiction of *consecrated elements*, so rich in results to the priesthood of Rome and Greece, Syria and England.

Baptism also would naturally fall to the church officers, if present; if absent, to any saint.

Now this liberty, which I have in Christ, as an individual, and which every congregation as a family in the Christian empire of the redeemed has from the holy word of Him, whom the Father commanded us to hear, (and concerning whose words Moses said, "The soul that would not hear them, should be cut off,") I still feel able in many cases to forego. Yet I never can cease to pray and desire that the church may assume her true liberty, knowing that she will be thereby better prepared for all that is coming from infidelity.

For all the varied circumstances that can arise in an increasing empire\* like this of ours in India, every body of believers, however small, will then feel their full liberty, authority and power, notwithstanding any secular pursuit, to take the office of bishop in the church of God: and every one of the church, however humble his gift, will feel free to minister, as of the ability which God giveth.

Let me call your attention to what the apostle says, Rom. xii. 3—8: "For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every

---

\* The first edition of the pamphlet was published at Madras.

man the measure of faith. For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office; so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another. Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; or ministry, let us wait on our ministering; or he that teacheth, on teaching; or he that exhorteth, on exhortation; he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness."

See again the apostle's description of the church of Corinth in 1 Cor. xii. "For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ." "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit." "For the body is not one member, but many." . . . "But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him." "And if they were all one member, where were the body?" "But now are they many members, yet but one body."

The idea here conveyed is any thing but that of one person set up in whom are collected eyes, nose, mouth, &c., for all the rest, and the others mere passive recipients; but every member is exhorted to seek from the Holy Ghost some ministry and gift for the purpose that the apostle mentions in Eph. iv. 7: "But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men." "And again, ver. 11—13 of the same chapter, "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."

Here you see the apostle again declares that to every one of us is given grace, according to the measure of the gift of Christ. We may not all have the appointments of apostles or pastors or teachers, yet we have some gift, and this we should exercise in love for the edification of the church.

And let no one be discouraged or alarmed at this liberty; for it was enjoyed by all the Jews, the seed of the bond-woman, who, as the apostle says, is now in bondage with her children. How much more then shall we who are children of the heavenly Jerusalem, the free city, enjoy this liberty; who are made a nation of priests to God to show forth the virtues of our Emmanuel?

All my desire is to say with Peter, "As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ; to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."—1 Pet. iv. 10, 11.

#### CONCLUSION.

From what has been stated, the following positions, I think, are clear:—

1. That the apostles never made their approbation

or appointment *necessary* to minister in the church of Christ.

2. That the apostles delegated no such power to others.

3. That they excluded false teachers only by *informing the conscience of the church*, and not by exerting a mere official authority.

4. The only principle set up for knowing a minister of Christ from a minister of Satan is, by examining his *life and doctrine*.

5. That any one who countenances a professed minister of Christ, who is a transgressor in his life or fundamentally unsound in doctrine, is a partaker of his evil deeds.—Therefore our Lord says, Beware of such; Paul says, Accurse such; John, Receive them not into your house.

In the various discussions concerning false teachers and warnings against them, *life and doctrine* are the only elements recognised as distinguishing them from ministers of Christ: but human appointment is never referred to as at all affecting the question.

All the claims now set up, circumscribing this liberty of ministry in the church of Christ, and taking away the allegiance of His subjects from himself and transferring it to man, appear to me direct rebellion against the Lord: like Israel of old, saying, "We will have a king," when the Lord was their King: and so, exactly a counterpart of the traditionary judaism of our Lord's time, by which the law of the Lord was made of no effect. Such claims often result in making those ministers whom God has *not* made, and (by rules and principles directly opposed to those established by the Lord,) excluding those whom he *has* made. Hence I cannot yield obedience to those who set them up, without compromising altogether the allegiance I owe to

Him who has told me, "One is your Master, even Christ, but all ye are brethren." They must therefore be disregarded, not only because these claims are *more* than Scripture enforces on me, but because they are *contrary* to that which it enforces.

I have shown how little ground there is for saying that Timothy and Titus were *bishops*, as the churches of Rome and England teach, or were *pastors*, as the late Mr. Irving taught: but that they were evangelists acting on special occasions, under the direction of the apostle Paul; and that neither they nor the apostles had any successors *inheriting* their authority.

