

# The Theological Instructor.

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## WHAT DO THEY MEAN BY RITUALISM?

In our last article on this subject we established, we trust to the entire satisfaction of our readers, that the assertion of Church authority is no innovation of modern times, and consequently cannot be reckoned as one of the peculiarities of Ritualism. It is, therefore, but proper that we should examine in whose hands this power is placed, in order that we may be guided in our practical attendance on the Apostles injunction "Obey them that have the rule over you."

Whatever may be said about the developments of ritualism in other respects, the doctrine of an Apostolic succession is, after all, the chief subject to which sectarian preachers object; and that obviously because it has a tendency to lessen their over Clerical importance. Had the Church Clergy omitted to meddle with this subject, or maintained the equality of all that pretend to the Ministerial character, their other errors would be looked upon as of a very pardonable nature. "It is elsewhere," said a sectarian preacher, "than in that Episcopal succession that we seek that which gives authority to our ministry, and validity to our Sacraments,"—(D'Aubigne on Puseyism, p. 23). This was surely most judicious-

ly as well as magnificently spoken; for, if any sectarian were to ascend but a few links in the chain of the ministry to which he belongs, he would soon come to the end of it, and would find its origin without the claim of even Presbyterian Ordination itself. He therefore gives up every idea of a succession, and betakes himself to the resort of every fanatic that has sprung up since the foundation of the church. If called and authorized by the Spirit of God, as all sectarians suppose, to take upon themselves the office of pastor without any other appointment, how in the name of all that is rational, are we to become cognizant of the fact? Has he the power of working miracles to convince us? Or have we the gift of discerning spirits? One of which, or perhaps both, would be necessary to satisfy us respecting his credentials.

In treating the origin of ecclesiastical authority, there have been three different theories adopted by those who have turned their attention to the subject. The first supposes a spiritual democracy to exist in the Church; and that the ecclesiastical officers, even the very highest, must receive their commission from the people.\* To