

principle of the Independents, so that the majority of a separate congregation should be entitled to resist the appointment by their bishop of a priest to whom they had strong objections. The courts seem hitherto to have determined that, as the building belonged to the majority of the pew-holders, they might deal with it as they pleased; but they have declined to pronounce any opinion on points of ecclesiastical discipline, leaving the members of each sect free, in this respect, to obey the dictates of their own conscience.

But to exemplify the more regular working of the congregational polity within its own legitimate sphere, I will mention a recent case which came more home to my own scientific pursuits. A young man of superior talent, with whom I was acquainted, who was employed as a geologist in the state survey of Pennsylvania, was desirous of becoming a minister of the Presbyterian Church in that state; but, when examined, previous to ordination, he was unable to give satisfactory answers to questions respecting the plenary inspiration of Scripture, because he considered such a tenet, when applied to the first book of Genesis, inconsistent with discoveries now universally admitted, respecting the high antiquity of the earth, and the existence of living beings on the globe long anterior to man. The rejected candidate, whose orthodoxy on all other points was fully admitted, was then invited by an Independent congregation in New England, to become their pastor; and when he accepted the offer, the other associated churches were called upon to decide whether they would assist in ordaining one who claimed the right to teach freely his own views on the question at issue. The right of the congregation to elect him, whether the other churches approved of the doctrine or not, was conceded; and a strong inclination is always evinced, by the affiliated societies, to come, if possible, to an amicable understanding. Accordingly, a discussion ensued, and is perhaps still going on, whether, consistently with a fair interpretation of Scripture, or with what is essential to the faith of a Christian, the doctrine of complete and immediate inspiration may or may not be left as an open question.

Some of my readers may perhaps exclaim that this incident