

bringing my remarks to a close, I think I only re-echo the sentiments of all here, when I express the hope which binds us to the mother-land will not soon be severed. I have the highest admiration for the neighbouring Union, for its equal laws, widespread education, and triumph over unbelief. Christianity, but I want to live under the old flag. Britannia, with all her faults, and she has many, we love her still; all Britons!

Provincial Wesleyan.

TUESDAY, MARCH 21, 1866.
Notice to Postmasters!
Genl. P. O. Halifax,
March 30, 1866.
It should be remembered that all Nova Scotia Papers posted previous to the 1st of April, will be allowed to pass free.

A. WOODGATE.

The Government of the Church.

In the correspondence of the *Christian Messenger* of last week we find a passage or two which we cannot allow to pass without remark. In No. 1 of a series of articles entitled "The Scriptural Principle of Church Government," over the signature of "Edward Manning," this passage occurs:

"Wesleyan Methodism undertakes to relieve the laity altogether, and puts the governing power into the hands of the clergyman by a kind of equality or power which is its final expression in its General Conference."

"This witness is false, and deserving of sharp rebuke. The most favorable opinion to be formed of such a statement is that the writer understands neither what he writes, nor whereof he affirms. We assume that he is professedly a Christian, and would not, of set purpose, utter what is false. But as one who undertakes to condemn all forms of church polity except his own, his misrepresentations, even though not intentionally untrue, are positively inexcusable. Before making such a sweeping assertion, he should have informed himself on the subject, and been sure of the ground on which he treads. We deny the accusation, and challenge him to the proof: proof derived, not from questionable authority, but from the standards of Wesleyan Methodism—and unless he produces such proof, or retracts his statement, we can regard him but as a calumniator. The polity of Wesleyan Methodism, while it secures the due recognition of pastoral responsibility, and guards that responsibility from control by a spirit of faction, at the same time effectually checks, by the intervention of the lay officers of the church—the leaders, stewards, local preachers and trustees—the assumption of claims not necessarily involved in the discharge of ministerial duty."

Our animadversions upon another article in the same issue, shall be offered in a kindly spirit, receiving in good faith the assurance given by this correspondent as his desire fully to represent our principles. We may premise that his views of the Scriptural authority of Congregationalism scarcely tally with those of his brother in the *Christian Messenger*, to be found in an other column; and further, that many judicious, godly and experienced ministers and members of Baptist Churches can easily be found who do not approve of carrying out their theory of Church government to the full extent under all circumstances; but who prefer, especially in cases of discipline, that matters be left for adjudication in the hands of a select few, rather than with the many. But then, if Church government by the popular vote is of such high importance, where is the Scriptural authority for departure from this principle, even in special cases?

J. M. C., in reply to remarks upon a previous article from his pen, reaffirms his position to be, "that in several religious bodies the people have nothing to do with the Government." According to his idea, the people in Presbyterian and Methodist Churches are denied their rights, and are not allowed to support for their own theory. He cannot produce any warrant for the opinion that in the apostolic churches the administration of discipline was controlled by a vote of the whole membership of a church. The passages he gives as authority for maintaining that the whole church and not the office-bearers of the church should have the management of its affairs, prove nothing, as they are just as confidently pleaded by the ablest advocates of Presbyterian and Episcopalian forms of ecclesiasticism in support of their respective theories. With as much confidence as though what he had to say were entirely sufficient for a settlement of the whole question, and capable of being understood only as an unanswerable argument in defence of his position, that the whole people and not the officers of the church have to do with its government, he says:

"Thus speaks the Lord—Tell it to the church—Withdraw yourselves from among yourselves that wicked person."

Now this is a mere begging of the question. The point cannot be settled by the construction which J. M. C. believes himself to be warranted in putting upon the above passages of Scripture which are understood by some of the wisest and best of men in a widely different sense. Let him, if he can, bring unimpeachable proof that his theory has apostolic warrant. Surely, if Congregationalism is so great a consequence, the New Testament will be very plain in indicating that form of government as the one which the Church shall follow; for in proportion as any theory of church government is high and exclusive in its claims, the divine sanction to which it appeals ought to be direct, and strong and explicit. But not a single instance of congregationalism, as J. M. C. understands it, can be produced from the New Testament.

