

the express design of the temporal office being to lend its entire aid to the spiritual power. Were the scriptural deaconship to be substituted for the mere secular trusteeship, the hazard of such a collision would be greatly obviated, and mutual co-operation would be more certainly secured.

Another very important advantage would be gained, of which we are almost wholly deprived by our present system of trusteeship—the deacons in respect of their moral qualifications, as well as in the discharge of their official duties, would be amenable to the spiritual courts—the Session and Presbytery, a responsibility that cannot be nullified without the sacrifice of a great principle in Presbyterian church government, namely the true spiritual constitution of the church, and the consequent overshadowing pre-eminence of its spiritual rulers.

Farther, by such a return to the practice of the primitive church as it respects its temporal officers, our different congregations would be more perfectly brought into the form and model of our church government. For the deacons would then always be members of the church, and appointed by its authority, and under solemn engagements to fidelity in their conduct and management.

N.

M.

ON THE LEGISLATIVE INCORPORATION OF THE CHURCH.

The Christian church, in its simple and primitive character, is nothing more than an association of persons, professing the religion of Christ, united for the purpose of promoting the spiritual well-being of each other, and of the rest of mankind. In this view it claims from the civil authorities, nothing more than what all well-disposed subjects have a right to claim under every government.

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—PROTECTION; it admits no interference, in spiritual things, with the prerogatives of its supreme Head; its laws and ordinances are under the administration of its own overseers, duly set apart, according to the divine institution, to rule over the heritage of God in his fear. In its spiritual character the civil power cannot or ought not to have any authority over it.

But while we thus assert the spiritual character of the church, and its essential independance, it is never to be lost sight of that it cannot well or long subsist, without entering into certain necessary civil relations. It cannot subsist long or in an extended form, without some financial economy. It must have edifices in which the congregations shall assemble; these congregations, by voluntary offerings, or by the bounty of the state, or by bequests from the pious dead, may acquire property; this property must be preserved and improved for the purposes to which it was originally set apart; it must be put under judicious and secure management. Could we be assured of perfect integrity and unanimity among those to whom the management of it is committed, during all the changes of office-bearers that may take place in the progress of centuries; that none of them would embezzle or divert it from its legitimate purposes, or that its rightful possessors would never be disturbed by the rapacious, then it might not be necessary to make any particular regulations respecting it. But all history has shewn that church property is, perhaps more than private, exposed to the hazard of mismanagement and alienation. It belongs not to one individual, but to many, who are tenants in common. From the number of the parties whose rights are concerned, disputes are the more likely to arise; divisions may follow, and many difficult questions