I regret there are so many passages in this long letter, necessarily painful to many whom I would most unwillingly wound. Yet in those things which reflect on particular systems, I have kept entirely within the bounds of what might be said against the operations of the systems, as they now stand. But should I inadvertently have looked at any defect in too strong a light, I shall most willingly correct it. I feel perfectly unconscious of the slightest unfairness in the references to Scripture; and I can call God for a record upon my soul, that in the main, with whatever measure of infirmity and weakness it may be mixed, I desire to know and to do my holy and blessed Lord's will, without choosing one precept before another. But two masters I cannot serve, and therefore I simply choose the Lord.

I by no means deny that there must be order, as in the government of every family; but this is consistent with perfect liberty, when there is love, as we see in the happiest and best governed families; and the anointing which the saints have received from the Holy One, will supply them with all that is needful of this wisdom, according to their varied circumstances and situations.



I do not complain of the exercise of any church's liberty in managing its own internal concerns, within certain limits. If one likes a form of prayer, if another none; if one would kneel, when another sits or stands; in these things I could and would be, "all things to all men;" but no church has a right to cut me off, by its regulations, from the privileges of a brother, except for some offence which cuts me off from Christ. I consider that the purity of the church depends on every individual considering himself responsible to the body for a holy walk; and that the judgment of the church is ordinarily exercised more scripturally, when individuals act for themselves, in shunning false teachers and evil workers and cleaving to that which is good; rather than by the exertion of public authority, where human influence is apt to prevail more than the word and Spirit of Christ. It is by being light that we reprove darkness; which light is manifested *primarily* by a living walk and conversation, and *secondly*, by a jealous oversight which prevents our suffering sin upon a brother, being only careful in the order of reproof to follow our Lord's rule, first between him and thee alone, &c.—Matt. xviii. 15—19.

I do not apprehend that the church possesses any proper *legislative* authority. I believe that at the very outside, in the extremest and most formal cases where her authority is called for, as in the excommunication of the notoriously scandalous, she acts only *judicially*; applying the laws which Christ has laid down; and to which she can neither add nor take away. Neither did Paul or Peter ever command any thing in their own name, but only in Christ's name, and as enforcing what he has commanded.

I understand my liberty in Christ to be *the liberty of giving up* to every brother, in every thing not ex-

pressly forbidden by the Lord, or his apostles: and the Holy Ghost having *enjoined* this, I could never submit to any human system, which prevented and condemned it. For instance,

Though I have much delight in the greatest part of the liturgy of the Church of England, if any brother were to come, not liking to use it, my liberty in Christ would lead me to say, Be fully persuaded in your own mind; only preach Christ and pray truly, and all is well. Some may like the gown and bands, others not; some may come ordained by bishops—some by elders—some by pastors—some by nobody; my whole concern would be to know on whose side they were, as our Lord says; and if they were on the Lord's side, I would bid them God speed, and let them minister. And though there might be disorder to the *eye* in this, there would be infinitely greater order to the *heart*, and this is the order which the Lord loves. If he only love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, what authority have I to force him to submit to what Scripture has not commanded? Rather let me give up my liberty, and be bound with those who are bound and free with those who are free, and not please myself, but my neighbour for his good to edification.

I apprehend that true order does not consist in aiming after outward uniformity, but in following Christ; avoiding discrepancy with the word, not so much in unity of the *letter* as of the *spirit*; for in this, as in every thing else, "the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life," for "God looketh not at the appearance, but at the heart," therefore "that which is highly esteemed among men" is continually "abomination in the sight of God.

I do not say that no system can be made out of the New Testament, but I am quite sure no *imperative* one

can, nor one from which difference of circumstances may not make it at once allowable and holy, in some respects to differ. In fact I do not see a single church existing, that appears an exact transcript of what is evident in Scripture; and I should feel it to be my duty, and I hope my happiness, to submit to any discipline that did not violate the *spirit* and *essential nature of the gospel*; which my brethren in Christ thought it right to institute. But if they made their tradition or regulation stand in the way of the least of my Lord's commandments, they would be as weak round my heart to bind it to obedience, as fetters of burnt thread to bind my feet.

Thus then I bring to a conclusion this long letter; with a most fervent prayer, that if there be any thing in it calculated to make any other impression than my Lord would have made, it may be prevented by his power; and that every word that is agreeable to truth and for his glory and for the church's honour and true ascendancy over the world, may by him be acknowledged and blessed.

Yours, most truly,

A. N. GROVES.