The Scripture passages given by J. M. C., though of such doubtful significance in support of Congregationalism, are favorably written of that school, and we may assume are the strongest proofs of Holy Writ which they can

find to aid their cause. But what support is thereby afforded to the notion that every separate congregation of believers should have the entire control and management of all matters relating to its government; and this, too, not by its office-bearers or representatives merely, but by the vote of its whole membership? None whatever. We have before us, by an able writer, a dissertation on this subject, in which the pretensions of the democratic theory of Church polity are tested, and the prop on which its advocates base their arguments shown to be unavailing. We make some brief quotations:

"Tell it unto the Church." *Met.* xviii. 17. "The amount of assumption required to transmute this scripture into an argument in favour of the Divine right of ecclesiastical democracy, is worthy, not merely of notice, but also of admiration. To make out the argument, the first assumption necessary is, that 'the church,' in the above passage, is a phrase synonymous with that of 'the church' in a modern dissertation on Congregationalism; that which a more unbounded notion cannot well be imagined. If this phrase denotes a corporate body at all, it is morally certain that 'the church,' (ecclesia,) is, or is directly referred to, the Jewish synagogue. But in vain will any man look for even the most remote analogy between the Jewish synagogue and a modern congregational church. There is scarcely a point of resemblance between the two. Take away the sound of an ambiguous word, and there is absolutely nothing left upon which to rest a comparison."

"The second assumption is, that there was some matter of inquiry, a doubtful question, upon which 'the church' was to come to a 'decision,' a thing not even remotely hinted at in the text. The notion of an inquiry as to whether an offence has been committed or not, is precluded by the terms of the passage, which proceeds upon the assumption of an undoubted fact. The third assumption is, that the matter in question was to be examined and adjudicated upon in a popular assembly; a thing unknown at the time, and opposed to every then existing mode of dealing with such matters."

"The fourth assumption is, that 'the church' our Lord intended 'a separate congregation,' invested by Divine institution, with a final jurisdiction over a congregational tribunal, from which there can be no appeal. The fifth assumption is, that the words 'in the church' are directly applicable to every separate congregation of believers."

Now, it is an easy matter enough, by such a process, to establish the great principles of Congregationalism; but, by a similar process, it would be just as easy to establish the principles of Romanism, or of almost any other system. With regard to the precise meaning of the phrase, 'the church,' and of our Lord's direction, 'Tell it to the church,' it is needless to remark that much diversity of opinion exists."

From people, or rather, from those eminent dissenting ministers by whom his learned Annotations are continued, we quote the following observation: "Nor is it necessary that we should take the term 'church' in the strict sense in which it is most generally used in the scriptures of the New Testament; for the general notion of the word is only a company of people called together; and, in this sense, 'Tell it to the church,' is no more than, 'Tell the multitude, make his crime more public.' Thus private remonstrance was to be followed by public exposure. Certain it is, that at the time these words were spoken, no Christian Church existed. Christian baptism, the entrance into the church, was not yet appointed; and communications were there none, for the Lord's Supper was not yet instituted."

"Put away from among yourselves that wicked person." *1 Cor.* v. 13. In the Corinthian church, the pastoral discipline had been grossly neglected, and the people, so far from disowning, had not merely tolerated, but gloried in, the criminal. Hence, Paul takes the matter into his own hands; and, as the apostle of God, authoritatively determines the whole business. The only alternative left to us, "to put away that wicked person, or to endure the penalty of disobedience. The former is the duty of the church, especially of the elders, without their knowledge, and in opposition to their will; and it is idle to suppose that they had either authority or power to prevent this infraction. They might have proved disobedient to the apostolic command; but assuredly that would not have prevented the punishment of the offender. Paul says, 'For to this end also did I write, that I might know the proof of you, whether ye be obedient in all things.' (*2 Cor.* x. 5.) They did prove to be obedient."

An assembly of the church was to be convened and an assembly an act of discipline was to be performed. But what particular form the action took, is still left undecided. To affirm that it took the form of a popular vote, is merely to dogmatize. We have as much right to affirm, and more reason for affirming, that it consisted in the official declaration of the pastor in the presence of the people; or more properly, in the solemn publication of the apostle's sentence. It is plain that the action of the church, as it is called in the scriptures, is ministerial and administrative. To conclude that this judicial power was distributed equally through every member of the community, is simply and nakedly to beg the question; it is to take for granted the very thing which requires to be proved; and it is, moreover, to conclude against the testimony of other scriptures, and in opposition to all the probabilities of the case."

