

from its original local references. It may be of use to the Presbyterian Congregations of this country, in giving them Scriptural views on the important subject of Ecclesiastical Temporalities. Should you consider it worthy of a place in your valuable Record, you will oblige your sincere friend,
A. FERRIER.

ADDRESS ON THE SUPERINTENDANCE OF THE TEMPORALITIES OF THE CHURCH.

It ought to be known and remembered that the Redeemer's Church has a government and laws which emanate from himself; that Christ is the originator of all power and authority and administration in the Church; and that the Church's members can claim no right to originate any system for conducting ecclesiastical matters; but must submit implicitly and wholly to the legislation of their rightful King.

The Church as a community, or as a system of organized government, is not Republican in its constitution, in which case the people might claim the right to enact and execute the laws. It is a pure and perfect Monarchy, where all power lodges in the Sovereign, and where the exercise of authority, and the execution of law by men, are derivative, and were directly and exclusively from the Saviour himself as the King and Head of the Church.

It may reasonably be thought that as King of Zion, Jesus Christ has provided a government and laws sufficient for all practical purposes; and well adapted to preserve and promote the entire interests of the Church.

Now, there are two great interests of the Christian Church for which legislation is necessary, and has been provided by her Great King. These are the Temporalities and the Spiritualities of the Church. For superintending the first of these, the office of Deacon has been appointed: for superintending the last, the office of Elder.

The Temporalities of the Church indeed are objects of a very different class from the Spiritualities. The latter class embraces the Scripturality of its doctrines, the purity of its worship, and the rectitude of its discipline. The objects of the former class are wholly, or rather fundamentally, worldly in their nature. But if any one shall avail himself of this consideration as an argument that Church officers, because their character is of a spiritual kind, ought not, as such, to take cognizance of Temporalities, he will find the conclusion not deducible from the premises, and himself perhaps involved in unexpected difficulties. If we look back to the arrangements under the Old Testament economy, we shall see that although the materials of the tabernacle and temple and all the means of supporting those splendid fabrics, and the establishment to which they belonged, were worldly, yet the immediate care of them was exclusively committed to persons invested with sacred office. Proofs of this must be unnecessary to those who are acquainted with the Scriptures. We do not here mean to institute any comparison between the ecclesiastical policy of the two dispensations: but from the fact now mentioned, this position incontrovertibly results,—that from the nature of those Temporalities, that is, from their being worldly and material, it cannot be inferred that the management of them is incompetent to Church office-bearers. On the contrary, it results undeniably from the above statement, that things in their own nature worldly, may become sacred not only as to their application, but as to their management, so that the disposal of them to their proper ends shall appertain exclusively to persons in sacred office.

We had not introduced these observations, had we not known that some have adopted the reasoning which we have combated, and have contended from the nature of Temporalities that the management of them is beyond the sphere of Church officers, and it must surely appear utterly preposterous that this mode of arguing has been employed by those very persons who claimed the management for themselves, on no other ground than their own spiritual and sacred character—that is, their being members of the Church. Whereas, if Church officers, upon the principle that their character is spiritual, cannot, as such, take cognizance of Temporalities, the same principle will exclude Temporalities from the cognizance of all

Church-members, as such, because in this view, their character is as really spiritual as that of ecclesiastical Office-bearers.

Those Temporalities, as external sacred things, are, not only, as we have stated, different in nature from the Spiritualities of the Church; but, we are ready to grant, very inferior in consequence. Nevertheless they must be allowed to be highly important, nay, to be, in their own place, altogether necessary—so necessary that without them there can be no regular and comfortable dispensation of Divine ordinances, and the Church cannot even subsist.

These things, then, being necessary to the existence of the Church, and to the dispensation of its ordinances, a strong presumption arises that there must be in the Church some constituted power to take cognizance of them. If they are thus necessary, which cannot be denied, and if Christ has made no provision for the management of them, the government which he has appointed must be extremely defective indeed. For what is the object or end of any government, but, primarily, the preservation and the well-being of that society in which it is established? If a legislator should neglect to provide institutions for objects essential to the existence of the society for which he legislates, and if the society cannot subsist without creating for itself a supplementary government, how can the views of such a legislator be regarded as comprehensive, or his appointments as complete?

It is presumed, therefore, upon the most obvious principles of reason, that the government appointed by the Church's Head has a right to take cognizance of all those affairs of the Church which involve its existence and well-being: and has not only a right to do so, but is laid under the necessity of doing it.

