

from the perversion of our blind, deceitful hearts. He only can teach savingly and to profit; he is the Spirit of truth, who alone can lead us into all truth. Taught by him, all things are full of light; despoiled of his guidance, the very light that is in us is darkness;—whatever knowledge we may possess, we know nothing yet as we ought to know.

S.

R.

# RUDIMENTS OF CHURCH POLITY.

Abridged from Mr Taylor's work on Spiritual Despotism.  
(Continued from page 57.)

VI. The question which next presents itself is of the highest moment, and involves almost every other consideration connected with church polity. Whence does the clerical function and power arise; or in what manner is it transmitted from hand to hand; or under whose control does it rest?

The clerical function and power may, then, in the 1st place, be imagined to be derived, in each instance, immediately from Heaven, by impulses and irresistible convictions on the mind of the individual who challenges to himself the right to exercise ecclesiastical authority. Such was the prophetic function of old; and such, essentially, is the idea of the Christian ministry entertained by the Quakers; and in measure, too, by some other modern sects. We do not here deem it necessary to entertain this supposition, as worthy of argument, in truth, by its very nature, it exempts itself from the range of reason; its only ground is that of perpetual miraculous attestation.

Or 2d, sacerdotal authority may be affirmed to spring, by perpetual derivation and tradition, from itself. That is to say, the clerical body, in each successive age, may be held to be empowered to deliver to its successors, called and installed by itself, the entire authority which, in a like manner, it received from its predecessors. This doctrine is the fundamental article of the Romish church, and it has been inherited and embodied by the church of England, and other episcopal communions.

Or 3d, all powers of government and instruction, within the church, may be alleged to originate with the will of those for whom such powers are exercised. That is to say, of the people, as distinguished from their clergy, and who may elect and remove their teachers and rulers at pleasure.

Or lastly, there may be imagined a sort of compromise between clergy and laity, such as shall leave a power of calling and ordaining with the former, and of electing and installing with the latter. This last method prevails among most of our modern sects, but under circumstances that produce different practical results. Presbyterianism, augmented in an elective degree by lay influence, presents this scheme in perhaps its most favorable aspect, and at once confers a substantial and necessary power upon the clergy, while the people have the means of securing themselves against tyranny and encroachment. The congregational communions, while they attribute a semblance of special authority to their clergy, in the instance of ordination, (which however is now very

commonly confessed to amount to nothing more than a paternal or fraternal recognition of the people's sovereign act,) do substantially devolve all power, not indeed upon the church—for a church, by universal admission, is a body, consisting of people and ministers; but upon the laity, as acting apart from the clergy, and as considered competent to decide in the most important of all affairs, without their rulers, and indeed while they have none. Moreover, by the absolute insulation of each chapel society, and by the immediate dependence of each minister upon the single congregation which he serves, all forms and semblances of clerical authority, be they what they may, are virtually held in abeyance. He who must depart when those who support him no longer wish for his services, exercises no power such as can avail in those very instances where power is needed—namely, to enforce discipline against sturdy delinquents, and to maintain truth and morality in opposition to the caprices or the lax desires of the people. This is a theory of church government which, much as it may recommend itself to our modern republican sentiments, must be denounced as subversive of all religious authority, (whether for good or ill,) and as broadly and essentially distinguished from the apostolic model.

In making a choice among the above named principles, and especially if we were to do so apart from apostolic precepts and precedents, it would be very natural to have recourse to the analogy of civil life; and, as under a free government, all public functions return, immediately or remotely, to their source—the will of those for whose benefit they are exercised, the inference would be, that religious functions should obey the same rule, and that the selective and elective powers, including necessarily the power to revoke, and to repel pastoral authority, should reside in the people. This sort of reasoning from secular principles, acquires peculiar force when applied to religious communities in modern times, breathing as they do the inspiring atmosphere of democratic independence. Certain modes of government might, it may be said, be tolerable or good in times or in countries where the popular mind has not been kindled, and where silent submission to irresponsible authority has long been the settled habit of the people, but the same modes become wholly inapplicable to societies unaccustomed to endure any species of restraint beyond what is felt by all to be indispensable. It may, we say, seem as if a scheme of church government which involves substantial clerical powers, even though proved to be apostolic, could not find room upon modern ground.

Then again, when the constant tendency of privileged orders, and especially of the sacerdotal orders, to encroach upon the public liberties, is considered, we must feel strongly the danger of giving place to a self-derived, and independent religious authority. With the evidence of history before us, and the common impulses of human nature in view, every dispassionate mind reluctantly to admit a principle that seems so pregnant with mischief. If it last compelled to grant that our Lord actually left his church on this foundation, we are placed in a position that demands the most vigilant regard; nor can we do less than bestow an extreme care upon the duty of maintaining, in its full efficiency, that counterpoise to spiritual despotism, or rather that safeguard against its advances, which we find to have been in play within the apostolic societies.

A curious inconsistency has attended the modern controversy on the source or origin of clerical power, inasmuch as the opponents have mutually exchanged positions. Those, on the one side, whose rule and practice it ordinarily is to pay a profound regard to