The fair presumption is, that when, in obedience to apostolic command, this church proceeded to administer discipline, the punishment which Paul had "determined already," it would proceed according to the rules elsewhere laid down by the apostle. And nothing can be plainer from the scriptures, than that "private members" are as plainly distinguished from the rulers of the church, as it is possible for one thing to be distinguished from another. Thus, for instance, "Salute all them that have the rule over you," (*Titus*, "all your rulers," and also the saints." (*Heb.* xiii. 24.) Of the former, it is required that they "rule well," and over the latter it is enjoined, "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves."

So obvious is the fact of the above distinction, that Mr. Mill, no friend to clerical assumptions, maintains, that authority to govern in the church is the one distinctive prerogative of the pastor. He holds the authority of the New Testament to be decisive, "that the churches of Christ are to be under government; and that such government is to be exercised over them by appointed officers. And he maintains that, among the various functions commonly regarded as 'clerical,' the only 'one thing' which is exclusively appertains to the office of bishop, presbyter, pastor, or minister, is pre-eminence over the body—governing the Christian community, taking care that Christ's law is obeyed, and so ordering affairs as that Christ's purpose may be accomplished."

The example of Corinth proves to demonstration, that cases of insubordinate faction and internal disorganization may occur in particular churches; and that when they do occur it may be for the advantage of a church so situated, that there should exist some authority competent to apply a remedy.

But for the intervention of St. Paul, the Church of Corinth might have been ruined by its internal factions; by his authoritative interference the evil was corrected, and order and harmony restored; the faction was scattered; and the pure part of the church were re-united and preserved. Whether such an authority may be most advantageously vested in a bishop, a presbyter, a district committee of pastors, or some differently constituted body, is a question merely about the mode and the accidents, not about the subject of the thing itself."

Methodists maintain their principles of Church polity without intolerance or exclusiveness, and with an unfeigned feeling towards any other denomination of Christians. On this subject there is room for diversity of opinion. We sound our system, to say the least, to be as sound, as safe, and as scriptural as any other; securing to the whole church the largest amount of Christian liberty, and yet by wholesome restrictions guarding that liberty against abuse; maintaining the prerogatives and authority of the pastoring office, as being accountable to the Chief Shepherd; yet obtaining the danger of clerical assumption. But while we give a decided preference for our own form and order, we can mark with approval what is good in the arrangements of other churches."

The following representation of an esteemed writer on church government needs not our commendation: "The Word of God does not establish, fully and completely, a model church, Episcopalian, Presbyterian, Congregational, and Wesleyan Connexionists may each be honestly held, by different Christian denominations, as the best embodiment of New Testament principles; and may all, if imbued, in their ministers, members and ministrations, with the influence of the Holy Ghost, be made efficient agents for the promotion of the cause of Christ in the world."

After all that may be said upon Church polity systems and forms, of far less consequence than the possession of pure, spiritual Christianity. The most perfect system of men, if improperly worked, or if unattended by the Spirit of God, will prove of little value; while a defective church arrangement, if employed in holy, loving zeal, may be rendered mighty instrumental in accomplishing the very best results. Every thing which man has done on earth may be marred by human infirmity; but if there is care and hearty devotedness to Christ, then the spirit will be poured out, and the grand design of church organization will be answered in the salvation of souls, and the glory of the Most High."

A meeting of a very interesting character was held last week at Brixton Hill, one of our principal manufacturing towns. It is a wealthy town, and Brixton Hill, inhabited chiefly by merchants and affluent tradesmen. A stranger passing along the main roads would see little beside noble villa residences, and stately mansions, surrounded by gardens and pleasure grounds, and if he were to turn down a side street, here and there, he would find clusters of small houses, many of them the abode of poverty, ignorance, and irreligion. Our Brixton Hill friends, several of whom are drooping of considerable wealth and social position, have long landably exerted themselves on behalf of this needy population, and we have there not a few church members who have been recovered from carelessness and ungodliness. It was resolved to invite a number of the inhabitants of these poor dwellings to tea at Brixton Hill school room; and by the instrumentality of tract distributors and others, tickets for that purpose were freely distributed; while the Rev. E. E. Jenkins, superintendent of the Circuit engaged to give them an address on his travels in the East. The invitation was heartily responded to. The tea-tables were arranged to accommodate 250 persons, and they were filled three times in succession. The spacious chapel was crowded to hear Mr. Jenkins, who gained the attention of a somewhat novel audience, many of whom had rarely if ever been in a place of worship before. These attentions to the poor on the part of their rich neighbours, the Circuit engaged to give them an address on his travels in the East. The invitation was heartily responded to. The tea-tables were arranged to accommodate 250 persons, and they were filled three times in succession. 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