Accordingly, if we ascend from general principles to facts, we shall find ground to conclude that in the primitive Church it was understood that the government appointed by Christ was competent to take cognizance of all the Temporalities of the Church, as well as of its Spiritualities, and did so. It is generally, or rather universally, granted that the tables of the poor, the tables of Ministers of religion, and the table of God, were provided from the common funds of the Church: and that all other public expenses were defrayed from the same source: for we read of but one fund belonging to the original Church. Now, to whom did the collection, the custody, and the application of this fund belong? Undoubtedly to the Apostles and Elders of the Church at Jerusalem. Hence we find it mentioned, no less than three times in the compass of five verses* that those temporal things which the bounty of the first converts furnished for the support of the Church, were brought and laid at the Apostles' feet. But shall we say that the Apostles had no right to retain and apply those contributions, but were merely the channels of conveying them to some independent board in the community, and that the community at large claimed those contributions, or could claim them, as a trust belonging to themselves, and did or would dispose of them, in whole or in part, by an inherent authority exempt from the control of the Apostles and Elders? The supposition of any such authority must at once be revolting to the heart of every considerate Christian; and is not only not supported by the Scripture, but contrary to it. Important facts are recorded there which ascertain to whom the principal conveyance of those things belonged, and which must convince any impartial mind that the inheritance was lodged, not in the community at large, but in its ecclesiastical office-bearers.

In the sixth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, at the beginning, we find it thus written:—"In those days when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministrations. Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said—it is not reason that we should leave the word of God and serve tables."—Had it not appeared to the Church that the immediate superintendence of those managements might have been assumed by the Apostles, and of consequence that their office respected such objects, had there not been a wish for their more direct in-

terference, and had not the Apostles themselves recognised their own right of superintendence, there had been little propriety or force in this remark—"It is not reason that we should leave the word of God and serve tables." The Apostles then had the right of superintending those affairs, and it should seem, would now have taken a more immediate management of them but for the reason assigned, that it was preposterous to neglect their principal functions for those of inferior importance, when it was impracticable to attend to both.

But whatever may be said as the import of the reply (about which we shall not greatly contend) this is indisputable, that had not the inspection of those Temporalities been an official business, the Apostles had now an opportunity, and indeed a call, to declare the rights of the community at large, and the community at large had an opportunity to assert their right to act in such managements independently of the Apostles. We find, however, that it was on all hands considered as an acknowledged maxim that this belonged of right to ecclesiastical office-bearers. At once the Apostles suggested, and the multitude as readily admitted, the propriety and the necessity of an auxiliary ecclesiastical office, plainly upon the principle that the management, or authoritative inspection of such affairs, belonged exclusively to official characters in the Church.

It follows in the fourth and fifth verses of the chapter referred to—"Wherefore, brethren, look ye out from among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and of wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and the ministry of the Word." Here we find the Apostles unequivocally acting as the superintendents of the matters in question, and, in that capacity, specifying the number of ecclesiastical office-bearers to be employed, assigning the right of nomination and election to the people, and retaining to themselves the authority of ordination. It follows in the account of this transaction—"And the saying pleased the whole multitude: and they chose seven men whom they set before the Apostles; and when they had prayed they laid their hands on them."

Thus we find that these Temporalities were deemed so important, and at the same time so sacred, that a distinct ecclesiastical office (not however superseding the inspection of the Apostles and Elders) was appointed for the management of them.

Although it were supposed (than which nothing can be more gratuitous) that, prior to this election and ordination, unofficial persons had been employed in the actual management of the Temporalities, yet this transaction plainly demonstrates that such Temporalities are the objects of Church authority, that the official superintendence of them had belonged to the Apostles, and that the order of the Church is most complete when the immediate management of them is confided to Ecclesiastical office-bearers.

We do not here enquire whether the Deacons mentioned in the chapter of the Acts possessed an office peculiar and extraordinary in some of its circumstances: for the resolution of this question is of no moment in our present subject; nor shall we, at this stage of our progress, affirm that their functions extended to any objects besides the distributions to the poor. Thus much, however, is already apparent, and it establishes the point for which we contend, that they were intrusted with those distributions in the character of ecclesiastical office-bearers, that they received none of their power from the people, but all of it from the Apostles, in whom this power resided neither by the courtesy of the people, nor usurpation (suppositions that will not be made), but by the appointment of Christ, and the principles of the constitution of His Church. Since then the power of the Deacons was included in that of the Apostles, and derived from them, the conclusion is unavoidable that they are accountable for their transactions, not to the people, but to the Apostles.

It appears from the passage of Scripture which we have been reviewing that such managements are entirely ecclesiastical, and that they are under the authoritative control of none but ecclesiastical office-bearers.

This position, then, that in the original Church