

distinct institute in the Church. The pastor was held to be nothing more than a brother, requested by his brethren to minister to their edification by the use of such gifts as he might have. No authority was supposed to belong to his position. No honour was to be given to him on account of his office. He was to be esteemed only for his works' sake; and his "work," by a misinterpretation of the Apostle's language, was held to mean the sum of such things as he actually did—not the office or service to which he was called. To give a pastor the title of "reverend" was held to be little short of profanity. It was even held sinful to call him "a minister of Christ" and it is not many years since I was myself rebuked in the Committee Room of the Congregational Union, by an aged brother, for so improper an application of a title belonging only to the Apostles of Christ. The use by pastors of any distinctive dress, though not going beyond the black coat and white neckcloth, was held to be a sinful affecting of worldly dignity, and of a piece with the use of the tonsure in the Church of Rome. In short, the tendency was to lower the pastoral office, and obliterate entirely the distinction which the holding of it conferred in the Church. We have now, I believe, if not wholly, yet to a great extent, got rid of these pernicious ideas. Our churches now, in general, recognise in the pastorate a distinct office, to which men are to be called on the ground that they are fitted to discharge its duties, and to which they are to be solemnly set apart. In this office they reverence the institute of Christ; and they are willing to give honour to the holders of it for the sake of the office which he holds. It is no longer held that the duties of the pastor are to be determined by the contract between him and the congregation to which he ministers, and that his official acts derive authority simply from the consent of the church over which he presides. With a juster and more reverend sense of the supremacy of Christ in His own house, it is now held that the duties of the pastor are determined by His Word, and that the authority of the pastor is derived from His institute. Recognising the distinctiveness of the pastor's position, they require that he should wear a distinctive dress; though, with a logical inconsistency unknown to our fathers, they still continue to object to the use of that particular form of distinctive dress which the fashion of the pulpit has now rendered common—the gown and bands, forgetting that if the argument against them is worth anything it is valid against *all* distinctive costume, and that (as Mr. Haldane puts it) it makes no possible difference whether it be by a gown, a band tied under the chin, or a black coat, that the distinction is effected. There is but one alternative here:—Either there must be no distinctive dress at all—and in that case we shall see our pastors disporting in all the variety of costume which caprice or taste may dictate—or the rule by which the particular dress that shall distinguish the minister must be that which the general usage determines to be the fashion of the pulpit.

I wish I could speak with more certainty than I feel myself at liberty to speak on the third point, in respect of which we have gained an advance upon those who acted in the founding of our churches. That point respects the manner and degree in which christian churches of later times are to take the apostolic churches as their model. By our Fathers the principle was adopted, in all its unqualified extent, that this model is to be followed with scrupulous and conscientious exactitude; that nothing which we find in the Apostolic churches are we at liberty to omit; that nothing which we do not find in them are we at liberty to introduce into our own organization and practice; and, in the severity of their logical consistency they did not hesitate to introduce usages which in our day are inconvenient, ludicrous, or indecent; they thought there was a special propriety in holding their meetings in an upper room; they addressed each other as brother this and sister that; and they even ventured to observe as an ordinance of Christ, the kiss of charity. Such extravagances cured themselves, and soon died out; but the principle which logically and legitimately led to them unfortunately remained, and has done no small evil, I believe, to our cause. I fear it still remains; at least, I find that whenever any new plan, method, or usage is proposed, however reasonable in itself, however plainly recommended by expediency, and however in harmony with the great principles of policy on which our churches are founded, those who are opposed to it find no means of resisting