

## The Canadian Independent

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### DOCTRINE AND POLITY.

The endeavour is sometimes made to sever church polity from church doctrine, to call the one comparatively indifferent, the other essential. This position, however, requires to be carefully noted, lest we fall into grievous error. If a number of independent churches band together, and because of what they deem special circumstances appoint one man to be their committee to look after some general interests, to examine candidates for the ministry, and to select individuals for their vacant pastorates, they have a right thus to do, only that individual office thus made is temporary, having no vested right, and terminable at any moment when any of those churches find themselves desirous of ending the arrangement, but invest that individual with sacerdotal power, you at once introduce a doctrine, *e. g.*, of apostolic succession, or of sacramental efficacy. Hence polity may be the embodiment of doctrine, in which case it ceases to be a question of expediency, but assumes the position of a principle.

Dr. Allon, in his noble address at the English Union last May, thus speaks:—"There is no principle, injunction, or precedent of the New Testament which demands any specific form of church government; its significant abstention from all Divine prescription or indication is a wise and purposed provision for various embodiments of church life, and for the exercise of those reasonable liberties and preferences which are the natural prerogatives and expression of intelligent manhood. We, at any rate, are bound by our cardinal principle to maintain this; we must concede to all others the prerogatives that we claim. Because we are Congregational we are of necessity Catholic." These utterances have been questioned, and the position maintained that the New Testament does present a church polity, which the New Testament church is bound to follow. Perhaps a consideration of the following root principle will manifest that both Dr. Allon's position and that of his challengers are, from the varied stand points of each, tenable, and tenable because true.

Congregationalism affirms a radical difference to be between the Church and the world; (understanding "world" as it must be understood, *e. g.* in 1 John ii. 15-17); the Church is in Christ, possessed of His spirit, His life, the world is without Christ, alienated from God. In the

New Testament sense of the word there is no such thing as a National Church, or a parish church, wherein every citizen, as a citizen, may claim his legal right to be found. None may be members of the Church of Christ who are not His in heart and in life. This is the Congregational doctrine, and from this its polity must grow. It was this which gave rise to the Separate churches of early English Congregationalism, and it is this, and this only which gives the right to any body of men to be a Church, independent of authoritative control on the part of Conference, Synod or Episcopate; it is this, moreover, which gives to true Congregationalism its Catholic tone, its independency to acknowledge a Christian Church wherever Christ dwells and His spirit gives life, and this irrespective of form of worship or administration.

Thus polity is associated necessarily with a characteristic theology, and to parade a polity without the possession of what that theology indicates is to take Ezekiel's valley of dry bones shaken together, for the living army clothed with flesh and breathed upon by the Spirit. When a Church manifests an un-Christlike spirit, departs from the truth as the truth is in Jesus, ceases to be a fount of spiritual power and of moral regeneration, ignores the New Testament requirements of a body of Christian men, it is no longer a Church in the Congregational sense of the term; but, rejoicing in the presence of Him by whose name it is called, the smallest band of believers can challenge the most powerful ecclesiastical organization in its right to discharge lawfully all the functions of a true Church of the Lord Jesus. Where regenerated men are not, you may have a club, you cannot have a Congregational Church.

### COURTESY.

"To show deference to age, to worth, and to dignity, is a duty; to show deference to equals, to strangers, and to unknown persons, is true refinement and courtesy," writes one discoursing upon good manners: but is not the latter equally a duty with the former? Yet a subtle, but not meaningless distinction may have led the writer (M. Joubert), to apparently distinguish between "duty" and "true refinement and courtesy." Duty often, perhaps most often, applies to specific acts and maxims. We meet a superior whom we have been specially taught to reverence, we yield the honour where the honour is due; but our bearing to equals, strangers, the unknown, will be regulated by our prevailing habit, for the law of true refinement and courtesy is written not in "Chesterfield," but in the heart. Duty may be constrained, courtesy freely flows, it is among the "counsels of perfection."

You know, kind reader, Tennyson's lines:—

"The churl in spirit, how'er he veil  
His want in forms for fashion's sake,  
Will let his coltish nature break  
At seasons through the gilded pale.  
For who can always act? but he  
To whom a thousand memories call,  
Not being less, but more than all  
The gentleness he seemed to be."

I'm a plain man, some will say,  
and know nothing of your laws of  
politeness,—which may or may not

be true, but is in no case an excuse for want of courtesy, for roughness if unaffected is but the "coltish nature breaking" through, perhaps, an ungilded pale, but the coltish nature still. Abraham Lincoln, than whom no ruler more deserved a civic crown, was a backwoodsman, a giant in strength, Jack of all trades, lawyer and bargee, yet no nurse could more gently soothe a ruffled infant than he; a loving heart made him truly refined; courteous, though his action might seem uncouth. Nature's courtesy is the highest, and the martyred President's character therein finds its secret in the notes by one of his biographers "Nothing made him so angry as cruelty."

