

this plainly show the folly and danger of yielding undefined power to Pastors alone ! Is it wise or safe to constitute one man a despot over a whole church ? Is it proper to entrust to a single individual the weighty and complicated work of inspecting, trying, judging, admitting, condemning, excluding and restoring without controul ? Ought the members of a Church to consent that all their rights and privileges in reference to Christian communion, should be subject to the will of a single man, as his partiality, kindness, and favoritism, on the one hand ; or his caprice, prejudice, or passion, on the other, might dictate ? Such a mode of conducting the government of the church, to say nothing of its unscriptural character, is, in the highest degree, unreasonable and dangerous. It can hardly fail to exert an influence of the most injurious character, both on the *clergy* and *laity*. It tends to nurture in the former, a spirit of selfishness, pride and ambition ; and instead of ministers of holiness, love and mercy, to transform them into ecclesiastical tyrants. While its tendency, with regard to the *latter*, is gradually to beget in them a blind, implicit submission to clerical domination. The ecclesiastical encroachments and despotism of former times, already alluded to, read us a most instructive lesson on this subject. The fact is, committing the whole government of the church to the hands of Pastors alone, may be affirmed to carry in it some of the worst seeds of Popery : which, though under the administration of good men, they may not at once lead to palpable mischief, will seldom fail in producing, in the end, the most serious evils, both to those who govern, and those who obey."*

5. This admission of lay influence into the parochial episcopacy confirms in the best and safest manner the authority of the minister. It will generally be found that those chosen to the office of the elder, are the most distinguished in the congregation for station, intelligence and piety, and that they not only possess the confidence of the people, but that they deserve it. Guided as they are by the laws and usages of the church, and solemnly bound to promote its welfare, a perfect unanimity may generally be expected in all the great practical instances of duty. This will not unfrequently be confirmed by those strong and elevated personal friendships which grow out of the sacred and delightful employments in which they are together engaged. The coadjutors of the pastoral office the whole weight of their personal and

official influence will be freely used to assist him in his duties, and to promote his usefulness. They will ever be ready to advise with him and to support him, to defend his reputation unjustly maligned, to vindicate his authority where it is contemned, and to enforce his instructions where they seem to be neglected. How much does this support of the constituted rulers of the church augment the legitimate influence of the christian ambassador ! He stands forth not as a solitary agent in his sacred work. The rulers of the church are with him, to advise, encourage and co-operate, to share his responsibility, and accompany and sustain him in his arduous labors. The session is the minister's right arm.

6. The parochial episcopacy affords full scope to that diversity of gifts that may be found among the laity of the church who are disposed to employ them in his service. In visiting and instructing his own allotted section of the parish in superintending, the education of children, and examining schools, in endeavours to reclaim the careless and irreligious, in administering consolation to the sick and dying, the elder will find enough to exercise every gift and grace of which he may be possessed. When he sits in session with his brethren, their deliberations on such cases as may come before them may be materially assisted by his more extensive knowledge and experience. As a commissioner to Presbyteries, Synods, and Assemblies, he may take part in their deliberations, and in the extended operations of christian enterprise conducted under their auspices. Let it not be forgotten that in the General Assembly of the church of Scotland, the most distinguished in the land for rank and talent have had a seat, and by the influence of their station, their legal knowledge, their eloquence, as well as by their personal worth, they have contributed not a little to the prosperity and usefulness of that National church. The full illustration of this point however does not belong to the head of parochial episcopacy. It will fall to be noticed when we treat of the superintendence of those higher judicatories of the church to which its elders are eligible.

(To be continued.)

* An essay, on the warrant, nature and duties of the office of the Ruling Elder, in the Presbyterian Church by Samuel Miller, D. D. Professor of Ecclesiastical History and Church Government in the Theological Seminary at Princeton, N. J.