Has sufficient attention been given in Bible readings to the gospel grace of courtesy? Christ's humanity is many-sided, and perfect from whatever point of view you gaze. Listen, "When ye come into a house salute it," *i. e.*, use the customary form of politeness, "and eat such things as are set before you," don't upset the arrangements of a household to minister to your special wants, as the wont of some is. "If ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? Do not even the Publicans so?" "Simon," said the Master to one who had with patronizing air invited Him to his house, "I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet—thou gavest me no kiss." Simon would have done his duty to acknowledge dignity, but here he deemed himself not as receiving but as conferring an honour, and gave a somewhat ungracious and therefore ungentlemanly admission to his table, true refinement and courtesy were wanting, therefore there was no water for the dusty feet, nor refreshing perfume for the head, and Christ noted the omission which "a sinner" supplied. It may be more than suspected that Christ takes notes still.

The want of courtesy is, we fear, a common sin among Christian churches and Christian people, and arises from a serious defect in our Christian life, leaving its rough words and domineering spirit to fester and to divide.

We shall all be the better of remembering the lesson of "OUR FATHER." Not mine only, but thine, and all mankind. Therefore the question we are to ask is not, How am I to treat my servant, boot maker, master or customer? but, How ought I to bear myself towards my fellow-man? The only higher question is, How am I to bear myself towards the truth? Paul, the model of courtesy, withstood Peter to the face because he was to be blamed, sternly rebuked the Galatians for their backward steps, but never forgot the dignity of brotherhood, nor the regard due to man as man. We may do worse than direct our attention to the Christian virtue of courtesy, of true refinement.

ARTHUR PENRHYN STANLEY, Dean of Westminster, is no more, having passed away after a brief illness at the not very advanced age of sixty-six. Son of Dr. E. Stanley, late Bishop of Norwich, favourite pupil and biographer of Dr. Arnold, of Rugby, friend of the late Prince Consort, confidant of the Queen, companion of the Prince of Wales during his tour through Palestine and the East, a man of letters, his-

torian, ecclesiastic, and through all the friend of the poor and toiler for the education of the working classes, few men enjoyed more of quiet honour, and, may we trust, few pass away with a more peaceful hope. "I have laboured amidst many frailties and much weakness to make Westminster Abbey the great centre of religious and national life in a truly liberal spirit," are said to have been his last audible words, and they are true; he sought to make the old Abbey, notwithstanding the divisions of theologies and politics, truly national. Whether his efforts in that direction were always wise is a question we shall not discuss, but his motives as well as his religious trust are indicted by the lines he caused to be engraved on Lady Stanley's tomb in Henry VII. Chapel:—

"Uniting many hearts from many lands,  
And drawing all to things above.  
We know that we have passed from death unto  
life, because we love the brethren."

In theology he was liberal, most will say, even to a fault; the writer of these lines must be permitted to remember him as the unweaver of the bust in Westminster Chapel, of the late Samuel Martin, whom we revere as the pastor of our youth; and also to call to mind the readiness with which facilities, not accorded to the general public, but to any who manifested a more than mere sight-seeing interest, were granted by the Dean for a survey of the antiquities of the Abbey. It appeared to be a special pleasure to the Dean to wander with visitors through the cloisters and chapels of the Abbey, which was his home. He could be often seen directing the workmen in the renovation of its mouldering parts, or in the arrangement for some special service, dignified yet easy of approach, and with a fervour that made his fine and sharp-lined face in the dim religious light of the Abbey Church suggest the mediæval saint, rather than the courtly Dean.

No churchman of the present day has done more to bridge the social gulf in England between the Established and non-conforming churches, and as such the late Dean demands this notice from our hands, a notice the more feelingly given from the personal reminiscence above referred to. The Abbey Church at Westminster enjoys peculiar immunities, being under no Episcopal jurisdiction, therefore, unlike the Deans of Cathedrals who are, with the chapters, the bishops' counsellors, the Dean of Westminster has no ecclesiastical superior but the Sovereign. Hence the late Dean opened the Abbey pulpit to Dr. Moffatt, the African Missionary and Congregational minister; to Max Muller, a distinguished layman; and to Principal Tulloch, of the Scotch Established Church. He took legal advice as to the liberty allowed by the law of the realm in this particular, and went to its extreme limit in the matter. It was the intolerance of the English statutes, not the inclination of Dean Stanley, that kept the nonconformist leaders from the pulpit of Westminster Abbey.

THE last time we heard Dean Stanley preach, was a year ago, one of the Sundays in last July. The occasion was a special one, being a sermon to some corps of volunteers.